

to state the estimated cost involved. In that respect the Bill is desirable and the inclusion of the amendment of which I have given notice will have the effect of placing the charges where they should lie. If the subdivision of a property does not create any need for drainage works, then that land should not be subject to any payment for any additional work. It is reasonable that the owner of land should not be required to pay for work that has not been occasioned by any subdivision of it. I hope members will agree to the amendment; in fact, I think the Government should be perfectly agreeable to the insertion of the words suggested. They will clarify a position which otherwise would be confused.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [5.30]: I merely wish to say that I support the Bill. I had the opportunity recently to discuss it with the members of the Harvey Board and was given to understand that the board desired it to be passed in its entirety. I think it unlikely that it will inflict hardship on anyone; the land to be subdivided would be land that would be rated in any case now. Any question of subdivision would therefore not increase the rate.

Hon. L. Craig: It would increase the price for the construction of works.

Hon. W. J. MANN: That was the explanation given to me, and for that reason I support the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. V. Hamersley in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—New section:

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I move an amendment—

That in line 7 of paragraph (c) of proposed new Section 22A before the word "if" the words "by reason of such subdivision of land" be inserted.

I have already explained the amendment and I hope the Committee will agree to it.

The **HONORARY MINISTER**: I have no objection to the amendment, but I consider the words to be redundant.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 3, Title—agreed to.
Bill reported with an amendment.

House adjourned at 5.35 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 1st November, 1945.

	PAGE
Questions: Mount Barker school, as to renovations and additions	1588
Superphosphate, as to grade	1589
Royal Agricultural Society, as to holding of Royal Show	1589
Leave of absence	1589
Bills: Commonwealth Powers, 1R.	1589
Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act Amendment, 1R.	1589
Marketing of Onions Act Amendment, 2R., Com., report	1590
South-West State Power Scheme, 2R.	1591
State Electricity Commission, Com.	1613
Builders' Registration Act Amendment, returned	1613
Supreme Court Act Amendment (No. 1), returned	1623

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

QUESTIONS.

MOUNT BARKER SCHOOL.

As to Renovations and Additions.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Education:

1, What progress has been made with the plans for renovations to the manual training room at the Mt. Barker school?

2, Can a start be made with the work in the very near future?

3, Is he aware that in its present condition the room is badly lit, draughty and ill ventilated, and that complaints have been received from a number of parents and children as to the unsuitability of the premises for use at the present time?

4, What progress is being made with the plans for additions to the Mt. Barker school to overcome the present overcrowding at that school, and when is it likely that action can be taken to put this work in hand?

The **MINISTER** replied:

1, The renovation of the manual training room at the Mt. Barker School is receiving the attention of the P.W.D.

2, It is hoped that a commencement will be made with the work in the near future.

3, Yes.

4, Approval is being given for the addition to the school of two classrooms; subsequent action to put the work in hand is dependent upon the position in respect of materials and labour.

SUPERPHOSPHATE.

As to Grade.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Agriculture:

1, What is the water soluble phosphatic content of the superphosphate at present being supplied in Western Australia?

2, Is it a fact that superphosphate is being supplied in South Australia with a 33 per cent. water soluble phosphatic content and with 4 per cent. of soluble citrate?

3, If not correct, what differences are there between the respective superphosphates being supplied in this State and in South Australia, or in other States of the Commonwealth where the grade is higher than in Western Australia?

4, If the grade is higher in other States of the Commonwealth, what are the reasons for the low grade superphosphate being supplied in Western Australia, what representations have been made or action taken to effect an improvement in the quality supplied in this State, or if no representations have been made, why have they not been made, and will they be made immediately?

The MINISTER replied:

1, The guaranteed analysis of superphosphate at present being supplied in Western Australia is 14 per cent. water soluble phosphoric acid. This is equivalent to 30.6 per cent. tri-calcic phosphate. The guaranteed analysis includes 2.5 per cent. citrate soluble phosphoric acid (equivalent to 5.5 per cent. tri-calcic phosphate) and 1.5 per cent. acid soluble phosphoric acid (equivalent to 3.3 per cent. tri-calcic phosphate). The total phosphoric acid guaranteed is 18 per cent., which is equivalent to 39.3 per cent. tri-calcic phosphate.

2, Under South Australian law superphosphate must be sold on a guaranteed content of tri-calcic phosphate and not phosphoric acid, as in Western Australia. One pound of phosphoric acid is equivalent to 2.183 lbs. of tri-calcic phosphate. In South Australia the guaranteed analysis is

39.3 per cent. tri-calcic phosphate, which is equivalent to 18 per cent. phosphoric acid. The guaranteed total analysis is identical with that in Western Australia. I am not aware of the actual analysis guaranteed for the water soluble fraction in South Australia, but it will be similar to that in Western Australia.

3, The grade of superphosphate throughout Australia is the same at the present time. On occasions variations occur owing to the nature of the raw material supplied. So far no variations from the 18 per cent. phosphoric acid grade of superphosphate has been necessary.

4, Answered by 3.

ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY.

As to Holding of Royal Show.

Mr. HOLMAN (without notice) asked the Premier: Has the Government been approached by the Royal Agricultural Society with regard to the holding of the Royal Show and if so, what is the position?

The PREMIER replied: Speaking from memory I believe that, before the end of the war—in March or April of this year—the Royal Agricultural Society communicated with the Government and asked whether it had any objection to the holding of the Royal Show. The Government considered the matter and advised the society that it had no objection to the holding of the show if the society, in the light of the circumstances, desired to proceed with the show under the usual conditions. I think that was the last communication that passed between the Government and the Royal Agricultural Society in regard to the matter.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Commonwealth Powers.

Introduced by the Premier.

2, Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Lands.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On the motion by Mr. Doney, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Mr. H. (Albany) on the ground of ill-health.

BILL—MARKETING OF ONIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 25th October.

MR. FOX (South Fremantle) [4.38]: The amendments to the Act, which are embodied in the Bill, will be welcomed by the growers and also by the members of the Onion Marketing Board. The Act was proclaimed in 1939 and has operated ever since, with the exception of portion of 1943 when, owing to circumstances arising out of contracts entered into between some of the growers and the military authorities, it did not function. This was largely due to a few of the growers wishing to sell their produce direct to the military authorities instead of disposing of it through the board. Prior to this legislation being enacted, many growers at Spearwood conducted a voluntary pool for a year or two but that move collapsed owing to the growers not being loyal to themselves. The growers then realised that the only way to stabilise the board was to give it a legal status.

When the Victorian board was formed it decided, after acquiring the crop, to store, sort and grade it. The consequence was that the Victorian growers were put to enormous expense. They were more concerned about delivering quantity than quality. Of course, the Victorian board had to pay for everything sent to it. When the Western Australian board was established it profited by the experience of the Victorian board. It decided that the growers should store their own produce and be responsible for all losses, however caused; and the growers were required to put the produce on the market in good order and condition when ordered to do so by the agent of the board. It is the custom for the agent to allot orders to the various growers in proportion to the tonnages which they hold, and that plan worked remarkably well until last season. Occasionally, a grower became disgruntled because he thought he was not getting a fair deal and not getting sufficient orders; but those small arguments have usually been smoothed out satisfactorily to both parties.

The growers are bound together, under the board, for their mutual protection. Consequently, last year it came as a bombshell

to the board when a grower instituted proceedings against it, claiming that he had had some losses and that the board was responsible for the whole of his crop. His legal adviser had informed him that the members of the board were individually responsible for the whole of his crop immediately the board acquired it, and were also responsible for losses. That meant that immediately the board decided to take over a crop and it came under its control, the members of the board, as well as the board itself, were responsible for the whole crop. The board's solicitors agreed that that view was correct. The Minister was therefore approached and requested to bring down a Bill that would make the growers responsible for the storage of their produce, and not the members of the board or the board itself. The growers state that the establishment of the board has been responsible for the growing of a better grade of onions and that the standard is being maintained.

Usually, the season begins in January and concludes about the end of May. This season the growers intend to operate from the beginning of December and to continue until the end of May, when the great proportion of the crop will have been harvested. The tonnage sold through the board in 1941 was 1,047; in 1944, 2,002; and in 1945 it is estimated that the tonnage will be 1,780. Ninety per cent., or more, of the onions grown in this State are produced at Spearwood; and the 1,780 tons does not include any onions that might be grown at Armadale or Osborne Park. Another provision in the Bill is designed to make the grower more careful in estimating his tonnage. Some growers may be anxious to over-estimate their tonnages, as by that means they think they will get larger orders and thus be enabled to dispose of their crops quickly. This year, however, the board is giving additional assistance to the grower and is taking precautions to ensure that proper estimates of the crops are made. The board has put on a man for a fortnight who will interview each grower; he will be the agent of the board for the season and will estimate the tonnages of the crops. A couple of check-ups will be made during the season, and so I do not think there should be any trouble as far as the estimation of the tonnages is concerned.

The other amendment in the Bill provides that the board may retain 12½ per cent. of the proceeds of the sales. In the past the board has been able to function economically; the cost has been about 5 per cent., and it has been as low as 4½ per cent. It may not be necessary for the board to retain a greater percentage during the coming season than it has retained in the past; but should the occasion arise, provision is made in the Bill to enable the board to retain a greater percentage.

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—SOUTH-WEST STATE POWER SCHEME.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 18th October.

MR. WILLMOTT (Sussex) [4.48]: This Bill has been expected for many years by the people of the South-West; and now that it is proposed to extend the scheme to the Great Southern district, I feel the people there will welcome it. According to the report of the Electricity Advisory Committee, however, it will be many years before the scheme reaches the various settlers throughout those areas. Even should it reach the main centres—the principal towns in the South-West—I am very doubtful as to when it will reach the farming community. It seems to me it will be many years before they will get any benefit. I would like the Minister to give us some idea when we can expect to have the scheme extended to the farming community. The committee's report indicates that it will be reaching my area in the second stage, that is, in the second five years, but we have not been told when the farming community will get it. It is to go to what are called the sub-stations, which are, principally, the larger towns in those areas, but we have not been told when the individual farmer will get any benefit.

According to the plan most of the sub-stations are to be from 20 to 25 miles apart. In some cases they will be more. As far as I can understand there will be no pole transmissions between these sub-stations. It seems

to me a pole transmitter is a very expensive job, and the farms, situated between these towns, will have to be wired from one or other of the sub-stations and that appears to be a tremendous job and an expensive one. If the farmers have to pay on the capital outlay, I am afraid that power for them will be costly. The committee, in its report, expresses the hope that power will be available at 5d. for the first 20 units, 4d. for the next 20 units, and so on down to 1¼d. for the large consumers. These figures are quite all right, although at present we get electric power from our own station at Busselton, run by the municipality, for 5d. a unit. Lighting is a little more—I think it is 8d. or 9d. I have not had any experience with electricity except that I have power, from the municipal council supply-station, brought to my farm, and pay 5d. a unit for it. That is more expensive than if I ran my milking machine by Diesel engine, but I will say that the electric power is certainly much more convenient.

The Minister for Lands: I have found that that is so in pumping water.

Mr. WILLMOTT: That is why I give the Bill every possible support. Because I am speaking on these lines, I do not want members to think that I am against the measure. It is all right to study the committee's report which indicates that in such and such a stage power will be in a particular place. Each sub-station, according to the plan, is some large town. At the end of the first five years we will have reached the first stage, and have got so far. At the end of the second five years we will have reached another stage and the power will be extended further. But the report does not say when the electricity from the sub-stations will be available to the general community, which is principally composed of farmers and, in other instances, the timber mills. I feel sure that they will be some of the largest consumers. That is the principal point that I would like cleared up. Although the committee says that this and that will be done, we do not seem to have any guarantee.

Another matter is this: Who is going to look after the line in the different sections? Is there going to be an electrician or linesman at each sub-station? The dairying industry will be the principal one consuming power in my electorate, and if power is cut off for one day it is "goodbye cows" for that

season! We may be able to stop milking once in the day, but if the cows miss two milkings, they will be just about ruined for the season.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Could not they be milked by hand?

Mr. WILLMOTT: They could, of course. Many are hand-milked now. But if a herd is built up to a total of say, 75 cows, on the assumption that they will be milked by electric power, and the power is cut off suddenly, the farmer cannot turn round and milk all those cows himself, and he cannot tear all over the country to get someone to help.

Mr. Abbott: I doubt whether the member for Geraldton has milked a cow.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: I have. There are very few dairy farms with 75 cows.

Mr. WILLMOTT: The dairy farmers are talking on those lines now because of the recent disturbance at Collie. They want to know what will become of their cows if the same thing happens after this scheme is established. I was wondering, if the second generating and transmission station is established at Bunbury, whether it could be constructed to run on Diesel oil. Bunbury is a port and oil can be easily procured there. If that were done, and if anything happened to the coal position for a few days, the commission could switch over to fuel oil and run the plant from Bunbury because, according to the plan, it will be connected through the South-West and eventually to the Great Southern and back to Perth and Fremantle.

Those are the principal troubles concerning my people, and they have asked me to bring them forward. I quite realise that the electricity commission will have power over all mines and open cuts but whether, with that authority, it will be able to get sufficient coal to keep the plant running regularly throughout the year is something that we would like to be definitely assured of. I did want to know what was going to happen to the existing staffs at the different centres, but the Minister replied to that the other evening. The plant at Busselton is run by five men and a boy. Will that sub-station need that number of staff, or are some of those men to be put off? Who will be responsible should any small defect develop in the electrical plant on a farm? A man who knows very little about electricity would not

be able to rectify such a fault, even if allowed to do so by the commission. Such a farm may be ten miles from the nearest sub-station and, in such a case, will there be a man available to go straight out and rectify any fault that develops? There are many things such as this that we would like to know.

I notice, in the committee's report, that it has investigated the question of generating power from streams. I know that the Town Planning Commissioner investigated a certain stream at Nannup, and I understand he gave a very favourable report, but unfortunately Nannup only comes into the early part of the third stage. Has the commission considered those points? I am glad to see the Minister nodding his head, and I hope it is in response to my question. There is a great deal of water running away from the Wellington dam, all the year round, and I think it could be used in generating power to pump water across to the Great Southern. By doing that, we could perhaps save a great deal of expense and thereby cut down the cost, per unit of electricity, to the general consumer. I realise that all these points have been raised on the other Bills. In fact, they come under all three Bills. I will give this measure every support I can, not only in this Chamber, but outside.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington) [5.5]: As one of the representatives of the South-West, I have great pleasure in supporting this Bill. I agree with the Minister that, so far as the South-Western part of this State is concerned, the fact that the people in that area are to be provided with power certainly makes it a red letter day in the history of that portion of the State. I think all the Minister said in introducing this Bill, when he spoke optimistically of the future development of the South-West will be fully justified. As members know, for many years the public bodies throughout the South-West have been unanimous in advocating and encouraging the provision of power in that area. There have been some very important periods in the development of the South-West. One was when we decided to put irrigation works in hand, and another was when we developed the South-West by group settlement. I think this third proposal, to provide power, marks the third milestone in the progress of the

South-West. There can be no doubt about the future of that part of the State. One never hears anybody, whether living in the South-West or not, express any doubt as to its future.

I never like to think that the Government is going to lose money, or that it is spending money without proper justification, but I was pleased when I heard the Minister for Works say that the estimated loss on this scheme for the first five years would be £30,000 per year. I did not think we could do this work with such a small loss in the initial stages, and I do not think many of those in the South-West, who have given consideration to this proposal, believed that it could be put into effect with such a small loss. The fact that we expect to lose only £150,000 in the first five years fully justifies the Government, in my opinion, in proceeding with this proposal. When the irrigation works were started they were started at great cost, and for the first few years, in all the districts where irrigation was developed, we knew we would face a loss. But there is no doubt that the indirect gain derived by the State from irrigation, even in its early stages, amply repaid any money spent in that direction. Today I feel that we will again get indirect benefit, in the early stages of this scheme. The Minister told the House about the need for decentralisation, and we are all giving support to that policy. We are all agreed, also, that we will never get decentralisation without providing amenities to encourage people to go into the country areas. This proposal will encourage people to go to the country areas, and to remain there.

Another important point to be considered when dealing with this proposal is that it is going to serve the dairying areas of Western Australia. We know that in all countries where the dairying industry is carried on the dairy farmers today are using power. Our dairy farmers, particularly in the future, will be dependent upon export markets, and will have to meet keen competition. They will not be able to compete with other countries unless our conditions are similar to those in such countries. We already suffer the disadvantage of distance.

Mr. Abbott: We cannot compete with Tasmania in electric power.

Mr. McLARTY: I am speaking generally. I do not know that the amount of butter exported abroad by Tasmania would make

much difference to us, but in European countries the dairy farmers are using cheap power, and plenty of it. If we are to compete successfully with them we also must have plenty of cheap power.

Mr. Watts: How many units of electric power would the average dairy farm use per month?

Mr. McLARTY: I would not like to specify any particular number of units, as it would depend upon the number of cows milked. As the Leader of the Opposition knows, one man may be milking a small number of cows, and another man a large number. I think this point relating to the supply of power to dairy farmers is a most important one. It is true that a number of the local concessions now supplying electric power will have to be taken over, and I do not think the Minister is at all pessimistic about the attitude of local authorities. I think he knows that he will find not only a desire but a keen desire on the part of the local authorities to assist this commission in every possible way. The local authorities in the interests of their districts, should not seek to exploit the position, because whilst these local concessions have rendered a valuable service in the past, we know that they could never supply the farmers surrounding the towns in which they are now operating. They themselves will admit that. If farmers are to have cheap power this, in my opinion, is the only possible scheme under which it can be supplied to them. I do not know whether the Minister will agree with me on this, but I think that where we have a concessionaire, other than a local authority, he is entitled to more consideration in the matter of compensation than a local authority would be.

Hon. N. Keenan: That is provided for in the Bill.

Mr. McLARTY: Yes, and I think it is reasonable because, after all, a local authority is part of the government of a country, while a concessionaire is working for himself, and has probably put all his money into the concession that he is working. He should receive just compensation. His position is such that in certain directions he should receive more consideration than should a local authority. It is proposed in this Bill to purchase the present power house at Collie, or perhaps to lease it. Under the conditions obtaining I think it would be much more satisfactory to purchase it

There, again, provision is made for compensation, and it should be just compensation. The tendency throughout the world today is to nationalise the supply of electricity. In South Australia we find that the Government has decided, after investigations by a Royal Commission, to acquire, from the company now running it, the power house and the supply of electricity generally. I believe that consideration is also being given to a similar proposal in New South Wales. Generally speaking, I have opposed nationalisation but, unless this industry is nationalised, I can see no hope at all of great numbers of people ever being supplied with electric power and all the amenities and comforts it brings to home life and the progress it brings to industry.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about a flat rate for current. I should like to see something done in that direction. It would be fair and just to the people of the country if a flat rate were charged for petrol which is so necessary in the interests of the country and of transport generally. The metropolitan area could well help the men in the outback districts in this way and thus aid in the development of the country. The same thing applies to the supply of electric current, and it should also apply to telephonic communication.

Hon. N. Keenan: And to water.

Mr. McLARTY: Yes.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: And railway freights?

Mr. McLARTY: I am rather disappointed that the finalisation of the scheme is going to take so long. I know perfectly well that a big scheme such as this cannot be put into operation within a short period. Much work has to be done and, what is more, a considerable amount of money has to be found, but I would say to the Minister that, if it is possible to speed up the development of this project, it should be done. When the Minister was speaking on this subject in a previous session, he said that the construction of the power house at South Fremantle would not hold up the construction and development of a power scheme for the South-West for any appreciable time. If that is a fact, perhaps the Minister will explain why it is going to take so long to complete the third stage of development under this scheme. In present circumstances it might be somewhere

near ten years before the whole scheme will be completed. I might be wrong in that, but this is the impression I gained.

It is proposed to obtain a considerable amount of revenue from the pumping of water from the Wellington Dam to the Great Southern districts. I have no objection to that; I am most anxious that the Great Southern should receive an adequate water supply, but in passing I would say that, before such a scheme is put into operation, the Minister should see that an adequate supply of water is stored in the South-West to meet the requirements in that part of the State because, whenever water is stored, the demand for it becomes greater than that originally estimated.

The Minister for Works: It is hard to satisfy the South-Westerners, is it not?

Mr. McLARTY: Not very hard; I want to help my friends from the Great Southern.

Mr. Watts: But to help your district first.

Mr. McLARTY: The hon. member cannot blame me for that. I was merely warning the Minister of the advisableness of storing an adequate supply of water. I am pleased that the Government has introduced the Bill, which I wholeheartedly support.

MR. WITHERS (Bunbury) [5.20]: As the third representative of the South-West, I would like to add my quota of commendation to the Government on its having at last been venturesome. This is one of the boldest schemes attempted in Western Australia since the construction of the Coolgardie water scheme, and it is only by boldness of this sort that we shall make progress in the development of the resources of this State. When the late Lord Forrest, then Sir John Forrest, proposed the construction of the Coolgardie water scheme, many people considered that it would not be justified. I recall as a young man having attended the performance of a comedy company in the Theatre Royal where a skit was staged entitled "When McGuinness gets a job." The skit alluded to Sir John Forrest's water scheme. It was said, "There will be a stream of pure water from Sir John's reservoir," and the chorus asked "When?" to which the reply was, "On the day when McGuinness gets a job," and that, of course was equivalent to never. That indicates what people thought at the time.

Let us not be like that in our attitude to this power scheme. It is something on which we should have launched out long ago. Previously it might not have been possible to give this project the attention it is now receiving, but we are looking to it to stimulate so much development in the South-West and Great Southern parts of this State that we believe the scheme is now justified. I do not wish to be parochial about the title "South-West power scheme." I have no desire to enlarge the title by including "Great Southern" or "Great Eastern." The one word "national" would do me.

Mr. Wilson: "Collie" would do me.

Mr. WITHERS: This project practically had its origin in a Collie power scheme. From 1939 and up to the time of the investigation by the Electricity Advisory Committee, we have endeavoured to get a national power scheme for the State with the source of that power in the South-West, and the contention was that if we established a power scheme at Collie—we were laymen but were supported by the opinion of experts—the current could be transmitted to the metropolitan area, the South-West and perhaps eventually to Geraldton. This appealed to me, but what appeals more is this: After the scheme had been proposed, there was a thought in the minds of the people of the South-West, as was mentioned by the member for Murray-Wellington, that the building of the power house at South Fremantle would retard the progress of the South-West power scheme, but I was pleased to hear that the whole of these power stations will eventually be linked up. When that happens, it will become a national power scheme.

I should like to know what will happen in the case of some of the local authorities like Bunbury that have generating plants of their own. The Bunbury plant has given wonderful results over the years, so much so that it is regarded as a milk-cow for building up the town of Bunbury. The profits from the electric lighting plant are used for the financing of other works. If the prices to be charged for power to be distributed by the commission are such that the local authority cannot make a profit—it will not be able to make a profit, though I am not contending that it should—it might take the selfish view that, if it supported the national scheme, the municipality would be worse off. I am not looking to the point that the local authority might be worse off.

I am looking to the fact that the whole of the people will be much better off. The report of the committee mentions a price of 5d. per unit. I take it that will be for power. In Bunbury the people are supplied with lighting at 6d. a unit less 1d., and power was distributed until recently to the South-West Dairy Products Co. for a 1½d. per unit. The Bunbury Harbour Board was not let off so lightly for the power it required for the bulk-handling plant. However, the Bunbury plant shows what can be done in a district where cheap power is provided.

The scheme submitted by the committee has everything to commend it. Concern was expressed by the member for Sussex about the time it will take to supply power to farmers. I think the farmers generally will have to wait a fair time because, as is pointed out in the report, the high voltage lines cannot be tapped to connect individual farms. Although the farmers require the amenities that electrical power will make possible just as much as anyone needs them, I believe the extension of these facilities to them will depend largely upon the increase in secondary industries, greater productivity or more efficient organisation in the districts adjacent to the farms. In this way some of the farmers may reap the advantage as against others who are located further afield. Viewed in this light, it may be five or ten years before the farmers will be able to take full advantage of the supply of power.

We have been told that the Government will probably have to bear a loss of £30,000 a year on the scheme when it is established. That seems to be a large sum but, during the investigation, I believe that mention was made of a loss of something like £50,000 a year.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: That would be for the first year or two.

Mr. WITHERS: Yes. In the circumstances, a loss of £30,000 a year would not be such a serious matter. Much will depend upon the development made possible by the scheme, and I hope that the loss will be recoverable in the space of a short period by reason of a heavy consumption of power made possible by increased development. Of course, the Government is in a happier position than private enterprise because of the fact that what it loses by way of capital in connection with a project of this description it should be able to pick

up in revenue from other sources as a result of production within the State. So there will not be a loss—or I hope there will not be—to the Government.

I trust that the prices mentioned in the report will be charged; because, if the commission is not definite that it can distribute the current at those rates, the effect may be detrimental on the areas supplied with the current since they will not be able to compete with the centralised positions where current would be so much cheaper. It is stated that the charges will be on the basis of those in the Eastern States. That is all right if the provincial areas can enter into competition with centralisation. That is one thing we are going to be up against. If we cannot get power at a sufficiently low rate to enable industries to be established in the districts where it is to be supplied, the industries will go to the centralised positions. The report says—

As the Commonwealth Government, through soldier settlement or immigration, will become increasingly interested in the South-West, it may be found possible, by joint Commonwealth and State action, rapidly to increase the rate of provision of rural extensions.

I hope that will be so. I trust that the Commonwealth Government will give consideration to the assistance of this project; that the State Government will be able to influence the Commonwealth to help us on those lines. The question of using the water in the Wellington Dam for the purposes of providing hydro-electric power is one that has been agitating the minds of the people of the South-West for a number of years. There are experts in the bush who can tell the other man that this should have been a first consideration long ago. I know that the committee has given every consideration to and made every investigation into what can be done in the utilisation of that water to generate current. If that could be done with a plant—I do not say it should interfere with the plant which is to be established at Collie or Bunbury—at a point adjacent to that area, where the cost of production would be low compared with that by the other method, then possibly the people in that vicinity could take advantage of the current from that particular source.

I am pleased about this project, because my mind goes back to the time, not long after I came to this House, when there was

an agitation from the people of the South-West for the introduction of a measure for the purpose of creating a South-West power scheme. This afternoon I had a look through "Hansard," and found that the member for Boulder, who was then Premier, moved the second reading of a Bill on the 9th December, 1926. In his opening remarks he said—

The question of a power scheme for the South-Western portion of the State took definite form three years ago,—

that made it 1923—

when a committee of six persons was appointed by Mr. Scaddan, then Minister for Railways. The committee, after holding many meetings and after making a thorough examination of every phase of the question, submitted certain recommendations; and this Bill is really the result of the committee's recommendations.

So the agitation was justified, we considered in 1923. How much more then is the scheme justified today, because there has been extensive progress in the South-West? We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that during the last 25 years the South-West has gone ahead far beyond the expectations of that particular period. I know the Bill will receive careful consideration, and I hope that the administrative side of the other Bill which was discussed yesterday will not be amended in any way during its progress through Committee and thus be made to militate against the scheme as a whole being given effect to. I hope that anything done in the way of amending the Bill relating to the establishment of the commission will be such that it will not be the means of retarding the objective of the Minister and the Government to give full effect to the South-West power scheme.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [5.35]: I shall, of course, support the second reading of this measure; and, indeed, I shall support, I think, the whole of it; because so far as the measure itself is concerned there is nothing, so far as I can see, that is objectionable in it. The only regret I have is the uncertainty I see as to the result of it in certain areas. I refer more particularly to those areas which are in the districts from which I come, where settlement is not as close as in the South-West of the State proper. I say that because of a discussion which I and other members on this side of the House have, by the courtesy of

the Minister, been permitted today to have with Mr. Dumas, Chairman of the Electricity Advisory Committee which presented the report now before this House. We, following out the terms of the offer made by the Minister a night or two ago—generously made and willingly accepted by us—asked that gentleman a number of questions and sought his opinion on a number of points which were of a technical and general character; and the answers which were given by him displayed, as one would expect, and as I did expect, a very great knowledge of the subjects with which he had to deal, and consequently could, in my opinion, be accepted at their face value.

Insofar as questions of a technical nature are concerned, I would be in no position to dispute them even if I desired to do so, which I certainly do not. The answers, so far as one could appreciate the reasoning and principles on which they were based, were thoroughly satisfactory to me. But I did find great dissatisfaction, and that dissatisfaction I must disclose to the House, with his views on the extension of electric current for this scheme to the farming properties, more particularly in the Great Southern districts. The principles to be applied will no doubt be the same in the more closely settled areas as they will be in those where settlement is some distance further apart. But they will be more easily overcome in the former because of the fact that settlement is close and the number of persons to be served in a given radius will be far greater.

The principle, of course, is as expressed in the committee's report at paragraph 47. It states that in these areas the farmers would be able to finance the low tension main extensions to their properties. Paragraph 42 of the report states that, in order that rural extensions may be payable, they must show a revenue return of 20 to 25 per cent. on the capital expenditure incurred in the extensions, and that this is seldom possible and has to be covered by a guarantee on the part of the consumers concerned. When one takes these observations in conjunction with the information supplied by Mr. Dumas, it becomes quite obvious that the benefits to be conferred—in this generation anyway—upon the farmers of the Great Southern will be very slender, if not entirely non-existent for a considerable time unless they are prepared to incur large expense.

I took some notes of the remarks made by Mr. Dumas when I and some other members had a talk with him—they will be able to confirm or qualify what I am about to say—and what he said amounts to this: That before farms could be economically accommodated with electricity—and it was likely they could only be so accommodated within one mile from any distributing centre—the houses would need to be at the rate of, say, four to a mile. The posts and wiring would cost about £250 per mile. Those costs would need to be met by the consumers who must also, probably, guarantee certain fixed revenue returns. That, of course, merely bears out the observations that I read from the report.

Mr. Doney: And, of course, the internal wiring as well.

Mr. WATTS: I am not concerned with the internal wiring of the premises because that is a domestic matter for the individual. The chairman, Mr. Dumas, went on to suggest that the commission would probably arrange for the manufacture of a standard type of home generator which would be sold or supplied on reasonable terms to farmer consumers. But, as he admitted and as we all know, there is no provision for that in the Bill. The impression given by the publicity that has preceded this report and the Bills now before us, has been that as soon as a given area could be connected with the scheme the farms, within a considerable radius, could be immediately served—or served as soon as lines could be run to them—at rates and upon conditions comparable with those applying to urban properties.

We have had, if not actually, at least metaphorically, a great deal of flag-waving in regard to that particular aspect. I do not say that the flags have been waved by officials of the department, or by Ministers of the Crown, but by over-enthusiastic people. They have deluded themselves and many others into the belief that it is only a question of generating the current and taking it to a place, reasonably central in the district, when it would forthwith radiate out and all they would be asked to do would be to use the current and pay for it. As one gathers from the report and from the information given by Mr. Dumas, it becomes clear that in the reasonably near future, unless some substantial alteration is made in the plans proposed, that will not be the case at all. A town on the Great Southern

for example, may be served direct with power generated at Collie, or it may be served with power under the aegis of the commission, generated at the town itself. In either event, the only farmers likely to obtain service, without considerable capital cost paid by themselves, will be those within a small radius of where the current is generated or distributed. I understand from Mr. Dumas that that radius is approximately one mile. I told him that so far as the principal town of my electorate is concerned, that would possibly serve 15 or 16 ratepayers, who are farmers, out of approximately 200. The remaining 184, who are all within a radius of 22 or 23 miles to the east and 16 or 17 miles to the west—

Mr. Cross: You would reckon it was more than 22 miles if you had to walk it.

Mr. WATTS: The hon. member does not know the boundaries of the Katanning Road Board. If he had the right information he would be entitled to interject. The remainder will not be served, except substantially at their own expense and by no means on a comparable basis with those in the more closely settled areas, who can be served within the small radius that I have mentioned.

While I do not make the slightest qualification in supporting this measure, because I wish to see it give service on a reasonable basis at once to those it can help, I have no hesitation in saying that, for the immediate present, and I believe for many years to come, the only service it is likely to give to the people to whom I refer is that instead of their not receiving electricity from the local concessionaire, or local authority in their immediate vicinity, they will be in the position of not receiving electricity from anyone. They will not be in any better position than they are at present. If they were prepared to indulge in the capital expenditure to which I have referred, which would promptly take all the gilt off the gingerbread, then undoubtedly they might get some service, but that will not be doing the things which have been mentioned in this House. That is not going to encourage migration to the rural areas, or discourage migration from them. It is not going to provide the men with conveniences for doing their work. I believe that Mr. Baron Hay when giving evidence before this advisory committee some months ago said he thought there were 100 uses for electric current on a farm. This

is not going to provide these people with the means of doing those 100 jobs—if there be so many—with electric current. It is not going to provide the women and children with refrigerators and other amenities, with the comfort, ease and satisfaction of which we have heard so much in past months.

It is, therefore, not going to be all that has been alleged by the people whom I have said have made these somewhat flamboyant statements and waved these flags. Nevertheless, it is unquestionably a contribution towards the development of this State, that cannot be lightly regarded, and that must be supported. I hope the Government will be prepared to take steps to see that these obvious shortcomings that are apparent in the report—and because this Bill adopts the report, in this Bill also—are overcome as speedily as possible in order that the people to whom I refer, in whatever part of the areas to be served they may be, and whatever occupation they may follow, may be supplied with the conveniences and amenities, that are supposed to underlie the reasons for this Bill being introduced, as quickly as possible. Then, without any question, the Government and those who are responsible for the implementation of this measure—provided the charges for the current when supplied are reasonable and likely to diminish the cost of production, and provided the capital costs to which I have referred are avoided—will have made a contribution and have done something for the deserving people of those areas, and will have contributed to the prevention of migration to the city, and to the increase of population in country districts, and will to some extent, at all events, have overcome one of the many disabilities to which those who endeavour to create the real wealth of this country are subject, and from which they have not yet been able to escape, though they have been most anxious to do so.

Western Australia, despite all those who profess to believe the contrary, will for a considerable time be substantially dependent for its national income on various types of primary production, commencing with gold-mining and going on to coal-mining and timber, and from that to all types of agricultural, horticultural and other related methods of primary production. Without those, there is no doubt in my mind that, for many years to come, the development of Western Australia will be very slow. This

metropolis must therefore make some greater contribution—because it contains about 50 per cent. of the population of the State and is dependent, for its wealth, largely on those industries—than it has yet made, if we are truly to develop the outer areas of Western Australia, and particularly those with which we are now dealing, where climatic and other conditions are more favourable than are to be found in the great majority of areas of the State.

As far as I can see, that contribution can best be made by providing the money necessary to enable this scheme to be implemented on a sound basis and in a whole-hearted way, so that everyone within reach of the current supplied by this scheme can obtain it at a rate uniform with that at which it is supplied to others, and on conditions comparable—notwithstanding the isolation of their homes—with the conditions applicable to those living in the more closely settled areas or in the urban districts. With that plea to His Majesty's Government of this State I conclude my remarks, again stating that I support the Bill, notwithstanding the fact that it does not go as far as I would like to see it go at this stage.

MR. HOLMAN (Forrest) [5.55]: I wish first of all to congratulate the Minister and the Government on bringing down this measure, and to express appreciation of the work of the Electricity Advisory Committee and the report it has placed before us. I want also to mention the assistance given to that committee by the local governing bodies and other organisations, as well as by other individuals interested. It has only been by the honorary work of such people and bodies as I have mentioned that the advisory committee was able to get the information to enable it to formulate this report. That is borne out in the report, when the committee says it has taken great notice of certain industries, particularly the dairy- and timber industries. It has been mentioned that the scheme will probably result in a loss in the early stages, a loss estimated at anything up to £30,000 per year. I think any loss in the initial stages will be more than offset by the increased prosperity of the South-West in particular, and of the State generally. In its report the committee has stated that it will take a few years before the current will be made available. I understand also that it will be some

time before isolated centres are able to have any current at all. I do not know to whom the Leader of the Opposition referred when he mentioned flag-waving, because I think the matter has been generally understood by those interested in it. I know it has been understood throughout the districts I represent.

Mr. Watts: The people I mentioned were not down in your country.

Mr. HOLMAN: I know the people in that area understand that it will be some time before isolated settlers can receive current. I am vitally concerned about the cost to isolated settlers. Unless the commission can propound some scheme to allow them to have the facilities made possible by the installation of this national power scheme, I do not think it will be of much advantage to them. The boot will be on the other foot and they will be placed at a distinct disadvantage, because those within a small radius of the towns and cities will have power available, resulting, as the committee states, in decreased costs of production. Consequently we shall need to be very careful because, so far from increasing the population of those districts, any unfair advantages would tend to decrease it. I was pleased to hear the Minister's answer last evening to my question about the timber industry. Although he could not tell me anything definite, his remarks conveyed the impression that the workers in the timber industry would be able to have the facilities at a cheaper rate than one would gather after reading the report of the committee.

The Minister said that the timber companies would more or less have to bear the cost of the transmission or low tension lines, and that the workers in the industry would benefit accordingly. I am pleased that these steps are being taken to launch the scheme, even though some years will elapse before it can be made the scheme we wish it to be. In recent years there has been great development in the timber, dairying and other industries of the South-West and some secondary industries have been established. During the war period the flax industry and dehydration works have been established. From this increased activity in the South-West we can visualize the immense potentialities in that part of the State. As the Minister remarked, the South-West has only been scratched.

Not many years ago I heard the statement made that only about one-tenth of the South-West had been developed. We are looking forward to the time when that proportion will be immensely increased, an increase that must inevitably occur because of the assured rainfall and other natural conditions that favour the South-West. The Leader of the Opposition said that the people in the South-West would not receive the advantages of the electric power as early as could be desired, but I am hopeful that even better results than are contemplated will be achieved as the scheme progresses. For many years a national power scheme has been talked of, and I believe it will not be very long before we can expect the amenities made possible by the scheme to be provided for the people in the South-West and other country districts.

Having spoken last night on the Bill dealing with the general scheme, I shall not delay the House much longer, but with other members representing South-West constituencies and, I believe, with all members of the House, I join in expressing my pleasure that the Government has taken the initiative to instal a national power scheme. When this Bill is placed on the statute-book, I believe it will be regarded as an outstanding piece of legislation. I wholeheartedly support the second reading and hope the Bill will have a speedy passage through both Houses, that the launching of the scheme will be expedited, and that the ultimate benefits to be derived from it will redound to the credit of the Government and the State.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [6.5]: I support the Bill. The measure is in the developmental tradition which distinguished the earlier phases of Responsible Government in this State. I am glad to see the tradition is again coming to the fore, because I believe that in a State in the position of Western Australia we need bold imagination if we are to make proper use of the resources that we have and build up our State to the position which it is entitled to enjoy. I would like to acknowledge the courtesy of Mr. Dumas in attending at the House this morning for the purpose of giving information to those members who took advantage of his presence to learn more of the South-West power scheme and electricity generally. The technical side

of the scheme is something beyond comment by any layman; we have to leave that to the expert advisers of the Government. The economic side we have dealt with and, as public men, I think we are convinced that the scheme deserves support from that point of view.

What I want to revert to is the matter of the efficiency of the scheme when it is completed and the cost of the service which it is going to render. I do not want to be misunderstood. I have a very high regard for the members of the Electricity Advisory Committee, who have done such valuable service investigating this scheme and putting forward its report. The Bill now before the House is to adopt that report and to authorise the execution of the scheme recommended. It is a scheme which, on the present proposals, is going to involve an expenditure of over £2,000,000. I would not be surprised if in the end the expenditure turns out to be much more than £2,000,000; it may be £3,000,000 or £4,000,000. In any case, that is a big sum of money for a State with a small population. I would like to know whether the Government has given consideration to securing some further highly authoritative advice. When the Commonwealth Government, for example, has some project of major importance and cost in hand, it is not infrequent to find that an expert—sometimes of international reputation—is brought out to Australia to advise. That has happened regarding harbours; it has happened regarding defence measures; it has happened regarding aircraft construction; and it has happened in other directions in the economic life of Australia.

This is essentially an occasion when the Government would be prudent to secure an additional authoritative opinion on this proposed scheme, not that I anticipate for one moment that the scheme would not be proceeded with, but to ensure that the proposals are in line with the very latest experience and research in other countries, particularly in America, where the matter of transmission of electrical energy has received intensive research in the last few years and where new methods have been evolved which it is believed will be capable of commercial use almost immediately. I do not take the responsibility for stressing this aspect of the matter merely as my own opinion. It has been put to me by a man

who has a peculiarly wide knowledge of developments of a scientific nature in other parts of the world and whose profession it is to keep in touch with these developments. This is not, as I say, in any way to avoid extending the fullest confidence in the men who have prepared the report; but it is to assist them and the Government, and also the people, by ensuring that there is nothing overlooked in the way of experience in the other States and in other countries which may help us, in this scheme, to secure an installation which is efficient and which will not be out-dated in ten years' time; also to make certain that when we do put in this installation—and there is no very great trouble in putting in some kind of installation—it will supply the service at an economic cost.

It would be no good if we got a power scheme costing £2,000,000 or £3,000,000 if the current is so dear that people cannot afford to utilise it and successfully compete with the other States or other countries. And costs are very tricky things. Any business project in the ordinary world of commerce or industry is examined most meticulously in the first place from the basic point of view of costs, because that is the rock on which it will be shipwrecked for a certainty if any mistake is made in the estimation of the amount for which the service can be rendered and the ability of the public to pay or their willingness to pay for it. Those are fundamental matters, and the expense of any outside consultation would be altogether inconsiderable compared with the assurance that we would get by an additional opinion. It is no more than the Government is doing in another Bill brought in by the Minister for Health in ensuring that the first doctor shall, where necessary, call in a second opinion. With every confidence in the authors of this report—we like to have men of such standing and ability in our State—I still think that in this, as in any other matter of major importance and cost, we should always endeavour to secure a further opinion from some authoritative source which is able to take a detached and external view of the affairs in our State and which is not coloured by our own natural partiality for the particular area in which we live.

The Minister for Works: The Government now has one of its electrical engineers in America studying electrical practice in that country.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

MR. PERKINS (York) [7.30]: Most of the remarks I desire to make on this measure I made last night on the Bill to constitute the Electricity Commission. I thought at the time that it was necessary to make those remarks because that measure is wider than this one, which only sets up what is known as the South-West power scheme. With other speakers, I give this measure every support at this stage. We also realise that if what is known as the South-West power scheme is successful, it will be the means of bringing very great benefit to a large section of the population of the State. At present, many supplies in country towns are costing consumers 1s. per unit.

Mr. North: And they do not work continuously either, do they?

Mr. PERKINS: Most of them are continuous supplies; but the charges are very high compared with those contemplated under this scheme; and, if the scheme can be made to function on a good basis, it can be of very great benefit to those consumers who are paying a much higher rate for the services at present provided by municipalities or concessionaires in particular areas. Also, at present many of those supplies are D.C., whereas this scheme will provide for A.C. on the standard frequency. That will be a great advantage. At the same time it is not doing the people of the State as a whole, or the potential users of current under this scheme, any service to paint unduly rosy pictures of what they may obtain.

The remarks of the Leader of the Opposition that there have been people who have done too much flag-waving in regard to this proposal were only too well justified. Now that the scheme has actually been put forward in a Bill, we find that the benefits that are going to be conferred are very much more restricted than many people had been led to believe. It seemed to be a belief quite widely held than anyone living along the power lines would be able to derive the advantage of a continuous supply of alternating current to his property; but we find that is not so. With other members on this side of the House, I had the advantage of

a discussion with Mr. Dumas this morning, and we found that the committee did not contemplate anything like that at all. Actually, the only service that will be available, as far as the committee can see ahead, will be the service provided at the centres marked as sub-stations on the map accompanying the report. So far as we are able to find out from Mr. Dumas, it will be impossible for the commission to supply individual consumers more than two or three miles away from those sub-stations. It will be necessary to run high voltage lines out to serve consumers at any greater distance from the sub-station and to put in further transformer stations, if consumers are to be served outside of the immediate area around the contemplated sub-stations.

We were also informed by Mr. Dumas that, for it to be feasible to supply the rural community, four homesteads to the mile of low tension transmission line would be required. I do not know the South-West areas of the State as well as do members who represent them; but I would imagine it would be very difficult to find many rural areas in this State which could provide that density of population. We were informed that if there is not that density of population the overhead cost of running a transmission line would be so great that the cost of supplying current to the consumers would not be an economic proposition, and a considerable subsidy in addition to any contemplated by the State at present would be necessary. I understand it would cost from £200 to £300 per mile to run out transmission lines to serve those individual consumers. That is rather a different picture from the one painted by some people when this scheme has been under discussion in recent times.

The contemplated charges for current, as I said earlier, are very much lower than some of the charges made at present. On the other hand, they will be considerably higher than the cost at present incurred by some of the potential consumers for other forms of power. I understand that only a very large consumer—quite a fair-sized factory—requires as much as 500 units per month. The charge for anything less than 500 units per month works out at 3d. per unit, and that is a fairly high charge for current for use in a factory. Unless a factory could get current from the commission at something less than that price, it is very doubtful

whether it would pay the factory to use power from the proposed source compared with putting in some private installation.

Mr. Cross: What are people paying now for power in the country?

Mr. PERKINS: I understand that one gallon of Diesel fuel will generate from 12 to 15 units of electricity. That works out at approximately 1d. per unit for the actual cost of generating the power, exclusive of overhead costs. I believe that even a small petrol engine driving a D.C. generator will produce current at 1¼d. to 1½d. per unit, again exclusive of overhead charges. It seems fairly certain that unless a factory can obtain power at less than 3d. per unit from the electricity commission the management would feel more inclined to instal some other source of power, such as a Diesel engine, a producer gas unit or other type of unit that may be developed in the future. So it is not wise to mislead the people of the State into believing that anything tremendously revolutionary is being done by the institution of this scheme. We have a long way to go before we can say that it will have a big effect in reducing production costs. I quite agree that we should do everything possible to increase the amenities in the country districts, and this is a step in the right direction, but it does not necessarily follow that it will have a material effect in reducing costs of production in those areas.

I support the remarks of the member for West Perth who suggested that the Government should make further inquiries regarding the suitability of the whole scheme. I hope the Government will accept proposals made from this side of the House in the spirit in which they are offered. They are not put forward as carping criticism, but merely with a desire to make certain that whatever we do in setting up this project—which will eventually cost £2,000,000 of loan money—will not be a repetition of the mistakes made when large projects were started in the past. Surely if it costs £10,000 to obtain expert advice from outside the State to check up on this report, it will be money well spent if we avoid setting up an unsatisfactory scheme, or if we avoid making any mistake in detail at any stage of the development of what we know as the South-West power scheme.

The Minister when moving the second reading of this Bill made some remarks that were difficult to follow. One would almost imagine from what he said he was advocating that we should start in Australia what is generally known in other parts of the world as peasant farming. Many people in this country have seen a good deal of merit in farms that some people are pleased to call, entirely self contained. I see very little virtue in that point of view. Competent authorities in other parts of the world say that peasant farming is rarely efficient. On the Continent the cost of production of articles produced under that system is very high. The cost of producing wheat before the war in France and Germany, where peasant farming is common, was as high as 10s. and 12s. a bushel, whereas in Australia, under a different system of farming, we produced wheat for very much less. On many occasions our farmers were paid little more than 2s. a bushel—although I do not say that that was recouping them satisfactorily for their labours!

I think the Minister was advocating a dangerous doctrine indeed, if he was advocating that our farms should become self contained. That, in my opinion, is turning back the clock. The development in all industries has been towards specialisation. Peasant farming, where one man is cobbler, producer of foodstuffs, builder, and everything else on the farm, is surely the opposite of specialisation and can only result in higher costs of production. That does not rule out having a good spread of industry on our farms in the South-West. But there is a big difference between having a good spread of occupations and a system of peasant farming, which I understood the Minister was advocating.

Mr. Seward: He was, definitely.

Mr. PERKINS: I suppose this has not any definite connection with the Bill, but I did not feel inclined to let his remarks pass without comment.

Mr. Watts: You are entitled to comment on the remarks made by the Minister in introducing the Bill.

Mr. PERKINS: I do not agree with what he said in this regard. I want to stress the point that I dealt with last night, namely, no matter how competent is the committee

that prepared the report, and no matter how good the report, the members of the committee have not had experience outside the State for some considerable time, and I think that the Government would only be taking a necessary safeguard if it got some further expert advice from outside the State in order to check up on this report and make doubly sure that no further costly mistakes are made.

MR. DONEY (Williams-Narrogin [7.49]: When speaking to the first of the trio of electricity Bills I expressed myself as being dubious as to the part that should be played in this legislation by the report submitted by the Electricity Advisory Committee. When I came into conflict with you, Mr. Speaker, I had to desist from further reference, but I recall saying that, on the passing of the Bill, the report I have just mentioned would be clothed with just as much authority as if it had been an integral part of the Bill itself. I also said that the House was certainly not in a position to amend the report. It is someone else's report and were we to amend it in any material particular, it could no longer be called someone else's report. We might have this way out of the difficulty; we might accept the report in part, but we could not add to or change it in any way. I recall that the Minister, during his second reading speech on the first of the three Bills, made an attempt to adjust the report to the needs of the commission, but in my opinion that attempt was far from satisfactory. According to the Bill, and assuming that the relevant clauses were passed, the House would then have approved of the report and would have accepted the recommendations in their entirety.

The Bill then follows up that part with a proviso that, should it become necessary in any way to vary, to add to, or to delete from the scheme, as there set out, that might be done, but of course with the approval of the Governor. As the House knows, the approval of the Governor, in a case like that, means nothing more than an expressed desire on the part of the commission that that should be done. This very valuable report contains 93 paragraphs. If we legislate to adopt those paragraphs and bind ourselves at the same time to execute the South-West power scheme as required by them, sur-

we will thus intimate that that report is essential to the adequacy of the Bill, in which case those paragraphs should surely be an integral part of it. As I said, to adopt them and then straight away to indicate, by means of the proviso, that they may be varied in any way as circumstances may demand, is to pay a great deal less than due regard to decisions made by this House. Another point that should deter us from accepting the report as it stands is that it contains a recommendation that the future controlling authority—the proposed electricity advisory committee, plus a Treasury representative—should be proceeded with and adopted as part of the Bill. That is a recommendation that has already been turned down, because a committee of entirely different construction has been or is likely to be accepted by this House. It would, therefore, be quite improper for this House to adopt the report in its entirety.

I brought to the notice of the Minister the question of voltages and secured from him a suggestion that probably a change would be made, and that a voltage different from that specifically mentioned in the report would ultimately be agreed to. In view of that, and for that additional reason, it is impossible for us to accept that report as it stands. The terms of reference handed by the Government to the advisory committee were satisfactory enough, except for one reason—not a particularly important one—that the Great Southern water scheme need not have been mentioned in terms that showed it to be just a possibility, or at the best a probability, instead of being a fixed intention—as I believe it to be—on the part of the Government.

Mr. Seward: Did it even reach the stage of being a probability?

Mr. DONEY: I am not going to agree with my colleague there. It need not have been mentioned in terms showing it to be just a possibility instead of a fixed intention on the part of the Government, that being, as I see it, its proper status. Fortunately, from the point of view I adopt and unfortunately for my colleague on my right—

Mr. Watts: On the extreme right.

Mr. DONEY: Yes. Unfortunately for him, a more encouraging tone is adopted by the members of the committee. They regard the success of the South-West power scheme as all the more likely to be proved financially

sound if it has the benefit of servicing the electric pumping needs of the Great Southern project. I noted with pleasure the Minister's remarks to the effect that the evidence given to the advisory committee by the Great Southern districts was ably prepared and presented. It is quite possible that the merits of those submissions so impressed the committee that that had something to do with the decision to extend the scheme, in respect of its first stage, sufficiently far east to reach the town that I represent.

The Premier: Williams, or Narrogin?

Mr. DONEY: Generally we do not separate them. Some years ago, some power linked them together and regarded them as equal, and I have never complained of that arrangement. The only further matter with which I wish to deal is that of some compliments to the gentlemen who formed the Electricity Advisory Committee. I cordially associate myself with the thanks expressed by the Minister as to Mr. Dumas and such others as may have worked with him and the three other good men in the prolonged and arduous investigatory work, and in the preparation of the report, on which, I might say, they are to be commended for its practicality, realism and conciseness. That report must have been of great value to the Minister, and certainly to the draftsman, in the construction of the three Bills we now have before us.

MR. ABBOTT (North Perth) [7.59]: Had I not regarded this Bill as one of major importance, I would not have risen to speak but, owing to its great importance, I feel that some of the statements made by various members will bear repetition. The measure seeks to bring into operation a very ambitious scheme that in its first stage is estimated to cost something like £1,000,000. Without ambition we would get nowhere. Therefore, if every possible precaution has been taken to ensure the success of the scheme, there is only one thing to do and that is to go right ahead and enable those in control of the undertaking to have the opportunity to prove its success or otherwise. I am very glad the scheme has been reported upon as quite feasible by persons whom I hold in the highest esteem and who, I have no doubt, have given the matter most careful consideration.

On the other hand, having in view the great amount of money involved, I think the suggestion advanced by several members that the Government should seek outside advice in connection with the scheme as outlined, is very wise. The difficulty I see is to induce some competent authority to undertake the task, for the reason that it would be very difficult to remunerate a man on a basis that could be regarded as essential. It is not only a matter of what the Government would be willing to pay as reasonable remuneration, for the difficulty I foresee is in the expert being able to retain the remuneration when he received it. I do not think we will induce a highly qualified man to come here from America, as suggested by the Minister, if when he arrives here whatever the remuneration paid to him may be it has to be immediately returned to the Commonwealth Government.

The Minister for Works: I did not make that suggestion.

Mr. ABBOTT: Did not the Minister suggest that we should go to America for a man?

The Minister for Works: I did not.

Mr. ABBOTT: I thought there was an interjection to that effect; I stand corrected. The difficulty I see is in inducing a highly qualified expert, who possesses a world-wide reputation regarding the advice he can tender in connection with such matters, to undertake the task. Unless the scheme will actually decrease the cost of electricity to the majority of the users of it, then the project will be a failure. One difficulty the commission will be faced with will be the pressure brought to bear upon it to spread its activities as widely as possible. It would not be in the interests of the State if the secondary industries were to be deprived of cheap power where it is most likely to be needed—that is, in the centres with the greatest population—in order to widen unduly the scope of the scheme. We are always faced with the proposition that if we cannot manufacture cheaply, that end will be accomplished in the Eastern States and we certainly cannot give our industries any protection in that respect. That is one thought that comes to my mind. No doubt that phase has been considered by the Minister and in all probability will be considered by the commission when it develops the proposed scheme. However, I assure the House that the scheme has my blessing and I propose to support the second

reading of the Bill in the hope that it will really assist in the development of secondary industries in Western Australia and provide of assistance in the expansion of the South West.

MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco [8.8]: I shall delay the House for a few minutes only. The introduction of the Bill will gladden the hearts of many women throughout the country districts. I am one who lives in the city and is able to enjoy all the amenities that are available, but I assure members that I would willingly use a kerosene lamp in my home for the rest of my life if I knew that the people, particularly the women, in the country were able to enjoy the advantages of electricity. My reason for that is that the countryfolk have so many hardships to put up with that they shall be very pleased indeed if they are able to enjoy the prospect of an electricity supply as soon as possible. I believe that the scheme will add to the population of the State. Apparently there is some nervousness about ways and means as to how the objective sought is to be achieved, but I must leave that phase to experts. Members of Parliament do not know much about electricity, and I feel like the man who said to his wife, "I wish I knew more about electricity". His wife replied, "Why you know all about it. You just touch the button and there it is." I realise that we know so little about the subject that we must leave it to the experts. The statement has been made that the Bill has come before Parliament many years after it was due for attention. I believe that is so. The member for Bunbury quoted something from "Hansard" and I wish to read another extract from a speech by one I regard as the prophet of Parliament—I leave members to judge for themselves to whom I refer. The course of his speech on the 5th August 1924, the hon. member said—

The Collie power scheme is bound to come forward very shortly. If money borrowed under the Trade Facilities Act could be used in that direction, we would the sooner be able to come into line with developments in electricity elsewhere in the world, and instead of utilising the scheme only for a distance of 45 miles to Bunbury, we could have the bigger scheme extending the odd 95 miles to Perth. This would undoubtedly be a boon to the manufacturing industries in the metropolitan area, enable us to electrify the railway system between Bunbury and Perth, and greatly assist in opening up settlements in between.

The question of compensation has been mentioned and I do hope the Government will be as generous in that regard as the Victorian Government was when it embarked on its electricity scheme. I may say that I doubled my capital on my shares. One member mentioned the price of electricity as 1s. per unit. I have been in country towns recently, and I feel that unless we can provide current cheaply, we shall hamper the scheme and the usefulness of it. I am very pleased that the Government is attempting to do something along these lines. Even if a little money is dropped in the process, what will a few hundred thousand pounds matter so long as we develop the country? I wholeheartedly support the second reading of the Bill.

MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall) [8.11]: Like the member for Subiaco, I was all enthusiasm for the Bill and for the other measures introduced by the Minister until this morning. I am in favour of the Bill, just as I favoured the one that was before us last night, although I had a lot of questions to ask about it. It might have been due to an earnest desire on my part, as with the honourable and charming member for Subiaco, on behalf of the people in the country districts, that I looked at the Bill through very rosy glasses, and though I grasped only a straw I thought I had hold of something tangible. It may be that I have been misled, I do not say by the Minister, but by the amount of propaganda in the newspapers over a considerable period in connection with the provision of electricity supplies in the country. Be that as it may, I thought that this measure for the installation of the South-West power scheme was the commencement of the end of the worries of country people so far as the amenities made possible by electric power and light are concerned, but after a discussion with the chairman of the Electricity Advisory Committee, Mr. Dumas, this morning, which I very much appreciated, my hopes have been dashed. I stretched out my hand and found that I grasped nothing.

I came away from Mr. Dumas with the solid impression that all that this Bill actually provides for is the taking over of existing services in most of the areas intended to be served and a very small extra service for farm householders. In the south-western areas, it may permit of the extension of power and light to the individual farmers,

but I was looking further afield to the Great Southern areas, which are situated similarly to the areas I represent, where the distances between farms are considerable. If this scheme were going to serve individual farmers, although that time might be 20 or more years ahead, I could see the possibility of a similar scheme serving my district. But in that belief I have been discouraged. This scheme will benefit only those—and very few more—who are enjoying existing electrical services. It will not extend beyond the towns. It will merely co-ordinate existing electrical services and bring them under one management, but will provide for very little in the way of extension. It might provide for a cheapening of the services to those places.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Are not you contradicting yourself by saying that it will extend and then will not extend the service?

Mr. LESLIE: It may be the means of extending the service in the South-West because I have no personal knowledge of the density of settlement in the South-West, but Mr. Dumas told me this morning that farms would need to be situated four to the mile in order to make it a reasonable proposition for the individual farmer to have his home connected with the scheme. I do not know whether there are four farms to the mile in the South-West, but in my area the farms would be nearer to five miles apart.

Mr. Withers: That applies to the water supply scheme.

Mr. LESLIE: But the farmer is not called upon to lay the mains for a water supply whereas I understand he will be required to pay for the electric lines under this measure. He is not called upon to convert a 32-inch water main passing his farm into a 1½-inch pipe immediately, whereas a similar reduction will be necessary under this scheme. That is one of the difficulties. The commission will carry the power past a farm on high tension lines equal in their way to a 36-inch water main, and then the farmer will have to take the current in the equivalent of a 1½-inch pipe under a different pressure entirely.

Mr. Cross: The requisite poles could soon be put up.

Mr. LESLIE: It is not only a question of poles; it is a matter of installing transformers.

Mr. Doney: And paying £200 a mile.

Mr. LESLIE: The farmer would have to pay £200 a mile and guarantee the payment of £20 a year. Consequently, with the member for Subiaco, I can see all these benefits disappearing into thin air. I repeat that I have not a personal knowledge of conditions in the South-West, but even though the scheme may confer some benefit there, I am considering the question of the cost.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Wyalkatchem is not in the South-West.

Mr. LESLIE: We must consider the cost of the scheme. According to the speech of the Minister and the report of the committee, stage No. 1 will include 20 centres in the South-West. The total cost of providing for those centres and for areas in the immediate vicinity is £1,110,000. I have perused the names of the 20 centres and most of them—there is just an odd exception—already have their own power plants.

Mr. Cross: And in most of them people are paying 1s. per unit.

Mr. LESLIE: That may be so. Now it is proposed that this scheme shall displace the power plants at present in use and the cost will be £55,500 to each of those centres. Stage No. 2 provides for 15 centres and includes the Great Southern. Not all those centres have their own lighting and power plants, but most of them have. The cost of serving that area will be £556,000 or £37,066 for each centre. Taking the 35 centres and the total cost as £1,110,000, it means that the provision of electric current to each of those centres, plus a very small extension to farmers in their immediate vicinity, will cost £46,283 for each centre. Let us take one place that has been mentioned by the Minister and in the report—Woodanilling—where there are perhaps 20 consumers. Would anyone suggest that that place should instal a power plant at a cost of £46,000 to serve the town and the farmers immediately bordering the town? Yet that is what will happen under this Bill. If this £46,000, or £1,100,000 or £2,000,000, whatever the amount may be, will do what I was anticipating it would do, I would not quibble even if the expense were double.

A very rosy picture has been painted of the way in which the scheme was placed before us; but I prophesy—and I do not want to be set up as a House prophet—that when the people in those areas find out the actual

facts they will be very seriously disappointed. I repeat what I said last night that I feel we must hasten slowly in this matter. Possibly other and better ways and means may be found to accomplish the end we are seeking. The idea should not be that we ought to enter upon a grandiose electricity supply scheme. My idea is that every householder in the country districts, whether he be a wheat farmer, a dairyman or an orchardist, should be provided with electricity and power at a cheap rate. That is the way in which we should look upon this matter. We should tackle it from that angle and call in additional experts, not to matter where they may come from, to ascertain whether or not alternative schemes can be suggested. I ask the Minister to consider what was done in the war period.

Some of the war inventions which proved to be of such immense value to us during the conflict were the result of mere vague suggestions made by laymen. These suggestions were acted upon by persons with vision who developed them along successful lines. Therefore, it is possible that further consideration of these measures will result in something of a similar nature. It may be that we can alter the existing plans in some way that the cost will not be as great as it will be if the present scheme is proceeded with. We might be able to make provision for a scheme with a far wider scope than this proposed scheme. I shall support the second reading of the Bill, because it is at least a start towards securing something that we desire; but I urge the Government to arrange for further investigations to be made and not merely to adopt the recommendation and report of the Electricity Advisory Committee. The Minister mentioned that reports which were not in favour of the scheme were made by other investigators; and it is possible that if their recommendations were again examined they might be a nucleus for further research through which we could attain the very worthy objective that I believe is in the mind of every member of this House in supporting the present scheme, which is not going to give us what we actually hoped for.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [8.24]: In view of the importance of this Bill, I am afraid my words will be unworthy of it, and they will be few. There are two paragraphs in the report of the Electricity Ad-

visory Committee which I would like to quote, as they enable me to support the Bill without any further conditions or arguments. Paragraph 56 of the report reads—

The Committee considers that the establishment of a power scheme should precede, not follow, the accelerated rate of development of the South-West which will follow the termination of the war.

Paragraph 41 reads—

..... As industry and population grow, with a consequent greater consumption of electricity, it is reasonable to assume that rates per unit can be lowered.

So that all the arguments adduced tonight about the cost fail if the plan is only to put this scheme into operation. It must be part of a general policy. Another scheme is the Great Southern water supply scheme; still another is to increase the population. New factories will follow those moves. I would be the first to agree with those who question the advisability of the scheme tonight if we were merely doing the one thing, that is, installing a plant for the supply of electricity to replace the present isolated units, and stop there. But if we talk in modern language and speak of plans such as even now Mr. Churchill is suggesting—four-year and other plans—we can see that this is a question of building up a completely new South-West district.

I can see everything being worked out in sections, and this scheme is merely one section. There may be failures. Throughout the years I have been in public life I have learned how easy it is for economists, financiers and others who wish to guide us to turn complete somersaults. I had instilled into me by very eminent financiers years ago that schemes of this kind were absolutely impracticable; but this time it appears that the people themselves are determined, through their Government, to have something to work upon other than the sharp, close reasoning of the financier who, of course, in his own limited sphere is absolutely correct. I believe that if this scheme is adopted merely as a separate unit it will be a disastrous and dangerous experiment. Some years ago I was reading a work by a famous writer and dramatist, Bernard Shaw. He was asked his description of a politician and replied: "A politician can be described in two words 'voluble windbag.'" Thus, nothing further need be said.

MR. CROSS (Canning) [8.28]: I am somewhat surprised at the way in which some members—whose constituents will receive most of the benefits which will be conferred by this Bill—are decrying the measure. Too many people in the past in this State have been afraid to make progress. If we took any notice of the member for Mt. Marshall, I daresay nothing would be done. We are at a disadvantage on this side of the Chamber. We were given reports, but these have since all disappeared. So we are now at a disadvantage in not being able carefully to study those reports. I do not consider it is a matter for hilarity. As a matter of fact, the report of the Royal Commission on vermin has disappeared, too.

Mr. Doney: In each instance we had a similar experience on this side of the House.

MR. CROSS: It is entirely wrong that important reports such as those should disappear from members' desks. It costs money to provide them and they are given to members to assist them in arriving at correct decisions. When a member wants them, however, he finds they have disappeared. I think tremendous advantages will result in all the areas to be served by this proposed scheme. It is not suggested that the population of the South-West district will remain the same as it is; in my opinion, it will greatly increase. I notice the member for Mt. Marshall said that apparently the commission will seek to take over the Collie power house. That power house at the present time is on its maximum production, and it is not producing sufficient power to supply the Collie municipality and the road board district. All the little tinpot plants in most of our country towns are producing current for which the consumers are being charged 1s. per unit for lighting purposes, and as much as 8d. and 9d. per unit for power purposes. This scheme will enable all those towns, from the kick-off, to be supplied with current at a much cheaper price. It is anticipated that the ordinary consumer who will use 600 units a month will obtain current for 2d. per unit.

Mr. Mann: This man has not read his report!

The Minister for Lands: Someone pinched his report.

Mr. CROSS: I have another one. This will make a difference to the country towns, where cheap current is wanted. How can women have the facilities they ought to have when they have to pay 1s. a unit for current? There are very few country plants that can supply any place outside of the towns. I notice the member for Mt. Marshall said that there might be 20 consumers in Woodanilling. He does not know much about it. There are 154 dwellings there.

Mr. Leslie: You are showing more ignorance than I did.

Mr. CROSS: There are a few shops, too, and there are 671 people on the Katanning roll for Woodanilling.

Mr. Doney: You have made a mistake.

Mr. CROSS: So I think there would be a few more than 20 consumers. I think also that when the transmission line went past their places on the main road, quite a number of farmers would be prepared to put up poles, which is an expensive job.

Mr. Leslie: At £200?

Mr. CROSS: It would not cost that much to put up 40 poles to the mile; and that number of poles might not be needed.

Mr. Leslie: Get the experts' advice!

Mr. CROSS: Never mind the experts' advice. I have been at places where there are usually 20 poles to the mile. How many days would it take a farmer, with plenty of timber on his property, to cut 40 to the mile and put them in? A transformer would not be needed at every place where current was taken off the main.

Mr. Leslie: Why did you not get on this committee? You know more than it does.

Mr. CROSS: No, I do not; but I have a certain amount of commonsense and some knowledge about the matter.

Mr. Mann: We have our doubts.

Mr. CROSS: If the member for Mt. Marshall had taken the same trouble to find out about the matter as I did, he would not have given utterance to the statement regarding the cost of a transformer for taking off power from the high tension line. Transformers are only required when sending current a distance. As an instance of the leakage of current, the power leaves the East Perth power house with a voltage of 250 and when it gets to East Victoria Park it is 243. If the current is to be taken any distance there is need for a transformer to

boost it up again; and around the metropolitan area there are sub-station transformers for that purpose.

If current were sent from Perth to Collie the leakage would be tremendous. There would be a need for four large sub-stations on the route. But there would not be a need for a transformer for every country farm that was only half a mile or a mile away from a station, and it would not cost nearly as much as was indicated by the hon. member if a farmer were willing to help. I think farmers would help, because the benefits derived from the current would entirely outweigh the work required to be done in the first instance in order to instal plant and equipment. The most expensive part of the lot, either in putting up transmission lines or running current from the high tension lines to farms, is the provision of poles and the cost of getting them up.

Mr. Leslie: The most expensive part in this House is to listen to your dreaming.

Mr. CROSS: If the hon. member went to the power house and into the control room and was shown over the place he would know a good deal more when he came out than when he went in.

The Premier: He would get a shock!

Mr. CROSS: As a result of the information he would obtain, I think he would be a little more willing to support the Bill. I am surprised at the attitude of the Democratic Party. This Bill is mainly a gift to them.

The Minister for Lands: Now the cat is out of the bag!

Mr. CROSS: There is not the slightest doubt of it. I believe this Bill represents the most progressive move made in this State for the country districts in the last 25 years, and I believe there will be greater benefits in a few years' time. When the scheme is in operation, we shall find that a circle of power houses will be built and most of the farms will be connected with the scheme. As a result, the people will have many of the amenities available in the city at present. I believe that people in the country should have the benefit of electrical power and everything we can give them to make the country a more desirable place in which to live. After all, from the land we get most of the wealth of the nation.

Mr. Leslie: You have been listening to us talking.

The Premier: We cannot help doing that!

Mr. CROSS: If one listened to the wailings of the members opposite over the last few years, one would be led to believe that there were nothing but disabilities and desertions of farms. One would think there was nobody living in the country! Yet it was surprising during the war period to go to country towns and observe that the people always had plenty of petrol to take them into a picture show at night, and always enough money to pay for admission.

Mr. Leslie: You can go every night to the pictures; they can go only once a fortnight.

Mr. CROSS: They can go oftener than that.

Mr. Mann: It is just like your cheek!

Mr. CROSS: I agree that people in the country should have the benefit of electric current, and I am pleased the Government has seen fit to launch a bold scheme of electrification of the South-West. I hope it will be a success; I believe it will be. I propose to support the Bill, and I hope the Country and Democratic League will stop crying out about the matter and decrying the scheme. The members of that party dare not vote against the Bill; because if they did, the people would hoist them out at the next election and put progressive men in their places.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam—in reply) [8.38]: I am very sorry that some of the speeches delivered by members of the Country and Democratic League were in strong condemnation of the Bill and therefore in strong condemnation of the proposed power scheme for the South-West and the Great Southern.

Mr. Leslie: Not quite; they expressed disappointment.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Government aims to establish the proposed scheme on a basis that will enable an alternative fuel to Collie coal to be used if at any time the necessity to do so arises. I think the member for Sussex need not have any fear about sufficient electricians and others not being available in different districts to carry out repairs which may become necessary at any particular period. It will also be found, if the scheme is put into operation, that people in homes and on farms will become electrically-minded to some extent and capable of doing what

might be described as minor repairs, such as were mentioned by the member for Sussex. The question as to how long it will take before the complete scheme will be finally installed was raised. It was suggested that it would be as long as ten years, and that therefore some areas would have to wait that long before being served.

If the report of the committee is read carefully it will be seen that the final phase of the proposed scheme is the inter-connection of the scheme through two different channels with the metropolitan power scheme, and that is the phase that will take probably ten years to achieve. It can safely be said that all the areas proposed to be served in the South-West and the Great Southern will be dealt with within a period of six years. The member for Bunbury suggested that the scheme might be financially assisted by some approach to the Commonwealth. The Government does not propose to make any approach to the Commonwealth on that point before the scheme is established and operating, but it might do so after the scheme has been tested practically in the financial and technical senses.

Members might have read in the newspaper today the report of a statement made at Geraldton by Dr. Wood, deputy chairman of the Grants Commission. He said, in effect, that the Grants Commission would be prepared favourably to consider assisting the States in undertakings of this kind, provided that the Budget of any State was detrimentally affected because of such a scheme. That appears to me to be an invitation to any State of Australia that commences a major scheme of this sort, and subsequently finds the undertaking weighing heavily on its finances, to approach the Grants Commission and present a case for financial assistance. Much has been said by members of the Country and Democratic League, and also by the member for North Perth, about the necessity to delay action in connection with this scheme; to hold up any further progress for the purpose of having a complete and thoroughly expert examination made in addition to those that have already taken place. It has been suggested that we might bring some super-expert from America or other country, and that we should not proceed to put this scheme into operation until we are sure of every detail associated with it. Had that course been followed in the past years of history, nothing would

have been attempted anywhere in the world.

Mr. Perkins: How did the Victorians put their scheme in?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: They took a risk.

Mr. Perkins: They did not; they got a European expert.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Victorian Government had an investigation made by experts and accepted their report and recommendations, and then put the scheme into operation. We propose to do the same thing here. There is, of course, always the tendency to depreciate the value of our own men.

Mr. Doney: I do not think anyone tried to do that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not sure whether they tried to do it, but in effect they did it.

Mr. Abbott: Mistakes have been made, and in Western Australia, too.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think at least one mistake was made at the last State general elections, but that does not interfere with the generally wise judgment of the electors at that time.

Mr. Abbott: From your point of view a mistake has probably been made in Greenough.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will address the Chair.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We are not a bit unhappy about that. Some of the apostles of gloom from among the Country and Democratic League suggest that we should make doubly sure before going ahead with this scheme. I doubt whether it is possible, in a scheme of this type, to make singly sure in regard to every aspect. It might, however, be some consolation to those who have advocated the necessity to make doubly sure to know that the Government is, to a large extent, going to make trebly sure—although I much doubt if this information will console or satisfy the member for Mt. Marshall or the member for York. The Electricity Advisory Committee closely investigated this proposal, as its report proves.

The general manager of the East Perth power station was recently in England for many months. While there, he did a considerable amount of investigation into the most up-to-date methods of electrical generation and distribution. At the present time, the Government has in America one

of its electrical engineers investigating all the modern practices that have been developed in that country in matters of this kind, and especially the most up-to-date practices in the generation and distribution of electric power in the rural areas of America.

Mr. Leslie: Why have we to wring out this information?

Mr. Watts: Why does the Minister complain at our suggestion that he should do something that he has already done, but about which we do not know?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not complaining at all.

Mr. Watts: It was a long complaint, and I listened very quietly.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not complaining. I am merely pointing out that those members of the Country and Democratic League, who spoke as they did, had little confidence in the officers of the Government concerned in the investigation of this proposal and the preparation of the report, and no confidence at all in the capacity of the Government to take every reasonable precaution to ensure that, before practical steps were taken to put the scheme into operation, every avenue would be explored for the purpose of making sure that the scheme was the most economical, the most efficient, and the best possible in all the circumstances. There has been a strong tendency on the part of a few members to condemn the Bill and the proposed scheme because it will not—at least in the early stages—provide electric power for farmers who might be ten, twenty, or even fifty miles from any centre. The proposed scheme will certainly not do that in the early stages, not do I think anyone would expect it to do so. What it will do is to establish in the South-West and the Great Southern area the foundations on which it will be possible in the future to build a scheme that will make electric power available to a great many more farmers than it will be possible to serve in the early stages of the scheme's operation.

Mr. Leslie: That is why we are supporting it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Without this foundation the people of whom I am speaking could never hope to receive the benefits of electric power unless they received the power under an entirely separate proposal that the Government is shortly to have investigated. That proposal has to do

with the practicability of obtaining from anywhere in the world, or of developing within this State, individual units to be made available, on reasonable terms, to farmers so far removed from towns or from the metropolitan area as to make it impossible for them, for many years to come, to be served by any large scheme. We are hopeful that our officer, who is now in America, will on his return to Western Australia be able to make available to the Government valuable advice regarding that proposal. It might and probably would be much cheaper in the long run for the Government, and for the individual farmers concerned, to obtain electric power from small individual units on the farmer's own properties than to take out many miles of low tension lines from a scheme such as the South-West Great Southern power scheme.

Mr. Doney : At present that seems to be the best way out of the difficulty.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : I think it is, and the Government will give close attention to the possibility of developing a proposal of that kind along practical lines.

Mr. Doney : We are glad to have heard about that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : I hope members will not be inclined to criticise this Bill, and especially the scheme proposed under it, because it cannot, at all events for years to come, take its benefits to farmers who are a considerable distance removed from towns or localities where the power could be made available on reasonable conditions, financially and otherwise. At the same time I think there is a great deal in the suggestion of the member for Canning. I am convinced that when the main power lines are constructed from Collie to Bunbury, for instance, and even down on the Great Southern, where because of different soil and climatic conditions, farms are larger in size and consequently further removed one from the other, individual farmers will be keen to be served from this scheme.

Mr. Watts : That is what I think.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : I think many of them will be prepared to do a great deal in order to have the scheme distribute electric power to their properties. I feel sure many of them will do a great deal themselves to bring about the necessary link-up between their properties and the main power line. I will be disappointed if that is not so. I therefore think we ought to look at this scheme from a reasonable point of view and

from the point of view of the benefit it will confer on the areas directly concerned, the possible benefits it will give to those further removed, and of course the great benefit it will bring to the State as a whole.

My greatest hope in relation to this scheme is that it will lead to a great expansion of industrial undertakings in the South-West and, I hope, in the Great Southern. If that can be done the financial side of the scheme will be built up and the commission will be able to establish reserves for the purpose of making it easier, in the financial sense, to take the benefits of the scheme to farmers who, in the ordinary course of events, might not be able to participate. I think we have all been inclined to overlook the knowledge, ability and care that the members of the proposed commission, when appointed, will bring to this work. Some speakers seem to have taken it for granted that when the Bill is passed the commission will be appointed and will go ahead, willy nilly, and establish the scheme and build up the necessary distribution system and put the scheme into operation. I am sure the members of this commission will be men who will give a great deal of attention to the duty that will be placed upon them. They will give a great deal of attention to the report of the Electricity Advisory Committee.

Mr. Doney : They will be required to do so.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : They will not swallow it holus bolus, because it has been prepared by that committee and endorsed by Parliament. There will be a heavy duty on the members of the commission to be extremely careful of every step they take in establishing the scheme and developing it. We have provided in the Bill that, wherever and whenever it is considered necessary to vary the scheme proposed by the Electricity Advisory Committee, the scheme will be so varied. It is impossible to expect any committee—I do not care what its composition may be—to put up in a report of this kind a proposed scheme which could be carried out one hundred per cent. in every detail in accordance with the report.

Everybody must know that any scheme, reported on in this way by any committee, no matter how expert it might be, will be found to require changes, perhaps even radical changes, when the practical steps are taken to establish it. Therefore I am sure we can look forward with every confidence to the safe and reasonably speedy establishment

of the scheme, to its fairly rapid distribution of power through the areas to be served and that we can contemplate more than hopefully the great progress which the establishment and operation of the scheme will bring to Western Australia.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION.

In Committee.

Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair ; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 7—agreed to.

Clause 8—Establishment of commission :

Mr. McDONALD : The clause provides that of the seven commissioners, two shall be persons nominated by the Minister as representatives of the consumers, one for the metropolitan area and one for the remaining part of the State. I think it would be wise to vest the responsibility for the nomination of the consumers' representatives upon the authoritative bodies in the districts concerned. Therefore I propose for the consideration of the Committee that the representative of the metropolitan consumers shall be nominated by the Perth City Council, and that the representative of the consumers in the remaining parts of the State shall be nominated by the executive committee of the Road Board Association of Western Australia. Both those local governing bodies are concerned with the interests of their residents and ratepayers in connection with electrical distribution, and both are certainly representative. In the metropolitan area the Perth City Council is the largest local governing body and the Road Board Association comprises some 127 road boards, almost all of which are operating in the country districts. It will be necessary first to amend the clause by deleting the reference to nomination by the Minister and then to add at the end of paragraph (a) the words "such nominations to be made in the case of the metropolitan area by the Council of the Municipality of Perth and in the case of the remaining part of the State by the executive committee of the Road Board Association of Western Australia." Accordingly, I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of paragraph (a) of Sub-clause (3) the words "by the Minister" be struck out.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : I oppose the amendment, which can be contested on several grounds. One is that the Perth City Council is no more entitled to nominate the representative for the metropolitan area than are other local governing authorities within that area. That, however, is not my main ground of opposition to the amendment. The local governing authorities represent only a portion of the people in the districts in which they operate, whereas the Government of the State represents the whole of the people and consequently is much more entitled to make the necessary appointments. I would rather trust the judgment of the Government than that of the local governing authority.

Mr. McDonald : Meaning your own Government.

Hon. N. Keenan : That is not very democratic.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : I think it is democratic, because it is a matter of trusting the people of the State generally as against an authority representing only a comparatively small number of people. This is to be entirely a Government scheme and it is wise that the Government should make the appointments. I am quite sure that appointments made by the Government on behalf of the consumers would be as satisfactory and I should hope more so than any that might be made by the authority proposed in the amendment.

Mr. SHEARN : I share to some extent the Minister's view. The member for West Perth, to carry the amendment to its logical conclusion, should have suggested associations representative of all local governing bodies. His proposal might easily prove unfair to any or all other local authorities whose activities are equally as important as are those of the Perth City Council.

Mr. WATTS : I oppose the amendment, not that I hold the same view on the local authorities as does the Minister, but because the Perth City Council and the greater number of the local road boards are not consumers but are suppliers of electricity and are likely to remain such for a considerable time. It would be as reasonable to leave the matter in the hands of the Minister as to have a determination by

people who are suppliers and are interested in that way only.

Mr. McDONALD: I am not wedded to the particular nominators. I am concerned with the principle that we should give some responsibility in such matters to responsible bodies. Instead of the municipality of Perth, the amendment might designate the council of the Local Government Association as representing local governing bodies in the metropolitan area. I am looking, not to tomorrow, but to the time years hence when local governing bodies will not be suppliers, as some may be today, however few, and they are peculiarly fitted to speak for the people in their districts. Under the Fire Brigades Act, we have board members elected by the council of the City of Perth and by municipalities and road boards in various specified areas.

The Minister for Works: They are all contributors to the upkeep of the fire brigade system.

Mr. McDONALD: They may be, but the people in the districts of the local governing authorities are to be the purchasers and the consumers of the current supplied. We might well trust the people sometimes and the local governing bodies in particular.

Mr. ABBOTT: I support the amendment. If we are going to have independent representatives of the consumers, why not have them appointed by an outside body? I cannot see the use of having consumers' representatives if they are to be appointed by the Government. It would be a good idea to have appointments made by some independent authority.

The Minister for Lands: Why not the R.S.L. or the A.L.P.?

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	.....	.....	.....	8
Noes	.....	.....	.....	26
Majority against	.....	.....	.....	18

AYES.

Mr. Abbott
Mr. Keenan
Mr. McDonald
Mr. McLarty

Mr. North
Mr. Shearn
Mr. Willmott
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver
(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Cross
Mr. Doney
Mr. Fox
Mr. Hawke
Mr. W. Hegney
Mr. Hoar
Mr. Holman
Mr. Leahy
Mr. Leslie
Mr. Mann
Mr. Marshall
Mr. Needham
Mr. Owen

Mr. Pantou
Mr. Perkins
Mr. Seward
Mr. Smith
Mr. Styants
Mr. Telfer
Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Triat
Mr. Watts
Mr. Willcock
Mr. Wise
Mr. Withers
Mr. Graham

(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. DONEY: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of paragraph (b) of Subclause (3), after the word "person" the words "who is an employee of the Commission" be inserted.

I think the Government will probably be just as anxious to support this amendment as members on this side are to see it made. The intention is plain. The number of employees of the commission may easily at the end of five years be 2,000 or 3,000, and each additional year the number will doubtless increase. It is desirable that the employees should be as contented as possible. A representative from among their number could report periodically to them the state of the commission's general account and other details and this would be conducive to their contentment.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I support the amendment.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 9—agreed to.

Clause 10—Tenure of office:

Hon. N. KEENAN: Although I have not placed the amendment I intend to move on the notice paper, I indicated in the few remarks which I made on the second reading that I possessed a strong desire to see a longer term for the tenure of office by the commissioners. I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of Subclause (2) the word "five" be struck out with a view to inserting another word.

It is my intention to move to insert the word "seven." I suggested nine years; but seven years in my opinion would be better than five. I point out that, on the wording of this subclause, a commissioner could be appointed for a week, or even for a single day, because the wording is "be appointed for any term not exceeding five years."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I oppose the amendment. Subclause (3) provides that any commissioner may be re-appointed for a further term not exceeding five years. It seems to me, therefore, that there is ample scope to continue in office, as a commissioner, for a much longer period than five years any person who during his previous term of office had proved to be satisfactory and had carried out his duties efficiently and well.

Mr. WATTS: I think that a longer period than five years is desirable, particularly in regard to that section of the commission

that will comprise technical men. Short appointments do not lend themselves to continuity of policy, to a feeling of security in the occupation. The shorter the term, and the more liable one is to be removed from office, the less likely one is to take action of a progressive or novel character. Because I believe the member for Nedlands is wise in asking for an extension of time—I would be only too pleased for some members to be appointed until they reach the retiring age of 65—I propose to support the amendment.

Mr. McDONALD: If my recollection is correct, in Victoria the members of the commission are appointed for seven years. In addition, they cannot be removed unless the intention to remove them is reported to Parliament; and the dismissal can be negatived by either House of Parliament. I think the reason is obvious: That it is not possible to get a first-class man if he is to be appointed for five years or less and can be dismissed should he happen to have some disagreement with the Government in power.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I remind the Minister that, in the course of his reply to the debate on the second reading, he very properly dwelt on the fact that the success of this scheme will depend on the men who are appointed to the commission. Those men are to be given the highest authority and trusted to give effect to the scheme. They must obviously be men with some security of tenure or they will not be capable of resisting pressure brought to bear on them to extend the scheme in one direction or other or to do something which would serve for the moment the popular clamour. Under another section later on, the Governor-in-Council has very wide powers to dispense with the services of a member of the commission. If, for instance, in the opinion of the Governor-in-Council, any commissioner is not capable of discharging the duties of his office—not if he is actually incapable, but only if he is not capable in the opinion of the Governor-in-Council—he can be dismissed; and, as was pointed out by the member for West Perth, there is no safeguard, as in Victoria, that that dismissal may be set aside by Parliament and, if not ratified by both Houses, would cease to be effective. Here such dismissal would take effect at once. That is an additional reason for an extended term. I hope the Minister will reconsider his decision.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It would be unwise to appoint any of the first commissioners for a period exceeding five years but I am prepared to go some distance to meet the argument in regard to re-appointment, as provided for in Subclause (3). I would be prepared to substitute "seven" in that clause for "five."

Hon. N. Keenan: Is that logical?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think it is perfectly logical because, before any person would be entitled to obtain an appointment of up to seven years, he would first have had to serve for a period of up to five years and, where that had occurred, we would know our man. He would have had practical experience and have proved himself.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: I would point out that in connection with the most important and at present the most highly paid position in the Government service—that of the Commissioner of Railways—the appointment is for a period of five years. The Commissioner of Railways has on various occasions been able to stand up to importunate requests from different quarters in regard to the policy on which the railways have been run. There have been four or five commissioners during the last 25 to 30 years. Some have received re-appointment even though they were appointed for five years. Some, after a very lengthy experience of administration in the Railway Department, reached the goal of their ambition when they were 60 years of age and could not take an appointment extending beyond five years. What has worked satisfactorily in that regard for such a long time should work just as satisfactorily with this commission, particularly as there are three commissioners in this instance and only one commissioner for the Railway Department.

There have been people appointed to different jobs in this State who would not have been appointed for such lengthy periods if we had known as much about them at the beginning as we subsequently found out. I do not know what is in the Government's mind. Perhaps it is proposed to appoint Mr. Taylor, who is the general manager of the Electricity Supply Department. I do not know what his age is but he must be nearly sixty. He has been in the service of the Government for 30 years, and he was not a boy when he entered it. He might reach the retiring age

when he had been a commissioner for only three or four years. I do not think we should stick at appointing someone who might have reached the zenith of his power and would be all right for three or four years but not for seven years or more years.

Hon. N. KEENAN: In view of the Minister's statement and the consideration given by him to the suggestion, I ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of Subclause (3) the word "five" be struck out and the word "seven" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 11 to 17—agreed to.

Clause 18—Proceedings of commission:

Hon. N. KEENAN: I referred to this clause when speaking on the second reading, and drew attention to the fact that all questions coming before the commission may be determined by a natural majority of the members present. That could involve a decision on purely technical questions being determined by a non-technical majority. I would like to know whether the Minister would be prepared to give consideration to an amendment providing that where a measure coming before the commission for determination is one of a purely technical character it shall be determined by the technical members of the commission. I do not propose to move an amendment to that effect now, but it could be done in another place or on recommitment.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am strongly inclined to think that that is what will happen in practice. I would be prepared to give consideration to the suggestion.

Hon. N. Keenan: Might I draft an amendment and send it to you?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes.

Clause put and passed.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I will now proceed to put the following clauses up to Clause 35 in bulk. I would like members to watch the clauses as I call them in case there are any on which they want to speak.

Clauses 19 to 35—agreed to.

Clause 36—Incidental powers:

Mr. DONEY: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of paragraph (d) before the word "cut" the words "subject to the approval of the Commissioner of Soil Conservation" be inserted.

I have in mind the matter of soil erosion. In nine cases out of ten the cutting down of trees, etc., would lead to no ill-effects, but when soil erosion ensues the consequences are pretty costly. When soil erosion legislation was introduced in this House the Premier verbally castigated the employees of the Postmaster General for the indiscriminate manner in which they cut down trees. The people are debarred from the indiscriminate destruction of vegetation because of soil erosion. The Premier seemed to think that the telephone linesmen were the worst offenders. It is plain that, for the purposes envisaged in this clause, the workmen erecting poles might be just as bad. I hope members will align themselves with the Premier in the opposition that I feel he must have to the clause as at present drawn.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I agree with the principle of this amendment, but paragraph (d) deals with more than the cutting down of trees. It deals with the lopping of trees, etc. I would be prepared to accept an amendment, making it necessary for the commission to be subject to the Commissioner of Soil Conservation in regard to the cutting down of trees. If that cannot be achieved tonight I will be prepared to have a suitable amendment drafted, and included when the Bill is in the committee stage in the other place. This amendment might make the commission waste a lot of its own time and that of the Commissioner of Soil Conservation. If we could make the amendment apply to the cutting down of trees it would simplify the matter and largely achieve what the member for Williams-Narrogin has in mind.

Mr. DONEY: I am quite willing to accommodate the Minister if what he suggests seems a feasible solution, but I point out that where soil erosion is concerned the question of windage arises no less than does the matter of the loosening of the soil by the removal of trees. I think the Premier would perhaps appreciate what I am saying to a greater extent than would the Minister. Windage is a fruitful cause of soil erosion. On second thoughts I think I should allow the amendment to stand as it is drawn.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I suggest that the member for Williams-Narrogin should have a discussion with the gentleman who will probably be Commissioner of Soil Conservation, and with the chairman of the present Electricity Advisory Committee. If those three gentlemen meet together they can frame an amendment that would be suitable, and that will achieve everything that ought to be achieved in a matter of this kind. I hope that will be satisfactory to the member for Williams-Narrogin.

Mr. DONEY: I take it that if I follow that suggestion the amendment we will frame will have the support of the Minister later on?

The Minister For Works: Yes.

Mr. DONEY: Then I withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. NORTH: Apart from the proposal of the member for Williams-Narrogin, I urged, during the second reading, that the commission should not have the power to go through public parks, for instance, in a straight line, when erecting a power line, when some slight deviation might prevent the destruction of a beauty spot. The words that I proposed to add to the end of this clause cannot now be added, because it has been complicated by the Minister's amendment. There have been cases where valuable trees have been chopped down to allow a straight line to be run through, while a slight deviation would have retained the beauty of the park. The words I proposed to add would have no meaning now, in view of the proviso about soil erosion.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am prepared to discuss this matter with the member for Claremont, to see whether it is possible to frame an amendment to meet the situation.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 37 to 48—agreed to.

Clause 49—Application of profit:

Mr. ABBOTT: On the second reading I suggested that there should be no possibility of moneys collected by the commission going into the general revenue. Therefore, I move an amendment—

That the words "and which, in the opinion of the Commission, is not required by the Commission for its purposes under this Act shall, subject to the approval of the Governor, be paid to the credit of the Consolidated Revenue Fund" be struck out

and the words "shall be retained by the commission for its purposes generally under the Act" inserted in lieu.

That only makes the position clear.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have just received a copy of this amendment and it seems to me that it would mean that the commission would always retain all the surplus cash that might come into its possession from time to time.

Mr. Abbott: For its general purposes.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Therefore, I think the amendment differs considerably from that portion of the clause that the member for North Perth proposes to strike out. Under the clause as printed, the commission is entitled to retain any surplus money for its own purposes, but if it indicates that moneys in its hands are not required for its own purposes, those moneys, subject to the approval of the Governor, shall be paid to the credit of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, whereas under the proposed amendment the commission would, in all the circumstances, have to retain all moneys and would never pay any money into the Consolidated Revenue Fund. The clause as printed gives the commission plenty of discretion while not in any way limiting it. It does not limit it in any way in the carrying out of its activities, or the development of its activities. In view of the wideness of the clause as printed, in the discretion that it gives to the commission, I regret that I have to oppose the amendment.

Mr. WATTS: I was hopeful that the Minister would accept the amendment because it seems to me, taking the long distance view as it were, that by the time the commission is able to make any profits, it will require the whole of the money at its disposal for the expansion of its work. There will be a great deal to be done and I need not mention the various activities that we have in mind. The commission will be able to spend quite easily any profits it may make without giving any consideration to the necessity to pay money into Consolidated Revenue during the lifetime of the Minister and for many years thereafter. It is better to say that if it makes any profits the money shall be paid into the commission's own funds, without making any bones about it.

Mr. ABBOTT: I appreciate that the Minister is at some disadvantage in dealing with the amendment straightaway and as

he is to reconsider some of the other clauses he might also deal similarly with the clause under discussion. My only object is to make it clear that no Government pressure can be brought to bear on the commission to pay into Consolidated Revenue any funds it may have available.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 50 to 72, First Schedule, Second Schedule—agreed to.

New Clause :

Mr. McDONALD : During the second reading debate I made some observations as to the scope of the Bill in view of the very wide powers given to the commission with regard to operating coalmines, selling coal, manufacturing briquettes, and so on. I wish to know whether the Minister, who I think agrees that the commission should not be a coal-owning and coal-operating body, is prepared to embody a clause in the Bill that will make that position quite clear. In other words, I want the scope of the commission's powers confined to matters dealing with the generation and supply of electricity, even though incidentally to that main objective it may quite properly acquire and work a coalmine. The purpose of the new clause I shall submit is to over-ride the portion of the Bill that deals with the powers of the commission. I do not suggest that the mode I propose is the best to deal with the matter, but it represents what I was able to frame in the short time at my disposal so that the proposed new clause could be placed on the notice paper. It might perhaps be better to deal with the point by some restrictive words added to the clauses in which the powers are conferred, but to do that would have involved more time than I had at my disposal. I move—

That a new clause be inserted as follows—
26. The several powers by this part of this Act conferred on the commission shall be exercised only for the purposes of or incidental to the manufacture, generation, transmission, distribution, supply and sale of electricity.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : I said when introducing the Bill that, in my opinion, it would be better to give the commission much more power than it might find it necessary to use than to clothe it with less power than it would need in the establishing and operating of power schemes. I am still of that opinion. If the new clause proposed by the member for West Perth

were accepted, some of the most vital powers of the commission might be seriously restricted and in operation could very prejudicially affect the work of that body. There may be some method of framing a suitably worded amendment to keep the commission within certain bounds, but I think anyone who attempted to fence the commission in, as it were, would find the task extremely difficult. Just where the boundary pegs would be put in would be hard to determine. I have had a careful look through the Act which operates in Victoria where the State Electricity Commission has powers similar to those we propose to give to the commission here.

Hon. J. C. Willcock : And the Victorian Commission uses those powers.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : Yes. It has done so for years, effectively and fairly. I think that is what the member for West Perth is anxious to ensure for this State. His greatest hope in that regard is to try not to limit the commission, but to develop confidence in that body, because the men who will be appointed will be of the type that will administer the measure in the right spirit and exercise the powers in such a way as to ensure satisfaction to everyone concerned. It will not inflict upon anybody an injustice or wrong which Parliament would not tolerate and which could easily lead to an amendment of the Act. I reiterate that it would be far better to give the commission substantial powers, even though some of them might never be used or would be used only to a small extent and occasionally, than to restrict the powers and thus make it difficult for the commission to function effectively.

Mr. WATTS : I cannot see that the amendment will restrict the powers of the commission in any way connected with the duties it will be called upon to perform. If the commission wanted the powers for any purposes other than those mentioned, it would not be for the purposes for which this measure is being passed. This is a reasonable amendment that might well be accepted.

New clause put and negatived.

New clause :

Mr. DONEY : I move—

That a new clause be inserted as follows:—

30. The price of electricity supplied or sold by the Commission shall be uniform to

all consumers having regard to the purposes for and the quantities in which the same is supplied or sold.

The Minister has expressed the wish that the Leader of the Liberal Party should look favourably upon certain sections in the Victorian Act. I remind members that Mr. Dunstan, in his last Budget, required uniformity in the price of electric current in all and every part of the State where it is being or may be distributed. That is a most inspiring policy, and the time is not far distant when much more will be said in favour of having uniform prices for quite a number of commodities more or less of the type of electricity. Whether in the heart of Melbourne or the most remote centre in that State, the price of current is to be the same. No one can complain of the wisdom of that proposal. If our scheme is to be of any use whatever to decentralise industry, the price must be uniform in order to give manufacturers in the metropolitan area or elsewhere no undue advantage over country competitors. Otherwise, of what use is all the talk about the desirability of extending industries to various parts of the State? Industries established in the country have sufficient disadvantages to cope with, for instance, heavier freights and distance from markets, and if to these and others we add the burden of a higher price for electric current, competition will become more or less impossible. Members should consider the stupidity of supplying current at, say, 3d. a unit in Perth, 4d. in Collie, 5d. in Narrogin, 6d. in Katanning, and 8d. in Albany.

Mr. Cross: Would you make the Perth price uniform, too?

Mr. DONEY: There is no more reason for having uniformity between Albany, Katanning, and Narrogin than between those towns and Perth and Fremantle.

Mr. Cross: What about existing contracts in the metropolitan area?

Mr. DONEY: There is no reason why one town should be excluded because it happens to be the largest and most important.

Mr. Cross: I do not know whether the member for Williams-Narrogin wants uniformity between the metropolitan area and the country.

The Minister for Works: That is the effect of the new clause.

Mr. Cross: In the metropolitan area there are contracts with 40 years to run.

Years ago the Government of the day made a particularly good contract with the Perth City Council—

The Minister for Works: But bad for the Government.

Mr. Cross: —and the Perth City Council has made an average profit of £40,000 a year ever since. Quite a number of local authorities in the metropolitan area are making thousands of pounds profit out of electric current supplied by the Government. Fremantle is making about £20,000 a year, and at least one of the road boards is making £12,000 a year. The current is retailed at a fairly low rate in Perth, notwithstanding the enormous profit being made by the council. The effect of that contract has been that, because the City Council is making enormous profits, it is costing more to produce current for consumers in the city of Perth than they should pay for it. Some of the wealthy ratepayers in Perth would pay higher rates for electricity if the contract were not in existence. The member for Williams-Narrogin does not propose to attempt to annul that contract.

Mr. Doney: I have not had any opportunity to do so.

Mr. Cross: It is obvious that the commission would not be able to generate current at some of the country stations as cheaply as it can be generated in Perth, because of the length of transmission lines in the country. The taxpayers of the State will be called upon to pay losses on the scheme for some years. The metropolitan residents will contribute a considerable sum towards recouping those losses, and the member for Williams-Narrogin cannot expect either the country people or the metropolitan people to assume the responsibilities for greater losses than those mentioned in the Bill. I oppose the new clause.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am afraid the acceptance of the new clause would to some extent put the commission into a strait-jacket.

Mr. Doney: That might not harm it. I know what the Minister means, of course.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Its acceptance would seriously hinder the work of the commission. The effect might be that instead of the commission getting to work to develop comprehensive power undertakings in the country, it would have to be content to sit down and carry on only

the power schemes already in existence. I think that is a short practical view of the proposal of the hon. member. The time might come when an amendment of this type could be accepted, but that time is not yet. The time would come when the ideas of the member for Claremont, the Minister for Mines and to some extent myself, were given practical effect in Australia; but until it does come I am afraid this new clause is not practical. Naturally, the commission will in every zone or region try to keep prices to different groups of consumers uniform; but even in a zone it might not be desirable always to keep prices uniform to the same groups.

Mr. Doney: But you would agree that it would be desirable and fair.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think I would go nearly that distance with the member for Williams-Narrogin.

Mr. Doney: I am sure you would. On the basis of fair play you could not exclude Perth.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There might be periods when the commission would depart from its policy of charging uniform prices to various groups in the one region. The policy of the Government, for instance, might be to make a special endeavour to encourage the establishment of a large secondary industry in some locality, say, Katanning, Bridgetown, Narrogin or elsewhere. To get the company concerned to establish the industry at a particular place, the Government might find it necessary to supply bulk power at a price considerably below that charged generally to industrial undertakings. As long as no competition was involved as between that type of industry and other types of industry within the region, the Government might act in that way for the express purpose of having the industry established and built up in Western Australia.

Mr. Cross: The rates are by no means uniform in the metropolitan area now.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We cannot at this stage of our development, and under our existing financial policy, accept an amendment of this kind, no matter how much it might be desirable theoretically and no matter how much it might appear to be acceptable in that sense. In a practical sense, under existing conditions, it might be even unwise to accept it, mainly for the reason I have

given. Therefore, with some reluctance, I find it necessary to oppose the new clause.

Mr. McDONALD: I wish to say briefly that I am in sympathy with the objective of the member for Williams-Narrogin. I think the trend will be in that direction, but I feel a difficulty in supporting the proposal without further study and without further opinion by experts as to what the result would be on the scheme. Like the Minister, I fear that it might mean the retardation of extensions to the outlying areas and perhaps the deprivation in some areas of benefits they might be able to receive and which they might welcome, even at a cost somewhat in excess of that paid in the metropolitan area. While I sympathise with the objective, I feel we would be unwise to accept the new clause at this stage.

Mr. DONEY: I am not impressed by the claim that the new clause is likely to act as a retardation of extensions of the scheme; but I was attracted by the argument of the Leader of the Liberal Party that the scheme deserves further study. If he cares to make a move to report progress in order that that study may be given, I shall be happy to accommodate him. So far as the view of the Minister is concerned, I was somewhat impressed by his use of the word "reluctance." I think he said that he found it necessary, with some reluctance, to oppose the clause.

The Minister for Lands: That is his usual attitude towards you.

Mr. DONEY: I do not know whether it has been noticeable; but every now and again the Minister gives indications that he is becoming increasingly human. It is difficult to understand the outlook of those who for so many years have been connected with the metropolitan area—I mean by living there. I do not deny that there are any number of real difficulties in the way of achieving what this proposal aims at, but that does not destroy its value, and it does not mean we should not seek ways of implementing it. I put it that no difficulty whatever is seen in securing uniformity for certain sections of the State. But when it comes to a question of price parity which involves the metropolitan area, for some strange reason the principles that guide us in respect of other parts of the State no longer seem to apply. That is not logical, and certainly it is not fair. I will admit that expediency

requires my friends on my left to adopt the attitude to which they have given voice ; but so far as fair play and decency are concerned we who live a long way off and have the most to lose from the loss of this amendment feel that the attitude of those who disagree with this amendment of the Bill is not defensible on any ground.

Mr. CROSS : It would be impossible for the new clause, if carried, to be put into effect because of the long distance contracts between the local authorities in the metropolitan areas.

Mr. Doney : I have heard that before, but was not impressed by the argument.

Mr. CROSS : It takes a lot to impress the hon. member and a long time for things to sink in ; but I point out again that it would be a difficult job to upset many of the contracts that have been made by those authorities with great advantage to themselves. Consequently, if an attempt were made to put the new clause into effect it would fail, and it would prevent the work of the commission from being carried out. I think the hon. member himself realises that his proposal would be unworkable and impossible. As a matter of fact, even in the metropolitan area, because of those various contracts, there is no uniformity of rates. The City of Perth has one set of rates and South Perth, which purchases current from the City Council, has different rates. People sometimes want to know why they have to pay 5d. a unit for current while other people pay 1d. Different local authorities have different prices ; so many local authorities purchase bulk supplies from the City of Perth.

New clause put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	8
Noes	..	..	..	21
				—
Majority against	..			13
				—

AYES.

Mr. Leslie	Mr. Seward
Mr. Mann	Mr. Watts
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Perkins	Mr. Doney

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. Needham
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Panton
Mr. Fox	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Graham	Mr. Styants
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Telfer
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Holman	Mr. Triat
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Wise
Mr. Leahy	Mr. Withers
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Cross
Mr. McDonald	

(Teller.)

New clause thus negatived.

New clause:

Mr. DONEY: I move—

That a new clause be inserted as follows:—

31. The Commission shall supply to all persons upon application a regular and efficient supply of electricity on the same terms upon which any other person is entitled to a corresponding supply, and so that no consumer shall be under any obligation to contribute more to the cost of any distribution works than any other consumer.

This is an amendment based upon pretty much the same principle as was the last—that is, the principle of uniformity. I hold in this instance, as in respect of the last, that uniformity is a principle the fairness of which no-one can successfully controvert. The new clause aims to put costs to isolated homes—it might be the homes of farmers or the homes of men living away in the gold fields areas, prospecting and so forth—upon a parity with those to homes in centres in which the lowest price for current operates. If something like this is not agreed to the Bill will, to the isolated homes, be little other than a dead letter in respect of the amenities that electric current could bring to them. The member for Murray-Wellington, when speaking on this matter a little earlier today, said that the scheme would be a big encouragement to people to go to the outer areas. I think he is a trifle over-optimistic. I would welcome a statement from the Minister on the degree of availability of this scheme to isolated homes. That amount of availability seems to me and my colleagues to be pretty low. Time may alter that, but meanwhile there is not a great deal of promise in the prospect. Unless the Minister agrees to this scheme, as it bears upon isolated homes, it will cost too much to allow other than rich people to take advantage of it. Perhaps it is a little too late to hope that something will be done to allow the high hopes that have been raised in the minds of the country people, to be consummated, but with the passing of time the position may improve.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I suggested that the previous amendment would, if accepted, have had the effect, to some extent at any rate, of putting the commission into a strait-jacket. This amendment, if accepted, would put a leading ring through the nose of the commission, and a rope on the leading ring, so that anyone who cared

to could take hold of the rope and drag the commission hither and thither.

Mr. Doney: I think that is a bit of an exaggeration.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The new clause states that the commission shall supply to all persons upon application a regular and efficient supply of electricity.

Mr. Cross: Even if they are 50 miles away.

Mr. Leslie: That is easy.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is putting an obligation on the commission that can easily smash it in next to no time. No commission could live up to such an obligation. The amendment goes on to provide that the regular and efficient supply of electricity shall be made available on the same terms as those upon which any other person is entitled to a corresponding supply, and so that no consumer shall be under any obligation to contribute more to the cost of any distribution works than any other consumer. It is true, as the member for Williams-Narrogin has said, that that portion of the proposal is similar in principle to one that we debated previously. For reasons I gave in opposition to that amendment, the second portion of this amendment is not acceptable. I oppose the whole clause.

Mr. CROSS: Even in the metropolitan area the principle contained in this amendment does not apply. Many local authorities have to contribute a portion of such cost, and it is the same with water supplies. Local authorities put up guarantees for electric light extensions. People so far from the main transmission line that the cost would be prohibitive could make application. Guarantees have been paid for three or four years in respect of a number of extensions in the metropolitan area.

Mr. Watts: Do you approve of that?

Mr. CROSS: I do, because if not the Electricity Department would charge perhaps 1s. a unit, or if the people concerned were not prepared to pay some of the original cost, or give a guarantee against loss, it might not be prepared to install the line. This amendment is unworkable, and I do not think it was drafted by the member for Williams-Narrogin, but by some mediocre person from Gobble Gutton!

Mr. LESLIE: The point of the argument raised by the member for Canning is that—

Mr. Watts: There is none!

Mr. LESLIE: He claims that because of the existence of an injustice in one part of the State that injustice should be perpetuated and extended to all parts.

The Minister for Works: That is not my argument.

Mr. LESLIE: That is so. I agree with the Minister that it might be difficult to carry out the first part of the clause, but the job of the commission is to provide electricity to all persons wherever the commission operates. In regard to the latter part I say that to expect a consumer to bear a cost, in connection with the installing of poles, etc., that is out of all proportion to what anybody else is called upon to bear, is an injustice and should not be allowed.

New clause put and negatived.

New clause:

Mr. DONEY: I move—

That a new clause be inserted as follows:—

"45. (1) The Commission may also with the approval of the Governor borrow money raised by an issue of debentures or of inscribed stock.

(2) When money is raised by the issue of debentures such debentures shall be issued payable to bearer and may be issued with or without interest coupons attached.

(3) Every debenture shall be in the prescribed form sealed with the seal of the Commission and numbered consecutively and and every debenture with interest coupons (if any) annexed thereto and every coupon after being detached therefrom shall pass by delivery and without any assignment or endorsement and the bearer of every debenture or detached interest coupon shall have the same rights as if he were expressly named as payee therein.

(4) When money is raised by the issue of inscribed stock the conditions of issue, inscription, registration and transfer of such inscribed stock shall be as prescribed by regulations under this Act and not otherwise."

I think the proposal I am submitting has more than a fifty-fifty chance of being smiled on by the Treasurer. It is an honest attempt to ease the strain on the Treasury in respect of loan funds. As it stands at present moneys required by the commission will be a charge on loan funds. It will be a great thing if the commission is allowed to borrow separately to meet its own financial needs, and the proposed new clause sets out the machinery to enable that to be done. We are financing a future that holds a certainty

of heavy charges on loan funds and for the next 20 years or so we will not have anything like the amount of money needed. I think separate borrowing powers should be granted to the commission on a basis more or less comparable with that possessed by the Finance and Development Board in this State. I hope the Minister in association with the Treasurer, will look favourably on this proposal.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I would like to smile on this amendment but, after consultation with the Treasurer, it has been decided that the odds against it are 60-40, and not 50-50 as suggested by the member for Williams-Narrogin. There are two main reasons why it is thought undesirable to incorporate this proposal in the Bill. Firstly, with Government borrowings the Commonwealth Government is responsible for 5s. per cent. of the necessary sinking fund, which is a considerable contribution and a great help to the State. If the commission were given separate borrowing powers that advantage would not be available and the whole of the sinking fund required would have to be provided out of funds available to the commission or, if those funds were not sufficient, by the Government, out of other funds.

Mr. Doney: It is available out of the funds of the Finance and Development Board, in their case.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Secondly, funds borrowed by the Government and with the backing of the Government, by way of loan, can be obtained more cheaply than would be the case if the commission borrowed on its own account. Even though it were a Government instrumentality the commission could not hope to obtain money at as low a rate of interest as could the Government, borrowing direct and in association with other State Governments and the Commonwealth. As I suggested earlier, the argument is against the amendment that proposes to give the commission separate borrowing powers. The Treasurer considers it better, in the financial sense, to leave the Bill as it is and leave to the Government full responsibility for the raising of loan money required for the purposes of the commission. I have therefore to indicate the opposition of the Government to this amendment.

Mr. WATTS: Both the objections of the Minister are met by the words, in the clause, "with the approval of the Governor," because if the commission cannot borrow without the approval of the Governor it cannot borrow without the approval of the Government. That is the whole story.

New clause put and negatived.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

- 1, Builders' Registration Act Amendment.
With an amendment.
- 2, Supreme Court Act Amendment (No. 1).
Without amendment.

House adjourned at 11 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 6th November, 1945.

Bills:	National Fitness, 3a.	PAGE
Land and Income Tax Assessment Act Amendment, 3a., passed	1623
Town Planning and Development Act Amendment, report	1623
State Government Insurance Office Act Amendment, report	1623
Medical Act Amendment, 2a.	1623
Marketing of Onions Act Amendment, 1a.	1625
Child Welfare Act Amendment, (No. 1) 2a.	1625
Trotting Control, 2a.	1631

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

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, National Fitness.
Returned to the Assembly with an amendment.
- 2, Land and Income Tax Assessment Act Amendment.
Passed.

BILLS (2)—REPORTS.

- 1, Town Planning and Development Act Amendment.
- 2, State Government Insurance Office Act Amendment.
Adopted.