

done in the workers' compensation legislation where small hand-outs were made from time to time.

As I said before, proof that what our Government is doing meets with the approval of the people lies in the fact that when we have put a reform on the statute book, nobody has been game to challenge it. It has remained there. The policy of the Labour Party has permeated every avenue of society in the few years it has been able to govern. It is the only party able to govern within its own rights. Other parties have to join together to form a government; that shows that the majority of the people are in favour of the Labour Party policy.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Isn't this an amendment to the Electoral Act?

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: It is a political act.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Why make a political speech?

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: If I could move for the introduction of adult franchise I would be a happy woman. I cannot do that. Therefore I must support the second reading of this measure.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

#### **BILL—INTERPRETATION ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).**

##### *Assembly's Message.*

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

#### **ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.**

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

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.30 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 8.13 p.m.*

## **Legislative Assembly**

Wednesday, 23rd October, 1957.

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

## QUESTIONS.

### RAILWAYS.

#### (a) Buffet Service on Albany Line.

Mr. HALL asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

(1) As with the introduction of wool sales at Albany travellers to that part of the State have increased, and to assure that the railways get their just share of such travelling, will he be prepared to introduce buffet servery for a trial period if given an assurance of support by wool buying personnel?

(2) If the answer is "Yes," would he advertise such alteration so as to acquaint the travelling public?

(3) If the answer to No. (1) is "No," is he aware that the railways could be losing approximately 30 first-class passengers as a result of this action, plus the general travelling public who would travel if amenities were available to them?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

(1) No. There is no standard buffet-car stock held by the W.A.G.R., nor would its provision be justified for seasonal wool sales. The cars used on the "Australind" would not be suitable, nor would their operation be economical.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(3) No. Refreshment services are available en route.

#### (b) Re-employment of Personnel.

Mr. EVANS asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

Does the Railway Commission give consideration to the re-employment, even on a casual basis, of men over the age of forty-five years, but under the normal retiring age, who have had previous experience in the service and good records of conduct, when such men have left the department for reasons other than misconduct?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

Yes; but each application has to be dealt with on its merits as conditions vary with the nature of employment sought.

### TROLLEY-BUSES.

#### Brookdale-rd.-Dumfries-rd., Floreat Park Extension.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

When will the extension of the trolleybus service, Brookdale-rd. to Dumfries-rd., Floreat Park, be completed?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

It is anticipated that this work will be completed by the 30th June, 1958.

### PENSIONERS.

#### Concession Fares.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Transport:

Will concession fares be granted to pensioners by the Metropolitan Transport Trust, as soon as it commences operations, in accordance with the reply to my question on the 30th August, 1956?

The MINISTER replied:

The matter will be considered if and when the trust is appointed.

### DIVORCE CODE.

#### Appeals and Amending Legislation.

Mr. CROMMELIN asked the Minister for Justice:

(1) Has he seen the article on page 8 of the "Daily News" of the 17th October, 1957, headed "Wide Implications in Court Decision"?

(2) Does the decision mean there is no appeal under the divorce code from a Supreme Court judge's refusal to grant a divorce?

(3) Is amending legislation necessary to rectify this position?

(4) Is it the intention of the Government to introduce this legislation, if necessary?

(5) Does this decision also question the jurisdiction of the State Full Court to hear appeals?

(6) If so, what is the solution?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) to (4) Yes.

(5) At least, not directly.

(6) The question of amending legislation is being considered.

### WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT.

#### Dairying Section.

Mr. BOVELL asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) How many war service land settlers in the dairy industry have—

(a) vacated;

(b) been evicted

from properties and for what reasons, from the 1st July, 1953, to the 30th June, 1957?

(2) How many dairy farms under this scheme are now unoccupied, and where are they situated?

(3) How many applications for dairy farms are now outstanding?

(4) Are there any evictions pending, and if so, how many, and for what reason?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) 54.

(b) Five—(incompetence; imprisonment criminal offence, 1; contravention of covenants of lease, 1; foreclosure by R. & I. Bank, 1.

(2) Five—Northcliffe, Karridale, Manjimup, Napier (via Albany), Narrikup.

(3) Fifteen.

(4) No.

### FORESTS.

*Pine and Hardwood Conversion Costs, etc.*

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Forests:

(1) (a) To what extent can the figures shown in the Estimates as the difference between pine and hardwood conversion costs and revenue from conversion be regarded as a net profit or are there other factors and details which must be taken to account before a correct appraisal of what might be termed a commercial profit or loss can be made?

(b) What are the other factors and details and what are the money values of each?

(2) What is the current availability and demand for Western Australian pine?

(3) What marketing plans exist to coincide with greater availability as forests mature?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) Figures shown in the Estimates are not intended to be a profit and loss account and are purely a statement of total estimated receipts and expenditure for a number of projects. They do not take into account a number of factors such as—

On the debit side—

(i) stumpage and royalty which would have been received if the timber was sold on a standing basis.

Some projects are directed at the salvaged and less valuable damaged trees rejected by the sawmilling industry. These may have only a small royalty value and require much greater work for the production of a millable log than in normal circumstances;

(ii) depreciation of plant and equipment;

On the credit side—

(i) stocks on hand are not included. (These include logs, timber, poles, etc.);

(ii) silvicultural value of this work, e.g., the removal of faulty and damaged trees unacceptable to the sawmiller, thus making way for vigorous new growth;

(iii) the fire protection value of placing gangs strategically on conversion projects during the fire season;

(iv) the creation by such operations of access roads which are of value in fire control operations.

(b) It is not possible to place precise money values on indirect credit factors, but separate final accounts for each undertaking are maintained within the department.

These are drawn up on a commercial basis each year and show the actual profit after allowing for overheads, depreciation, etc. They are available to the hon. member for inspection at any time.

(2) Current availability is approximately 1.15 million cu. ft. of logs per annum, all of which is absorbed by local demand, chiefly for case making.

The demand for pine logs is much greater than the available supply, but due to the fact that in the main, young pine thinnings only are available, there is as yet not enough pine timber of sufficient dimensions to supply the market for larger sizes.

(3) Broadly, pine plantations are being established and maintained to meet the demands of increasing population and particularly to provide raw material for a future pulp and paper industry which requires long fibred pine wood to mix with the available supplies of short fibred eucalypt wood. The pine plantation working plan approved by the Governor-in-Executive Council dated 1950 and revised in 1956, sets out in detail the policy being followed in plantation development.

Pine plantations are still too far from maturity to warrant preparation of detailed marketing plans other than those for thinning along present lines.

The Forests Department keeps a close watch on all developments in other States and New Zealand where mature pine stands are being utilised. Even in these States marketing practice is undergoing constant changes.

### BASIC WAGE.

*Price Movements, Cost-of-Living Index.*

Mr. COURT asked the Premier:

(1) Can he advise the details of price movements for commodities and services, etc., reflected in the "C" series cost-of-living index for the quarter ended the 30th September, 1957, in Western Australia?

(2) If so, what are the details?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Premier) replied:

The main movements in average quarterly prices affecting the "C" series index numbers in the metropolitan area for the

September quarter, 1957, were recorded in the following items of the food and groceries group:—

|  | Per cent. |
|--|-----------|
| Tea .... decrease                          | 11.43     |
| Eggs .... do.                              | 13.49     |
| Pork .... do.                              | 7.40      |
| Bacon .... do.                             | 3.44      |
| Onions .... increase                       | 17.18     |
| Food and groceries aggregate .... decrease | 1.06      |

Slight increases were recorded in the clothing, rent and miscellaneous items aggregates but there was no noticeable amount in any single item. The following were the percentage movements in these groups:—

|   | Per cent. |
|---|-----------|
| Clothing aggregate .... increase            | 0.27      |
| House rent aggregate .... do.               | 0.93      |
| Miscellaneous items aggregate .... do.      | 0.61      |
| Total aggregates ("C" series) .... decrease | 0.15      |

### TRAFFIC.

#### (a) City of Perth Parking Arrangements.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) When will finality be reached in deliberations on the Perth City Council parking scheme and what matters still require agreement between the Perth City Council and the Government?

(2) Is he able to give a comprehensive survey of City of Perth parking arrangements envisaged in the next few months; and if so, what are those arrangements and on what time-table will they be introduced?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Not known at present but proposed talks early next week should clarify some points in connection with the Wellington-st. and Mill-st. areas.

(2) Not at this stage.

#### (b) Perth Origin and Destination Survey.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is he yet in a position to advise the results of the Perth traffic origin and destination survey held in May?

(2) If so, what are the main findings of the survey?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

#### (c) Availability of Results.

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

With reference to the answer he gave to my question, can he indicate when he expects the origin and the destination survey to be complete and the results available?

The MINISTER replied:

The member for Nedlands in his questions on this subject shows that he does not fully appreciate the reasons why this survey was undertaken and the benefits expected to be derived from the information obtained. It is not possible to state a date specifically when the results can be mentioned, because they will continue to be obtained for many months and possibly years to come.

The information was obtained so that it could be referred to in order to find the answers to questions which would arise from time to time. For example, in providing for parking areas in certain locations it is necessary to know how many vehicles can be expected directly to use such a parking area without travelling off their routes; and the information has been collated, firstly, to answer certain specific questions which the department wished to have answered quickly, and some of those questions have been answered. Other questions are in the course of being answered from information already obtained. The question does not arise as to when the results will be completed from the information obtained. It is a continuing process.

Mr. Court: You did indicate at one stage that the information would be made available.

The MINISTER: If the hon. member will ask some specific questions with regard to the information which was obtained, we may be able to give him the answers now.

Mr. Court: That is what I wanted to know.

The MINISTER: I suggest that any questions the hon. member has with reference to the origin and destination survey and which may be answered from the information obtained should be submitted so that we can see whether it is possible to answer them now, and if it is not, I will be able to give the hon. member an estimate of when it will be possible to answer such questions.

### HOUSING.

#### (a) Provision of State Rental Homes, Kalgoorlie.

Mr. EVANS asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Will he please give earnest consideration to the erection of a number of State rental homes in Kalgoorlie?

(2) Is he aware that private rental homes are difficult to obtain in Kalgoorlie?

(3) Is he further aware that there appears to be a strong demand for rental homes in Kalgoorlie?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The commission feels that a rental home programme at Kalgoorlie is not warranted. No applications for rental homes are held.

(2) No.

(3) No.

*(b) Details of Homes in Country Towns.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) (a) In what country towns are there—

(i) surplus State Housing Commission homes?

(ii) demands for additional State Housing Commission homes?

(b) What action is proposed in the case of each town?

(2) (a) Is it correct that there are some Nissen huts or other emergency type accommodation still in use for housing at Albany?

(b) If so, what is to be their fate?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) There are vacant State Housing Commission homes at:—

|                 |      |      |   |
|-----------------|------|------|---|
| (i) Bakers Hill | .... | .... | 1 |
| Boddington      | .... | .... | 2 |
| Collie          | .... | .... | 3 |
| Denmark         | .... | .... | 3 |
| Northcliffe     | .... | .... | 1 |
| Port Hedland    | .... | .... | 1 |
| Pemberton       | .... | .... | 1 |
| Toodyay         | .... | .... | 1 |

There are no applications on hand for houses in those centres other than Collie, where two of the houses are under offer.

(ii) In other country towns there are applications which will be substantially met in most cases.

(b) Answered above.

(2) (a) The commission has no Nissen or other forms of temporary accommodation at Albany.

(b) Not known.

**NATIVE WELFARE.**

*(a) Sanitation and Water Supply, Beverley.*

Mr. MANN asked the Minister for Native Welfare:

(1) Is he aware that the Beverley Road Board is concerned with natives infringing the Health Act as no sanitary accommodation is available to these people?

(2) Will the Government arrange temporary carting of water to the native reserve in Beverley until such time as water is laid on?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

*(b) Departmental Vote and Expenditure.*

Mr. MANN asked the Minister for Native Welfare:

(1) What was the amount of money voted for the Native Welfare Department for 1956-57?

(2) What was the cost of administration of the department for that period?

(3) What amount was actually spent on native welfare during that period?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) £473,965.

(2) £80,632.

(3) £366,109.

**TAXIS.**

*(a) Allocation of New Plates.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Transport:

What system is adopted in the allocation of new plates for taxi drivers?

The MINISTER replied:

Taxi plates are issued strictly in order of date of application with a maximum of 10 per month.

*(b) Position between Armadale and Cannington.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Is he aware that there is no taxi available between Armadale and Cannington, and when a recent application was made the applicant was advised that it would be approximately nine months before a plate could be provided?

(2) In view of there being no taxi in this vicinity, will he give consideration to granting a special licence in order to serve this district?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) It is proposed to issue a set of plates within the next few days.

**WAR SERVICE HOMES DEPARTMENT.**

*Discharge of Liability on Already-Erected Homes.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) What is the policy of the department in regard to the war service homes in the matter of discharge of liability on an already-erected house?

(2) In cases where an applicant is suffering grave hardship through an existing loan from an insurance company, can special consideration be given?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Under Commonwealth policy and instructions, the war service homes division cannot discharge a liability on an already erected home, unless the applicant has first obtained approval and temporary finance pending his turn being reached.

(2) Generally, no. Extreme hardship cases can be referred for decision by the Director of War Service Homes, Canberra.

### GOSNELLS TOWNSITE.

#### *Widening of Highway.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is the highway through the townsite of Gosnells to be widened this financial year?

(2) If so, when will work commence?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes. The establishment of a drainage system through the townsite of Gosnells along the Albany Highway is being carried out now. This is a necessary preliminary to the widening of the road pavement which will be carried out as soon as the drainage system has been established.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

### MAIN ROADS DEPARTMENT.

#### *Limitation of Grants to Local Authorities.*

Mr. NALDER (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is it correct that the Main Roads Department has placed, or is about to place, some limit upon grants to local authorities with which they may do work in their own districts with their own plant and employees?

(2) If so, what is the limitation, placed or proposed, and what are the reasons for it?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) There is no intention at this stage to limit the general allocations or grants to local authorities with which they may do work with their own plant and employees. This general allocation was increased by about 50 per cent. in the year 1956-57. With regard to allocations for specific work which the department has been able to provide for, the carrying out of them, either by the department or the local authority, is dependent upon arrangements which may be made from time to time.

The department, as is well known, has built up a large work force with professional and technical support and the disposition of this force or parts of it is necessarily dependent upon the requirements of the various areas in which it operates. Therefore, from time to time it

may be found that the resources of the local authority may be called upon either to assist in a departmental programme of work or to do the work itself.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

### W.A. EGG MARKETING BOARD.

#### *Sources of Supply, etc.*

Mr. WILD (without notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

What is the maximum number of producers who forwarded eggs to the W.A. Egg Marketing Board either by way of consignors, permittees or direct to the board, and what was the total number of eggs received by the board during the last financial year—

(a) from metropolitan producers; and

(b) from country producers?

The MINISTER replied:

The hon. member made available a copy of the questions to me and the replies are as follows:—

(1) 2,058 during first two weeks in October, 1956.

(2) (a) 5,696,893 dozen.

(b) 1,511,652 dozen—total 7,208,545 dozen.

### UNIFORM BUILDING BY-LAWS.

#### *Committee's Deliberations.*

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: A few days ago the member for Nedlands asked me the following question:—

Does he anticipate that the committee examining the uniform building by-laws will have finished its deliberations in time for the motion on the notice paper to be dealt with by the 13th November so that Parliament will know how far the Government proposes to go in connection with the regulations.

I answered and said that I had no precise information on the matter but I expected that that would be the position, and the deliberations of the committee would be finalised. However, I undertook to refer the matter to the Minister for Local Government and to furnish further information to the House.

I find the position is substantially as I explained at the time. The committee, which is comprised of the Principal Architect, the building supervisor of the Perth City Council, a representative of the Royal Institute of Architects, a representative of the Institute of Engineers (Australian Division) and a representative of the Local Government Association, was appointed in June last, before Parliament assembled, for the purpose of giving consideration to suggested alterations to the uniform by-laws which had been drawn up.

This committee has been dealing with these suggested alterations, and all of those that were mentioned in this House or in another place; those which have been submitted by local authorities, and those which have been submitted by members of Parliament. A meeting of this committee is to be held on Tuesday next at 6.30 p.m., when it is expected that it will finalise consideration of all the matters that have been raised in opposition to the proposed by-laws. So if that meeting is held as scheduled and consideration is completed, then the position will be as I informed the member for Nedlands some days ago.

Mr. Court: Thank you.

## **BILL—LONG SERVICE LEAVE.**

### *Message*

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

## **BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.**

1. Electoral Act Amendment (No. 3).
2. Constitution Acts Amendment (No. 2).

Introduced by the Minister for Justice.

3. Cattle Trespass, Fencing and Impounding Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Health.

## **MOTION—NATIVE WELFARE.**

*Committee of Inquiry into Basic Needs and Financial Assistance from Commonwealth.*

**MR. GRAYDEN** (South Perth) [4.55]: I move—

That a committee comprising representatives of the Native Welfare, Police, Education and Health Departments, church organisations, and the Anthropological Department (University of Western Australia) and others who could contribute to such a committee, be set up to inquire into and prepare an estimate of the finance required to improve and/or establish such missions, pastoral holdings, communal farms, settlements, schools, hospitals, etc., and such services as regular medical and dental surveys, as may be required to meet the basic needs of aborigines in Western Australia, with special emphasis on the requirements of the "desert" aborigines, and that the estimate after being considered and if necessary amended by this House, be submitted to the Commonwealth Government with the request that the amount specified be made available to this State by way of a special grant for the purpose of implementing the recommendation.

The reason for this motion is that, as members will be aware, the Commonwealth Government has now made available, under the Colombo Plan, over £60,000,000 to foreign countries—to people who, in many cases, are far less in need of assistance than are our own aborigines. We have already given £60,000,000 under this plan. The Colombo Plan is a wonderful scheme, and I am quite certain that everyone in this House will support it. But when we give away that amount of money and find our own natives in the plight that is well known to us, I think it is time that we took stock of the position, and asked ourselves whether portion of this money should not be diverted to our own aborigines.

I would like to mention further that last year alone Australia made available £15,000,000 under the Colombo Plan, which money went to people in other lands. Frequently we have had travellers coming back from overseas and telling us that they have seen tractors and other farm machinery rusting on the wharves. Recently we read that some countries were slaughtering boars that had been sent over and using them at banquets. Members will be familiar with the general position of aborigines in Western Australia. We all know the position in Perth. We know that within two miles of the G.P.O. there is a band of these people camped on the banks of the Swan River; they camp in the open and the girls come into town at night and stand opposite the Royal Perth Hospital and attempt to pick up passing cars.

Recently I had occasion to go to the Fremantle gaol and during this visit I went to the native section and interviewed 70 of its inmates. Later on the superintendent told me that prior to the war it was exceptional to find more than seven natives in the Fremantle gaol—now the figure is 70, and it is fairly constant. The superintendent says that the reason for it is that various native settlements, missions, etc., within a reasonable distance of Perth have closed down over the last few years. Natives who are in need of assistance and have nowhere to go, have no alternative but to commit some offence for which subsequently they will be arrested and sent to Fremantle gaol.

Unfortunately, when they come out of Fremantle gaol they are not eligible for social services—none of the 70 natives I interviewed were eligible for social services; nor are they able to obtain employment when they are released. Because of this, they have no alternative but to commit some offence, and they are then arrested and again sent back to Fremantle gaol within a week or so. That seems to be a constant process with them.

The position in the South-West is well known. Practically every South-West town has, on its outskirts, a settlement of these natives. Most of them are completely unable to obtain work. Not very

long ago—a couple of years or so—myxomatosis was introduced into this State and whereas formerly in the South-West half-castes and other natives were able to trap a few rabbits—even if only to eat—myxomatosis has practically wiped out the rabbit population and the great bulk of these natives, who are not eligible for social services when unemployed, have no alternative but to commit some offence.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I can assure the hon. member that there is plenty of work in the South-West. The work is there if they will take it. There is no question about that.

Mr. GRAYDEN: I am pleased to hear from the member for Murray that that is so at the moment.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: That has been the position for a long time.

Mr. Cornell: Can the hon. member give us an assurance that the natives will stick to the jobs?

Mr. GRAYDEN: No one can give that assurance. Most of them are utterly unsuited for permanent work, but the fact remains that the problem is there. These people are not suited for that work, but they are ideal for seasonal work. Surely in the off-season there should be some place where they can go in order to be given assistance in return for a small amount of work.

Let us take the position in the mining towns. According to the evidence taken by the select committee—it has been confirmed on many occasions—there are about 400 or 500 natives in the Laverton district, about 30 of whom are permanently employed. Some of the others are able to obtain a little mustering once a year. However, in the mining districts there is no permanent work open to the majority of the natives.

In the Laverton district the children go into the Mt. Margaret Mission and are fed there for, say, 10 months of the year and for the remaining two months they go back to their parents and fend for themselves. As a consequence, during these two months we have the spectacle of children fossicking in dust bins behind the Laverton hotel in the hope of finding a few crusts. When the members of the select committee returned from the Warburton reserve prior to Christmas last, we stayed at the Laverton hotel and the publican informed us that that day he had had a visit from the police and had been told that the children were not permitted on licensed premises for the purpose of fossicking in the dust bins. That is the position generally in the Laverton area.

It is exactly the same in other places. At the Warburton reserve for nine months of the year the children are given European food and clothing, and are housed

in dormitories. For the remaining three months, they have to fend for themselves. If it is a good season, they come back in reasonable condition; but if it is a bad one, they come back suffering or not at all. For 25 years on the Warburton reserve these children have been taken from their parents and made accustomed to white food and clothing, and at the age of 14 they are sent back to live on the reserve, less fitted than formerly to fend for themselves and with no prospects at all of obtaining any employment.

Apart from five or six who are permanently engaged, there is simply no employment available at the Warburton reserve and the nearest point where the natives could apply for work is Laverton, which is 400 miles away. However, there are several hundred natives there of whom only about 30 are permanently employed.

The same position applies in the North-West. Apart from obtaining occasional work, the natives must fend for themselves. For some time experiments have been conducted with kangaroos to find a virus which will eradicate them the same as myxomatosis has killed off the rabbits. Undoubtedly, this virus will be released to infect kangaroos throughout Western Australia and immediately we do that, we deprive the natives of their principal source of food.

Contrast this position—which undeniably exists in Western Australia and no one in this House would dispute the fact—with that obtaining in the Northern Territory. There the Commonwealth Government is looking after possibly half as many natives as live in Western Australia and spends possibly twice as much on those few natives. Pastoralists in the Northern Territory, if they have natives on their properties—this was the position when I was there last year—received £1 11s. per adult native and 11s. for every child on the property. If a pastoralist had 70 natives on his property he would receive £1 11s. for each adult and 11s. for each child and would spend that money on food and blankets. Of course, any of the natives employed by him would be paid the award rate.

It seems strange that that position should exist on one side of the Western Australian border and the position which I outlined earlier should exist on our side. In addition to that, in the Northern Territory, three times each year there is a medical survey of the natives. Also three times each year there is a dental survey. One could say with complete assurance that in many parts of Western Australia, no attempt has been made to survey, much less to embark on a policy of a survey three times each year. That position exists in the Northern Territory simply because the Commonwealth has more funds to spend.



We can contrast the position, too, with the aid Australia is sending overseas. I repeat that we have already sent away £60,000,000 under the Colombo Plan. Last year £15,000,000 was made available and I would suggest that the only way we are going to make a start on doing something on an overall basis for the natives in Western Australia is to have an inquiry into the needs of aborigines in this State. Having done that, an estimate of the finance required to establish pastoral holdings, communal centres, etc. to make these people self-supporting should be submitted to the Commonwealth.

I suggest that the best way to conduct such an inquiry would be to set up a committee comprised of representatives of the Native Welfare Department, the Health Department, the Police Department, the Education Department and others from church organisations and the Anthropological Department of the University. It is possible that there would be others who could serve a useful purpose on such a committee. It would be a simple matter to obtain the information we require. For instance, a letter could be sent to the various missions asking what they felt was needed in order to make their particular missions self-supporting. Having obtained that type of information we could collate it and arrive at an overall estimate which could be submitted to the Commonwealth.

So far as I can gather, we have never attempted to approach the Commonwealth for a special grant. A delegation did go from this Parliament earlier this year, to interview Mr. Beale, the Commonwealth Minister for Supply, in respect of a special grant for the Warburton reserve natives, but I would point this out, that we went over under difficulties. The delegation went over at the same time as our own Commissioner of Native Welfare was making statements to the effect that the select committee report, on which the recommendations we were putting to the Minister were based, was, to quote his actual words, "grossly exaggerated." The commissioner also said, "The recommendations were not of any practical value."

The Minister for Native Welfare: Where did he make these statements?

Mr. GRAYDEN: In the Press. It was published in the Melbourne "Herald" of the 12th January, 1957. There were similar statements in "The West Australian" at the same time while the Minister for Native Welfare, myself and the member for North Perth were in the Eastern States—as it turned out, at our own expense—to put the case to the Minister for Supply to the effect that we needed this money for the Warburton natives. The Commissioner of Native Welfare was, at the same time, making statements that our report was grossly exaggerated and our recommendations were of no practical

value. Small wonder then that the Commonwealth dismissed out of hand our application. The unfortunate position about that little affair was this—

The Minister for Native Welfare: The commissioner denied that, of course.

Mr. GRAYDEN: I agree the commissioner denied that.

Mr. Rhatigan: Like his colossal cheek!

Mr. GRAYDEN: He denied that he said it was grossly exaggerated. That is the point I want to pin on him and make him stand by it, because I have a letter in which he has repeated it and I will read the relevant extract. The letter was written to Mr. J. Nutley on the 11th April, 1957. The relevant part reads as follows:—

the consensus of opinion confirms that the contents of the report are so grossly exaggerated, that they are no longer regarded as being reliable.

It is all right for the commissioner to deny that he made that statement, but it was published throughout Australia.

Mr. Rodoreda: Who was the letter written to?

Mr. GRAYDEN: Mr. J. K. Nutley, 31 Danvers-rd., Tonbridge, Kent, England, and the letter was sent back to me. The commissioner wrote another letter to Professor J. A. Barnes, Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, and said this—

They are amply supplied with food, clothing, blankets, medicine and medical attendance by the Native Welfare and Public Health Departments.

The point I wish to make is that whilst the commissioner has been making these statements, they do not represent what he actually thought. He has been making these statements in letters to people overseas and elsewhere as well as in the Press. He wrote a letter to the Minister for Native Welfare and in that letter, which is on the Warburton file, he said this of the select committee report, and I would ask the Minister to listen carefully—

The remarks under the headings: terrain, basic requirements, food, medical attention, clothing, secondary requirements, religion, education, secondary education and training, mission responsibility for natives, separation of children, sanctity of reserves, decentralisation, infanticide and rations—

Those are the principal headings in the select committee's report.

—are also well known and apply with equal force to larger numbers of natives who live within their tribal boundaries in the areas between the Rawlinson Ranges and the Balgo Pallotine mission (south of Hall's Creek); the desert country south of

the Fitzroy Valley; along the Canning stock route, and to the east of the rabbit proof fence from the Pilbara district. The questions which come immediately to mind are whether this one area—about which the chairman of the committee has only a cursory first-hand knowledge—is to become the focal point of a major Government effort; by a few of an estimated total of 6,000 nomadic desert natives in this State are to be subjected to special treatment at great cost to the exclusion for financial reasons of the others; will the facilities recommended for the Warburton Range natives be duplicated for those living north of the Rawlinson Ranges and the other areas mentioned?

This is a most serious matter. The public of Australia and people outside of Australia have been told that the report was grossly exaggerated, and whilst the Commissioner of Native Welfare was publishing statements of this kind, he was writing to the Minister for Native Welfare saying that the remarks made under the headings I have enumerated were not only well known but applied to 6,000 desert natives in Western Australia. So, if the select committee report caused a stir when it applied to only 300 or 400 natives, surely it should cause an ever so much greater stir when it is known that it also applied to 6,000 natives!

In this morning's paper we saw a statement by the commissioner to the effect that within the limits of the department's financial and manpower resources, it was assisting the natives of this State in every way. The commissioner repeatedly makes statements of that kind forgetting, of course, that he himself did more than any other man to prevent the Western Australian Government from getting aid on the occasion when the delegation went to Canberra. But the commissioner has gone far beyond that. Apart from writing to people and telling them that these natives are not in need of aid, he has actually gone further.

Let me read again from the letter to Mr. Nutley. Incidentally, Mr. Nutley was prepared to approach the English Government and say, "You are a partner in this rocket range affair in Australia, so England should make some contribution." But the Commissioner of Native Welfare wrote to him and said—

You are assured that the natives under report are not in need of more ameliorative treatment than what is now available to them through this department, and that people in your country have no cause for concern.

That is an untruthful statement. We have the evidence given before the select committee by the missionaries at the Warburton mission that although they have many more than 20 indigent natives—aged,

crippled and blind—they can get rations for only 20; that although they have many more than 60 children for whom they obtain rations from the Government, the number is kept at that arbitrary figure. So one could go on. But that is typical of the type of statement that the commissioner is making.

Again, he wrote to Professor Barnes and said—

They are amply supplied with food, clothing, blankets, medicines and medical attendance by the Native Welfare and Public Health Departments of this State, and it is not expected that the taxpaying public should be required to pay twice for this service.

That, too, was an untrue statement and was calculated to dry up this source of sympathy for these people in Western Australia that would have resulted in some aid being given to them.

The Minister for Native Welfare: It is not totally untrue. You have drawn an inference that is not everyone's view. You know that substantial assistance is given to the natives at the Warburton mission, the same as in other areas.

Mr. GRAYDEN: Of course, but no one would suggest that the natives are not in need of far greater assistance. I know the Minister would not agree to that. Again, to go further, the Aborigines Advancement League of Victoria actually sent a cheque for £150 to the Commissioner of Native Welfare, and he sent it back and said that these natives were being well looked after by the Native Welfare Department, and that the natives were not in need of help of that kind. How, if the commissioner is making statements like that and sending money back, can he claim, as he did in this morning's paper, that, within the limits of its financial and manpower resources, the department is assisting the natives of this State in every way? I suggest he cannot.

But apart from this, the commissioner on every occasion has denied anything which depicts the true plight of the natives in Western Australia, and his attitude in that regard goes back over years. If we want an example of this, I suggest we have in the file, which is at present on the Table of the House, a classic one, and I would like briefly to analyse it because it will indicate to members what little chance we have had in the past of obtaining the money which has been so necessary for the welfare of the natives. I refer to the file dealing with the Canning stock route.

Members will recall that Captain Holyman, a helicopter pilot, sent a telegram in which he mentioned starving natives on the Canning stock route. Members will also recall that on the 7th August—the following morning—"The West Australian" reported that the Commissioner of Native Welfare "said yesterday that they were not starved." Later, in the House, I asked

the Minister on what information the commissioner had based his statement, and the Minister gave me this reply—

The commissioner did not base his statement on psychic power, but on information provided by his district officer in Derby, his experience of the past with similar reports by inexperienced observers and his knowledge that the Bureau of Mineral Resources party which had been in the area for some considerable time had not reported starving natives being contacted.

So it goes on.

The Minister said that the information had been supplied by the district officer in Derby. Let us go back to the file, which is on the Table of the House. What do we find? We find that the commissioner had only one communication from the district officer in Derby at the time he made the statement; and what was the communication? It was a telegram dated the 6th August which reads—

Bureau Mineral Resources party situated Godfrey Tank Canning Route report meeting party about 40 natives Well 40 near Lake Tobin state older natives appear weak younger better condition evacuated one woman one child by helicopter to Balgo for medical attention stop B.M.R. have reported natives condition and evacuation to Canberra and A.N.A. Melbourne stop. Have requested B.M.R. take some food this location next Thursday on last trip helicopter making this site stop Have been reliably advised against attempting reach natives overland can reach point 120 miles this side safely stop Only suggestion endeavour make some contact from this point if you consider desirable. Beharell.

This was the only communication the commissioner had received up to that time and yet on that telegram he refuted the report the helicopter pilot had made. In the reply that the Minister gave me, he also said that the commissioner based his reply on the fact that the Bureau of Mineral Resources party had been in the area for some considerable time. A later question elicited the fact that this party had never been to the Well 40 area prior to the arrival of the helicopter. So much for that point. Knowing that statement came from the helicopter pilot, this comment came from the commissioner over the A.B.C.—

The Commissioner of Native Welfare, Mr. Middleton, said there were four missions in the area where natives could obtain food and medical supplies.

Subsequently I asked the Minister a lot of questions and I found the four missions the commissioner referred to were

Balgo, which was approximately 210 miles away, as the crow flies; Jiggalong, which was 300 miles away as the crow flies; Wiluna, which was 450 miles away, and Warburton which was 270 miles distant. In other words, these natives were at Well 40, virtually in the middle of that desert area, and the commissioner said there were four missions at which they could obtain supplies. He was referring to four missions on the outskirts of the desert area. But even though Wiluna was 450 miles away, to reach it, the natives would possibly have to go 900 miles because they can only travel along chains of waterholes; they cannot go overland in a direct line. So this was a most misleading statement.

Then again we had the assurance from the commissioner that when these natives were reported to be starving on the Canning stock route, food was taken out immediately. We find from perusing the report which is on the Table of the House, that the helicopter went back the following day on a routine flight, and there happened to be two natives at the well on that occasion. The helicopter crew were able to give these natives food, but they did not contact any of the other natives they had seen initially, and so no one has since contacted them. Thus, we get that typical misleading statement.

The Minister for Native Welfare: It would not be quite right to say that no one else contacted them. Is it not a fact that a droving party came through there within a few days?

Mr. GRAYDEN: The Minister is quite right. And this party contacted a few natives, but there were 40 natives in the party that was initially seen by the helicopter pilot.

Mr. Rhatigan: They would have hardly enough food for themselves, let alone some for the natives.

Mr. GRAYDEN: In a report published in the "Daily News" under the heading "Officer says Natives Well," on the 11th September last we find this—

A native welfare officer's patrol to the Canning stock route has established that natives there are in no distress but were enjoying a very good season. He reported that natives he had seen were in good condition and young adult natives were of fine physique.

A report of the patrol was received in Perth by Native Welfare Commissioner Middleton from Derby district officer J. S. Beharell. Drover M. Brown's party had been at Well 40 only six days earlier. They said that the Canning stock route natives were enjoying a good season. No natives they had met had mentioned a shortage of food.

A bureau of Mineral Resources survey party, led by geologist Dr. Veivers at Well 48, supported the report of the droving party.

A suggestion that Canning stock route natives were starving arose when A.N.A. pilot Captain Holyman, on August 5, flew a sick aboriginal woman and boy to Balgo mission.

I suggest that that is a most misleading statement, apparently given to the Press by the Commissioner of Native Welfare. I say it is misleading because we have only to look at the file, which is on the Table of the House, in which there is a statement by the district officer at Derby, who interviewed the two natives who were flown in from the desert. He interviewed them in the hospital and he wrote this report which appears on the file—

On Thursday afternoon, while visiting a patient at the Derby Native Hospital, I learned that the woman and child who had been evacuated by the Bureau of Mineral Resources party, from Well 40, had been admitted from the A.I.M. Hospital, Hall's Creek. I endeavoured to interview the woman, both before and after tea on this day, but owing to her condition and lack of intelligence, besides which I had very poor interpreters, little or no information was gained, other than the fact that her name is Orbinar, and the boy, Chungare, is her son. They are of the Kokatja tribe which inhabits an area immediately south of Balgo mission, and in the main the inmates of that institution belong to the same tribe.

He goes on—

Both these persons have since been interviewed by me several times, and it would appear from the information that they have given that the party has found that conditions in the desert, at present, are very difficult and both say they are all very hungry and there are others who have become weak as a result of insufficient food. It is believed that this party may endeavour to travel towards Balgo, but owing to their general condition, particularly with reference to the aged and very young, such a long journey will present many difficulties.

The district officer then continues—

The spear wounds previously referred to on the woman, were apparently administered by her brother, Galbe, some time ago, but have left running sinuses.

It is clear that an officer should proceed to the Balgo-Godfrey's Well area to render what assistance is possible to these people.

That is the sort of information on the file.

The only two people from the original party who have been contacted are the two natives in the Derby Hospital. I had a photograph of them pinned on the board outside this Chamber. The boy aged ten years, weighed only three stone. Both of the natives said that the conditions in the desert are at present very difficult and that the natives are all very hungry, and some have become weak as a result of insufficient food. Notwithstanding a statement of that kind, the Commissioner of Native Welfare makes a statement to the Press such as quoted a few minutes ago.

Recently, on Friday, the 20th September, in "The West Australian," the Commissioner of Native Welfare in Western Australia made this statement—

The officer—  
there he refers to the district officer at Derby—

—had established beyond doubt that natives in the area were not starving but were enjoying the fruits of a very good season.

I emphasise that statement. What the district officer, on whose report that statement was based, did say was—

It is submitted that no conclusive knowledge can be gained of the people in this area until such a patrol as suggested can be arranged. Furthermore another factor which may become an issue, both politically and journalistically, could be the position of these natives in relation to the Maralinga rocket range which, from all accounts, is in a direct line with the proposed direction in which the rockets are to be fired.

On that statement, apparently, the Commissioner of Native Welfare said that the officer had ascertained beyond doubt that natives in the area were not starving but were enjoying the fruits of a very good season!

Just prior to the statement by the district officer, which I have just read and which is on the file, that officer emphasised that he had never been anywhere near Well 40, and made this statement, which is also on the file—

Information gained on this patrol—  
That is to Well 48—

—leads me to believe that there are a number of natives probably of the Kokatja and other tribes, living in the so-called desert area extending from Well 44 to Well 22, and their east and west boundaries extending possibly to the fringe of the stations situated on the coast, and the Western Australian border, and possibly further into the Northern Territory, in the east. These people are living an entirely primitive and tribalised existence and to date there has been no attempt to contact them. In order to do so satisfactorily, any party would need to be well equipped and prepared to remain in

the area for several months. Such a journey would have to be undertaken with camels and horses during the months between May and September, for at all other times the extreme heat would make it impossible for animals to travel.

There we have the district officer saying that he did not go anywhere near that area, and could not do so because such a journey would have to be undertaken with camels and horses during the months between May and September. Yet, in the face of that, the commissioner says that the officer has ascertained beyond doubt that the natives in the area are not starving.

In the Press statement to which I have already referred, the Commissioner of Native Welfare said—

The district officer at Derby—who recently travelled the Canning stock route—

The commissioner made that statement, but the officer went through the area between Wiluna and Well 48, and he did not go along the Canning stock route anywhere near the area to which we are referring. The commissioner went on to say—

—reported this week that Capt. Holyman, the helicopter pilot, denied statements attributed to him which, he said, had annoyed him intensely.

The commissioner quoted Captain Holyman and claimed that he denied the statements attributed to him, and said that they annoyed him intensely.

If Captain Holyman said anything like that, surely the statement should appear on the file which is on the Table of the House, because it is only from information on the file that the commissioner can base such statements. But there is nothing on the file along those lines because the helicopter pilot did not make any such statement. I received a letter from the helicopter pilot on the 23rd September, three days after the Commissioner of Native Welfare made that statement. I asked Captain Holyman for certain information and his letter commences—

Many thanks for your letter, copy of your speech and very interesting book "Adam and Atoms." It is certainly gratifying to know someone is taking an interest in these poor unfortunates in the Canning Basin.

At the end of his letter he says this—

I trust this small amount of information may be of help in your venture, and wish you the best of luck in what I feel to be a very worthy cause. Please accept enclosed photograph of natives in that area who to me, anyway, look hungry.

The photograph he sent me was the one which I pinned on the notice board outside the Chamber; it was a photograph of

natives who were obviously starving. As I said earlier, the boy aged ten years weighed only three stone.

The Minister for Native Welfare: Do you say that the native woman appeared to be starving?

Mr. GRAYDEN: I would not say that the woman was starving. No one could say that. But surely the Commissioner of Native Welfare would not deny that the boy was starving.

The Minister for Native Welfare: He does not know and neither does the doctor who examined the photographs. No one can tell from photographs.

Mr. GRAYDEN: That is so. But those at the district hospital at Derby could tell whether they were or not.

The Minister for Native Welfare: I asked questions of the Medical Department and the reply was such that I think it would be a surprise to the hon. member.

Mr. GRAYDEN: I think the Minister might ultimately get a great surprise, from a different angle altogether. The original telegram from Captain Holyman makes it perfectly clear what he thought of the position. He said—

Increasing number of desert natives encountered during operations Well 40 area (stop) Thirty to forty in one mob (stop) All unclad and most starving especially very young and very old (stop)

He went on to make it very clear what he thought of the position and he brought two of the natives out with him.

The Minister for Native Welfare: He did not say that in the letter. He used the term "hungry." He did not use the word "starving."

Mr. GRAYDEN: Do not worry about what was said in the letter.

The Minister for Native Welfare: I am often hungry; but I am never starving.

Mr. Oldfield: Hungry for what?

Mr. GRAYDEN: I suggest that Captain Holyman is being extremely sarcastic when he says that the natives are hungry. He sent me a photograph of natives who were obviously skin and bone, and the boy weighed only three stone; his thighs were only skin and bone. When the helicopter pilot sends a photograph like that, and says that to him the natives looked hungry, I suggest that he is being sarcastic. Let me deal with the final point on the file and I suggest this might give the Minister a shock, although it should not do so because he is conversant with what is on the file. We have the assurance from the commissioner that all is well on the Canning stock route.

The Minister for Native Welfare: I do not think he said that at all. That is only your interpretation of it. He has not said that they are all well on the Canning stock

route. You are only making that allegation. You want to be fair to the commissioner.

Mr. GRAYDEN: I will be fair to the commissioner and quote again what he said. He said—

The officer had ascertained beyond doubt that natives in the area were not starving but were enjoying the fruits of a very good season.

Is not that clear enough?

The Minister for Native Welfare: That is clear enough.

Mr. GRAYDEN: That is an unequivocal statement.

The Minister for Native Welfare: But he does not say that all is well on the Canning stock route.

Mr. GRAYDEN: No, but he said they were enjoying the fruits of a very good season; and the helicopter pilot said—

Increasing number of desert natives encountered during operations Well 40 area (stop) Thirty to forty in one mob (stop) All unclad and most starving especially very young and very old (stop)

That is to be found on the file which is on the Table of the House, and notwithstanding that the native welfare officer was at Well 48, which is only 118 miles from Well 40. The commissioner had all those reports, and he had Captain Holyman's original statement that they came away from the place and left natives in the area to carry about on their backs a crippled native.

That seems an extraordinary state of affairs. Also on the file there is a report by the native welfare officer at Derby who said—

This party also reported that they had met some 40 natives at Well 40 and stated that the aged and children appeared to be in need of assistance and seemed to be in a state of starvation. The young adults were reported to be in reasonably good condition. One crippled adult was being carried on the backs of others.

Then we had the droving party to which the Minister referred. A young lad in Brown's party, who originally came from the Well 40 area, said that he knew of no other sick natives, but several were aged and one was crippled and had to be carried by others. That is confirmed in two places.

It means this: No one can go back there until the wet season is over and after the wet season there is extreme heat. The district officer stationed at Derby has already said that it is not possible to take horses and camels into the area between the months of May and September because of the extreme heat. Yet we propose to leave those natives to trudge from tiny waterhole to tiny waterhole carrying a

crippled native on their backs. We knew they were doing that. There was a helicopter stationed at that place. The pilot offered to give assistance, but we did not take advantage of his offer because we did not want to spend something over £200 for that purpose. So, rather than go 118 miles in a helicopter to pick up a crippled native, we left him to be carried around by his fellow-tribesmen in the circumstances I have mentioned.

Let us assume that the helicopter pilot was right when he said that this group of natives were practically all starving. In that condition they also had to carry the crippled native. They will do that, and will continue doing that until next year. In that act they are manifesting an infinitely finer spirit than is displayed by some officers of our own Native Welfare Department. During the war the Australian troops had the experience of walking forwards and backwards, on two occasions, over the ridges of New Guinea, and over tremendously high ranges.

At one stage when we had a great number of wounded soldiers on our hands, and when we had to carry them down into 2,000 feet gulleys and up the other side, an order came from the brigadier that the wounded were to be left behind. That was a firm order. That was the first time that I have known of an order in the army to be disobeyed. The men in the unit simply refused to carry out the order. They refused to leave their sick and wounded comrades. The natives I am referring to are manifesting the same spirit. They are carrying the crippled native on their backs, yet we will not authorise the expenditure of something between £200 and £400 to send a helicopter 118 miles to do something for that native.

A few nights ago, the Minister for Native Welfare, the Premier, members of the Government front benches and other members of this House gathered on the lawns outside of Parliament House to look up into the sky, and to see an artificial moon circling the earth. We watched it for one night, and then again on the following night. We thought that was a great phenomenon, and considered that we had entered the space age. Notwithstanding that people on this earth can do that sort of thing, we in Australia seem to be back in the horse and buggy days in our approach to common humanity. While we watched the artificial moon which circled the earth every 90 minutes, we were not prepared to send a helicopter 118 miles to pick up a crippled native. We have instance after instance of such happenings, as I mentioned in a previous debate.

A survey party from the Lands Department went into the same district, around Well 22, last Christmas, and found among a group of natives one woman with the flesh rotting from her nose and knees.

She was suffering from yaws. She was 200 miles from Balgo mission. A good track leads from Well 22 to Balgo mission. There was no organisation in this State, when that incident was placed on the file, able to send a vehicle 200 miles to pick up a woman in the condition I have mentioned. That woman was left out in the bush to fend for herself, and if she had children, to fend for them also. There are instance after instance of such happenings. I quote them because there is a tremendous need in Western Australia for something on an overall basis to be done in order to solve the aboriginal problem.

No one pretends for one minute that these people will make fine citizens. In their present state of development, some do turn out to be good citizens, but the great majority do not. Instead of leaving them to hang around the outskirts of the towns where they steal in order to survive, they should be placed on small communal farms or pastoral holdings. Let us provide the medical services for the natives in the areas I mentioned; let us put down a chain of waterholes in the inland desert which will provide them with drinking water and, in turn, attract game. This could be done quite simply, as I indicated previously.

There is a very big mine outside Marble Bar which required 8,000 gallons of water a day. That was obtained by sinking a dam 60 yards by 40 yards on a recognised water basin. The dam was dug to a depth of 30 feet when water was found; then it was followed for another three feet. With a couple of dry years, the water level descended and it was necessary to dig down another three feet. This was not really a dam but a well in a water basin, and the water from a half mile on every side flowed into it. If it is possible to build half a dozen of such waterholes, adequate water will be available for the natives, and in turn the waterholes will attract game.

In addition we need only provide medical services now and then in the inland areas. By supplying those requirements we will do something of a practical nature to overcome the problems of the aborigines, instead of allowing the present conditions to continue in the same manner. This country has given away £60,000,000 under the Colombo Plan, and last year it gave away £15,000,000. Surely the Commonwealth Government could, under those circumstances, find sufficient money to meet the needs of the Native Welfare Department in this State! I know that if the Minister for Native Welfare had sufficient money he would spend it wisely, and I have moved the motion in the terms set out so that representatives of that department and of all the other Government departments could be appointed to the committee.

Members of political parties will not have the task of estimating what is required, because they are always politically suspect, no matter what they do. I have moved the motion in terms that will meet the wishes of the Minister. I know that his department will spend the money wisely. I cannot see any reason for any member objecting to the proposed inquiry and to the collation of the necessary information, in order to arrive at an estimate for submission to the Commonwealth Government. For those reasons I have moved the motion.

On motion by the Minister for Native Welfare, debate adjourned.

#### **BILLS (5)—RETURNED.**

- 1, Chiropradists.
- 2, Local Government.  
With amendments.
- 3, Roman Catholic Vicariate of the Kimberleys Property.
- 4, Supply (No. 2), £18,000,000.
- 5, Junior Farmers' Movement Act Amendment.  
Without amendment.

#### **BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.**

- 1, Shearers' Accommodation Act Amendment.  
Transmitted to the Council.
- 2, Jetties Act Amendment.  
*Passed.*

#### **BILL—INTERPRETATION ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).**

##### *Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of 6 amendments made by the Council now considered.

##### *In Committee.*

Mr. Moir in the Chair; Mr. Oldfield in charge of the Bill.

##### *No. 1.*

Clause 2, page 2, line 4—Insert after the word "amended" the letter "a" in brackets thus "(a)."

##### *No. 2.*

Clause 2, page 2, line 5—Delete the figure "3" and substitute the figure and letter "2A."

##### *No. 3.*

Clause 2, page 2, line 6—Delete the figure "3" and substitute the figure and letter "2A."

##### *No. 4.*

Clause 2, page 2, line 8—Delete the letter "a" in brackets thus "(a)."

On motions by Mr. Oldfield, the foregoing amendments were agreed to.

No. 5.

Clause 2, page 2—Add the following paragraphs:—

- (b) by inserting after the figure "(2)" in the second line of subsection (3) the passage "or (2A)";
- (c) by adding at the end of subsection (3) the words "within twenty-one days of the passing of the resolution. Provided that no regulation published in the "Gazette" prior to the first day of January, one thousand nine hundred and forty-nine shall be amended or varied or another regulation substituted for it pursuant to the provisions of subsection (2A) of this section."

Mr. OLDFIELD: I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Mr. COURT: Liberal members of the Opposition would like an explanation from the hon. member as to the exact significance of this amendment. It is not that we are opposing it. We feel that some reason for agreeing to the amendment should be recorded in Hansard.

Mr. OLDFIELD: I thought it was obvious to all members, and I did not make any explanation, because I wanted to avoid delaying the Committee. When the Bill had passed through the Committee stage in another place, it was discovered that the numbering of the clauses was out of order so the Bill was recommitted. If it had been passed in the form in which it left the Committee stage there, we would have had the spectacle of referring to clauses whose numbering was out of line with the remainder of the Interpretation Act.

The amendments merely bring about a re-numbering of clauses in the Bill to conform to the Act. The subject matter of the Bill has not been interfered with in any shape or form. It remains not only as to principle but in context as it left this place, except in respect of the re-numbering.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: In amplification of what has been said, and as I was primarily responsible for the amendments inserted in the Bill in this place, I would point out that the error that crept in in these amendments was that a new Subsection (3) was inserted in the Act by the Bill as it left this Chamber. It was then proposed that the remaining subsections be re-numbered.

But when the Legislative Council was looking over the subsections it ascertained that they referred back to the original Subsection (3) which had no reference to the subject matter of this proposal. Therefore a new Subsection (2A) was inserted

so that the reference back in the Interpretation Act as it was originally would refer to the subsections to which the original reference was made, and not to this one.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 6.

Clause 3, page 3—Delete:

Mr. OLDFIELD: I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

## BILL—HIRE-PURCHASE AGREEMENTS.

*In Committee.*

Resumed from the 16th October. Mr. Moir in the Chair; Mr. Johnson in charge of the Bill.

Clause 18—Liability for fraud, etc:

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported on this clause after the following amendment had been moved by Mr. Court:—

That all words after the word "Any" in line 8 down to and including the word "goods" in line 11, be struck out.

Mr. COURT: This matter was thoroughly canvassed last week, and I have no intention of delaying the Committee any further.

Mr. JOHNSON: It is not my intention to go over the matter raised. The position is that the member for Nedlands has moved to strike out words up to the point at which I have a proposed amendment. If his amendment is agreed to, mine will fall, and the effect would be to remove the remainder of the clause. If the first amendment succeeds, I will have no possibility of opposing the other portion of the hon. member's proposal.

The intention of the subclause being discussed is that under it no one will be able to enter anybody's home for the removal of goods which are the subject of hire-purchase unless he has legal authority obtained from the court. If the subclause is deleted, that will make it possible and probable that anybody who signs a hire-purchase agreement will undertake to allow the owner of the goods—that is, the hire-purchase seller—to enter his house by force if necessary to repossess goods on which payment is in default.

It is a matter of important principle that entry by force, entry without consent, to anybody's home should be achieved only by due process of law; and I strongly maintain that this amendment is contrary to all the principles of British law.



The CHAIRMAN: I think I should point out that there is quite a difference in the wording on the notice paper which provides for the deletion of the words after "any" and that on the addendum to notice paper No. 42 which states, "page 18, lines 8 to 14 inclusive—delete." The latter seems to be the correct way of stating the position; it would include "any."

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

|      |    |
|------|----|
| Ayes | 18 |
| Noes | 23 |

Majority against 5

#### Ayes.

|                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| Mr. Ackland      | Mr. Nalder   |
| Mr. Bovell       | Mr. Oldfield |
| Mr. Cornell      | Mr. Owen     |
| Mr. Court        | Mr. Perkins  |
| Mr. Crommelin    | Mr. Thorn    |
| Mr. Grayden      | Mr. Watts    |
| Mr. Hearman      | Mr. Wild     |
| Mr. Mann         | Mr. Roberts  |
| Mr. W. Manning   |              |
| Sir Ross McLarty | (Teller.)    |

#### Noes.

|               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| Mr. Andrew    | Mr. Lawrence |
| Mr. Brady     | Mr. Marshall |
| Mr. Evans     | Mr. Norton   |
| Mr. Gaffy     | Mr. Nulsen   |
| Mr. Graham    | Mr. O'Brien  |
| Mr. Hall      | Mr. Potter   |
| Mr. W. Hegney | Mr. Rhatigan |
| Mr. Hoar      | Mr. Sewell   |
| Mr. Jamieson  | Mr. Sleeman  |
| Mr. Johnson   | Mr. Toms     |
| Mr. Kelly     | Mr. May      |
| Mr. Lapham    | (Teller.)    |

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. JOHNSON: I move an amendment—

That after the word "goods" in line 11, page 18, the words "not being motor-vehicles" be inserted.

The intention is to meet the difficulty envisaged by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in relation to the recovery of goods by hire-purchase owners in case of default.

The matter of motorcars is one in regard to which I feel we can meet the demands of property as against those of privacy to some considerable extent; because, firstly, a motorcar is practically never stored within a private home; and, secondly, because if it is the firm intention of the purchaser to default, it is not impossible for him to remove the vehicle with great speed in almost any direction. While I am not completely in love with the principle, I am prepared to recommend the inclusion of this amendment to meet the difficulty as far as seems reasonable.

Amendment put and passed.

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

Mr. COURT: As my previous amendment was not agreed to, I do not propose to proceed with a further amendment I have on the notice paper.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clause 19—agreed to.

Clause 20—Agreements entered into by financiers as owners:

Mr. COURT: The intention of the amendment I have on the notice paper is really to oppose the clause, which I think unfair and I feel that the draftsman overlooked certain provisions of the Bill. It has the effect of making the lender, as defined, subject to the same obligations as the owner. If I felt that the purchaser within the meaning of the Bill would be placed at a disadvantage by the intervention of a finance company, I would not oppose the clause but I invite attention to Clause 19 which contains a provision that is in the existing Act. That provision is necessary.

I know of no case of hardship on the part of a seller of goods owing to that provision, but it makes the seller more responsible in connection with his staff and others who represent the condition of goods on his behalf. If we wish to convey the position in respect of the original owner on to the lender, we will create a situation that would be unfair because the lender would be one of the finance organisations that would be held responsible for matters over which it had no control. I would not mind that if it were not that I am convinced that the purchaser is fully protected by the existing law.

A legal luminary explained to me that the purchaser still has his rights against the dealer if he is "forced or induced to change his position to his disadvantage by means of false representation." If the person negotiating the original transaction induces the purchaser to write the agreement in the name of the finance company, the purchaser's rights are still preserved against that original party. If the clause is deleted the purchaser will not lose his or her rights in that regard. I feel that the clause would be to the disadvantage of the hire-purchase flow in this State and I oppose it.

Mr. JOHNSON: The side note shows that this clause comes from Act No. 56 of 1941, N.S.W. The preceding clause, which is taken from our Act, is also found in the New South Wales legislation where over 16 or 17 years it has created no great handicap although that State has the greatest volume of hire-purchase business in the Commonwealth. As printed, the clause makes it clear that a financier behind a transaction has the same liability as if he were the original vendor. I think the clause should be allowed to stand.

Mr. COURT: While some of these provisions have been in the New South Wales Act for many years, they have not been part of it for long as at present constituted, and I feel that they would write a different Act on to their statute book now if they had opportunity. This provision must be considered in the light of other sections of their legislation and some of the

provisions which had not much impact under their old statute have an entirely different effect under the present one. I oppose the clause.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: The opposition of the member for Nedlands to this clause is based on his statement that this provision would turn lenders away from taking the risk, but is it fair that a purchaser should be penalised by a change in the other party concerned? I see no reason why the purchaser should have his rights reduced or interfered with. If the vendor transfers his interest in the agreement to another party who would be a lender, the situation could be covered by agreement between the vendor and the lender. I support the clause.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 21—Restrictions on payments by financiers to owners of goods:

Mr. COURT: Would the member for Leederville give the Committee his interpretation of this clause. It seems it tries to prevent what are known as kick backs in the hire-purchase business, but that may or may not be the interpretation. One or two people have had a go at interpreting the clause, but have not been satisfied with the result. I do not oppose the clause, but could the hon. member say how it is expected to operate, and against whom it is aimed?

Mr. JOHNSON: The intention of the clause is to prevent kick backs or any of those other things that are known to take place in this industry. If we remove the frills from the clause it would mean that the cash price shall not be jacked up or anything like that. That is its purpose but not being a legal expert, I cannot say whether it will be achieved.

Mr. COURT: Will it be illegal for a finance company to enter into a contract to give to a dealer a proportion of the hire charges although not described as such? For instance, take 6 per cent. flat rate imposed on a new vehicle. On a £300 balance for a 12 months deal it would be £18. There are certain transactions where the dealer gets half per cent. for doing administrative work for the finance company. He might be writing the papers or collecting certain instalments and obligating himself to other work. Some of that is related to the physical work done by the dealer and is bona fide, but as I read the clause it would be forbidden. Does the hon. member expect this clause to cover such arrangements or will they be forbidden?

Mr. JOHNSON: The main point is that the amount which will be paid by the financier back to the dealer will not be more than the amount which is the cash price. The dealer cannot receive anything more than the amount that is owed.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 22—Certain breaches of insurance contracts may be varied:

Mr. COURT: I am opposed to this clause because it introduces a bad principle. However, I do not feel strongly about it except to object to it being in the retrospective part of the Bill. I propose to delete this clause if possible with a view to reinserting it following Clause 36 after line 11 on page 37. I wish to reinsert it as a new clause at a later stage. If members read the clause they will see that there is adequate protection for the insurer because the purchaser has to satisfy a competent authority that the insurer is not disadvantaged. However, there is a bad principle inasmuch as a contract will have been entered into whereby one party will observe certain conditions in his dealings with another, and we are setting up machinery to excuse that person from observing those conditions.

If we accept this as a desirable provision for the protection of a purchaser, it should be taken out of this part of the Bill which has retrospective effect. If members refer to Clause 5 they would see that this particular clause would be retrospective in its effect. I am quite prepared to see it in the Bill, but I do not wish it to have retrospective effect.

Clause put and negatived.

Clause 23—Avoidance of certain provisions of insurance contracts:

Mr. COURT: This is another clause which I wish to oppose with a view to reinserting it as a new clause later if I am successful in its deletion. In other words, I will undertake to move for its insertion in another part of the Bill. My main complaint is that it falls within Part 2 of the Bill which has the retrospective effect to which I referred earlier. The main point about this clause is that if a contract of insurance provides that a dispute must be referred to arbitration before going to litigation, such a provision shall be void and of no effect.

Here again we have direct conflict with the contract law. Two people enter into a normal arrangement and we attempt to pass a Bill which will upset that arrangement and make the contract void and of no effect. It has been found except in the odd instance that compulsory arbitration before litigation acts in favour of the insured. People will argue that it acts against the insured, but, in my opinion, it acts in his favour and can be instrumental in cheaper arbitration before going to more expensive litigation.

In most cases insurance companies are fairly well off, but the insured is not so financially stable. Litigation would not mean a button off a shirt for some of these insurance companies. Arbitration is cheaper and quicker, provided the insured uses his rights. I object to the clause being included in the retrospective part of the Bill.

Mr. JOHNSON: Seeing that the member for Nedlands has undertaken to move for the reinsertion of this clause and the preceding one, in another place, I will not oppose him. I am glad to have it on record that he thinks there is some possibility that these clauses are of value, and his desire to take them out in order that they might not affect current agreements, and permit them to affect future ones, indicates that there may be some existing now which will be affected by these provisions. Whilst I have heard rumours that that could be so, I have now had it confirmed.

Mr. COURT: I wish to remove a misapprehension. I was merely trying to be co-operative. I oppose the position of the clause because of its retrospective effect. I do not know whether it would be hard on anybody or not. It is morally wrong to introduce retrospective legislation when people have entered into contracts quite happily, and to make it so that they later might find themselves up against a retrospective law with respect to that contract.

Clause put and negatived.

Progress reported.

## **BILL—ELECTORAL DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading—Defeated.*

Order of the Day read for the resumption of the debate from the 16th October.

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

|      |    |
|------|----|
| Ayes | 17 |
| Noes | 24 |

Majority against 7

Ayes.

|                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| Mr. Ackland      | Mr. Nalder   |
| Mr. Bovell       | Mr. Oldfield |
| Mr. Cornall      | Mr. Owen     |
| Mr. Court        | Mr. Perkins  |
| Mr. Crommelin    | Mr. Thorn    |
| Mr. Grayden      | Mr. Watts    |
| Mr. Hearman      | Mr. Wild     |
| Mr. W. Manning   | Mr. Roberts  |
| Sir Ross McLarty |              |

(Teller.)

Noes.

|               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| Mr. Andrew    | Mr. Moir     |
| Mr. Evans     | Mr. Norton   |
| Mr. Gaffy     | Mr. Nulsen   |
| Mr. Graham    | Mr. O'Brien  |
| Mr. Hall      | Mr. Potter   |
| Mr. W. Hegney | Mr. Rhatigan |
| Mr. Hoar      | Mr. Rodoreda |
| Mr. Jamieson  | Mr. Sewell   |
| Mr. Johnson   | Mr. Sleeman  |
| Mr. Kelly     | Mr. Toms     |
| Mr. Lapham    | Mr. May      |
| Mr. Lawrence  |              |
| Mr. Marshall  |              |

(Teller.)

Question thus negatived.

Bill defeated.

## **BILL—NOXIOUS WEEDS ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

MR. W. A. MANNING (Narrogin) [8.7] in moving the second reading said: This Bill has for its object the enabling of a

road board to undertake the work of the eradication of primary noxious weeds in its area on public land or on private land, and to pay the expense of such work out of its special rate or its ordinary funds.

The reason for this arose out of the desire to eradicate cape tulip which shows promise of taking control in large areas of country. Although cape tulip is not mentioned in the Bill, it is listed in the Act under the primary noxious weeds and the Bill would include any weeds listed in that section. The prime purpose of the Bill is to deal with cape tulip, but it could apply to any other weed. It is better to gain control of cape tulip before cape tulip gains control of our agricultural lands. It is felt that the matter is becoming rather urgent.

The control of cape tulip involves the spraying of the plant during the winter months over a period of several weeks. The exact time for spraying depends on the type of cape tulip, of which there are two varieties, and the work needs to be undertaken rather quickly when the time arrives. This particular weed has the habit of spreading quickly. It is easily carried by water so that with heavy rain and run-off of water it is rapidly taken from one property to another. There was an example of this when the floods occurred two years ago when in February torrents of water were bearing down all valleys. The result was that this weed gained a tremendous hold in low lying areas and is a real danger.

A conference of local governing bodies was held two or three months ago in the Central South Regional Council area which discussed the eradication of cape tulip and it was decided that this weed should be attacked while it was still not serious in a good many areas, although in some parts it has already become serious. It was felt that where a few plants are observed they should be eradicated quickly. A campaign was organised to encourage people to take this action. This brought results, but it was felt by some road boards—and there was a resolution to this effect—that it would be better if the road boards could enter on private property where it was indicated cape tulip existed in order to spray the isolated spots. This was to be done whether the cape tulip was on private land, public land or roadways.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Is it a primary noxious weed in all districts?

Mr. W. A. MANNING: Yes, throughout the State it comes under that particular heading. The road boards feel that if this were done by using road board funds, it would not be a penalty on anybody and even the person who contributes his rates and has no weed on his property knows very well that if it is on the roadways or on a neighbour's property or in the gullies it will not be long before it is on his property. Therefore, the expenditure of

a small proportion of his rates on the eradication of the weed surrounding him would ultimately be to his benefit.

Mr. Nalder: This would apply in council areas as well as road boards.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: That is true, but road boards are mainly concerned. It is felt that by a combined effort of ratepayers through the road board the weed could be eradicated with the least possible expense, and it would save a lot of expense later on.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Does the road board recoup the expenses?

Mr. W. A. MANNING: No, the idea is that a road board should spend the money out of its funds on behalf of the ratepayers. It is not intended that it should be a charge on individual ratepayers; it is a co-operative effort of all the ratepayers in the district concerned.

Mr. Ackland: Doesn't the parent Act provide that expenses can be recouped from the ratepayer?

Mr. W. A. MANNING: Yes, but the idea of the Bill is not to accomplish that. All that is desired is that the road board do the work on behalf of the ratepayers, as that is the better way of dealing with it.

Hon. A. F. Watts: At the present time they cannot spend funds on private land.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: That is the difficulty we are getting over, as a road board cannot spend road board money on private or public land. This Bill will enable the road board to provide the money. There is no compulsion. A road board may do this entirely at its own discretion. This amendment has been discussed with the officer in charge of weed control, Mr. Meadley, and he heartily approves of the idea and has commended the district concerned for its co-operative efforts to eradicate this weed before it gains control. I commend the Bill to the House, as I feel it is very necessary to enable this weed to be controlled with the minimum of expense and without delay. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Minister for Agriculture, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—HOUSING LOAN GUARANTEE.**

### *Message.*

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

### *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING** (Hon. H. E. Graham—East Perth) [8.16] in moving the second reading said: I feel proud to have the opportunity of introducing this Bill because, so far as I can ascertain, it provides for the broadest and

most generous housing scheme which, if the measure becomes law, will be in existence in any part of the world. I have already indicated that the time has arrived—and indeed the tempo is increasing—where the State Housing Commission or the Crown is bowing out in the matter of providing funds for the erection of homes. The Bill is designed to assist persons in the achievement of their desire for home ownership, irrespective of the persons concerned, and irrespective of the size, design or cost of the home they propose to build. In other words, the measure applies to all sections of the community who care to use it through the medium of established lending institutions.

Mr. Perkins: Could it be used to help farmers to build homes on their properties for themselves or their employees?

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** It could, but in such circumstances it might create more difficulties than it would solve. The member for Roe may appreciate this point as I proceed. The measure, then, is one to encourage the building and the acquisition of homes without the expenditure of Government moneys. The idea is based on the fact that the accepted lending institutions advance, as a general rule, only 60 to 70 per cent. of the cost of a building. In many cases people are unable to find the balance and, accordingly, are unable to proceed with their building proposals which frequently means that no other course is open to them than to lodge an application with the State Housing Commission.

A person seeking to erect a humble home costing £3,000 is, through the orthodox channels, required, generally speaking, to find the best part of £1,000. Of course, that is an impossible proposition. Under the Bill the Government will guarantee approved lending institutions, which will be able to make advances—indeed they are encouraged to do so—in excess of the existing limit. It is proposed, where those approved institutions make advances and are embraced within the scheme, to guarantee them up to 95 per cent. in respect of a loan not exceeding £3,000.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What are the approved institutions—building societies?

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** Yes, amongst others. They are listed in the Bill and include banks, insurance companies, building societies, the superannuation board and any other institution which is approved by the Minister.

Mr. Bovell: With the Minister's sole approval?

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** I think—

**THE SPEAKER:** Order please! I would ask members to allow the Minister to proceed.

The **MINISTER FOR HOUSING**: I have hardly got beyond my opening words, and I suggest that I tell the story and if, towards the end of my remarks, Mr. Speaker will permit, some questions may then be asked by those members who are doubtful on any points. I say this advisedly because I do not for one moment anticipate opposition; it will be a question only of properly understanding the provisions which are wide, generous and general for the purpose of overcoming the position where restrictions are generally applying.

If we take the example I gave earlier of a person seeking to erect a humble house, and the value of the property does not exceed £3,160, any of these institutions could advance £3,000 against it and the owner himself would have to find £160 only instead of something in the vicinity of £1,000. In other words, it now becomes practicable for the person to proceed and he is accordingly removed from the necessity of having to approach the Government. The idea is that on a loan not exceeding £3,000, the guarantee shall be up to 95 per cent.; between £3,000 and £5,000 the loan shall not exceed 90 per cent., and on a house valued at over £5,000 it shall not exceed 80 per cent.

As an example, on a £10,000 home, if a financial institution approved under the scheme were prepared to do business, it could lend £8,000, and the Government would guarantee repayments and all commitments in connection with the loan, so that the client would have to find only £2,000. I might interpolate that I do not think there would be many cases along the lines I have indicated because if I have been correctly informed the feeling of the banks is that if a person desires to build a super luxury home, he must find all or a greater part of the money himself. In other words, these institutions themselves impose certain limits.

There will be no direction of any sort to these approved institutions and it is thought that they will conform to their usual practice of assessing the merits of an applicant and of his proposition and will carry out a certain amount of supervision or inspection as the erection proceeds. Such institutions will continue to regard these transactions on a business basis because, if they do not conform to reasonable requirements as a business concern the penalty may be withdrawal of approval.

For the risk the Government is taking in making it possible for an advance to be made, far in excess of that to which prudent business rules would apply, a charge of one quarter of 1 per cent. will be payable by the approved lending institutions into a loan guarantee fund. That one quarter of 1 per cent. per annum will be reckoned on the outstanding balance of a client's account and it is not likely to prove a burden to anyone, but will make possible the realisation of the dreams of many who would like to build homes of

their own but who are now driven by circumstances to purchase homes from the State Housing Commission or to rent premises from private landlords.

The **SPEAKER**: Order, please! There is too much conversation.

The **MINISTER FOR HOUSING**: The fact that there is so much conversation, Mr. Speaker, confirms what I said the other evening; that whereas a few years ago housing was a top priority political question it is now merely another of the 101 problems dealt with by Parliament from time to time. The purpose of the Bill is to allow people to become owners of new houses. It will permit a person to erect or build an entirely new house or to buy a new house already erected. It will also allow a person who has been living in a house for a period not exceeding six months and who has been the only occupant of the premises also to come within the scheme.

It may be that a person wishes to buy a house that appeals to him, probably from a builder or agent and he may have only a week or so in which to make up his mind. That period of time might not be sufficient to enable him to complete the necessary financial arrangements and therefore this measure would make it possible for him to purchase that home. It is proposed to allow a person under such circumstances to reside with his family in that house for a period not exceeding six months, in which case it will still be regarded as a new house, conditional on what I said earlier, that no one else has at any time lived in that house.

While most lending institutions have at the present time a maximum of, in some cases, 15 years, others 21 years, and others 31 years, this guarantee scheme will apply, if the lending authorities feel disposed, in respect of loans for a period up to 45 years. This is to bring it on all fours with the maximum period under the war service homes scheme, under the State Housing Act, and also under the purchase arrangements in the Commonwealth-State housing agreement. But here again I emphasise that it will be a matter entirely for the lending institution itself to determine, whether it adheres to its existing periods of repayment, or whether it desires to go to a period beyond that and up to a maximum of 45 years.

It is provided in the Bill that a person who has been assisted under this scheme shall not be further assisted automatically, but may be assisted with the approval of the Minister. Without giving examples, I think all members can envisage that there might be circumstances from time to time which warrant second assistance under this scheme. But it is not thought that it should be availed of as a general rule. The purpose of this Bill is to enable people on the easiest of terms to acquire homes for themselves; and it is not designed to enable

people to build houses for the purpose of trading in them at some profit to themselves. Neither is it intended that a person who already owns a house shall be embraced within the terms of the Bill, unless approval is granted by the Minister.

I might mention in connection with this that an applicant who already owns a home is, as a general rule, ineligible for assistance from the State Housing Commission; but under certain circumstances that procedure has been overridden. For instance, if a person has a house at Albany, where perhaps he seeks to retire—and in other words he does not wish to dispose of the home—but he now has a permanent job at Geraldton, it seems ludicrous to debar him from consideration. After all, of what use is a house to him at Albany if the whole of his lifetime is likely to be spent at Geraldton, Derby or somewhere else a great distance away? It is in cases such as that, where people already own homes, that assistance is likely to be given through the lending institutions.

It will be seen that the Bill is a very small one. I have already indicated that the purpose is not to particularise but rather to state general principles, to provide a certain machinery and then leave it to the good sense and the administration of a department like the State Housing Commission, which has now had a great deal of experience in operating its own schemes and dealing with war service homes itself, and through other lending authorities. In addition, over the past 12 months or so, it has had a good deal of experience in dealings with building societies. So the officers of the commission are well qualified and experienced to handle a scheme of this nature.

On the other hand, speaking personally, I have the utmost confidence in the banks, insurance companies, building societies and other like bodies, which make advances in the normal course of their business to enable people to build or acquire homes. Therefore, I have not much doubt about their playing the game in accordance with the spirit of this legislation.

I must emphasise that, subject to some normal requirements, the activities of these concerns will be interfered with to no extent whatever; they can please themselves whether they come into it; they can deal with as many or as few clients as they like; they can lend up to the 95 per cent. or at a lesser figure; they can continue their procedure of lending for a period of 21 or 31 years; or, at their own discretion, they can take advantage of the extended period of 45 years. They can at any time withdraw from the scheme, once having been a member of it and under those circumstances, if the lending authority withdraws voluntarily, or has its charter withdrawn by the Government because of some practice which

is frowned upon, the guarantee of the Government will still apply in respect of all transactions up to that date.

Mr. Wild: Have you envisaged the amount you might require in any one year by way of guarantee?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I hazard a guess that it would be most unlikely that anything would be wanted for a generation, unless we had a severe depression.

Mr. Wild: I think you misunderstood me. What I meant was the amount the Treasurer would be called upon to guarantee in any one year.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I have no idea whatever. I have some figures regarding schemes in other parts of Australia and they are not nearly as generous as this scheme. I have the figures only up to 1955, but the State of Victoria has guaranteed £45,000,000, New South Wales, to the same period, has guaranteed £111,000,000, South Australia £10,000,000, and Great Britain £2,000,000,000. In South Australia the limit is £2,750 and in a report from that State it says that not one penny has had to be provided. In the words of the officer concerned—neither did he think it was ever likely to be.

But at the same time it is necessary to have this fund just in case. As a general rule, the person seeking to acquire a home is one with some sense of responsibility. He is a pretty fair type of citizen, and having sunk some of his own money, even if it be as low as £100 or £150—and the person going into a humbler home with £150 probably finds it of greater consequence to him than somebody else who has £500 or £600 to put in—he strains every nerve and sinew to retain his home.

Even if bad times befall these people the general increase in values, the improvements effected to the property by the individual himself and, of course, the original deposit plus the instalment, or the amortisation portion of the instalments, for several years until he falls down on his contract, will almost invariably ensure that however much the client owed to the lending institution, there would be far more by way of equity in that property.

But there could be cases to the contrary, and a guarantee does not mean anything unless there is some fund to back it up; and the charge of one quarter of 1 per cent., with certain variations, appears to be the figure that has been settled on. Apart from claims, however, there are certain expenses of an administrative nature so far as the Government authority—in this case, the State Housing Commission—is concerned. In certain cases valuations would have to be undertaken for the purpose of checking up; but I do not think the

Government is inviting any trouble, so there would be no great responsibility devolving upon it.

For those who may have some doubt as to whether the Government is not going too far, I might mention that under the State Housing Act we were dealing by and large with the little people—those on the lowest incomes. We sell houses on a 2 per cent. deposit; that is to say, a deposit of £50 on a home costing £2,500 and anyone who knows anything about the State Housing Commission, or the Workers' Homes Board before it, knows perfectly well that in the overwhelming majority of cases people have lived up to their obligations, and I think the income limit for the Workers' Homes Board until a few years ago was £400 a year.

In other words, only those people whose incomes were less than £400 could do business with the then Workers' Homes Board. At the present moment the income limit is approximately £1,100 which is not a great sum, having regard to the fact that the basic wage is not far short of £700 at the present moment.

Mr. W. A. Manning: Under this Bill the institutions will still have to finance from their own resources.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That is so, but it will be possible for them to go further than is customary, but in so doing they will be giving these people more generous terms to enable them to give effect to their own desires on their own blocks of land.

Mr. Nalder: The Bill does not fix any rate of interest.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: No. If it were found that there could be extortion on the part of any of these approved institutions, or that they were not taking the ordinary precautions and approving loans because the Government was backing them, and if they allowed persons to erect houses on what is known as swampy land, where there is no security, their franchise would be taken away. I hasten to repeat, however, that the types of lending institutions envisaged are responsible bodies, and I do not anticipate any trouble whatever.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Do you expect that it will considerably curtail the activities under the Commonwealth-State rental scheme?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I do not know that they can be altogether related, because people who seek rental premises are, as a general rule, in a different category from those who desire to purchase homes. As a matter of fact, under the various schemes at the moment, it is easier for people to obtain a home under the purchase scheme from the State Housing Commission than it is for them to get a rental home. I am speaking about

the metropolitan area in connection with war service homes and homes under the State Housing Act and the Commonwealth-State purchase scheme.

Mr. Roberts: Last year an amount of £600,000 was distributed amongst the building societies. Will this measure affect the distribution of a like sum next year?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: No, it will have no detrimental effect whatever. The member for Bunbury should know that of next year's allocation not 20 per cent. but 30 per cent. will go to the building societies, so if the same amount is set aside in Western Australia, the building societies will receive not £600,000 but £900,000.

Mr. Roberts: This will not affect them?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: No, that is an agreement between the Commonwealth and the State, and this is purely a domestic matter. I do not think there is anything more than I can usefully add. I hope the Bill will have the effect not only of making it possible for people to set up homes of their own, and proceed with that object in view, but that it will also have some beneficial effect upon the building industry at a time when it is most required. I hope also that as another scheme—and there has been a new one almost every year of late—it will assist in educating the public to the fact that if they have a housing need, there are places other than the State Housing Commission to which they can go.

I trust they will realise that the Treasurer has insufficient funds to undertake his school building programmes and hospital-building programmes and water supply schemes and the rest, and that the more he can be relieved in the matter of housing, to that extent will it be possible for him to undertake these essential public responsibilities. If this Bill succeeds in achieving that, and that alone, it will assist in the provision of many facilities in Western Australia, both in the town and country, which we have had to do without for a considerable period.

Mr. Wild: What security must be given over the guarantee by the applicant? Is it a second mortgage that you take out?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: At the present moment let us call it the XYZ insurance company. Its practice at present is to lend 60 per cent. of the value of a property with a maximum of say, £2,000, repayable over a period of 21 years. There will be no interference with that insurance company, or with the clients or anybody else. If it is embraced within this scheme, that insurance company will be permitted to lend a greater amount, and a greater proportion of the security, up to 90 or 95 per cent. and will be able to give the extended credit for this period of 45 years, instead of 21 years under the usual practice.

The only requirement will be one-quarter of 1 per cent. per annum on the outstanding quarterly balance of the account shall be paid to the State Housing Commission. That will go into a guarantee fund to meet certain expenses, and also the cases—which I anticipate will be exceedingly rare—where there has been foreclosure with insufficient to meet outstanding amounts.

Mr. Bovell: What legal security will the Government have for its guarantee?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Only that it is doing business with reputable organisations.

Mr. Wild: It will be between the institution and the Treasurer.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That is so.

Mr. Bovell: It will not be in the form of a second mortgage.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: There is already a second mortgage scheme in existence. That was passed two years ago under which persons can go to their customary financial institution for assistance. If what they are able to borrow, together with what they have in hand, is insufficient, then the Government will provide them with a second mortgage up to £1,000. The affairs of the institution will not be interfered with in any way. All the Bill seeks to achieve is to enable the banks to be more generous in their approach to clients. They can please themselves whether or not to come in under this scheme. They can please themselves how far they go. The client can please himself in any respect, irrespective of his circumstances. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Wild, debate adjourned.

## BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [8.53]: This is a most interesting Bill which has been brought before us by the Minister representing the Minister for Railways. So far as I am concerned, before considering it, we are entitled to know more about what is proposed to be done in the case of the commissioner, Mr. Hall. The Minister indicated to us that a decision on that matter would be made subsequently, but that is a very unsatisfactory state of affairs.

As I see the position, of the three persons who were appointed at various times to make up the railway commission, as it existed three or four months ago, Mr. Hall is the only person who still has a completely unblemished record. There is no

suggestion of improper conduct on his part; he appears to be generally respected; and no allegations have been made against him in any of the reports that have come under our notice that he is in any way unsuitable to hold the position for the balance of the term for which he was appointed. I would suggest that the Government has had ample time to consider the position of this gentleman. It is not as though this matter had been sprung on the Government suddenly yesterday or the day before; it has been quite apparent for a month or more that some decision would have to be reached in this regard.

I would point out that Mr. Hall was appointed commissioner until he reached 65 years of age, under the Railways Act of 1948. He has not attained that age; I understand he has over two years to go. Personally, I consider that before we give further consideration to the Bill we should be made aware of the intentions of the Government in this particular case. To use a colloquial phrase, we are being asked to "buy a pig in a poke." That is not a fair proposition to place before either House of this legislature. I earnestly hope that before the Bill is permitted to go to a vote on the second reading, we shall be made aware of the intentions of the Government with regard to the gentleman I have mentioned. I would hope personally that those intentions—whatever might be the fate of this Bill, or whether or not one commissioner will be appointed—would result in Mr. Hall being able to see out his time as a railway commissioner. As I have said, there is no evidence that he has done anything to justify any other treatment being meted out to him.

For my part, I am not convinced that the three-man commission has proved to be undesirable. I am satisfied that the difficulties which have arisen have been due more to the personnel than to the system. The Minister has agreed with that to some extent when he said there has been some clash of personalities, but he was of the opinion that the matter went a great deal further than that. I would suggest that the difficulties to which reference has been made have obviously increased very greatly since Mr. Raynor's death. He was the Assistant-Commissioner (Commercial) up to the time that the Government of which I was a member went out of office, and for some time after that until his death.

I was frequently in contact with Mr. Raynor, because as members know, at that time the Minister for Railways was a member in another place and had, as is the case now, to be represented by a member in this House. It happened that I was the Minister responsible for that representation. I have no hesitation in saying that from all I could gather from Mr. Raynor at that time, quite a reasonable relationship existed between the three members of the commission.



So I say there is some indication, to my mind at least, that the difficulties that have been referred to have increased since Mr. Raynor's death and, of course, the appointment of Mr. R. E. B. Lee followed on Mr. Raynor's death, with the results we have already been made aware of by the report of Royal Commissioner Smith. It was obviously not as good an appointment as one could have wished. Undoubtedly, as events have turned out, Mr. Raynor was a very much better person than the man who took his place.

It is quite clear, I should suggest, from the report of Royal Commissioner Smith, that the difficulties have been gravely accentuated since that substitution took place owing to the unfortunate death of Mr. Raynor. Therefore, I cannot bring myself to believe that there is anything intrinsically wrong with the arrangement of three commissioners, which, as everyone knows, was strongly recommended by the Royal Commission which was appointed in 1947 and reported in 1948. That Royal Commission, of course, was composed of two gentlemen of outstanding knowledge and ability in regard to railway management and construction.

I saw in the Press recently that one of them, Mr. du Plessis, is now in complete charge of the very substantial 3ft. 6in. railway system in the Dominion of South Africa and quite obviously, therefore, he was a person of undoubted competence. Indeed, it was quite clear from his report—from the report of the commissioners, in the compilation of which he took part—that he was eminently qualified to express opinions on the subject of the Western Australian railways, especially as the report was not the result of a cursory examination, but a very careful investigation, extending over the whole of the system and for a period of a good many months.

The other commissioner was Mr. Gibson, who was an eminent civil engineer with much experience in railway construction and operation and who was highly recommended by responsible authorities in Eastern Australia as being a person who was entirely satisfactory for a position such as he was given, when he was given His Majesty's Royal Commission at that time. What that Royal Commission did demonstrate, I think beyond the possibility of any successful contradiction, was that the one-man system had failed, because in their report, the commissioners said—

We feel that the managerial control should be further strengthened. In our opinion, this can best be achieved by the appointment of officers as assistant general managers, one to be in charge of the commercial traffic and accounting branches, and the other to assume control of the two engineering branches, civil and mechanical, as well as the stores branch. With the appointments of

two assistant general managers the general manager, assisted by the two assistant general managers (these three officers will form the management committee) will exercise the functions hitherto vested in the commissioner.

They went on to say—

The two assistant general managers should be appointed as members of the management committee by the Minister and, subject to Section 13 of the Government Railways Act, 1904, they should hold office until they would normally retire from the service. To ensure a balanced organisation one of the assistant general managers should be an officer possessing a thorough knowledge of the commercial, traffic or accounting branches, while the other assistant general manager should be a technical officer.

That is exactly what was done, except for the change of name from manager to commissioner and assistant commissioner. As I said, these recommendations were not lightly or hastily made by these very expert and experienced gentlemen, but in the light of the full investigation of what had happened under the one-commissioner system, and only as recently as 1948. I think the position is, in fact, that the system recommended by the Royal Commissioners in 1948, and put into operation, has actually never been given a fair trial. It certainly has not been given a fair trial in the last two or three years anyway.

That is as apparent as the sun in the sky at midday, when one reads the report of Royal Commissioner Smith, because there have been undercurrents during that time which I should say would prevent anything of that nature becoming effectively successful, no matter what intrinsic value it might have. At the same time, the Royal Commissioners in 1948 included in their report some criticism of the system in existence at the time they made their inquiry. For instance, at page 104 of their report, it is stated—

Some of the unsatisfactory features and bad conditions which we find at so many centres could have been avoided, or at any rate mitigated, if greater interest and energy had been displayed by the management in the attainment of more effective supervision and the adoption of more efficient methods of working.

I think it could hardly be expected to find stronger criticism than that. They went on to say—

It is apparent that for some years now, the Commissioner of Railways and heads of branches, as well as other senior officers, had accepted the position that due to the "financial malnutrition" very little, if anything, could be done to improve matters.

This inertia has had a devastating effect on the morale and efficiency of the service as a whole and also left its mark on the public, who had evidently accepted the inefficiency of the railways as something inevitable which they had to suffer. Throughout our inquiry the attitude of these railway officers has, with few exceptions, been defensive and this negative approach to the problem, this reluctance to take action, to retrieve the position by taking a more forceable attitude has, in our opinion, been a contributory factor in bringing about the present state of inefficiency on the railways.

The rank and file of the staff, taking their cue from the senior officers, have become apathetic and in consequence efficiency and discipline have reached a low ebb. The team spirit and mutual confidence between the management and the personnel has been undermined and the feeling of pride which comes of the knowledge that the public was being well and efficiently served by the railways, has been destroyed.

That, I think, evidences the fact that there were distinct faults in the system which prevailed prior to the 1948 amendment to the Act. In passing, I might refer to what these Royal Commissioners stated was the most acute problem of that time—it was lack of sufficient engine power. The Royal Commissioners said—

Lack of sufficient engine power is the most acute problem today.

That was in 1948. The remarks continue—

The circumstances were such that the Commissioner of Railways would have been justified in pursuing a more aggressive course of action in an endeavour to bring home to the Government the gravity of the situation, namely, the risk of a breakdown in the railways with disastrous consequences for the State and the Commonwealth that such an eventuality connotes, even at the risk of being considered importunate by the Government.

In the light of the memoranda submitted by Mr. Ellis and the discussions with Ministers for Railways from time to time, we can only express surprise that anybody failed to take more energetic action to prevent the railways from falling into their present state of near breakdown.

I have referred to this for two reasons, firstly, because it supports the earlier contentions I have read of the Royal Commissioners of 1948; and, secondly, because some criticism has been advanced against the Treasurer in the last Government for giving preference to the provision of engine power. This, of course, was the

major obligation undertaken by his Government in respect of the railways after the 1948 amendment to the Act and the appointment of the two commissioners. It is desirable to point out that the Royal Commissioners, men of vast experience and great knowledge, after a careful examination of the position throughout the State, said that the lack of sufficient engine power was the most acute problem of the day. So, there was no doubt that was obviously the first problem to deal with.

To me it is not of great moment whether the railways are controlled by one commissioner or by three on the basis proposed by the 1948 Royal Commission, and which has since been the law of the country. All I want to do is to ensure that what is done is the best for the system. I find it difficult to bring myself to believe that the recommendations of those gentlemen in 1948 were not soundly based in view of my clear understanding as to their ability, knowledge and capacity. I feel that they were on the right track. What had taken place before had convinced them that a definite change was necessary, and they made their recommendation in good faith and it was carried into effect.

I am satisfied that the fact that the carrying out of their recommendations has not fulfilled expectations, is more due to the clashes of personality, particularly in more recent years, than to any other factor. I venture to say, without fear of contradiction, that had there been a person appointed in 1954 of the same calibre as Mr. Raynor, the system of three commissioners would today have been working far more satisfactorily than it has obviously been doing in recent times.

However, I find it hard to understand the attitude of the Government. We have had a single Public Service Commissioner and the Government now wishes to have three. We have before us a Bill to set up the management of a metropolitan transport system where it is proposed to have three trustees, yet in the face of skilled recommendations which were made after careful and long inquiry, the Government proposes with the railways to return to the one-man system which was previously condemned. I do not say that I am not open to conviction on this matter.

The Minister for Transport: I think you are a bit unfair in bringing in the proposed transport trust.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I only mention it because it is a transition, as it were. The Minister is moving from one system to another, and in proposing the new system he suggests there should be three trustees.

The Minister for Transport: But the State Electricity Commission is under a single managerial head although there is a commission of some members. This will also apply to the proposed new trust if the Bill passes Parliament in its present form.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: That may be so, and if the Minister objects to the comparison I will not persist in it, but I will persist in the other one which is perfectly correct, without any question and without qualification.

The Minister for Transport: Even that might meet with a sticky fate.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I am not saying what will happen to it but what the intention was when the Bill was introduced. However, I am prepared to pass judgment on the Bill when I have learned the views of other members, but at this stage I cannot say that I am satisfied with the change that is proposed.

MR. COURT (Nedlands) [9.18]: I do not rise to oppose the Bill. At this stage I propose to support it but we must maintain our perspective over the situation that has arisen. We are examining the three-man commission in the light of a peculiar set of circumstances. I agree that the three-man system has not been given an opportunity to demonstrate whether it is the best system or not, owing to the peculiar clash of personalities that has been accentuated in recent months, culminating in the present situation whereby we have only one commissioner left in active participation in Commission affairs.

The main purpose of the Bill, of course, is to revert to a single commissioner, for the reason that the three-commissioner system has failed. As I said before it has been a clash of personalities that has brought about an extraordinary state of affairs. In theory the three-man commission has much to commend it, but in practice we must admit it has not worked out. In theory it should bring a blend of knowledge which cannot be expected from one man. We have to accept the fact that the railways in Western Australia, as in any other State are the biggest single organisation in the State, and it calls for almost superhuman effort to manage such a concern.

There are men with the personality, ability and power of direction to get other people to work with and for them, who could manage such a concern and retain complete control of matters of policy as well as day-to-day management, but we must remember that the railways are the biggest single undertaking in the State and call for great skill in the matter of top management.

I repeat that, in theory, a three-man commission should bring to bear a blend of knowledge and experience that could not be expected of one man. It would also, in theory, avoid too much power getting into the hands of one man. This is a machine in which many millions of pounds are invested and which handles millions of pounds inwards and outwards each year. If the members of a three-man commission are all competent and each has special ability in a particular

sphere and is possessed of suitable personality, and if they have a sound and forceful chairman, there is no reason why there should not be a better result from the three than one could expect from a single commissioner.

However, the experience of this three-man commission proved it a failure and therefore I support the Government's intention to revert to a single commissioner. We must remember, however, that this proposal is not a cure-all. We could have a commission of one man or of five, and it might do nothing of value—

The Minister for Transport: I have told you a dozen times of the many steps taken by the Government, and none of them has been the complete answer.

Mr. COURT: The Minister is reading into my remarks something that I did not intend. I am still dealing with the question of a commissioner or a commission as the case may be. The fact of our reducing the commission from three men to one man will not necessarily give the answer in regard to management and the big task is to go out into the field and find the right man, which will not be easy unless the Government has preconceived ideas on who is to be the appointee.

The Minister for Transport: I can assure you it has not.

Mr. COURT: In other words, the Government is starting from scratch to comb local talent or perhaps also talent interstate and abroad in order to fill the position. I am glad of the Minister's assurance, but am concerned also because it will not be easy to find such a man. I hope the Minister when replying will indicate the methods the Government proposes to employ in seeking a successor to the present commissioner. I do not think it unfair to interpret the Minister's remarks as implying that the present surviving commissioner will not be the appointee and that when he completes his contract with the Government he will retire from the service. The Minister remains silent but I do not think that is an unfair interpretation to place on his remarks.

The Minister for Transport: We have made no decision whatever; it is awaiting the fate of the Bill.

Mr. COURT: In place of a concerted effort by three men each possessing special qualifications we have had undoubtedly disloyalty on the part of one or two of them, coupled with bickering and indecision and the obvious outcome had to be inefficiency, poor morale and ever-increasing losses. If the position is as bad as is rumoured and portrayed by Magistrate Smith's report, one is entitled to ask what successive Ministers have been doing. Is this the culmination of years of tittle-tattle from the commissioners to Ministers who have lent a receptive ear to those representations?

I would have thought that if a Minister knew the three commissioners were bickering and being childish, he would bang their heads together and tell them to be sensible or get out, but this seems to have gone on over the years, culminating in the Smith report and legal action against one commissioner and suspension of another—

Mr. May: They took fine care that the Minister did not know what was going on.

Mr. COURT: Surely the member for Collie will not suggest that the Minister did not know that for some years there was a lack of harmony and loyalty between the commissioners!

Mr. May: Like the rest of us, he knows now.

Mr. COURT: It has been stated in this House and headlined in the Press that the commissioners have not been on speaking terms with one another. It was public property and the Minister must have known it. I do not suggest that the present Minister is wholly responsible, but this must have been known to the Government through its Ministers, and yet the commissioners have been allowed to remain in office long enough to bring about the present catastrophic state of affairs in the finances of the railways and consequently the finances of the State.

Mr. May: That is why the Royal Commission was brought about.

Mr. Hearman: If the Minister did not know it years ago, he was the only one who did not.

Mr. COURT: The member for Collie misses the point. The Smith report was not the Minister's first intimation of the state of affairs among the commissioners.

Mr. May: It was his first official knowledge of it.

Mr. COURT: I will not have that. It is a reflection on the Minister as the man in charge of the department and in daily contact with the senior men to say that. It would be foolish to suggest that he did not know that bickering was going on.

The Minister for Transport: He would know it in a general sense, but he would not have detailed information regarding it.

Mr. COURT: In the Minister's own speech he told us that the commissioners were beating a track to the Minister's office. Would that not sound a note of warning to him? It is amazing to me that someone did not hit this harder some time ago. However, it is past history and we are confronted with a situation in which the Government wants to revert to the single commissioner system.

I have tried to work out the background of the appointment of the three-man commission. Most of it has been given in

detail by the Leader of the Country Party and the member for Blackwood, but the fact remains that the two Royal Commissioners, who were highly respected and capable men, decided that our railway system was at a stage where it needed three commissioners. They referred to them as managers and for the word "commissioner," we have to read "general manager" when dealing with their report, and for "assistant commissioners" we have to read, "assistant general managers."

At that time the situation of our railways was at an appalling level and the position was desperate. If I remember rightly—as a member of the public at that time—it was on its last legs and at one stage there was a chance that the system would collapse altogether, and in those circumstances the Royal Commission made its recommendation. I have raised this question to keep the matter in proper perspective because there is the suggestion that without the three commissioners, all would have been well today. We could have had a single commissioner who would have been worse than the three of them put together.

Mr. May: He could never have fallen out with himself, could he?

Mr. COURT: I agree with that proposition. But if the Government lands a man in a top position, remunerated as he should be, and with a long-term contract as he should have, it is not going to be easy to get rid of him. If the Government eventually picks on a man who does not measure up to the situation after he is appointed, it will be extremely difficult to get rid of him. However, that is a chance that every big concern takes when it appoints a general manager; and all it can do is to be extremely careful in the actual appointment.

I re-echo the sentiments expressed by the Leader of the Country Party regarding this sudden change to a one-man commission. By interjection I reminded the Minister for Transport of this particular point, so far as it relates to the Public Service, and he suggested that I transfer my argument to the Premier. But it makes rather strange reading. I would also point out to the Minister that whilst he brushed off the trust idea of having three trustees, the fact remains that just as the State electricity undertaking has a commission sitting over the manager, so the manager of a trust will virtually have a commission sitting over him; it is a commission, with another name, for all practical purposes. But the principle is not much different.

The Minister for Transport: Yes. In the railways there were three administrative officers and the decision could only be made by a meeting of them.

Mr. COURT: That is so.

The Minister for Transport: To my knowledge, that does not apply anywhere else in the Government service.

Mr. COURT: I will admit that three sensible fellows, anxious to work together, would have been able to do a better job than was done in this instance. There has been friction and there did not seem to be any effort to try to pull together. It is unfortunate that there was such a clash of personalities; and I doubt if we would ever find such a failure again in top level positions.

However, I have no intention of prolonging this debate. I wanted to make the point that there were good reasons why the Government of the day appointed a three-man commission. It was done on the best possible advice available; at the time the railway situation was desperate, as also was the supply and labour position. Looking at it in retrospect, I think the decision of the Government at that time was a sound one, based on the advice that it had. However, I readily admit that it has been a failure; and therefore I have no alternative but to support the Government's proposition of reverting to a single commissioner.

Finally, I hope that the Minister in his reply will give us some reasonable indication of the treatment that will be given to the remaining commissioner. He has come through the whole of this debacle with flying colours. His character and his reputation are unsullied, and I feel that he deserves a measure of generous treatment by the Government. It would be in the interests of all concerned if the Minister would indicate the method by which the Government proposes to deal with Mr. Hall, if it should happen that the Government wants to terminate his services before his normal period expires, which I presume is at the age of 65 years. I support the Bill.

MR. ACKLAND (Moore) [9.34]: I support my leader, the member for Stirling; and I would have been much happier in rising to speak if the Minister had given some indication of what the Government proposed to do regarding the new commissioner, or manager, of the Railway Department. I must admit that I can throw no stones at the past Government for its decision to appoint a three-man commission. I supported the idea with a good deal of enthusiasm, and that it has not turned out as successfully as some of us had hoped, is something to be regretted. Its failure was brought about by circumstances which those responsible for making the recommendations could never have envisaged at the time.

It is also my opinion that if the previous commissioner, Mr. Ellis, had had the same opportunities as the three commissioners

appointed by the McLarty-Watts Government had, he would have made a very much better job of it than those who took his place. However, as I said before, I was very much in favour of the three-man commission, and I fully supported the decision of the McLarty-Watts Government. I understand that the decision to appoint the three commissioners was made after a committee had thoroughly investigated all the qualifications of those who applied for the positions. Their qualifications seemed to cover all the necessary requirements.

I suggest to the Government that in considering the appointment of a new commissioner, it should give preference to a man who is a business manager—one who has the power of organising—in preference to a man who is a railway engineer, or who occupies some similar position. Our experiences since 1948, of men who have come from countries such as India, where coolie labourers can be employed for about 2d. a dozen, is such that they do not have the necessary knowledge to make the railways in this country pay. I do not hold the same views as my leader, and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, regarding the only commissioner now in office, when they say that he may be the most desirable man for the job.

My regret is that before the Government embarked on its drastic action of closing 842 miles of railway lines, it did not give consideration to the lack of harmony and the state of the railway management; that it made no attempt to bring the railway system on to a business footing; that it did not make every effort to ensure that the management was effective; that it did not make every effort to see that redundant men were not employed in the department; and that it did not do something about the chaotic condition of the service.

Had the Government taken all those steps, it would not have received such bitter opposition from me to the closing of the lines. If it had been able to prove that, after taking all those steps, freights should be increased, there would not have been a great deal of opposition from the people who live in the country, and who have some sense of responsibility. But instead of taking such a step; instead of seeing whether the system could not be better operated, the Government took the drastic step which, in effect, told the world that we, the Parliament of Western Australia, had lost faith in our own country to the extent that we were going to curtail and contract our agricultural activities in this land. I would say that Western Australia has the greatest potential for development of any country in the world where the white man can live in reasonable comfort.

The SPEAKER: I do not think the hon. member is in order in proceeding along these general lines. That has already been discussed fully on other motions. The Bill deals with the appointment of a single

commissioner; and I think the hon. member should address his remarks to that aspect of it, and not traverse other general matters.

**MR. ACKLAND:** I bow to your ruling, Mr. Speaker. I did not want to get on to a general discussion of what had happened previously, but I did want to draw the attention of the House to the fact that I would have been much happier had the Government looked into the management of the railways before taking the step it did.

Our three commissioners have been a failure, but I believe that the real failure has only come about since the death of Mr. Raynor. Up till that time, I feel the three commissioners were proceeding reasonably well with the rehabilitation of the railway service, as had been suggested and recommended by the Royal Commission, a member of which was Mr. du Plessis of South Africa.

It has been known to every member in this House—and I have stated it repeatedly when speaking on railway matters—that there was a lack of harmony, and a feeling of antagonism and bitterness between the three railway commissioners. I certainly did not go into the offices of the railway commissioners as often perhaps as did other members; but on the various occasions I went to see the commissioner, it was obvious to me that this antagonism and bitterness between the commissioners certainly existed, and I believe the Government should have been able to see that for itself.

Had it not been for some pimps who reported certain happenings in the Railway Department, we might never have had the inquiry that is now being conducted by Magistrate Smith. The findings in the first and second interim reports are most astounding. I am certain that when the rest of the report is published we will hear far more astounding things; and the three commissioners must be held responsible for the state of affairs that existed.

I do not propose to say anything more on the matter. I intend to support the second reading of the Bill. But I hope the Government will look for a man with organising ability. I hope it will look for a man who can say to the various heads of the departments, "I expect service from you or else! You are here to do a job and give satisfaction; now get out and do your job!" That is the type of man we want to see in charge of the railways of Western Australia; because I believe the railways in this State could be operated sufficiently well to enable them to meet their operational expenses if the task were approached with energy by the person appointed to fill the position.

**HON. SIR ROSS McLARTY (Murray)** [9.46]: The main provision in this Bill, of course, is that which seeks to provide

for one commissioner instead of three as is the position at present. From what one can gather as the debate has proceeded, at least a majority of members have made up their minds that they will support the proposal put forward by the Government that there shall be one commissioner.

The Government of which I was a member did not make these appointments lightly. We did, in fact, go abroad, and we obtained the most expert advice it was possible to get. Mr. Gibson from New South Wales, the head of a great engineering firm, is recognised as one of the most eminent consulting engineers to be found in the southern hemisphere; and of course Mr. du Plessis from South Africa, who was then one of the senior officers of the South African railways—which have a gauge similar to that which operates in Western Australia—was considered to be not only an expert but a most practical man in connection with railways generally.

I suppose the Minister already knows this, but it is interesting to see that Mr. du Plessis will be visiting Western Australia in a few days' time. I would suggest to the Minister for Transport that he and the Minister for Railways, or some other member of the Government, should endeavour to meet him during the time he is in Western Australia, with a view to telling him how things have developed in regard to our railways, and to ask him his opinion of the position in Western Australia at the present moment.

Of course, I appreciate, that Mr. du Plessis will not know all the developments that have taken place since he was a member of the Royal Commission in 1947; but as he will be in this State in a few days' time I suggest to the Minister in charge of the Bill that it might be worth his while to seek an interview with Mr. du Plessis during the time that he is in the Commonwealth.

I am not satisfied that the three-men commission was a failure. Looking at the latest Budget speech, and return No. 21, we find that the capital of the railways amounted to £60,666,759 at the 30th June, 1957. That capital is still increasing. It would be interesting to ascertain the amount of capital still required to put the railway system into proper working order. No doubt it would require many more millions.

When we consider that this concern has a capital of well over £60,000,000, we realise it is too great for one person to manage. Some members have spoken about obtaining the services of an outstanding man. I agree that he would have to be outstanding. Whoever is appointed to that position will not be able to act as he wishes; he will be subject to a considerable amount of political control. We know that return No. 21 shows

the railways deficit for 1956-57 at just on £5,300,000, and during the present financial year it is expected to increase to nearly £7,000,000.

The Minister for Transport: You should not complain about political control, because in 1951 you amended the Railway Act specifically for the purpose of giving political control.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Minister is right. There was political control; but that does not detract from my contention that the new commissioner will be subject to political control.

Referring to the deficit, how is it proposed to reduce it or to get rid of it? It cannot be got rid of, but it can be reduced substantially with proper management. Under existing circumstances in a State like ours, where developmental lines have been laid, the railways are not expected to pay under existing circumstances. We will have to face up to railway deficits for a long while to come. What control will the commissioner have over freights, fares, employment of personnel, purchase of diesel engines and such things? In these important matters he will be subject to political control, and he will not have the freedom of action which is available to the ordinary business manager controlling a great undertaking.

I notice that in the report of the Royal Commission in 1948, reference was made to the low morale amongst the personnel of the Railway Department. The present Royal Commissioner, Mr. Smith, states that low morale still exists in the department. Something has to be done to correct that situation, but I do not know what steps can be taken.

Reverting again to the three-men commission I am rather sorry to see that the Government intends to depart from that set-up. As was stated by several speakers, there has been a clash of personalities among the commissioners. Under those circumstances it was not possible for any commission to function satisfactorily. I hope that the Government will give further consideration to the report of the 1948 Royal Commission. It is still a very valuable report, and it deals with many problems and difficulties which confront the Railway Department today.

In view of the fact that a Royal Commissioner has been appointed to investigate railway matters, his report could be considered in conjunction with the report of the 1948 Royal Commission. I do not know what inquiry is being made at the present time. We have been told that he is investigating the general activities of the railways.

The Minister for Transport: He has virtually a blank cheque.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: We all recognise that the Royal Commissioner is a man of very considerable ability but he has not the benefit of the technical advice available to the 1948 Commission. In their particular spheres, both of the Royal Commissioners, Mr. Gibson and Mr. du Plessis, were experts and possessed very wide and practical experience. If Mr. Smith were to carry out his investigations successfully he would have to be given the assistance of the most expert technical advice available. Whilst I am aware that he has the right to call witnesses in relation to engineering or technical problems that crop up in the railway undertaking, it would be more satisfactory if he had been given the assistance of one or two technical experts as fellow Royal Commissioners.

Mention was made of the remaining commissioner, Mr. Hall. It is true that the reports submitted so far do not place any blame on him. It can be said that he has tried to give of his best to railway administration in this State. Looking back, I think he faulted in one direction. When he faced difficulties in having to work with his fellow commissioners he should have informed the Government that an impossible situation had arisen; he should have recommended steps to be taken in order to arrive at a satisfactory solution.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He should have done that.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I agree.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He might have done so, and we might not have been told.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: If that had been done, the Minister and the Government of the day would have given Mr. Hall their backing. I regret that it is now proposed to depart from the three-men commission. That set-up would have worked satisfactorily had it been given a fair trial. The Railway Department is a great undertaking. Apart from having to obtain an outstanding manager to control the railways, about which we have heard so much, the department will also require the best technical advice that is obtainable.

When I spoke on this matter previously, the Minister for Transport said that Cabinet was the board of directors, to which the commissioners reported. To some extent that is true. However, I would not say that Cabinet is a satisfactory board of directors when it comes to the management of a great concern such as the Railway Department. I think the Minister for Transport, on reflection will agree with me.

Let him look at his own portfolios! Certainly one of them is transport; but he has a full-time job in the portfolios which he controls and that applies to all other Ministers as well. As a result of that, they

have not time to delve into the many problems that arise in regard to our railways; and I think it is almost impossible for them, as Ministers, to make themselves fully conversant with what is going on throughout the railway system.

That brings me back to the fact that a one-man commissioner faces a tremendous task, and whilst he would have officers under him who would advise him, I do not think that it would have the same good result as having with him a man with seniority comparable with his. He, of course, would be a senior commissioner; but the other commissioners with one standing would be able to discuss things on the same level. Where problems arise with which one commissioner might not be conversant, it would be very useful indeed for discussions between three commissioners to take place.

The Government is inconsistent in this regard, because recently it introduced a Bill into Parliament which provided for three commissioners to run the Public Service, which is not nearly so intricate a business as the huge concern of the railways.

The Minister for Transport: I do not think it is a comparison. It would be more like three members of the Arbitration Court; and they hardly have a big business to run.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I disagree with the Minister; and if he really wants to admit the fact, he will say that the three-man commission in the Public Service is being proposed through pressure by the Civil Service Association. I do not want to be hypocritical about this, because I supported that particular Bill; but I do think, to a certain degree at any rate, that it can be compared with this proposal.

It is too late now, I suppose, to ask the Minister or the Government to reconsider this matter. I feel it is important because the huge losses we are making on the railways are having a detrimental effect on the general economy of the State; and, from present appearances, will continue to do so. This is not a matter which we need rush, and Mr. du Plessis and Mr. Gibson—I think he is still on the job—could be consulted if necessary and maybe they could tender some valuable advice to the Government. I know that Royal Commissioner Smith has recommended we should revert to a single commissioner; but even so, I feel that a most important step is being taken, and I have yet to be convinced it will be in the interests of the Railway Department.

MR. PERKINS (Roe) [10.5]: I would like to say a few words in this particular debate. I agree with the attitude which the Government is taking in reverting to a single commissioner. I must admit that when this change was made, during the

term of the last Government, I was one member who had some misgivings about the legislation, although I did not say anything on the floor of the House. Three commissioners did seem to have some superficial attraction, but unfortunately it has not worked in that direction at all. As far as I am concerned, the advantage of a single commissioner is that at least the railway system will have a certain and definite direction from the top.

There is nothing worse in any business venture—in fact, in any public undertaking of any description—than that there should be indecision as to what the official policy of the organisation is, and how it is going to be carried into effect. I believe that that has been the main trouble which the railway system has been working under in recent times.

In my opinion, the result has been that the lift in morale, which we hoped for in the railway system as a whole, did not take place; and unfortunately it is having very severe repercussions, not only on Government finance generally, but on the transport facilities available to people throughout the State.

I do not wish to enlarge on these particular aspects, but would like to say that I feel the step which the Government proposes should at least be given a trial. It cannot work out worse than the way the commission has operated in recent times.

Reference has been made to the benefit which could accrue from having three persons discussing some particular problem, as compared with its being left to a single individual. However, previous amendments to the Railway Act make the commissioner subject to the Government of the day both as regards policy and administration. At the time, I had misgivings about that change which made the commissioner subject to the Government of the day so far as administrative matters are concerned.

Admittedly, it is very difficult indeed to draw a clear line between what is general policy and what is an administrative matter; but looking at the position by and large, I believe that if the management of a large concern is not capable of making the decisions necessary for carrying into effect the general policy, that management should not be there. What are we paying the general management for, if it is not capable of making these decisions to carry policy into effect?

Perhaps, Mr. Ellis, the then Commissioner of Railways, might have been done a very great injustice at the time we changed over to a commission. A great deal of money has been spent in the years since, and I feel that perhaps the previous system of railway management may have given the State better value for the money spent than we have received in the period the commission has been in operation.



Whether the position has deteriorated more rapidly in recent times, I am not in a position to know; but I have felt that ever since we tried the policy of a commission instead of a single commissioner, some defects that have been particularly noticeable in recent times, became evident.

Those of us who have had dealings with the commission realise that it was inevitable that with men on the commission holding definite views, and each entitled to a more or less equal share in deciding the questions that came before the commission, there would be indecision; and I feel that sometimes this had a serious influence, not only on the immediate policy to be carried into effect by the Railways Commission, but also on a great number of the senior employees of the commission, so that it had the effect of not improving the morale of the system. In fact, it may even have had the effect of lowering it in some cases.

I can only say that I hope the experiment of changing back to a single commissioner will work out better than the previous arrangement, because I think we all realise that a great deal is at stake. The losses that the railway system is making are having a serious effect on the State; and one can only assume, or at least hope, that with a more efficient management the position can be rapidly improved.

I believe that rapid improvement is possible. A great responsibility lies on the single commissioner who will be appointed—whether it is the present commissioner or some other person—because what he does will affect not only the Railway Department but many other activities which are dependent on Government finance.

**THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT**  
(Hon. H. E. Graham—East Perth—in reply) [10.13]: A number of speakers have suggested that the Ministry should have been aware that all was not well in connection with the administration of the railways and that therefore some action should have been taken earlier than now. These statements have been made, I am certain, without consideration being given to them; because, as is generally known, quite a serious procedure is involved. Members should have had their minds refreshed on that point in recent weeks.

It is not a matter of the Government being satisfied, or of having learned through talk around the town or from people in the department, that something was amiss. The Government is placed in the position of having to bring submissions to Parliament, and of then having at its command a sufficiently strong case to answer any challenge which might be made in either House. Therefore something substantial and definite is required.

This brings me to the point about which there has been some comment; namely, as to whether there should be a permanent appointment or one with a limited period. If the appointment is for a limited period, then it means that automatically the Government of the day has an opportunity of surveying the situation; and if it feels that the occupant of the high position has not been satisfactory, so that he should no longer continue in office, it is a comparatively simple matter not to make the reappointment but to place someone else in the position.

This can be contrasted with the procedure I mentioned earlier of having to make submissions to Parliament and then requiring a water-proof case; because it is a serious matter for a Government to suspend or dismiss a person occupying a senior responsible position. After all, there is nothing new or novel in this matter of a limited appointment. As is well known, the Conservator of Forests is, in accordance with the provisions of the Forests Act, appointed on that basis. The general manager of the State Saw Mills and the State Brick Works—now the State Building Services—has been appointed for a period of seven years. We have agreed to the principle in connection with the Agent General. He is not appointed for an indefinite period, until removed from office, but for a short term, so that if he is unsatisfactory no reappointment is made; but if he gives full satisfaction, he can be reappointed for a further period.

Mr. Hearman: You have not had a lot of trouble so far as Agents General are concerned, recently.

**THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT:** Except that their period of life seems to be reduced somewhat on account of the appointment. It has been suggested that personalities only have been responsible for the existing unsatisfactory situation in the railways. I wonder whether that is so. I am thoroughly convinced—and there is no need to repeat what I said when introducing the measure—that this idea of three commissioners was badly conceived.

I have not read all, but I have read some of the report of the Royal Commission. I can be corrected if I am wrong, but I do not think there was anywhere a condemnation of the one-man commission. As a matter of fact, Mr. J. A. Ellis, the then Commissioner of Railways, in his submissions to the Royal Commission was pleading the continuance of the one-man control. It appears, somewhat that the Royal Commission of 1947 plucked this idea out of the sky.

Our experience over nine years has not been very happy. I would have thought there would be the strongest and most compelling reasons to cause these two Royal Commissioners to decide upon a change, particularly as there were not severe criticisms of the form of control

and administration. It is true that the Royal Commissioners were most critical of the state of affairs that had developed with regard to the general deterioration of the system; but so far as I am aware, none of that deterioration was attributed to the one-man control.

The question has been asked: What about Commissioner Hall? I think I should read something—

The Bill, however, inevitably raises the question of Mr. X's future. In drawing attention to departmental deficiencies, the Minister was less than just to a commissioner, and also to his senior officers who, in the face of insuperable difficulties, not of his own making, has managed to keep the system operating.

Mr. X's term of office is expiring and he may not desire reappointment but no evidence has been produced to show that he would be unworthy of it. No evidence to show that the sorry position of the railways today is not of political rather than administrative origin.

That was portion of a leading article in "The West Australian" dated the 14th October, 1948. Instead of the "X" which I used, and which referred to Mr. Ellis, if we inserted the name of Mr. Hall the same set of circumstances would perhaps apply. But notwithstanding what was suggested in that leading article the Government of that day proceeded to dispense with the services of Mr. Ellis.

Incidentally, the original draft by the McLarty-Watts Government of the Bill allegedly to give effect to the Royal Commission's recommendation provided for a 5-year term of appointment for the new commissioners. Yet this evening, apparently, the supporters and principals of that erstwhile Government have found, belatedly, the greatest virtue in the suggestion that there should be an indefinite appointment. However, their first thoughts, notwithstanding that self-same document, were that there should be a five-year term.

I do not want to twist the tail of the Opposition, partly because of the seriousness of the situation, and partly owing to the general acknowledgment of all sections opposite—as I sense it—that at least the second reading of the measure should be supported, and so I return to this question, which has cropped up in so many speeches: What about Commissioner Hall?

First of all I make this observation: The fate of this Bill should be determined on principles and on the inherent merits of the legislation, and not on personalities which, while important, are I suggest, an entirely different consideration.

Mr. Court: I do not think it has been suggested for one minute during the debate that the fate of the Bill hinged on what happened to this commissioner.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: No; but the question was raised by a number of speakers.

Mr. Court: Only seeking an assurance from you that this man would be generously treated.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: To use the recent words of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, that has nothing to do with the Bill.

Mr. Court: It has some import in the matter under discussion.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: That is a lame way of trying to get out of it. Of course, until such time as the fate of the legislation is known, the Government can make no decision in this matter. Suppose I had authority to announce that Mr. Hall or Mr. Jones from outside was to be appointed to the position. Surely that would be presumptuous until such time as the fate of this Bill is known!

Mr. Court: I do not think any member has suggested that Mr. Hall be appointed commissioner under the new set-up. It has merely been an inquiry as to how he is to be treated.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I would say there have been broad hints as to what the Government should do in that connection.

Mr. Court: Do you suggest anyone has proposed that he be appointed to the job?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition could check his own speech in that regard.

Mr. Court: I will; but I did not imply that.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Up to date the Government has received two interim reports from the Royal Commissioner, and his investigations have resulted in the resignation of one commissioner. The second interim report made it obligatory on the Government to take certain steps, and another commissioner was suspended; so that accounted for two of them. I do not want my words to be misconstrued, but the third interim report has not yet been submitted; and who knows what its purport will be?

I have indicated that I know Mr. Hall reasonably well, having met him on a number of occasions; and I have quite a regard for him; but I am not investigating his administration, and I know very little of it. It could happen that instead—to use the words of several speakers opposite—of Mr. Hall coming through with flying colours and meriting generous treatment, which incidentally were the words of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the exact opposite might be the case. We do not at present know.

Mr. Court: Then Commissioner Smith will have to change his opinion on his latest report.

**The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT:** Perhaps it would not be too discreet to pursue that any further. I do not want it thought that I have any inside knowledge of what his future reports might contain, because I have not; but I think I should say—I hope I am not going too far—that in respect of Commissioner Clarke—I am not looking in the direction of anyone in particular when I say it—certain representations were made to the Government before the inquiries had been completed suggesting everything possible in his favour and that the Government should do nothing with regard to him, because if ever there was a satisfactory man in all respects it was he. I will make no comment on that because there is certain action in process at present. I am only suggesting that neither on this Bill, nor at this time, is it appropriate for us to decide what might or might not happen to certain individuals. The whole of the administration, in its many aspects, is being thoroughly sifted by Royal Commissioner Smith.

Mr. Bovell: Parliament has the responsibility of seeing that justice is done.

**The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT:** Of course! But while investigations are taking place, is it suggested that the Government should undertake to be generous to somebody or to say that he has come through with flying colours, when the next report may indicate the opposite? On the receipt of that report and the Government's subsequent decision, members of Parliament will have a responsibility to take action in accordance with their beliefs and outlook and knowledge, as to whether the proper thing has been done by the Government.

The member for Moore said that whilst he favoured the Bill, he realised the difficulties and importance of the new job. Obviously, it will be a terrific responsibility. Owing to the nature of things, I do not think it will be possible for whoever is in charge of the railways to perform miracles. The member for Moore said that he should get out and do the job to the satisfaction of the State. A worthy sentiment; but who is to be the judge of what is to the satisfaction of the State or of what is meant by those words? Satisfaction to whom or to which section of the community?

I know that the present commission and the previous commissioner recommended to the McLarty-Watts Government and indeed to the Hawke Government—and no doubt many times before that to other Governments if one searched the records—that fares and freights should be increased by certain percentages; but I am not aware of any instance in which any Government conformed entirely to those requests by an authority seeking to operate on a businesslike basis. I have also seen reports in connection with the closure of railway lines; these reports emanated from those in the best position to know—

those operating the system—pointing out what a continuation of these services was doing to the economics of this vast concern.

Yet, because of political interference appropriate steps were not taken, or steps were not taken in accordance with the advice that was tendered. So I think we must be exceedingly careful in appointing a person to this responsible position, and then expecting him to produce results; because all of us are rather sensitive to reactions, and probably all of us show a tendency to do those things most likely to tickle the ears or the fancy of our constituents rather than to be bold and brave and to undertake those things that are in the best interests of the State, even if it means losing a little support or a few votes here and there.

That is why I have always said, when there has been a talk of the necessity to change the administration, and the need for greater efficiency, etc., that many of us at present in Parliament, and those who preceded us, should stand before a mirror. If we did that, we would get a fair answer to the problem.

Finally I say that the Government is of the opinion that a single management is essential. It is too great a task for one man; but he has the power and authority to delegate certain of his responsibilities. With a single commissioner at least, when decisions are made, or if anything goes wrong, there is somebody to whom the matter can be sheeted home. It will no longer be necessary for meetings to be held, for majority decisions, or a possibility of the chief commissioner being overridden by his underlings. How is it possible for any system to operate under that state of affairs?

I indicated when I introduced the Bill that our experience as members of Parliament, and from what we have gathered and learned as individuals, should be sufficient to convince us of the necessity for a change without a Minister or anybody else having to submit evidence in this or the other House. I hope and trust that both Houses of this Parliament will agree to this legislation as expeditiously as possible, because I am informed that many things requiring attention are at present being deferred.

Hosts of papers and documents, matters large and small, are finding their way on to the Minister's table; and it is impossible for him to cope with all of them. An air of uncertainty exists in this giant organisation, from the top to the bottom. Therefore I hope that it will be possible for us to pass the Bill through its various stages this evening so that at the earliest possible moment the Legislative Council will be able to give attention to it.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

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

**ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1957-58.***In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the previous day, Mr. Sewell in the Chair.

*Vote—Lands and Surveys, £736,856 (partly considered):*

**MR. ACKLAND** (Moore) [10.40]: I followed with a great deal of interest the remarks made by the Minister for Lands when he introduced these Estimates, and it was gratifying to me to hear how near to completion was the soldiers' land settlement scheme. Tonight I want to speak more particularly about the civilian schemes of settlement. When speaking to these Estimates last year, I made an appeal to the Minister that he should use all his influence on the Wundowie charcoal iron industry authorities to get on with the business of taking all the timber they require from Berry Brow estate to enable that property to be quickly thrown open for selection.

There have been small allocations of farms thrown open and only last week the allocation board dealt with seven properties for which there were 119 applicants. That gives some idea how interested people are to select that type of country. But it is rather disheartening to watch the activities of the charcoal iron industry in the knowledge that those concerned are not concentrating their entire efforts on this portion of their timber rights scheme, but are spending a lot of their time on a reserve which will never be thrown open for selection if the present policy continues.

This property, the Berry Brow estate, for which the Government paid 30s. an acre, should, I think, be brought into production in order to help the Government recoup the money spent on that estate, if for no other reason. If the Minister could bring pressure to bear on the management of the charcoal iron industry at Wundowie, it would be a very good thing indeed.

I would like to make some reference to future civilian land settlement schemes. At the outset I wish to thank the Minister for agreeing to have a look at the country west of Moora and Watheroo, generally known as the Badgangarra district, when he was requested to do so by the people who live there. He saw for himself how difficult it was for these people to carry on. They were, on an average, more than 45 miles away from the nearest railway; they were 22 miles away from the nearest telephone, and I would suggest to the Minister that when there are future areas of land to be thrown open, as there have been at Badgangarra, not only should roads

be provided in the early stages, but provision should be made for an exploration to be conducted of the water potential of these new districts.

The Minister saw one case of a young man who had been endeavouring to find water and had gone down to considerably over 100 ft.; he had reached the capacity of the plants which were operating in the district, and had been unsuccessful. Accordingly, he had put in a bitumen surface on a fairly large area of land, and because the land was so porous he had constructed concrete tanks at great expense to enable him to place stock on that land. Before land is thrown open in future I would suggest that as a preliminary there should be an exploration for water in such areas.

I can see the Minister for Mines looking at me very hard, so I shall hasten to say that I know he is making provision for deep boring plant. But from the early stages of Badgangarra those people, in many instances, have not been able to stock their properties because water has not been available. I would suggest that any block where water is found should have added to its costs the cost of providing that water supply.

Next I would like to make mention of the need for telephone communications. We have all heard the member for Stirling speak about the hardship suffered by the people at Jerramungup, because of the very poor single telephone line that was put up many years ago by the Hassell family. It seems to me that the Government should enter into negotiations with the post and telegraph authorities and ask that telephones be made available in areas that have been or are about to be settled. For many months Senator Seward, the members in the Legislative Council representing the Midland Province, and I have been trying to persuade the Postmaster General's department to install a telephone in the contract post office at Badgangarra. It was situated 25 miles from Dandarragan and the Postmaster General's department demanded that £22,000 be found before it would contemplate the installation of this telephone to a contract post office.

However, owing mainly to the good services of Senator Seward, and the degree of co-operation of the settlers of the area, who agreed to provide a great deal of the manual labour, the Commonwealth Government has now decided to put the line in itself—that Government's share of the cost would be something between £9,000 and £10,000. In the interim, however, it is necessary for these people to make long trips of 45 to 50 miles into Watheroo and Moora in order to see whether their consignments have arrived; it also would be necessary for them to make a trip of at least 22 miles—and in some cases up to 40 miles—to reach the nearest telephone.

I know that I have clashed very often with the Minister for Transport, but on this occasion I wish to thank him for having agreed to grant the right to the people in that area, who would have to make a trip of at least 80 miles and more to and from Perth. He has agreed to allow these people to take their requirements such as super, building materials and their needs for water conservation and so on, straight from the metropolitan area by road. They are also to be granted a reduced licence fee and they will not be compelled to take produce down to Perth until such time as they have produced something that they can sell.

In the Badganger area already more than 80 blocks of land have been selected. Altogether there are in excess of 400,000 acres of land taken up. There are 21,500 acres cleared; 12,000 acres under pasture; 2,500 acres under crop; 100 miles of fencing erected; 37 buildings constructed; 29 wells and soaks established; but there are only 2,000 head of stock. This is essentially a stockraising district. The advent of better means of communication, and the right of the settlers to cart their requirements by their own transport from Perth will help considerably.

Knowing the hardships that those settlers have faced in the past, I would strongly suggest to the Minister for Lands that before he throws open similar land in other areas, provision should be made for roads; for exploration of water; for the charging to the blocks of the cost of finding water where it is found, but not for boring the holes where water is not found; and for reasonable telephone communication in the early stages of settlement. The Government should persuade the Postmaster General's department to provide telephone facilities. The settlers should not have to fight, as they did in this instance, for that form of communication.

The other evening the member for Vasse referred to the wheat industry. It is gratifying that this year Western Australia will have at least twice as big a wheat crop as any other State. The Eastern States are having a very thin time. There is every possibility that Australia will not produce enough wheat to meet home requirements. It was gratifying to learn that Western Australia will have a reasonably good crop, but at the same time it is a great disaster that the rest of Australia will have poor crops.

It is anticipated that this State will have a crop of 30,000,000 bushels. I think that is optimistic. It is anticipated that Victoria will reap a crop of 15,000,000 bushels when that State usually produces more than 40,000,000; South Australia 12,000,000 bushels when it usually produces about 26,000,000 bushels; New South Wales 5,000,000 bushels when

it usually produces 60,000,000 bushels; and Queensland 5,000,000 bushels when it usually produces about 12,000,000 bushels.

Australia will have a carry-over of wheat on the 1st December, the beginning of the new cereal year of approximately 40,000,000 bushels of wheat. I would suggest to the Minister for Agriculture that he give support to the Australian Wheat Board, should an approach be made to the Commonwealth Government for permission to import wheat from overseas to meet the requirements of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland; rather than advocate the use of the surplus wheat held in this State to meet the Eastern States requirements.

If my information is correct, wheat can be purchased from Canada or Argentina and shipped to Melbourne and Sydney at a cheaper rate than wheat purchased and shipped from Fremantle. Australia has traditional customers and it would be a great pity if we were to lose their custom to our competitors—America or Canada. Members will recall that recently the Minister for Trade and Commerce reached an agreement with the United Kingdom under which an assurance was given for that country to take 28,000,000 bushels of wheat a year.

Then there was the recent trade agreement reached with Japan which will take all the hard wheats we can produce, and also at least 7,500,000 bushels of f.a.q. soft wheats. For many years we have had a business arrangement with New Zealand under which we supply an average of 10,000,000 bushels a year mostly in bags from South Australia. Owing to the good relations which have been established under the Colombo Plan, Pakistan is taking between 4,000,000 and 6,000,000 bushels each year; and Rhodesia is taking 3,000,000 bushels.

We have established most of those markets over a long period. If we are to use the wheat grown and stored in this State to feed the other States of Australia this year, we will probably lose the markets I have referred to. As the cost of purchasing and shipping wheat from Fremantle to Sydney is greater than the purchase and shipment of wheat from North and South America to Sydney, it would be a very sound business proposition to supply the needs of the Eastern States from those markets. That would entail the use of dollars. Even if this country were to lose a little in that direction it will be more than compensated by the retention of our markets which have been so hardly won.

I would point out that it was only a few years ago when the whole costs of handling wheat between the farm and the port of discharge was 7½d. per bushel; today because of many factors, including increased railway freight, the cost is

2s. 3½d. The increase in such a short period from 7½d. to 2s. 3½d. is very alarming. It is in the interests of everybody, including the consumer himself, that the farmer should be able to produce wheat at a satisfactory cost.

Last year the railways carried more than 60,000,000 bushels of grain, but this year it is not anticipated that half that quantity will be hauled. On the whole, the oats produced this year will be retained on the farms. Already the Oats Pool has refused a most lucrative offer for oats from overseas, because it believed that there was no justification in selling a shipment of oats to Germany at a price which would have represented 9s. 8d. a bushel, at ports or 7s. 8d. a bushel net. That is quite a good price for oats. The Oats Pool, knowing the seriousness of the position, and realising that very much of the oats will be used for stock purposes, refused to accept the offer.

I want to make only one other other reference. I do not pretend to have a knowledge of dairying in this State, but following on what the member for Vasse said last night, I would like to refer to that industry. I know that the soldier settlers on wheat and sheep farms are doing quite well. There are more than 100 of them in my electorate and, while they are no better off than those in other places, they are in an excellent position. However, the dairy people seem to be in a much worse plight.

While I have not the latest figures, it is rather alarming to know that many dairy farmers are making less than £300 per year; that 6 per cent. of the dairy farmers in the South-West are losing money and that 20 per cent. are making less than £300 and 50 per cent. less than £530, while the great majority of them are not paying any income tax at all. One of the Ministers, when speaking tonight, mentioned that the basic wage returned something in the vicinity of £700 per year. That gives us some realisation of how unfortunate the majority of dairy farmers are in this State and of the need that they should receive all the assistance possible in order that their herds may be built up to a reasonable size to enable them to make a satisfactory living. It should also be made possible for them to have a greater acreage of pasture than they have at the present time.

The Minister for Lands: Do those figures include people who work in other occupations and only run a few cows?

Mr. ACKLAND: As I told the Committee a few moments ago, I do not pretend to be an authority on dairying, but I have an article here which gives these figures. They are not recent figures, but in discussing the matter with the member for Vasse he told me that the same position exists today as existed when this article was prepared.

The Minister for Lands: I do not think the overall position is anything like as bad as that for bona-fide farmers.

Mr. ACKLAND: I hope the Minister is right. I am not going to argue about dairying, but I do pretend to know something about wheat and sheep.

Mr. Bovell: The position regarding outside employment is occasioned by the necessity to get some extra income in a lot of cases.

The Minister for Lands: It is not fair to call them dairy farmers.

Mr. Bovell: A number of dairy farmers in Busselton work on the wharf.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. ACKLAND: Who is making this speech, the Minister, the member for Vasse or myself. I have practically finished, but thank the member for Vasse for putting the Minister right on the matter of outside work.

The Minister for Lands: He has not.

Mr. ACKLAND: I hope the Minister for Lands and Agriculture will make a recommendation before he leaves the State to take up the position of Agent General, that in future provision will be made to provide these facilities that I have mentioned at the same time as land is thrown open or development starts in new areas. I have watched the people at Badgangarra where the position is much the same and have seen hardships which could have been avoided. I believe that steps should be taken to see that a repetition does not occur.

MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood) [11.51]: I do not propose to speak at great length, but there are certain points which have occurred to me. I noticed on page 65 that for the year 1956-57 there was a vote of £740,000—odd for agriculture of which only £722,000 appears to have been spent. It seems to me that this department, which is extremely important from the State's point of view, has had some difficulty in spending the amount of money allocated. There may be a good reason for this. However, many of us have constantly advocated greater facilities for the farming community and have stressed the need for better equipment and housing for officers of the department.

It seems that an under-spending of something like £18,000 for the year is something which the Minister should explain. I should have expected the tendency to be the other way and that the Minister would be anxious to spend as much as possible. Had he over-spent his vote, I would not have cavilled as much as I do at his under-spending. As I do not know the explanation, I cannot offer any criticism, but I hope the Minister will explain the position.

The Minister for Lands: What are you talking about?

Mr. HEARMAN: The figures on page 65.

The Minister for Lands: I cannot hear what you are saying.

Mr. HEARMAN: The next point I should like the Minister to tell us is how he is getting on with the number of surveyors available for the surveying of new blocks and also for catching up with some of the surveys that have been waiting for a good many years. Comparatively recently I had occasion at the Lands Department to represent the case of a man who sought a title to a block on which the conditional purchase requirements had been complied with many years ago.

In due course I obtained his title for him and the next time I saw him he laughed uproariously and said that the department failed to take into account the fact that it resumed approximately 40 acres in 1947 for the purpose of a new road, and it was not shown on his title. I realise the department has had its difficulties, but I would like to know what progress has been made in connection with the catching up of arrears of surveys because it affects not only existing settlers but, as the Minister is well aware, it holds up further land development in certain areas, such as the Tone River district which is in my electorate. Some work has been done, but there are a number of people who would like blocks in that area.

I believe there is no difficulty so far as the Forests Department is concerned and it seems to hinge largely on when the surveyors can be made available. If the Minister can give an indication as to what progress has been made in that regard, it will be helpful to individuals who are wanting to settle in that area. They are sons of existing farmers and would not require a great deal of assistance. They are people who are well aware of the problems; their main interest is getting on to a block.

The Minister for Lands: Which area?

Mr. HEARMAN: Tone River. Some are still carrying on jobs such as holding agencies for oil companies in an endeavour to hang on until they can get their own block. I would like to know what progress has been made.

The last matter I wish to discuss is the question of land classification. The difficulty I am confronted with is that in my electorate there are large areas of designated forest and also of Crown land which, in some cases, has been cut over for timber. In a number of instances the adjoining settlers would like to expand their properties, but when they apply for land they always seem to be fobbed off on the score that there is still some timber to be removed or that a classification of land in the area is proceeding, and until a decision has been made it will not be

known whether the land is to become part of the State forests or whether it will be thrown open for selection.

I realise that perhaps these classifications are necessary, but I think the Minister must also appreciate that if a farmer has a son who is growing up, he may require a larger property. While the argument put forward for holding up a decision may be valid, it is resulting in the fact that sons are just leaving the farms, and this is most undesirable because in many instances the farmers are getting older and are no longer able, single handed, to work their farms as efficiently as previously. Generally the sons would be quite willing to stay on the farms provided they could see some future prospect, although not an immediate one, of getting a decent living from the farms.

In many instances where additional land is required, a decision must be arrived at within a reasonable time. I know of people who have been applying for land over a period of ten years. I have in mind the case of three brothers who are farming a property. They bought up some adjoining private land so that now there is a piece of Crown land with private land on three sides of it. This piece of Crown land is only 100 acres in area, and their application is held up because they are told it is to be the subject of classification, and might be required for forestry purposes. It seems inconceivable that the Forests Department would want this land, which is surrounded on three sides by private land, and consists of an area of only 100 acres.

Mr. Owen: Some land is surrounded on four sides, but the department still will not give it up.

Mr. HEARMAN: I daresay I could find a similar case if I tried. This is getting to the stage of frustration for a great many of these people. I am prepared to concede that the decision cannot always be made immediately, but these classifications have been going on for quite a while. In many cases we have had reports on blocks from foresters, indicating that there is no great amount of timber on them, that the department is no longer particularly interested in the land and that the problems associated with the complete removal of the millable timber would not be great. Then we know from practical experience that within 5 or 6 years, or even 10 years, the same forestry officer explains that the land might be required for forestry purposes; that it has a potential timber-growing value.

This leads to a terrific amount of disappointment and frustration on the part of those settlers who genuinely wish to expand their properties. I further point out that from the State angle it is bad because in most cases these people who have a farm and wish to take on another 50 or 100 acres—I have known of areas as

small as 10 acres being required—are able to develop, clear, fence and pasture the land, and make provision for water, without assistance from any Government instrumentality. They do not require help through the R. & I. Bank, or any other medium that the Government has for assisting settlers.

It might appear to some members that an area of 10 acres is quite small; and so it is. On the other hand, if it is suitable country for orcharding it can be the means of providing a living for someone. From the point of view of the Government or the Forests Department, these comparatively small areas might be relatively insignificant, but in parts of my electorate, even a matter of 10 acres is of considerable importance to the people concerned.

As the Minister would know, in many instances the areas applied for are swampy—summer land, as it is termed—which is of relatively small importance from a forestry angle. This sort of dangling a carrot in front of a donkey indefinitely has to stop. A decision must be made in fairness to the settlers concerned, and particularly in fairness to the sons of settlers who would like to stay on the property and take over the responsibility from their parents, and possibly provide for them in their old age. But when they realise that the existing property is too small to maintain two families they realise that there must be an extension of the properties before they can wisely agree to remain there.

I would like to hear the Minister's views on this matter and to know what the Government's policy is to be, and when we can expect some decision on the important question of land classification in the South-West.

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 11.20 p.m.*

## Legislative Council

Thursday, 24th October, 1957.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

### QUESTIONS.

#### TRADE WITH EASTERN STATES.

(a) *Tonnage of Goods Carried by Rail.*

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON (without notice) asked the Minister for Railways:

Can he please supply the following information:—

(1) What was the tonnage of goods entering Western Australia by rail from the Eastern States for the years 1955-56 and 1956-57, respectively?

(2) What was the tonnage of goods carried by rail from Western Australia to the Eastern States for the corresponding periods?

The MINISTER replied:

1955-56.                      1956-57.

(1) 48,750 tons.              50,170 tons.

(2) 18,518 tons.              30,340 tons.

The figures do not include consignments originating or terminating at Kalgoorlie, the handling and accounting of which are dealt with by the Commonwealth officials at Parkeston.

These figures do not include consignments which originate and terminate at Kalgoorlie; that is at Parkeston. Obviously there is a greater tonnage of goods carried than the figures I have given disclose, because a quantity always terminates at Parkeston for the Trans-train and is either destined for Kalgoorlie or travels elsewhere by road.