Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 6th November, 1957.

CONTENTS.

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

QUESTIONS.

NATIVE WELFARE DEPARTMENT.

Particulars re Vehicles, Carnarvon and Port Hedland.

Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Native Welfare:

(1) What is the age of the Native Welfare Department vehicles stationed—

(a) at Carnarvon;

(b) at Port Hedland?

(2) What mileage has been covered by each vehicle?

(3) What has been the cost of repairs and replacements each year for each vehicle?

(4) Would it not be more economical if these vehicles were replaced before they need major overhauls or are likely to break down on patrol in isolated areas?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) Land Rover at Carnarvon—4 years.

(b) Land Rover at Port Hedland—3 years.

(2) (a) 25,326 miles.

(b) 41,369 miles.

(3) (a) 1953-54—£12.
1954-55—£40.
1955-56—£90.
1956-57—£92.
1/7/57 to 31/10/57—£36.

(b) 1954-55—Nil.
1955-56—£248.
1956-57—£321.
1/7/57 to 31/10/57—£518 (includes recent complete overhaul at Plant Engineers costing £485).

(4) If finances were available, new vehicles would be purchased for these districts and the vehicles at present in use would be withdrawn and used in a more southern area or disposed of.

ARTICLED CLERKS.

Numbers, Conditions, Employment, etc.

Mr. EVANS asked the Minister for Justice:

(1) Could he please ascertain the total number of written inquiries made to the Barristers' Board, during 1956 and up to the present in 1957, from persons interested in taking articles in law?

(2) How many persons have actually commenced articles (apart from graduates) during 1956 and 1957?

(3) Have any of the above received the consent of the board to engage in any other employment outside their articles? If so, how many?

(4) What is the total number of non-graduate persons engaged in articles of clerkship at present?

(5) What is the total number of students enrolled at the University of Western Australia, in the process of completing an LL.B. degree course?

(6) Is it a fact that no restriction is placed upon the above students from engaging in any form of employment, outside of actual hours of attendance at the University?

(7) In what other States of Australia do provisions apply similar to those embodied in Section 13 of our Legal Practitioners' Act, 1893-1957?

(8) On the basis of questions (and answers to same) that I have directed to him today and on Thursday, the 31st October, 1957, is there not definite need for investigation into aspects of Section 13 of the above Act, with a view to reform of the section?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) One only.

(2) One only.

(3) No. No application for consent has been made.

(4) Two.

(5) Fifty-five, including three part-time.

(6) Yes.

(7) None.

(8) No. I refer to answers given on the point on the 31st October.

ALBANY HIGHWAY.

Removal of Tramlines, Victoria Park.

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

(1) When is it anticipated that the work on the removal of the tramlines in Albany Highway, Victoria Park, will be completed?

(2) Has the Perth City Council indicated when it will commence resurfacing the road?

(3) If the answer to No. (2) is "Yes," what date has the council given?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

(1) By the end of next March.

(2) Yes.

(3) Late in December this year.

TRANSPORT.

Establishment of Road Trains.

Mr. BOVELL asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Has the Government given consideration to encouraging the establishment of road trains above the 26th parallel?

(2) Would not such a transport system keep stock losses, caused by many hundreds of miles of overland droving, to a minimum and enable fat cattle to arrive at their destination as "fats" instead of "stores," and therefore improve the quality of export beef for sale by open competition on overseas markets?

(3) If the answer to No. (1) is "Yes," what are the details of the Government's proposals?

(4) If no consideration has been given to this matter, will appropriate action be taken forthwith?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The Government is spending upwards of £250,000 each year in the maintenance and improvement of roads north of the 26th parallel. Authority has been given by regulation for the attachment of more than one trailer to a prime mover in areas north of Northampton in order that road trains may operate. Road trains are operated by private enterprise.

(2) Transport of cattle by road trains prevents loss of condition and reduces stock losses, and this method is being used at the present time.

(3) Answered by No. (1).

(4) Answered by No. (1).

RAILWAYS.

(a) Fire Hazard, Busselton-Flinders Bay.

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

(1) Is he aware that undergrowth, grass, etc. on the Busselton-Flinders Bay railway track are potential fire hazards to adjoining farms, and to bridges, culverts, and sleepers on the rail track itself?

(2) What action is being taken to erase these potential hazards?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

(1) There should be little risk of fire on the railway reserve unless it spreads thereto from an adjoining property.

(2) Arrangements are being made for firebreaks to be provided around bridges and culverts, and during organised burning

off operations the district engineer will co-operate with the local authority as far as practicable with the limited staff available.

(b) Cost of Equipping Coaches with Three-Point Plugs.

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

What would be the estimated cost of equipping main line sleeping coaches with three-point plugs and necessary transformers, etc. for use by passengers with electric razors?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

The cost of equipping one sleeping berth coach is estimated at £180. As there are 74 sleeper coaches in service, the total amount involved would be approximately £13,320.

(c) Tabling of Aerial Photographs.

Mr. HEARMAN (without notice) asked the Minister for Transport:

On Thursday last, when introducing a Bill to authorise the construction of a railway line from Midland Junction to Welshpool, mention be made of photographs that were in the possession of the member for Beeloo. Is it possible for the Minister to make similar photographs available to members of the Chamber generally by tabling them?

The MINISTER replied:

I shall have inquiries made as to whether that is possible. The position, as I understand it, is that the member for Beeloo has some aerial photographs of at least portion of his electoral district. He saw fit in his own interests to have superimposed on them the outline of the proposed route of the new railway line. I suppose that is something which any member can undertake, if he so desires. I shall investigate whether it is possible, and if so will have pleasure in laying the documents on the Table of the House.

TAXATION.

Income from Agricultural Sources.

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Treasurer:

(1) What was the total income derived during last financial year from the tax on improved agricultural land?

(2) What was the total income from the vermin tax during the last full year?

(3) What was the total sum received from land tax during the last financial year?

(4) What was received in total for a full year from land tax before the new rates applied?

The DEPUTY PREMIER (for the Treasurer) replied:

(1) Statistics were not kept to provide this dissection, but it has been estimated that approximately £330,000 was received from improved rural land.

(2) In 1955-56 gross collections from vermin tax amounted to £89,797.

(3) In 1956-57 gross collections from land tax amounted to £1,108,173, of which £100,000 was paid to the vermin trust account.

(4) In 1955-56 gross collections from land tax amounted to £529,412.

ROAD CLOSURE.

Wellington Locations 4669-4670, etc., Bunbury.

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Lands:

Will he ensure that Wellington Locations 4669-4670 plus Lot 221 near Wilkes Crossing, Bunbury, and the new subdivision at Withers and Haig Crescents, Bunbury, are included in this year's Road Closure Bill?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes.

EDUCATION.

Refrigerator, Domestic Science Centre, Bunbury.

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Education:

In view of a question asked by me on the 6th August, 1957, when is it considered a refrigerator will be supplied to the domestic and home science centre at Bunbury?

The MINISTER replied:

A refrigerator will not be supplied to the home science centre at Bunbury High School this financial year. No consideration has yet been given as to whether any refrigerators will be available in later years.

BASIC WAGE.

Adjustments, Goldfields Area.

Mr. EVANS asked the Minister for Labour:

If basic wage variations had been made by the State Arbitration Court between the period from the 13th November, 1953, to the 9th August, 1955, what would have been the sum total of these adjustments for the Goldfields area?

The MINISTER replied:

8s. 8d.

BREAD POSITION, GOLDFIELDS.

Investigation by Commissioner of Unfair Trading.

Mr. EVANS asked the Minister for Labour:

(1) Is he aware that difficulty is experienced by Goldfields residents, especially mothers with young children and also aged pensioners, in collecting their bread?

(2) Is he further aware that the majority of workers on the Goldfields find it necessary to take a cut lunch to work which, in turn, necessitates fresh bread daily, as it is very difficult to keep bread suitable for lunches longer than a day because of the dry conditions in the above area?

(3) Further, as hot weather is now approaching and the distance travelled by some people to collect their bread from shops is considerable, will he please indicate what action, if any, is contemplated by the Commissioner of Unfair Trading, to settle the bread dispute on the Goldfields?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes, in many cases. However, many people prefer to take delivery at shops.

(2) Yes. Fresh bread is baked daily according to the provisions of the Bread Act.

(3) The investigation is still in progress and action is being taken in accordance with the provisions of the Act and the practice of the office.

UNIFORM TAX LEGISLATION.

Effect of High Court Judgment.

Mr. COURT asked the Treasurer:

(1) With reference to my question asked on the 29th August, 1957, regarding the High Court's uniform tax legislation judgment, has the opinion of Crown Law been obtained?

(2) If so, will he table such opinion?

(3) If the opinion has not yet been received, is it expected in the near future?

The DEPUTY PREMIER (for the Treasurer) replied:

(1) No.

(2) See answer to No. (1).

(3) The papers have been referred to the Crown Law Department, but as the judgment is lengthy, it will be some time before an opinion is available.

ORCHARD REGISTRATION.

Extended Periods.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Has a decision been made on the proposal to provide extended periods of registration for orchards?

(2) If so, what decision has been made?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) A Bill will be submitted to the Government during the next session of Parliament, recommending an increased period for the registration of orchards.

PROBATE DUTY.

Relief to Widows.

Mr. COURT asked the Treasurer:

As in "The West Australian" of the 30th May, 1957, it was reported that the Minister for Justice had been asked by the metropolitan council of the A.L.P. whether provision could be made to relieve widows of probate duty on houses left to them, can he indicate what answer was given by the Minister for Justice or by himself?

The DEPUTY PREMIER (for the Treasurer) replied:

The following reply was sent:—

> When the Act was amended last session, concessional rates of duty were provided for Western Australian widows, as follows:—
>
> Estate net value:
>
> Up to £6,000: One-half of normal rate of duty;
>
> £6,000 to £8,000: Two-thirds of normal rate of duty;
>
> £8,000 to £10,000: Three-quarters of normal rate of duty.
>
> A section—69 (a)—was provided which permits the Treasurer, upon receipt of an application, to defer the whole or part of the duty as he thinks fit on a dwelling house or on interest in a dwelling house used by the widow as her ordinary place of residence. This concession is applicable to house or interest in houses up to a value of £6,000 in estates which do not exceed £10,000 in net value.
>
> The 21st report of the Grants Commission commented as follows regarding the probate duty collected by this State—
>
> > Western Australia received 83% of its estate duty revenue from estates exceeding £10,000 in value, and 92% from estates exceeding £6,000 in value. An unfavourable adjustment of £137,000 for Western Australia is the result of the comparatively low rates generally, particularly those levied upon estates less than £6,000 in value.

FLOUR MILLS.

Restricted Production Quotas.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is it correct that local flour mills are on restricted flour production quotas?

(2) Are the quotas applicable to both local consumption and export?

(3) What is the basis of the quotas, and do they allow for seasonal movements in local consumption?

(4) Are bakers on quotas?

(5) Does he expect any shortage of local supply?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) There is no restriction on flour production. There is a restriction on sales of flour for the local trade from the 9th October to the 30th November. This restriction is imposed every year by the Australian Wheat Board prior to the announcement of the price of wheat for local consumption on the 1st December.

(2) Restriction applies only to the local trade.

(3) Quotas for the 7½ weeks mentioned are based on the average weekly sales for the 12 week period, the 17th July to the 25th September.

The quota may be reviewed by the Australian Wheat Board on representation from any flour mill to allow for any anomalies such as seasonal movements in local consumption.

(4) It is expected that flour mills will similarly restrict sales to baker clients to their normal purchases.

(5) No.

COLLIE COAL.

Establishment of Chemical and Fuel Industry, etc.

Hon. D. BRAND (without notice) asked the Minister for Industrial Development:

(1) Referring to a Press statement of the 6th November, 1957, regarding the establishment of a coal-based chemical and fuel industry in Australia, will he explain to the House what steps have been taken by his department to ensure an exhaustive investigation of the prospects of using Collie coal?

(2) What did he mean when saying that "the method of recovery of coal would have to be considerably altered"?

(3) What are the prospects, in view of the recent coal agreement, of obtaining coal at 15s. per ton through open-cut mining?

The MINISTER replied:

This question was handed to me only a few minutes before leaving my office, and so I have had very little time to give it much thought. The answers are as follows:—

(1) Members will recall that some time ago a committee was set up by the Commonwealth Government to investigate the possibilities of obtaining chemicals from coal. From the time the committee was set up the Departments of Industrial Development and Mines have been in a position to forward a tremendous amount of data to that committee, and also to advance certain formulae in regard to the possibilities that we had examined here in our laboratory. Undoubtedly, that information will be very helpful in enabling the Commonwealth Government to make up its mind as to whether chemicals can be won successfully from coal.

(2) and (3) When the Press contacted me by telephone, I was asked to comment on the statement that Collie coal could be won at 15s. a ton. I said that the production of open-cut coal at Collie at 15s. a ton was not beyond the realms of possibility; but to achieve this low figure present recovery methods would have to be altered considerably. I had in mind that to reach a figure of that kind—and it is a Commonwealth figure and not our figure—considerable modern mechanisation and methods would have to be used, such as drag lines and so on.

UNFAIR TRADING AND PROFIT CONTROL ACT.

(a) Personnel of Advisory Committee.

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

Is Mr. F. E. Chamberlain, the general secretary of the A.L.P., a member of the advisory committee constituted under the Unfair Trading and Profit Control Act?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes. Offhand, I think that Mr. Hammond of Sandovers and Mr. Prater, who used to represent the Farmers' Union, are other members.

(b) Complaint Lodged by F. E. Chamberlian.

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Deputy Premier:

Seeing that Mr. F. E. Chamberlain is a member of the advisory committee constituted under the Unfair Trading and Profit Control Act, if the A.L.P. has lodged a complaint with the commissioner—and what purports to be a copy of it has been placed in members' boxes today—and it was sent by Mr. Chamberlain, as general secretary of the A.L.P., will he automatically relinquish his position on the advisory committee, and will the Government take steps accordingly?

The DEPUTY PREMIER replied:

In forwarding the complaint to the commissioner, Mr. F. E. Chamberlain was acting in his official capacity as secretary, subject to the direction of the organisation. It was in no way a personal approach from Mr. Chamberlain, and should not in any degree whatever affect his position on the advisory committee.

(c) Divorcing Personal Views from Committee Decisions.

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Deputy Premier:

Does he not think it would be impossible for a man in Mr. Chamberlain's responsible position with the A.L.P., to divorce his own personal feelings from the directions of the body he represents with respect to an important matter?

The DEPUTY PREMIER replied:

No; such situations frequently arise, especially in regard to lawyers and members of Parliament.

(d) Position of Mr. Chamberlain on Committee.

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Deputy Premier:

Will the Government give consideration to the invidious situation which has arisen on account of Mr. Chamberlain being on the advisory committee and at the same time holding his position in the A.L.P.

The DEPUTY PREMIER replied:

The Government does not acknowledge that an invidious position has arisen.

MINERALS FROM SEA WATER.

Extraction by Pilot Plant.

Hon. D. BRAND (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

Does my memory serve me correctly when I say there was a suggestion by the Minister that he was importing a pilot plant from Britain for experiments in connection with the extraction of minerals from sea water? On one occasion I think he said that it was the intention of his Government to import such a pilot plant.

The MINISTER replied:

So far as I can remember, the reference alluded to a matter which was raised in this House. My reply was that we had very close liaison with the C.S.I.R.O., that organisation was obtaining a plant for that purpose and that the information would be made available to us.

BILLS (9)—FIRST READING.

1, Traffic Act Amendment (No. 4).
Introduced by the Minister for Transport.

2, Supreme Court Act Amendment.

3, Matrimonial Causes and Personal Status Code Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Justice.

4, Unfair Trading and Profit Control Act Amendment.

5, State Government Insurance Office Act Amendment.

6, Workers' Compensation Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Labour.

7, Mining Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Mines.

8, Western Australian (Employment-Promotion Labels).
Introduced by the Minister for Industrial Development.

9, Natives (Status As Citizens).
Introduced by the Minister for Native Welfare.

BILLS (3)—THIRD READING.

1, Basil Murray Co-operative Memorial Scholarship Fund Act Amendment.

2, Cattle Trespass, Fencing, and Impounding Act Amendment.

3, Nurses Registration Act Amendment (No. 2).

Transmitted to the Council.

BILL—HOUSING LOAN GUARANTEE.

Report of Committee adopted.

MOTION—WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT SCHEME.

Implementation of Royal Commission's Recommendations.

MR. NALDER (Katanning) [5.3]: I move—

> That in the opinion of this House the recommendations of the Honorary Royal Commission appointed to inquire into and report upon the war service settlement scheme in Western Australia, and to recommend such changes in procedures and methods as may seem desirable to ensure an early success of the scheme, should be given early effect to by the Government.

I ask the indulgence of the House while I quote quite considerably from the report of the Honorary Royal Commission in order to prove the points I wish to make in reference to the motion. It is with a certain amount of regret that I feel it is my responsibility to introduce this motion, especially seeing that we are almost on the eve of the departure of the Minister from this Chamber. However, I feel that the recommendations made will have to be carried out by his successor, and therefore it is necessary for me to move the motion with a view to ensuring the early success of the scheme. Quite recently the Minister stated it is possible that it will not be very long before the scheme will be brought to a conclusion; but I hazard a guess that plenty of problems will need solution before the scheme is completed.

At the outset, I would draw attention to the fact that this is the second report on this question that has been made within five years. First of all there was a report made in 1952 by a select committee appointed to inquire into and report upon all phases of war service land settlement in Western Australia. Then, in 1956, a select committee was appointed by another place for exactly the same purpose. The committee took evidence in various parts of the State but, because of lack of time, it was found impossible to report back before the House rose last year. Accordingly the Premier agreed that it should be converted into an Honorary Royal Commission so that it could complete its investigations and make a report to the House this session.

As I said, there were two reports dealing with exactly the same subject submitted within five years; and if one reads both reports, one discovers that the second is in many instances identical with the first. I imagine that the report was brought about by the evidence submitted to the Honorary Royal Commission, and that can be proved if one takes time to read that evidence. I have spent quite a time reading the testimony given by those who came forward voluntarily to submit to the Royal Commission the information that was required.

The present Minister was chairman of the select committee that reported on this matter in 1952, and it is very strange to find that the report of the Royal Commission of 1957 should have provided much information that was identical with that presented in connection with the 1952 inquiry. The story tells of broken promises and many frustrated settlers. It gives evidence of lower standards in many instances; and the position is summed up in the following statement from the commission itself, quoting from column 1 of page 7:—

> One other feature resulting in the slow development of farms in some areas may be that the W.S.L.S. are concerned that 40 per cent. of losses is being borne by the State Government and are endeavouring to keep such losses to a minimum.
>
> The Commission agrees that this thought is a reasonable one provided that the original agreement is not broken or retarded—that a settler must be rehabilited to certain standards as soon as possible. The curtailment of expenditure has retarded development in many areas—in many cases for years—consequently it has delayed the rehabilitation of the settler and instead of saving the State expenditure it has resulted in further losses both to the State and the settler.

I want to lay emphasis on those last words "the settler." Little evidence will have to be submitted to this House to convince every member that if the scheme is not functioning satisfactorily for the person for whom it is designed—the war service land settler himself—it is he who will be on the wrong end in the finish.

Time does not wait. It speeds on; and we find that it is now approximately 10 years since the scheme started. A period of 10 years in a man's life as far as his efficiency is concerned, is a goodly period. A man—and especially one who has spent time in the forces—at the end of a period of 10 years will feel that he is not as efficient, capable and energetic as in the early stages. I say that because even today many of the settlers are not in a satisfactory position so far as war service properties are concerned, and I will give evidence to prove that point as I proceed.

With regard to the statement I quoted from the report, the commission has placed its finger on the reason for the switch from a rehabilitation scheme for ex-service men to a land development scheme. That point was raised in evidence by one of the witnesses who appeared before the commission. Personally, I have no disagreement with the idea, because I feel that it was found that in quite a number of instances properties were not available, although evidence has been submitted—and I know of several cases in my own district—that the authorities, because of the advice of their officers, would not accept some of the properties offered for sale.

One instance is a farm only three miles from my own property. It was offered for sale at £1 1s. per acre. The area was 1,800 acres, with approximately 1,200 acres cleared. It is within seven miles of the town and railway and approximately four miles from the siding. That property was refused by the land settlement authorities.

Yet within six years that property was resold for £10 10s. an acre. It is one of the good farms in the district and is being farmed by a man from South Australia who, I understand, is doing quite well on it. There are other properties that were refused by the authorities because they were considered to be not up to standard. That, however, is only a point in passing, because I have no vast disagreement with the desire of the authorities to embark on a land settlement scheme to develop parts of Western Australia previously undeveloped.

The Minister for Transport: In what year was that land available?

Mr. NALDER: For war service land settlement purposes, in 1947.

The Minister for Transport: During the term of the Government you supported.

Mr. NALDER: It had been refused previously to that period. But that is only a very technical point. I could, if the Minister requires, ascertain the exact date on which it was offered for sale. The point is that the Government decided to undertake a land development scheme rather than rehabilitate ex-service men on properties that had already been developed or partly developed. That being the case, I stress the point that the Government in its developmental programme, should bring properties destined for settlers up to a standard which would enable them to make a decent living. That is where most of the problems that exist today have emanated from. They have arisen through the decision to embark on a development programme in various parts of the State by preparing previously undeveloped land for farming purposes. Evidence will be submitted to prove that point.

The Minister for Lands: Do you mean to say that these project areas are not successful?

Mr. NALDER: I am saying that many of the problems that exist began in areas where original development of land was undertaken by the war service land settlement authorities. I do not say the whole of the project is a failure but would point out that in many cases the evidence proves that farmers have been put on farms before the properties have been developed to a stage where they are self-contained. The report states that the evidence submitted in regard to under-developed holdings was substantially correct, and it goes on, in column 2 on page 6, to state—

> The Commission recommends that where settlers were placed on lease conditions prior to the property being brought to the required standard that—
>
> (a) the rent of the farm be re-assessed retrospectively on a productivity basis and the difference between the figure thus obtained and the rental figure that has been raised against the settler be written off;
>
> (b) any unpaid interest which accrued through no fault of the settler be written off;
>
> (c) where fencing has been found to be not up to standard, instructions be given to the Taxation Department officers when finally valuing that some allowance in the way of reduced values be made.

The commission says further, in its report—

> 'The position of some settlers whose accounts were transferred prematurely to the R. & I. Bank—before their farm was an economic unit—appear to be critical.
>
> These men were placed upon full commitments irrespective of the carrying capacity of the farm and apparently were not assessed on the economic standard as laid down in Clause 5 (5). They were forced to work on a budget as laid down by the Bank and, being unable to meet their commitments, have incurred debts which under existing circumstances they will not be able to liquidate.

The commission refers to Clause 5 of the Federal-State agreement of 1953 and that is interesting because in that the State authorities had found excuses for most of their broken promises.

The Minister for Lands: It has not broken one promise. Tell us where it has done so.

Mr. NALDER: I will tell the Minister plenty.

The Minister for Lands: Now is your chance.

Mr. NALDER: The Minister can wait.

Mr. Bovell: The Minister knows that a number of dairy farms have not been brought up to the 40-cow standard yet.

The Minister for Lands: Do not make irresponsible statements, but back up your remarks with facts.

Mr. NALDER: I will back them up. I could read the 1952 select committee's report and the Minister would be in a bad spot to get out of it.

Mr. Mann: Who was the chairman of that committee?

Mr. NALDER: The present Minister for Lands, as the member for Avon Valley knows very well, as he was a member of that select committee. I feel sure that he can confirm many of the statements I am making, and although the Minister states that my remarks must be backed up, I am sure at least one member on this side of the House will substantiate what I say.

The Minister for Lands: I am referring specially to your statement about Clause 5. It is up to you to prove your statement now.

Mr. NALDER: I will do so, and I have plenty of evidence by which to prove it. In all fairness, I must say very few settlers in my own electorate at present have not been fairly well satisfied, but the Minister knows very well that there are one or two cases that have not been satisfactorily concluded. The Minister has been to those properties and he knows that up to the present some of those original settlers, who went there during the first year of the scheme, are still up against the problems that I will detail.

The Minister for Lands: Do not get away from Clause 5.

Mr. NALDER: I will refer back to the broken promises but I might mention that some fantastic valuations have been placed on properties. At Many Peaks in the electorate of the member for Albany, the figures show that the valuations on many properties are absolutely fantastic. Some of the properties in that district have valuations of £19,000 placed on them. There are no properties of like value in the area and I believe these fantastic valuations have been concocted by officers with apparently very little knowledge of local conditions. That was a new project and the land settlement people developed the land and put men on these properties and the valuations, as I say, are now as high as £19,000, but on the market it would be hard to get anyone to bid half that for them.

Hon. D. Brand: What would be the acreage of those properties?

Mr. NALDER: From 800 to 1,000 acres or, in some cases, a shade more, but some are not all developed. Some of them carry approximately 1,000 sheep and some have a few cattle. I understand that the rental value of these properties at present ranges from £450 to £500 per year. Men are asked

to pay that rental plus the repayment on stock, plant, fencing and so on. I feel sure the Minister knows that even now wool values are receding. The valuations on many of those holdings on which settlers have been placed are such that a number of them could not meet their commitments and obtain a reasonable standard of living.

The State has used the position there as a loophole to increase rentals from 2½ per cent. to 6 per cent. on the value of the holding while the old agreement required holdings to be written down to an economic level. To tie it to the cost and not to the value makes it topheavy. In regard to settlers on undeveloped holdings—

The Minister for Lands: You know the commission has spoken favourably of our methods of valuation?

Mr. NALDER: In some cases, yes. The report states further—

> The Commission recommends that all W.S.L.S. accounts controlled by the R. & I. Bank be carefully examined and where it is proved that the settler is in an unsatisfactory financial position brought about by his premature transfer to the Bank that such accounts revert to W.S.L.S. and be retained until (a) the property is brought to the required standard of productivity to be an economic unit, and (b) the settler has been able to pay full commitments for at least 12 months and accumulate a credit of an amount sufficient to meet his working expenses for the ensuing year.
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> Any accrued interest debt which is ouptstanding at the time of reversion to W.S.L.S. is considered to be beyond the capacity of the settler to pay and while it remains as such, payable on demand, constitutes a continual worry to the settler and thus assists in fostering dissatisfaction. It is therefore recommended that such accruals be written off.
>
> After evidence had been submitted regarding these understandard properties and inspection of the areas carried out, the Commission arranged for the examination of the office records of some of the farms. To our amazement the lack of development, defective water supplies, badly situated dairy yards and other things which were so apparent at the time of our inspection had been reported in some cases five to six years previously and recommendations had been made to rectify the position.
>
> It is our opinion that the persons responsible for allowing these farms to remain in this unsatisfactory position are deserving of severe censure.

The Minister for Lands: Just a few of them.

Mr. NALDER: I would be ashamed to admit even that.

The Minister for Lands: I have the facts and will give them.

Mr. NALDER: I would be ashamed to admit that even a few of those responsible are still in that position, after the Minister inspected the farms and saw the conditions. Now, after five years, the Minister admits that the position still exists.

The Minister for Lands: Just in a few cases.

Mr. NALDER: I would be ashamed to admit that.

The Minister for Lands: You are mad! There has not been sufficient time to complete all the work on those farms. Three or four remain to be done and all the available time over four years has been taken up by bulldozers and manpower to correct the position left by your Government.

Mr. NALDER: Let us hear the Minister state the facts when replying.

The Minister for Lands: You will get them, in plenty.

Mr. NALDER: I would now like to proceed from valuations to the assessment scheme. The commission goes on to discuss the assessment scheme which the settlers claimed in evidence was merely an expedient to preserve topheavy valuations which many of the later farms are carrying. Rejecting the settlers' claim that the scheme was not in their best interests, the commission gives the following explanation of the scheme as applied to grazing:—

> Where the carrying capacity is assessed at 500 sheep or under—no commitments are raised against the settler. Commitments commence at 600-sheep carrying capacity and increase proportionately as the development of the farm continues to increase productivity to the position where full commitments are charged on a carrying capacity of 900 sheep.

It is important to understand what is meant when it is said that no commitments are raised against the settler. I think I am correct in saying—if I am not the Minister can correct me—that the term "commitments" embraces rent, interest, super, general working expenses, living expenses and repayment of principal on stock, plant and improvements.

In actual fact, the only commitment waived is the rent, because super is capitalised and remains a debt against the farm. Working and living conditions are usually met out of the proceeds of the farm produce, while repayments on the stock, plant, improvements, fences, building, etc., are merely postponed and remain a debt against depreciating assets. If this was fully understood by the commission, it is difficult to see how it could give its blessing to an assessment scheme.

On page 8 column 1 of the report, we find the following:—

> It was found that a large majority were not only meeting their assessed commitments but were also accumulating a fairly healthy credit, portion of which is represented in the farmer's equity in livestock.

That is what the commission said. If the position of those settlers was so good, it is difficult to understand why at this late stage of the scheme they have not been transferred to the Rural and Industries Bank. That is the case in many districts. It is possible that careful consideration of these healthy credits would show that a large proportion of this accumulated credit could be largely fictitious, having been built up by including certain farm charges and depreciation.

The Minister for Lands: You must be struggling a bit, because that is another recommendation of the commission.

Mr. NALDER: The Minister can prove how I am struggling when he speaks to the debate because I am quoting from the statements in the commission's report.

The Minister for Lands: Why don't you tell us what the commission said in respect of this assessment scheme? It said it was excellent and in the interests of the settler.

Mr. NALDER: Some of the settlers in the project areas at this date may have been transferred to the Rural and Industries Bank but at the time the commission was making its report, I understand that not one settler in these project areas had been transferred to that bank. Yet we find the commission said that in a number of cases these people had been accumulating a lot of assets. However, the Minister will not doubt give us some information on this point.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, you are all boxed up.

Mr. NALDER: We have further evidence to prove that there is a great deal more to be done to bring to a successful conclusion the war service land settlement scheme in Western Australia.

The Minister for Lands: The whole of this section you are referring to deals with the dairy scheme and not the project areas at all.

Mr. NALDER: Certainly not!

The Minister for Lands: Have a look at it.

Mr. NALDER: I propose to quote quite a lot in relation to dairying. Although some of the aspects I have mentioned do refer to dairying projects, they also refer to other projects as well.

Next I would like to touch on the accounting system carried out in connection with the war service land settlement project. This was criticised by the commission, and some of the most outspoken criticism in the report deals with this aspect. Settlers have always claimed that one of the main reasons for the averaging system was to facilitate the apportioning of large sums of wasted money which would have necessitated awkward explanations had they been allotted to the properties on which the money was spent. This is amply substantiated by the commission's findings.

The commission reveals that under the terms of the Federal-State agreement, settlers will have the right to appeal against the option purchase price at the end of the ten-year leasehold period. It foretells an uncomfortable showdown for the department when this time arrives. The commission also deals with this accounting system in part and I will quote the appropriate finding later.

The Minister for Lands: I have been through this a score of times.

Mr. NALDER: You must know it by heart.

The Minister for Lands: Very nearly.

Mr. NALDER: In that case, if I mention it again it will only help to impress my point on the Minister's mind, and I hope he listens carefully to what I have to say with reference to the contents of the commission's report on the accounting system.

The Minister for Lands: I think it is a very good report.

Mr. Ackland: Why not give him a go and let him make his own speech?

Mr. NALDER: I do not mind the Minister interjecting in the least; it makes me feel that I am impressing my point on his mind. On page 10, column 2 of the report, we find the following:—

> The Commission have been unable to determine the necessity for W.S.L.S. "Group Accounting" system, especially for single-unit farms.

I know the Minister will remember this because we had quite a bit to do with it in the 1952 report. The report continues—

> No authority can be found either under the old or the new statement of conditions for such a practice. As the majority of single-unit farms are subject to 1947 lease conditions, and therefore are entitled to single-unit valuations, all individual items of expenditure on these farms should be known.

I would like to emphasise that point; it should be known.

If members will cast their minds back to the position that obtained in 1952, they will recall that one of the weaknesses of the war service land settlement scheme that was emphasised at the time was that no detailed account was kept of expenses on individual farms. If one has an account with a firm, one receives a statement at the end of the month giving details of that

account. But the war service land settlement authorities did not adopt that idea. As a matter of fact, in many cases they had no account at all, and the Minister, who was a member of the select committee at that time, took many pages of evidence from settlers, which proved they had gone to various places, taken delivery of several items which they required on their properties, and yet they did not receive any receipt or docket to show what had taken place—no detailed account was kept at all.

I would ask the Minister to cast his mind back to the heap of fence posts that we saw on a certain property. The war service land settlement authorities became alarmed because the posts began to disappear and they got in touch with the Police Department in Perth, who sent out two detective sergeants to inquire into the position and ascertain where these posts were going. They found that the farmers were delegated to go to this heap of fence posts and take delivery of their requirements and move them to their farms. Even though the settlers went to the office and gave the officer in charge the details of the posts that had been removed, the officer concerned did nothing about it.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Very convenient!

Mr. NALDER: No note was taken by this officer at all. After a period of weeks they found that many fence posts were missing and actually they had been taken quite legitimately to the properties concerned; and yet nobody in authority knew anything about it. That is what went on then and what is apparently happening today. Farmers do not get a detailed account of much of the expenditure on their properties. No details are given them as to the expenditure on iron or fence posts or various other items they might require. As I have said, the same position exists today.

The Minister for Lands: No, it does not.

Mr. NALDER: I ask members if they can see any reason why a land settler should not receive a detailed account of all that is required on his property, and for any items of which he might have taken delivery from the various depots. They should receive a detailed account every month, or every three months, so that they would know where they stood.

Some of these farmers keep a detailed account of their own and when they receive valuations they want to know why so much money has been spent on their properties. I can give the House an example where the department admitted after two or three years that a sum of £240 was debited against a land settler for coils of wire he had never received. The settler's name is Lloyd Hogan of Arthur River, and he is still endeavouring to secure satisfaction from the department. Although he has appealed to the Minister, the matter has been postponed time and again.

The Minister for Lands: I have not seen it.

Mr. NALDER: That appears to be most strange to me.

The Minister for Lands: I should say it is, and it will give me an opportunity to check on that before I reply to you. You do not want to make any mistakes.

Mr. NALDER: I have made no mistakes at all. I know that the man to whom I referred is trying to get the department to give him a detailed account of the money spent on his property and the department will not do this. I do not think the department is in a position to give this account because it has not got the figures.

The Minister for Lands: You do not want to come here with a cock-and-bull story.

Mr. NALDER: I would like to refer to this case again because apparently the Minister's memory is short-lived so far as this property is concerned. When this man went on to his property, the building that was supposed to be put up was a shearing shed. When the shearing shed was being constructed, the settler appealed to the authorities here and said that the building was not being properly constructed. His plea was ignored. As a matter of fact, the supervisor told him to mind his own certain business in pretty emphatic terms, which he did. When the shearing shed was completed—and I think I have photographs to prove this—the building was 11ft. off the ground.

Hon. A. F. Watts: I have seen one.

Mr. NALDER: As I have said, the building was 11ft. off the ground and when the shearer had completed the shearing of the sheep he had to push them down 11ft. to the ground. When the wool picker came to pick up the fleece he had to walk along with his back bent because he hit the ceiling with his head.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It was not an 11ft. ceiling.

Mr. NALDER: It was about 5ft. from the floor to the ceiling.

Mr. Jamieson: How far off the ground?

Mr. NALDER: It was 11ft. When this ex-serviceman complained about this position, the supervisor advised him to get a tractor and push a heap of earth against it so the sheep would not fall 11ft.

Mr. Norton: Was the shearing done by blades or machine?

Mr. Potter: Perhaps the floor was put in the wrong place.

Mr. NALDER: It is almost amusing. It is laughable really, but these are things that really happened. The cost was in the vicinity of £1,200 and in desperation he came down and saw the deputy chairman who, when he saw it, agreed it was foolish construction and demanded it be altered.

The next thing was that sections were pulled down and the floor was altered in order to make the shed a reasonable one.

The Minister for Lands: A lot of mistakes were made in the earlier days of this scheme.

Mr. NALDER: I am mentioning this particular property because the man has not yet received satisfaction. All he wants is a detailed statement of the amount of money which has been spent on his property. When he held out and said he would not pay an increased rental, the War Service Land Settlement Department admitted that this mile of plain wire had never been sent to his property. He wants to know what has happened to over £2,000 or £3,000 spent on his property, and the department cannot give him details. In 1957 the Honorary Royal Commission found the same problem.

The Minister for Lands: If that is so, what about reading out their last paragraph?

Mr. NALDER: I have some more to read about this as follows:—

> This method of group costing lays itself open to malpractice and results in dishonesty on the part of the persons to whom the temptation is directed.

The Minister for Lands: What about the last paragraph?

Mr. NALDER: To continue—

> It is the considered opinion of the Commission that if an individual system of costing had been introduced initially, the cost of each farm would have been identifiable.
>
> The group system is very cumbersome and to arrive at the actual development cost of any particular single unit holding would be well nigh impossible.

That is what this Royal Commission has found this year.

The Minister for Lands: Yet it favoured a group system in the last paragraph. I do not think you will read that somehow.

Mr. NALDER: I must give the Minister an opportunity to quote some part of the report.

The Minister for Lands: I am surprised at your moving this motion at all.

Mr. NALDER: To quote further—

> The Commission has found it difficult to interpret the increased option price on some of the single unit farms and deplores the absence of a detailed statement of expenditure to warrant such increase. Although the settler may not have the right to question costs in relation to leasehold rent he must surely be entitled to a detailed statement of expenditure—Acquisition and Development—when the option price for freeholding is submitted to him.

That is what I have been trying to tell this House. If the department had kept a detailed account of these properties, I feel sure the problems existing today would be practically nil, because when, on demand, a land settler asked for a detailed account of the money spent on his property, the War Service Land Settlement Department would say, "Here it is in black and white." Now they cannot do it or apparently are not prepared to do it, with the result that many problems exist in the scheme today.

Referring to a specific case of increased valuation which was investigated as a test case, the report goes on—

> The Commission spent considerable time in an attempt to arrive at an explanation for the increased cost, but was unable to get a satisfactory answer. It is our opinion that an objection to this valuation will be lodged at the end of the 10 year leasehold occupancy and it is difficult to see how the increased cost will be substantiated by the war service land settlement.

That is a statement by the Royal Commission which has just investigated this position. They go on to say—

> Had an individual costing system been in operation the forthcoming difficulty would not have been experienced. This case was investigated by the Commission as a test case and in their opinion there are many others of a similar nature.

It is interesting to speculate what action would have been recommended had the foregoing revelation of faked accounts been discovered in a private business concern and not a Government department. If these accounts had been discovered in a private firm, what would have happened to the accountant? Anyone's guess is as good as mine. This happened and is happening in a Government department and the war service land settlers are the victims. To pass on to another point—

The Minister for Lands: Before you leave that point, you have not dealt with that last statement. They are in favour of a group system.

Mr. NALDER: I will allow the Minister an opportunity to do it. Surely I have convinced every member of the House, if not the Minister!

The Minister for Lands: You must have convinced yourself.

Mr. NALDER: Perhaps there is some satisfaction in that. I do not think the Minister can say that always.

The Minister for Lands: No, sometimes I am in doubt, but not about this one.

Mr. NALDER: I want to make some reference to altered lease conditions. In all the points I have raised, I have given evidence by quoting from the Royal Commission report. One of the main points submitted in evidence by settlers was that the State had departed from the original concept of the scheme and introduced a new form of lease which forced settlers to accept conditions much more onerous than those enjoyed by earlier settlers.

Although in the main excusing this departure from principle, the commission, through the report, draws a distinction between the 1947 lessees and the 1953 lessees. After comparing the two leases the commission observes, and I quote—

> The main difference in our opinion is in making provision for averaging in the 1954 document.

That is one of the problems of the whole system. The department is averaging one farm or a number of farms against each other when they get the property to a stage of reasonable development. One property may cost a small sum of money to develop and another one may cost a high figure, but the department averages the lot. That is probably one of the reasons why it is difficult for the department to get a detailed accounting system. To go on—

> After comparing—

I may be repeating myself but I will carry on. After comparing the two leases, the commission observes—

> The main difference in our opinion is in making provision for averaging in the 1954 document. One other important change was the omission in the new lease of Clause 2 (i) of the old lease which made provision for the lessee to appeal to an authority for investigation and determination of any disputes and questions whatsoever. This has definitely reduced the liberty of the settler in the matters to which he can appeal.

Criticising the absolute discretion of the Minister under the new lease subsequently to load a farm with costs incurred before the execution of the lease, the commission had this to say—

> As a system is already in operation whereby standard 1946 values are charged for structural improvements and the balance capitalised on which the settler pays 2½ per cent., therefore the right of the Minister to complete and apportion these costs at his absolute discretion is entirely wrong. All costs on structural improvements completed before the signing of the lease document should in our opinion be included in the document at the time of its execution.

Mr. Potter: Who is responsible for the variation in the lease?

Mr. NALDER: The Minister is responsible for the alteration, because he introduced that measure into the House in 1954.

Mr. Potter: It has nothing to do with the Commonwealth.

Hon. D. Brand: You can't put this on the Commonwealth.

Mr. NALDER: Although the commission does not make any further comparison of the lease conditions at this stage, it draws further distinctions elsewhere in the report under the heading of "Averaging" and "Appeal Board." I go on to quote further on the averaging system. Although agreeing that the 1953 legislation legalised the averaging system as applied to settlers allotted farms subsequent to that date, the commission upholds the right of settlers under the 1947 lease to a final rental valuation on a single unit basis. The report goes on—

> It is evident that lessees entitled to 1947 lease conditions have been issued with interim and final valuations based upon averaging of costs even though the single unit valuation to which they were entitled is, in some instances, lower, this necessitating an appeal by the lessee.
>
> The commission recommends that all 1947 lessees whose single unit valuation is lower than average valuation, be issued with the former. This would then conform to the 1947 lease conditions as provided for by the war service land settlement agreement and as promised by the Minister for Agriculture in a letter to "The West Australian" dated the 18th September, 1954, by the Minister for the North-West, on page 2069 of Hansard, No. 2 of 1954, and confirmed by Messrs. Baron Hay and Barrett on pages 577 and 603 respectively of the transcript. The war service land settlement scheme would then be honouring its obligations and not breaking their lease agreement as is obviously the case under the present method.

That is what the Royal Commissioners' report had to say. I want to turn back to the 1952 report which the Minister gave to this House and I quote from page 7, column 1—

> That valuations of farms under the war service land settlement scheme, either for rental or later freeholding, should be based exclusively on the cost of acquisition and development on a single unit basis and subject to the requirements of subclause (7) of Clause (6) of the War Service Land Settlement Agreement Act, 1935, and this valuation should be the option price for freehold.

Comparing the two reports, we find that the Minister in 1952, as chairman of this committee, submitted a report of this

nature and again in 1957 we find the chairman of the Royal Commission giving the same report. What has the Minister to say to that? I could use words that probably you, Mr. Speaker, would not allow me to use in order to describe the position.

Hon. D. Brand: Try it out; the Speaker is tolerant.

The Minister for Health: I do not think that is in your make up.

Mr. NALDER: The commission has found that in addition to ignoring this recommendation, the Minister and his departmental heads have continued to flout the conditions of the 1947 lease in spite of repeated promises that they would observe them. The commission further upholds the right of the 1947 lessees to appeal against any matter, including valuations, and at page 11, column 1 of its report, it makes the following observations:—

> Clause 2 (i) of the 1945 perpetual lease made provision for all disputes and questions whatsoever to be investigated and determined by an authority constituted in accordance with Clause 18 of the agreement. Unfortunately this authority was never established.
>
> The Commonwealth are adamant that no lessee should have the right to appeal against his valuation but it is the commission's contention that any alteration in the regulations cannot take away from those settlers with the 1947 lease agreement their right to appeal on any matters whatsoever which must include valuations.

The report later goes on—

> The commission is of the opinion that the cost of acquisition and development of each individual farm should be available as—
>
> (a) Lessees with 1947 leases have their rent based upon cost of acquisition and development.
>
> (b) Lessees with 1954 leases have the right to freehold at cost of acquisition and development or market value, whichever is the lesser.
>
> Without these figures no appeal board, arbitrator or judge would be in a position to give a fair judgment on an appeal.
>
> The commission maintains that the group accounting system instituted by the W.S.L.S. has been responsible for this position and has also been responsible for the failure of the W.S.L.S. to satisfy settlers when queries have been raised in connection with costs.

The Minister for Lands: A good report.

Mr. NALDER: A good report, the Minister says.

The Minister for Lands: It is a good report; an excellent one.

Mr. NALDER: I agree, and if the House agrees with the recommendations of the report—I have no doubt the Minister will agree to them, because he says it is a good report—the recommendations of this commission will be carried into effect.

The Minister for Lands: I did not say what I thought of the motion.

Mr. NALDER: If that is the case, I hazard the guess that in a few years we will have nearly 100 per cent. of satisfied war settlers in Western Australia and the scheme will have come to a conclusion with which, I feel sure, not only the members of the House but all the citizens of Western Australia will be in agreement.

The Minister for Lands: You have almost that percentage now. You are only speaking for isolated individuals.

Mr. NALDER: Some members on this side of the House and some on the Minister's side may be able to give the Minister some enlightenment on the position.

The Minister for Lands: You criticise the scheme as it is. All you have been doing up to now, in order to call attention to yourself, is to select isolated instances.

Mr. NALDER: When the Minister replies, he can give us proof that the instances I am quoting are isolated ones.

The Minister for Lands: You want to be a little responsible when you make a statement.

Mr. NALDER: I accept all that I state. The Minister has evidence that probably I, as a private member, cannot come by; and if I am wrong, the Minister can correct me.

The Minister for Lands: I think you have your eye on "The West Australian" and nothing else.

Mr. NALDER: I am sorry that I have not the same outlook as the Minister.

Hon. A. F. Watts: I should be glad that you have not.

Mr. NALDER: The commission reveals that an appeal board under the 1955 regulations was finally set up in 1956, but that so far it has heard only one case; and this is due mainly to the restriction placed upon settlers by regulation No. 24. I have not that regulation here but I hope before my time expires that I will be able to quote it.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member has unlimited time.

Mr. NALDER: I hope to be able to quote it to prove my case. Under the heading "Valuations" the commission refers to the existing confusion in the minds of many settlers. From my reading of the report, I do not think that the commission has

cleared up this confusion. At page 4, column 1, of the report, we find the following:—

> In many cases settlers have multiplied the rental figure by 40 (based on the 2½% principle) to estimate the capitalisation value of the holding. This, of course, is not the criteria today.

In the next column there is this comment—

> Final valuation must conform with Clause 5(5) and the rental is based upon 2½% of the figure thus obtained.

Practically all the confusion regarding the all-important subject of valuations has arisen out of a departure from one of the fundamental principles of the scheme—that farms should be written down at the outset to a reasonable economic level irrespective of the cost of acquisition and development.

I emphasise that point. No doubt in some cases the actual cost of the acquisition of the property and the development to a standard that would give the settler a reasonable chance of attaining a decent living that would meet the present-day requirements would be such that it would be impossible for him to pay it back, or pay a rental based on the whole of the capital cost. This, therefore, necessitates a writing down to an economic level on existing conditions; and also, as the Act stated, there should be an averaging over the preceding years' income derived from the property, and so on, taken into consideration in order to come to a finding that would give the lessee a fair chance of being able to meet his commitments and enjoying a reasonable standard of living.

The commission has failed to come to grips with the whole question of valuations, and after an effort to explain the difference between option price for freeholding and final valuation for rental, tosses the whole question back to the War Service Land Settlement Board with the following recommendation which is to be found on page 4, column 2:—

> It is our recommendation that the Commonwealth and the State authority immediately announce their interpretation of this clause (Clause 5 (5)) in order that the uncertainty which exists in the minds of settlers today may be eliminated.

All the points I have mentioned go to prove that quite a number of settlers are still frustrated because they really do not know just what are to be their final valuations when the opportunity arises for them to take over their properties for leasehold. Concluding the section on valuations, the commissioners say—

> Once the final valuation has been determined it cannot be increased under any circumstances without the consent of the lessee when further planned work is undertaken.

This may be so under the 1947 lease, but it is doubtful whether it holds good for the 1952 lease which, according to the opinion of an eminent Q.C., submitted to the commission, empowers the Minister to vary the rent as often as and by as much as he pleases. The Minister knows that he has this power. If, in between times, the War Service Land Settlement Board has found that some commitments that have to be met by the lessee have to be added to the original capitalisation, then the rental is increased. The Minister has the power to do that, and that is probably right; I am not querying that point.

I come now to the subject of dairying. As the Minister made some comment to the effect that I was dealing mainly with dairying, I wish to make some further remarks about it. In many aspects of the report, it appears that lack of time has prevented a full inquiry into matters which were obviously not as they should be. I feel sure that the member for Vasse will be able to back me up in the statemeent that all is not well with the dairying section of the war service land settlement scheme.

It is common knowledge, I think, that quite a number of lessees on dairying farms have walked off their properties. There was no mention of that point in the report. There is evidence from the report which proves that the position is far from satisfactory in the dairying areas. Referring to the standard for dairy farms laid down by the Commonwealth, the commission observes—

> It was evident that very few of the farms had reached this standard irrespective of the fact that this was a feature of the 1952 select committee report.

One would have expected that this in itself would have been sufficient reason for an exhaustive probing for the underlying reasons for the failure. I wish to quote further from the report under the heading of "Under-standard Properties," as follows:—

> Considerable evidence was tendered in regard to this aspect and the following is considered to be a fair summary of the reasons:
>
> (i) Poor standard of bulldozing and clearing.
>
> (ii) Insufficient pasture establishment — standard area, as agreed to by authorities, not developed.
>
> (iii) Bad supervision and administration.
>
> (iv) Lack of water and bad dams.
>
> (v) Bad fencing.

Further on under the same heading the commission states—

> Some properties were handed over to settlers when not developed to required standard.

> Delay in the development of farms to the required standard, in some instances by two to three years.

And in some cases by five and six years. That was in the 1952 report and again in the report of 1957. This report continues—

> Excessive depreciation on settlers' machinery caused by the rough nature of clearing.
>
> Insufficient pasture establishment thus not enabling the carrying capacity of the holdings to be at the required standard.

Those points outlined in the report must, I believe, concern every member here, and not only those in whose areas these dairying properties are situated. The previous committee went into those areas and made inspections. They found that there were many cases, which had been proved, where the complaints made by the settlers were correct. I wish to quote now from a heading appearing in the report at page 13.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. NALDER: Prior to the tea suspension I was quoting from the report of the Honorary Royal Commission, and I was about to quote from the section of it dealing with dairying. I had also stated that it had been proved that not sufficient work had been carried out on these dairy farms, and that was one of the reasons why a number of lessees of these dairying properties had walked off their holdings. On page 13 of the report appears the following, under the heading of "Dairying"—

> After evidence had been submitted and the first inspection was carried out by the Commission in the dairying areas it was obvious (as previously stated in Section D of this report)—

I quoted that earlier. It goes on—

> —that the main troubles were:— (a) lack of sufficient pasture; (b) lack of mowable area for hay; (c) lack of subdivision and (d) lack of water points.
>
> The standard as laid down by the Commonwealth for a dairy farm carrying 40 cows is:—
>
> (i) 160 to 200 acres cleared and pastured, 60 acres totally cleared, balance with not more than four to five trees per acre.
>
> (ii) 40 acres of mowable land.
>
> (iii) 6 main paddocks.
>
> (iv) water laid on to each paddock if reasonably possible.

That was the suggested standard laid down by the Commonwealth Government. The report goes on to state—

> It was evident that very few of the farms had reached this standard irrespective of the fact that this was a feature of the 1952 select committee report.

I do not think it is necessary for me to enlarge on that because evidence has been given to prove that the lack of supervision mentioned in the 1952 report is still evident, and is mentioned again in the 1957 report. This, too, proves, as I said previously, that the Minister has taken no action whatever to remedy the position; and so I believe he is worthy of censure because of his non-activity in that regard.

I now want to discuss the question of the settlers' equity. Many of the settlers, particularly those in the project areas, expressed concern that owing to delay in issuing final valuations, it was likely that they would penalise themselves by continuing to improve their properties. They felt that they were, in fact, building up an equity for which they would later be called upon to pay. That question is causing the settlers a good deal of concern, although they have been told by the Minister and the authorities that all the work they do to improve their properties over the period of years they have to be on their properties to qualify for freeholding—a period of ten years—will not be used against them when the final valuation is made, at the end of that period. But they have no guarantee that it will not be used against them, even though the Minister has stated that that will be the position.

They are worried about it because other details of their leases have not been carried out. As regards settlers' equity, the commission went to great pains to reassure settlers on the point and quoted assurances from the Minister, and the chief valuer of the Taxation Deuartment, Mr. Steffanoni, that the settler would receive credit for the work he had done. It is doubtful, however, if the commission has fully grasped the point raised by the settlers. The property as handed over to the settler would have a very low market value.

In ten years time the settler has the right to freehold at cost or market value, whichever is the lesser. Almost certainly the market value ten years hence would be vastly greater due almost entirely to the settler's efforts. Settlers therefore contend that the final valuation. and the option price for freeholding, should be fixed when the farm is handed over, or as soon as possible thereafter. In the light of the commission's own findings, that the Minister and his departmental heads have failed to keep their promises in regard to valuations, settlers may be pardoned for accepting the Minister's assurance on settlers' equities in their holdings with a good deal of reserve.

One point I wish to make before I conclude concerns settlers' representation. One request. which is not mentioned in the report, but which has been sent to the Minister by the settlers' associations in the State—and they attached quite a bit of

importance to it in the evidence that they gave to the commission, although the commission did not mention it—is that the settlers should have one of their own representatives on the War Service Land Settlement Board which inquires into their problems. On every board, whether it be the Egg Marketing Board, the Potato Board, or any other board dealing with primary producers or their products, there is a producers' representative appointed by the organisation involved. So I ask the Minister to allow one of the war service land settlers to be appointed, or elected by his own organisations, of which there are many in existence throughout the State. There is an organisation in the lower Great Southern, the Central Great Southern, the Midlands, and I understand that there is one in the dairying areas.

Why not allow the settlers to select one of their own representatives by ballot to sit on this board. That was one request that the settlers, through their organisations, submitted to the Minister, but he has not approved of it. Personally, I think it is one to which the Minister should agree. These settlers should have a direct representative on the board which listens to any objections or appeals concerning war service land settlers. As members have agreed to the principle with other boards, I feel sure that they will agree to it in this case. At present, all they have is a person nominated by the Minister and, I understand, he has no direct interest in the war service land settlement scheme. If they had one of their own representatives, he would be able to stress their point of view to the other members of the board.

The other request submitted by the settlers through their organisations was that more information should be given to the settlers. This matter was also mentioned by the Honorary Royal Commission in its report, and under the heading of "Information" on page 14, column 2, is to be found the following:—

> Many settlers were of the opinion that not sufficient information was made available to them regarding the working of the scheme and to what they were entitled. The Commission unfortunately found this to be true and it is considered that much of the evidence presented to us would not have been tendered had the settlers been kept more informed of their position.

I think that is one recommendation that should be carried into effect. If the department takes the settlers into its confidence, and lets them see that it is out to get them settled as quickly as possible, it will get all the co-operation it wants. I think, as the commission has stated in its report, that many of the settlers would not have given evidence before the commission had they been kept informed of their position, and been given details of their applications. If the department lets them see that it understands their position, many of the problems will be overcome, and many of their worries will disappear. So I hope the Minister will give consideration to that request as well, and that he will ensure that the officers co-operate more with the settlers. If that is done, I feel sure that the co-operation will be reciprocated by the settlers themselves.

Mr. Potter: They are given a lot of pamphlets and data now, are they not?

Mr. NALDER: What is the good of pamphlets, if the settler does not understand them? I could give the member for Subiaco some of the pamphlets that are issued to these settlers and he would not have a clue of what they meant after he had read them. The whole position requires explaining to them so that they can understand it.

Mr. Potter: You want a special officer giving information to them?

Mr. NALDER: No, but I believe that the officers have a duty to go around from place to place, from time to time, to explain things and give information to the settlers. It can be done as they are carrying out their ordinary duties.

Mr. Potter: Verbal instead of written information?

Mr. NALDER: I wanted to quote regulation No. 24. The commission reveals that an appeal board under the 1955 regulations was finally set up in September, 1956, but that so far it has heard only one case due mainly "to the restrictions placed upon settlers by regulation No. 24." Regulation No. 24 appears at page 2865 of the "Government Gazette." It is not necessary for me to read it in full because anyone interested can read it for himself. But it gives details about where the board shall meet, discuss the problem that has been submitted by the land settler, and it further states that the board shall write to the Minister giving the findings, and that that shall be final. The lessee of any property has no opportunity of getting his case resubmitted to any authority.

On examining the evidence that I have placed before the House this evening, as contained in the report submitted by the Royal Commissioners who investigated these matters, and in conjunction with the report submitted in 1952, we find that practically all of the points which were referred to by the select committee of last year have been touched on by the select committee of which the Minister for Lands was chairman. That proves that the Minister has not carried out the findings of his own report.

I feel sure that this House will have no other alternative than to agree to this motion and to request the Government to carry out the recommendations of the Royal Commission which investigated the affairs of war service land settlers. If that

is done, all the problems which now exist will be ironed out, and land settlement will prove to be the success we hope, and there will not be any further problems arising which cannot be overcome. That would place land settlement on a sound and solid basis and enable the settlers to produce the much-needed exportable products for which Western Australia is noted.

On motion by Mr. O'Brien, debate adjourned.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

1, Bills of Sale Act Amendment and Revision.

2, Inspection of Machinery Act Amendment.

Without amendment.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills;—

1, Junior Farmers' Movement Act Amendment.

2, Roman Catholic Vicariate of the Kimberleys Property.

3, Jetties Act Amendment.

4, Interpretation Act Amendment (No. 2).

5, Bush Fires Act Amendment.

6, Supply (No. 2), £18,000,000.

BILL—NOXIOUS WEEDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 30th October.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [7.50]: I obtained the adjournment of the debate on the second reading because, in the absence of the Minister for Lands, the Premier did not give the Bill his blessing. I understand that the Minister for Lands and his department have considered this measure. In fairness to the member for Narrogin, who introduced the Bill, further consideration should be given to the measure in order to remove any misunderstanding between members of the Government. Unfortunately, the Minister for Lands is not in his place at the moment. I understand that the measure meets with the general approval of his department and I would ask the Deputy Premier to agree to the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—OPTOMETRISTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 30th October.

MR. W. A. MANNING (Narrogin) [7.55]: The object of this Bill is to admit one particular person as an optometrist under the Act. The provision in the Bill is to remain in operation until the 30th June next. Although it does not specify one person in particular, it has been introduced with that object. I understand that other persons can also apply for admission under that provision before the 30th June next. I support the second reading of the measure, but I do so with a qualification, because, as members are aware, I have given notice of amendments.

Firstly, I do not agree with the idea of introducing a Bill for the sake of admitting one person. It seems entirely wrong when legislation has been passed to protect the public against unqualified persons practising as optometrists, that Parliament should agree to a provision to enable one person to obtain a concession. Secondly, I am of the opinion that the word "reasonable" referred to in Clause 2 will give rise to various interpretations. It might have a different meaning according to a person's point of view, and it is in that respect that I object.

There are some features which should be placed before the House so that all members can deal with the measure on a fair basis. I shall refer to the person to be covered by the Bill as the applicant because I do not wish to mention his name. He is a migrant, and in his immigration papers he is described as an optical mechanic. He has worked in Cairo for 20 years for William Derby & Co. This firm is described as dealers in optical requirements. He is not described as an optometrist nor is his firm described as opticians. He has set out his qualifications in a letter, as follows:—

> 1. Member of the Association of Optical Practitioners, London.

I understand this was granted to him in Alexandria without examination.

> 2. Diploma, Philadelphia Optical College.

This is a certificate from a college to which he has paid for a course. He was issued with a certificate at the end to say that he had completed the course, whatever that might mean.

> 3. Passed preliminary correspondence course of School of Opticians, London.

As the name indicates, that is a preliminary course.

There are certain diplomas recognised in this State as a substitute for the examinations of the board. For instance, if someone comes into Western Australia from

overseas or interstate and possesses the following qualifications he will be admitted as an optometrist:—

(a) Dioptric or Fellowship diploma of the British Optical Association, London.

(b) Fellowship diploma of the Worshipful Spectacle Makers' Company, London.

(c) Licentiate in Optometric Science of the Australian College of Optometry.

I have quoted the diplomas and certificates held by this applicant, but the value of the courses as a qualification for admission in this State is unknown.

As I have indicated, the qualifications are very important. The Optometrists' Board of Western Australia asked the applicant for copies of the syllabuses of the bodies concerned. He was unable to produce them. I shall read a portion of his letter in this regard, dated the 11th September, 1956—

> I regret that syllabuses were either lost or left behind in Egypt, but I am sending text books referring to both the School of Optics, London, and the Philadelphia Optical College.
>
> These books are all I can provide to indicate the subjects covered, apart from the certificates and references which I am sending you again.

He was not able to prove by providing syllabuses of those colleges what was the measure of his previous knowledge. In his first application, he advised that he was prepared to take a course in optometry at the University of Western Australia and asked the board whether consideration could be given to him for his qualifications and experience overseas and thus minimise the course and reduce the time required to qualify.

The board dealt with that application and the registrar replied on the 22nd November, 1956, stating, in part,—

> I believe that I advised you verbally that the Faculty of Science of the University of Western Australia, after mature consideration of your case, had consented to your enrolment in the optometry course, as an unmatriculated student in accordance with the University's general regulation 18.
>
> Following the examination of your credentials and a subsequent interview which you had with Mr. H. J. Fuller—a member of this board—and Mr. L. C. Eimer—Supervisor of Optometry Education—the board has agreed that you be permitted to forgo the first and second years of the course and Physiological Optics in the third year but that you be required to sit for examinations in the first, second, third and fourth year Optical Dispensing.

So it will be seen that the board did everything possible to minimise time and difficulty for that applicant to secure his qualification, by exempting him from certain examinations and courses which he would otherwise have had to take.

I would like to point out that in anything we do with regard to this Bill, we must not lower the standards of optometry in the State, because the Act exists to protect the public from unknowledgeable or inexperienced men testing their eyes and providing them with spectacles. Anything we did that lowered the standard would be entirely wrong. Yet we must be fair. If this man has the qualifications, we must see that he is given a fair opportunity to practise his profession. But I contend that he must first of all prove his qualifications; that is most essential.

The Minister for Health: By examination?

Mr. W. A. MANNING: I do not see how he could do so in any other way. It is no good letting him try himself out on people for a few years and find out by his mistakes. He cannot prove his qualifications by providing syllabuses; and it is doubtful whether the certificates he has are of any real value. It appears that he may not have very high qualifications. I would point out that citizens of this State desiring to qualify as optometrists have to undergo a four-years' course at the University; and even returned servicemen who desire to follow the profession have to complete that course.

The Minister for Health: It costs £100 a year in fees.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: It involves a lot of time and money, and there is no reason why we should substitute something else which is rather mythical for the very definite course prescribed for our own people in Western Australia. I contend that we should endeavour to be fair to the man concerned and yet protect the public of Western Australia. I support the second reading with the idea of moving in Committee the amendment I have suggested and which speaks for itself. It can be dealt with in detail later on if the second reading of the Bill is agreed to.

MR. JAMIESON (Beeloo) [8.5]: To a great extent I am inclined to agree with the member for Narrogin. I believe that with regard to any of these medical ancillaries, there should be no lessening of the standard required in any form of examination that would possibly damage reciprocity between this State and other States in connection with the qualifications that these people hold; and if we do, by lowering the standard to let one person into the field, damage that reciprocal status between the States, we will be doing optometry in Western Australia a great deal of damage. In fact, we would be doing any of the

medical fraternity damage if we permitted one person to practise under special circumstances.

I understand that this person knew before he came to Australia the conditions that prevail, and that he would have to undertake an examination. As the member for Narrogin has pointed out, his qualifications are really doubtful. Some are along the well-known American lines of what might be called dollar qualifications. If one pays a dollar for a course and keeps on paying dollars, one gets a certificate.

Mr. Cornell: Railway commissioner qualifications.

Mr. JAMIESON: I suppose they could be classed as such. I suggest there should be some limiting factor to the admission of any person such as this man. If he could spend the time to qualify the same as any other person who takes a professional course does, then he should be allowed to practise.

I understand that of those practising in this State in this particular field, there are 20 who have come from overseas and satisfactorily passed the prescribed course set down by the board. So it would not appear to be out of the scope of anybody particularly interested in this field and desirous of practising under these circumstances, to put his mind to it and obtain qualifications.

This particular man is engaged in a business which would possibly preclude him from attending certain lectures. That could doubtless apply to any person who desired to be an optician. If he was not able to attend lectures, he could not obtain a degree and finish up by practising in that field.

I would like to hear from the member for North Perth, when he is replying, as to what his ideas are on the possibility of a lowering of standard, which might affect the position throughout Australia. Failing his being able to supply information on this point, I shall be inclined to support the amendment suggested by the member for Narrogin. With that reservation, I support the second reading.

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH (Hon. E. Nulsen—Eyre) [8.10]: I do not intend to have much to say in regard to this Bill, but I think it is bad policy to have one-man legislation. It is a practice that should not be followed. People know perfectly well that certain qualifications are laid down for these professions; and if they can attain those qualifications, they can practise the profession.

From what I can learn of this gentleman —I am not speaking or thinking derogatorily of him; I do not blame him for trying to do what he thinks he has the qualification to do—he has no qualifications as an optician. He did not study in England or the U.S.A., and the institutions whose qualifications he claims to possess are out of existence, and there is no way of proving that he possesses those qualifications. In any case it is unfair to our optometrists that they should have to study at the University for four years and pay fees to the extent of £400, and then have opposition from someone who was not so qualified.

Mr. Ackland: That is not so bad as taking a risk with people's eyes.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: No; that is a very great risk. Because of the reciprocity aspect, and for the protection of our own optometrists, I do not intend to vote for the Bill. Even the amendment does not meet the position. This man did not even have the minimum required standards.

We have had English people come here with qualifications far superior to his, and there was some truth in what they put forward; yet their applications were refused because they did not have the qualifications that were required in this State. This Act has been in operation since 1940. We have a Medical School, and we must be very careful what we do in these matters. If a person has the qualifications, then, irrespective of his nationality, I feel that he should be allowed to practise; but unless he has such qualifications, he should be prevented from doing so. I wish now to submit a few notes supplied by Dr. Henzell, who says—

> There is a principle in this Bill which threatens each ancillary medical service. If this person was well qualified and no evidence existed to suggest that he could be registered without detriment to our standards or to graduates from our local schools, the Bill could be supported in the public interest.
>
> Unfortunately this is not the case. The person concerned was born in Palestine in 1904 and continued to live in Egypt until 1952 when he migrated to Western Australia. This person has never studied in England or the United States, and this is of interest when considering the "qualifications" which he claims. These are—
>
> Diploma of the Philadelphia Optical College.
>
> This was obtained by correspondence, as may many other qualifications of less reputable American educational institutions.

I do not mind a person qualifying by correspondence, provided he has qualified and has had the necessary practical experience. To quote further—

> He is also a member of the London Association of the Optical Practitioners. This membership is not in any way a measure of ability or studies in optometry.

He also claims to have completed a preliminary correspondence course with the School of Optics, London. This school is defunct, and the preliminary course undertaken does not constitute training in optometry.

Our own trainees are required to study for four years at University standard, and pay fees amounting to £400.

When Mr. —— was nominated as a migrant he described himself as an optical mechanic. He now wishes to be classed as an optometrist on a level with our own highly trained graduates.

We have examples of local trainees who were on active service in the Middle East and who returned to take up studies in the profession not long before Mr. —— arrived here. This Bill is patently unfair to them.

Mr. —— applied to the Optometrists Registration Board in 1952 to be registered. The board investigated his qualifications and was sympathetic to his case, but found that his qualifications fell so short of necessary minimum standards that it had to refuse.

Other persons have applied—some with English qualifications superior to those held by Mr. ——, and have been refused.

If this standard can be accepted in optometry, similar conditions could apply in dentistry, occupational therapy and physiotherapy, all of which are ancillary medical services and can reflect upon the reputation of our medical school. It seems unnecessary to say that this should be high, and can only be maintained by insistence on high standards of training. These must be a prerequisite to registration of any person.

The Optometrists Act was passed in 1940, and it is inappropriate at this time to register persons who do not conform to our minimum standards.

I feel we should give people such as this every opportunity if they can prove they have the necessary qualifications, but unfortunately this gentleman cannot do so. After having been away from study for a few years it is almost impossible for one to return to it and pass examinations, and particularly when one has passed the age of 50 years. I repeat that we must be fair and just and must protect our own graduates.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: Are you opposing the second reading?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Yes.

MR. ROSS HUTCHINSON (Cottesloe) [8.20]: I think this Bill comes within the category of undesirable legislation and it seems extraordinary that it should have passed another place. At all events on this occasion we are acting as a House of review and must be responsible in our attitude towards the measure. The Bill is undesirable because it seeks to legislate for one man in particular. Although it may be said that the measure could assist other people in similar circumstances, it has been introduced to assist one man and its purport is that he should be assisted to become a registered optometrist by the lowering of standards laid down by a board instituted by this House—

Mr. Lapham: That is not right.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I am aware that there is an amendment on the notice paper—

Mr. Lapham: That has nothing to do with it. The Bill does not lower standards.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: With due deference to the hon. member, I disagree with him. If the standards were not to be lowered this gentleman would, perforce, have to pass the examination set by the board.

Mr. Lapham: That is what he has to do. It is a pity some people in this House have not read the Bill.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: If it were not for certain circumstances, I might take objection to what the hon. member is saying, but, of course, he is entirely wrong. It has been found that this gentleman, who desires to become a qualified optometrist, sought from the board permission to have certain parts of his training set aside, in order that he might be assisted. The board agreed to that, but subsequently found it could not legally make that agreement, and, in any case, this person was unable to fulfil what was requested of him, as he said he was unable to attend the University to acquire the knowledge necessary to pass the examination. So legislation was brought before another place to give the board power to set a reasonable theoretical and practical test. The board could interpret that as it liked—

Mr. Lapham: Quite right.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: The board is very much opposed to this Bill. In the ancillary fields of physiotherapy, optometry, chiropody and the like, this House has, in the past, agreed to the establishment of those ancillaries as professions and has set up boards to control and manage them, the purpose being twofold; firstly, to set and maintain high standards and, secondly, to protect the public interest or, in short, the public health. The board in question feels that the Bill should not be passed in this form and is very much opposed to it. The Minister for Health was at pains to give the views of the experts of the Public Health Department in regard to the Bill. I think that

power could be given to the board subsequently, to use more latitude in excusing people from having to take certain sections of the course, but at the moment it cannot do that.

Mr. W. A. Manning: That is what the Bill is for.

[*Mr. Moir took the Chair.*]

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I realise that, but the measure has been brought down without due consultation with the board itself and the Public Health Department, both of which feel that it is not desirable and is not in the best form to ensure that the necessary standards are maintained and that the public interest is protected. I think we would be most unwise, acting as a House of review, to accept the Bill at this stage, and I do not think it would do the man in question any good. It would be useless unless the board in interpreting "reasonable tests" made them such that the standard would be lowered.

Mr. Lapham: I think you are reflecting on the board.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I do not for a moment think the board would do that. I feel that the amendment made in another place and that proposed here by the member for Narrogin would better enable the board to interpret the wording so that the standard might be maintained—

Mr. Lapham: That is correct.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I am wondering what is the necessity for such legislation.

Mr. Lapham: To give this man an opportunity to pass the examination.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: The hon. member has just said the standard must be maintained. At present the door is open to this gentleman—

Mr. Lapham: It is closed.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: It is open for him to proceed and go through, just like anyone else in this State. I repeat that the legislation would do this man no good unless it lowered the standard. I do not think the board would allow the standard to be lowered.

Mr. Lapham: No one wants to lower it.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: Then what is the need for the legislation?

Mr. W. A. Manning: It grants certain exemptions.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I have just made that point. With the Public Health Department and the board disagreeing with the Bill, we would be unwise to accept it. Let any legislation which might come down in the future be the result of negotiations between the appropriate authorities.

This man whom this Bill attempts to assist, has no qualifications whatever. He has, apparently, practical qualifications in that he has served in the field of optometry in another country; but the qualifications he alleges he has are worth nothing, as the Minister pointed out. The Minister made appropriate remarks with regard to those qualifications. Accordingly, one of the purposes of the Bill is that this man will not have to qualify by any set period of training—training set by the board for a University course. It is more than possible that the board would be at a loss to understand the meaning of this Bill.

Perhaps I do not see it as clearly as some members, but I would ask how the board will interpret this as it relates to obtaining knowledge necessary to pass reasonable practical and theoretical tests as members want. Does this Bill mean that the board must immediately set these reasonable tests? Without anything further in the Bill, one might expect that to be so. The board might say "The wish of Parliament is that we shall at this stage set a test for this gentleman in order that he may have the door opened to him to enter this field."

There is nothing in this Bill to indicate anything to the contrary. That is a very great weakness in this legislation; perhaps it is its greatest weakness. All the Bill says is that he must pass a reasonable practical and theoretical test in the work of optometry prescribed by the board; and there is an amendment foreshadowed which tightens up the situation to make it such that the standard cannot be lowered. If this Bill passes the second reading—and I sincerely hope it does not—I will support the amendment proposed by the member for Narrogin. It is my fervent hope, however, that we will not pass such ill-conceived legislation.

Mention has been made of the fact that at the present time there are optometrists in this State who have no real qualifications—at least not similar to those required by the board—but, as members know, when any profession such as this is made subject to statutory control, then initially we bring into the field all qualified optometrists—those who have practised over a specified number of years. That, of course, is well-known to members of this House. We have done that in the field of physiotherapy, chiropody and in other ancillary services of the medical profession.

However, after the initial stage is passed and we have required, as a Parliament that the board we have set up should prescribe and maintain a high standard, then we must see that that standard is not lowered; or that there is no precedent set for the lowering of that standard. If we are to give any additional power to the

board, we must ensure that there are certain safeguards—which the appropriate authorities feel are necessary safeguards —to maintain a high standard, and to ensure the safety of public health.

In this debate I believe that the points brought out by the board have been made very clear. I have a paper before me in which there are nine points that have been brought to my notice by the board indicating its factual disapproval to the legislation before us. I have before me a brochure that has been drawn up for the benefit and advice of school children who are in their final years at school. The brochure has been drawn up to illustrate the nature of the work of optometry and it is called "A Career in Optometry." It points out to the school children something about the career of optometry and deals with the course of training that one must undergo.

It also gives the subjects a student must pass in order to qualify and it goes on to mention the fees that are payable which, of course, are substantial. As a Parliament we set up these boards and it certainly costs something to enable them to carry on their work. I believe that a student who enters this profession and who goes through the full course, pays something in the nature of £400; and all the time the student is qualifying and paying those fees to the board he must keep himself—or his parents must keep him—for those years he is at the University.

Yet here we find legislation before us where some person who is not qualified can be given an easy door to enter this profession. There is no mention of a time but merely that a reasonable test must be passed. In all the circumstances, I hope that the House will have full regard for the uncertain nature of the provisions in this Bill and that, unlike another place, it will not pass this legislation.

MR. POTTER (Subiaco) [8.39]: I was not present in the House when the Bill was introduced, but I have read the speech made by the member for North Perth when he moved the second reading. If the House should pass the second reading of this measure, I think we would lower the standards of optometrists in this State. With the influx of people from overseas, I ask myself how many amending Bills we must have brought before us from time to time to cater for the cases of the various people concerned. To my mind, it means lowering the desired standard.

There is a foreshadowed amendment with which I cannot agree, because I feel that, in effect, the amendment is implied in the existing Act at the moment, and for that reason I think it is redundant. This is a one-man measure, and I sometimes ask myself whether we are here to legislate for the 1 per cent. of the population, or whether we are here to cater for the 99 per cent. I think the House would be well advised to vote against this measure.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [8.40]: I do not think this Bill carries with it the danger that some members seem to think it does. The board will have the entire say in this matter. The board has to set the examination which this person has to pass. There is nothing new in having one-man and two-man legislation brought before us, because not so long ago I put through a Bill with reference to two people who became physiotherapists. They came here under wrongful advice; they had been physiotherapists in the countries from which they came and we put through a measure giving them a certain time in which they had to pass the necessary examinations set by the board.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: It is a different matter when wrongful advice is given, but there is no wrongful advice in connection with this question, because the immigration authorities were informed by the board of the necessary qualifications.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: No person should be allowed to practise unless he can show he has the necessary qualifications. But this Bill sets out that the man concerned has to pass the examination set by the board. If he has no qualifications—as some members seem to think—then the only one who will be in trouble is the man who wants to pass the examination. There is nothing to worry about. This man cannot be let loose on the public until he has passed the necessary examinations.

MR. LAPHAM (North Perth—in reply) [8.42]: I find it difficult to understand the attitude of some members of this House because it indicates they have given this measure a very cursory examination. The Bill is simplicity itself. It gives an individual an opportunity to sit for an examination which is prescribed by the board. The board is the examiner, and it can please itself whether it marks the papers strictly or otherwise. The board has complete control of the position.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: Does it specify a time?

Mr. LAPHAM: All the measure does is to give the individual the right to sit for an examination before the 30th June, 1958. The Optometrists Board will be comprised of seven members and for the information of the House, I will read who they are. There will be three registered optometrists nominated by the Minister—and I am sure the Minister will not nominate just anyone. There shall be three registered optometrists nominated by the Registered Optometrists' Association and one shall be a member of the teaching

staff of the Physics Faculty of the University nominated by that faculty. So we have seven people on the Optometrists Board who will set the examination that this individual has to pass. They set the papers and mark them. There should be no fear that there will be a lessening of the standard.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: When are they supposed to set it?

Mr. LAPHAM: When this individual applies. The member for Cottesloe said that there was nothing to stop this individual applying for registration now. There is something to stop him and it is this factor: Section 35 of the Act sets out that no person shall be qualified for registration as an optometrist unless and until he proves to the satisfaction of the board that he has completed the prescribed course of training and has passed the prescribed examination. The prescribed course of training is that he attends the University for a number of years. This individual is 53 years of age, he has been connected with optometry for many years overseas and he states that he can pass the examination set by the board; yet people in this House are not prepared to give him the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Cornell: If this examination is so easy, why limit it to the 30th June?

Mr. LAPHAM: All the Bill does is to give him an opportunity to apply. He is a migrant who came to this country; he is naturalised and he says he is skilled in this particular profession. He wants to be registered by the Optometrists Board and has said to the board, "You are the people with the skill; set me your examination and I will pass it."

Mr. Marshall: That is fair enough.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: What about the prescribed course?

Mr. LAPHAM: The prescribed course is one at the University. This individual cannot attend the University owing to the fact that he is a married man with children. He has to earn a living and cannot attend during week-days. It is true that he applied to the Optometrists Board asking for registration, which was refused. However, while the board refused him, it granted him certain credits which indicated that he had certain qualifications. It is no good the board now backing down and saying this man is not qualified. The board's letter indicates that it was quite prepared to give him certain credits in certain parts of the training.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: That was, providing he did the course at the University.

Mr. LAPHAM: No, the board gave him credits and wrote indicating he would have to do a course of training at the University. He wrote and asked the board if he could do the course of training by correspondence in the evening rather than go to the University. He could get a lecturer of the University to teach him in the evening but he could not attend during the day.

Mr. Marshall: Our own people have to do it.

Mr. LAPHAM: The board told him that he must attend the University during the day and, as a consequence, wrote to him later on and said that it had acted ultra vires in granting him certain credits. A representative of the Optometrists Board has seen me and stated that there are difficulties in this Act. The board has not wide enough powers to deal with a matter like this and I promised that the matter would be rectified next year, as it was too late to bring down a measure this session. I am asking the House to agree to this simple provision so that this individual can have his examination prescribed by the board. The board is the examiner and there cannot possibly be any lessening in the standard in regard to this profession due to the obvious fact that the board sets the examination.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: With no prescribed course. How silly can you get!

Mr. LAPHAM: I wonder how silly the hon. member can get.

Mr. Evans: That makes two of us.

Mr. LAPHAM: One of the members on the board is from the University and I take it that the University sets its own examination. All this individual wants to do is to sit for this examination and if he does not sit for it, he will not be registered. There is no lessening of the standard. All we are doing is giving a migrant an opportunity to take up a profession to which he has been accustomed for many years overseas.

Much has been said about reciprocity. If we look at reciprocity under the Act, we will see that it deals mainly with the question of English countries. It does not deal with the diplomas from countries such as America; it is only in regard to England. This individual has not been to England and has not an English diploma. I do not think that should be held against him. If he has the skill to pass the examination, why not give him the opportunity to do so?

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: What about waiting for proper legislation next year?

Mr. LAPHAM: Why should he wait? We had a Bill before this House the other night and hon. members opposite were very concerned about migrants having to be naturalised. This individual is already naturalised and all he wants to do to to sit for this examination because he says he has the skill to do the work. He says, "Set the examination and I will pass it." In another place, a safeguard was inserted in the Bill which said that it shall be a reasonable theoretical and practical examination.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: That is good enough.

Mr. LAPHAM: The member for Cottesloe pointed out that the word "reasonable" is used right through the Act, which was passed in 1940 and amended subseuently by a measure similar to this. It has been satisfactory over the years and there is no reason to alter it now. I commend the Bill to the House.

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

Ayes	18
Noes	18
A tie	0

Ayes.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. Lawrence
Mr. Evans	Mr. W. Manning
Mr. Gaffy	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Graham	Mr. O'Brien
Mr. Hall	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Heal	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Watts
Mr. Lapham	Mr. Sewell
	(Teller.)

Noes.

Mr. Ackland	Mr. Hutchinson
Mr. Bovell	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Brady	Mr. Norton
Mr. Brand	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Potter
Mr. Court	Mr. Roberts
Mr. Crommelin	Mr. Toms
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. I. Manning
	(Teller.)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The voting being equal, I give my casting vote with the ayes.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Norton in the Chair; Mr. Lapham in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Section 34B added:

Mr. W. A. MANNING: I move an amendment—

> That paragraph (d) in lines 24 to 26, page 2, be struck out and the following new paragraph be inserted in lieu:—
>
> (d) he has passed theoretical and practical tests in optometry to the usual standard as prescribed by the Board.

Mr. LAPHAM: I would like to know what the hon. member means by the words "usual standard as prescribed by the board" in the paragraph that he proposes to substitute for paragraph (d). Does it mean that the individual must go to the University?

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: It is a bit late to think about that.

Mr. LAPHAM: I ask this question because there is something prescribed by the board which indicates that certain studies must be carried out at the University. If the member for Narrogin is only concerned with the fact that there is to be no lowering of the normal standard of an optometrist, then I would be in agreement with his amendment. But if he intends that an individual should go to the University to complete his studies, I must oppose it because the Bill is based on the fact that the individual in question finds it impossible to attend the University during the day and is debarred from having a tutor during the evening and so cannot study as the board wants him to. If the amendment means only that there is to be no lessening of the standard, I am agreeable to it.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: I do not know whether this individual should attend the University or not, but there should be no lowering of the standard and he will have to pass theoretical and practical tests of the usual standard. Whether he has sufficient knowledge to pass the test without going to the University, probably no one but he knows. The amendment would simply delete the word "reasonable" which could have a wide interpretation, and would make sure there is no lowering of the standard.

Mr. Lapham: Do you mean he has to go to the University if he has the knowledge to sit for the examination now?

Mr. W. A. MANNING: If he can pass the board's examination without attending the University, well and good.

Mr. Lapham: I agree with that.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: I am not prescribing how he is to pass the test so long as the standard remains and the necessary safeguards are observed.

Mr. RODOREDA: It is not a question of what the member for Narrogin or the member for North Perth thinks the amendment will do, but what somebody else decides it means. I do not know why the member for Narrogin wished to redraft the clause and I do not think anyone can say definitely what the amendment means.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I am convinced that the amendment does not require anyone to go to a University, but to pass a test prescribed by the board and not below the usual standard. If this man can do that just by going to the examination room, he will get away with it, but if not, he will not pass the examination.

Mr. Cornell: What is the fundamental difference between the two?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I cannot find any substantial difference except that this says "the usual standard prescribed by the board" and the other says, "reasonable theoretical and practical tests prescribed by the board." I think it is better to have the word "usual" than something special prescribed, and that is why I favour the amendment.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: Who is to say what is "reasonable"? The board objected to the word as being capable of too wide an interpretation. I know one hon. member has been canvassing opposition to the amendment, but the board agreed that it was satisfactory.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I oppose the clause. What we have heard during this debate has highlighted the fact that there is considerable misunderstanding of what is going on. The member for North Perth questioned the member for Narrogin as to whether if the Bill were passed, the man in question would have to go to the University and do a prescribed course or whether he could sit for examination immediately.

It seemed to be resolved by the member for Narrogin that this person could take the examination without the prescribed course if he could pass the practical and theoretical examinations to the standard required by the board. The fourth year syllabus for a person qualifying in optometry, as shown in a brochure called "A Career in Optometry", contains ocular physiology, contact lenses, optometry and ocular movement, instrumentation—

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think that comes within the ambit of the matter before the Chair.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I normally take the greatest notice of what you say, Mr. Chairman, but does not Clause 2 contain the meat of the Bill? In opposing the clause, can I not point out my reason for opposition to it? It is my intention to try to point out that unless the gentleman in question has studied, it is well-nigh impossible to be able to pass the tests at the usual standard, because of the quality of the syllabus I was reading.

Mr. Rodoreda: What are you concerned about if the fellow can't pass it?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I am concerned that good legislation should be passed by this Chamber. Have I your permission to continue, Mr. Chairman?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: In the fourth year the syllabus includes—

Psychology, ocular first aid and hygiene.

History, law and ethics.

Optical dispensing IV.

This Bill verges on the ridiculous when we are asking the board to set an examination so that the usual standard may be enforced, and yet there is no necessity for him to go through the prescribed course. The member for Pilbara asked me why I was kicking up a fuss, or used words of that description. Surely when we have a Bill brought down from another place, we are acting in the role of a House of review! I oppose the clause.

Mr. LAPHAM: I would like to correct the member for Cottesloe. The only subjects that the board wants the individual to go to the University to study are optical dispensing I, II, III, and IV. The board was quite satisfied to give him credits in all the other subjects.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: Provided he went through the prescribed course at the University.

Mr. LAPHAM: Only in optical dispensing.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: That is rubbish.

Mr. LAPHAM: It is not. They are marked here by the individual who came to see me from the Optometrists' Board.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: That is quite wrong.

Mr. LAPHAM: It is not wrong, and I object to that remark. I can assure members that there is no danger. I have agreed with the member for Narrogin that the word "reasonable" is dangerous, and have agreed to his amendment. That is quite fair.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—FREMANTLE HARBOUR TRUST ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council with amendments.

MOTION—NATIVE WELFARE.

Commissioner's Annual Report and Select Committee's Objections.

Debate resumed from the 30th October on the following motion by Mr. Grayden:—

> That in the opinion of this House as the annual report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare for the year ended the 30th June, 1957, which was tabled on the 22nd October last, contains many inaccurate and misleading statements in respect of the report of the select committee appointed to inquire into the conditions of aborigines in the Laverton-Warburton area and in respect of the controversy which the report caused and as the commissioner's annual report, by presenting selected documents and in other ways, conveys a distorted account of happenings in the Warburton-Laverton area, the members of the select committee be authorised to prepare a reply to the offending sections of the report and such reply be attached as an appendix to the annual report of the commissioner.

THE MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE (Hon. J. J. Brady—Guildford-Midland) [9.17]: In order that members will

be able to understand the position, I think I should go over the history of what led up to the appointment of the select committee, and what subsequently transpired in connection with its report; and, finally, the annual report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare.

About last October the House agreed to the appointment of a select committee to investigate the position of natives in the Warburton Range area. The committee submitted its report about two or three days before the end of last session. In actual fact, I think we debated the adoption of the report at about 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning on the last day of the 1956 session. Then we had the calm before the storm. Very little was said or done until the middle of January, 1957. Then the storm broke and it might be as well to remind members of the circumstances surrounding it.

I understand that a communist paper in Sydney quoted substantially from the select committee's report, adopted by this House, and from then on practically every paper in the Eastern States took up the matter and sensationalism ran riot for about three or four weeks. In fact, it was nothing for journalists from the Eastern States to ring me up at my home as early as 5 o'clock in the morning, asking me to give them some information; and sometimes they rang me up as late as 11 o'clock at night. I understand, too that the Commissioner of Native Welfare had a similar experience.

The reference to the communist paper, which published the report, might have some significance bearing in mind the commissioner's 1955 annual report, which the member for South Perth quoted to show the type of report that the commissioner compiles. I think the gist of what the commissioner was saying in his 1955 report was that there were some disgruntled people in Australia who were prepared to adopt any tactics to try to cause alarm and concern. He may have been referring to those people who published this matter in the first instance. When that paper controversy was on, all types of people came into the fray and aired their views in regard to the natives. We had those who were well-informed, ill-informed, and those who were not informed at all.

There is one very important point on which I would like to remind the House. The member for South Perth has continually said in this Chamber that the Commissioner of Native Welfare publicised in the Press a statement that the select committee's report was grossly exaggerated; and the commissioner on his part right through has denied that he ever made such a statement to the Press at all. But in justification of his own statement, the member for South Perth argues that such a statement was made by the Commissioner of Native Welfare to the Eastern States Press and also to Mr. Knutley in the Old Country.

The Commissioner of Native Welfare says that one morning he was rung up by a newspaper reporter who said that in that morning's paper there were headlines which read "Horror Report—Native Tribes Left to Die in the Desert." The reporter wanted his official statement with reference to this matter. The commissioner said that if such a statement had appeared in the Press, all he could say was that it was a gross exaggeration and added that the reporter could quote him if he liked, which he did.

I now come to the statement that Mr. Knutley is alleged to have written to him and the member for South Perth quoted Mr. Knutley's letter in this House. The commissioner explains that and says that a letter was written to Mr. Knutley saying that it was the general consensus of opinion. Did the commissioner have the right to make such a statement? In view of what transpired subsequent to the select committee's report, I do not think it can be said that the commissioner was unfair in making that statement because we must remember that subsequent to the report of the select committee a party from the Medical Department journeyed to the centre in question.

This party comprised two doctors, one of whom has a Australia-wide, if not a world-wide, reputation on eye diseases and is considered to be an authority on such, and the other was a deputy in the Medical Department. There were also two health officers. A separate party from the University, quite detached from the party from the Medical Department, also journeyed there. Two independent reporters from the Press also visited the area, and I, as Minister, did the same. We came back with a different report, largely opposed to that presented by the select committee. So Mr. Middleton can be quoted as rightly stating the facts when he said it was the general consensus of opinion of those who could express an informed opinion.

Mr. Grayden: He said that the report was grossly exaggerated.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: He was quoting the general consensus of opinion.

Mr. Grayden: He says that the consensus of opinion confirms this.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: All the people outside the select committee who visited that area were experts and they disagreed with the findings of the select committee.

Mr. Grayden: They did not disagree on one thing.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: They disagreed on a number of points. I am merely bringing this forward so that the House will get the matter in its true perspective when considering the statements made by the member for South Perth. The Commissioner of Native Welfare has been maligned time and again to the effect that he made a statement to the Press and that he publicised it. But he has denied it right through, and he continues to deny it.

Mr. Grayden: And he puts it in a letter.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: He puts in a letter what he said was the general consensus of opinion, and he had that right as a consequence of the experts' report.

Mr. Grayden: It was not the consensus of opinion.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: It was; they disagreed with the select committee's findings.

Mr. Grayden: It was not. Name one!

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: They said that malnutrition was not rife.

Mr. Grayden: We said that malnutrition was commonplace, and they said the natives were not suffering from starvation.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: They pointed out that there were certain foodstuffs available to the natives which had a higher protein content than some of the food that the whites were eating at the missions and in the towns. Yet our friends make out that the foodstuffs were inadequate! It was pointed out that the protein value contained in the seeds eaten by these natives was 100 per cent. greater than most other foods in missions and towns.

Mr. Grayden: How do you explain the fact that 43 natives were starving when the select committee was there?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: Let us follow this matter up. I have no desire to do this to the member for South Perth, but the hon. member said the natives were starving, and he has produced a photograph of a native skeleton rather than some evidence to show that these people were starving. Does the hon. member mean to say that while there were natives starving within a few miles of the mission, he would prefer to go out and take a photograph of a native who had been dead for some time rather than produce the evidence—the starving natives? I have no desire to bring this matter up, but it is the hon. member who mentioned the question of starvation.

Mr. Grayden: There were 43 natives starving when the select committee was there.

The SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: That is the type of statement that the member for South Perth makes, but I have quoted one instance as to what was done when these natives were alleged to be starving. The select committee was formed as a result of the experts in the Education Department and in the Department of Native Welfare wishing to set up a school at Cosmo Newbery, because it was felt that the opportunity for the children would be greater in that area. Because of that fact, the hon. member took the step he did.

Mr. Grayden: It started because they were going to separate the children from their parents.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: That is the hon. member's statement. It is all part of the set-up, and the department was trying to help these people. I will cover that aspect as I proceed. The report was tabled in this House at about 3 or 4 a.m. and a condition was attached to it that we should call on the Commonwealth Government to find the finance in relation to the recommendations. I suggested that we should get the report before the House rose. I had no chance whatever to obtain a considered opinion from any of the departments, and I accepted as factual the statements of the select committee.

In a desire to help the natives I was prepared to see the report adopted with a view to asking the Commonwealth Government to assist immediately, because the member for South Perth and I both said that the Commonwealth Government was largely responsible for any distress caused to the natives as a result of the tests at Maralinga and the meteorological stations that were being set up.

Subsequently Mr. Middleton submitted his annual report. Up to that time the commissioner had received commendation from the authorities on different occasions for his very humane approach to the natives. He has given nine years' service in Western Australia as the head of this department. He has introduced many innovations in the interests of the natives. Yet he was referred to by the member for South Perth as having only had a few years experience in this State. The hon. member used the term "a few years" in several places. He knows full well that Mr. Middleton has been here for nine years.

Mr. Grayden: Between eight and nine years.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: The hon. member knows there is a difference between a few years years and eight or nine years. The member for South Perth attempted to make out that the commissioner had only some experience in the islands, but he deliberately ignored the fact that this person was born on the

west coast of Queensland, where there are many natives. As a result of his own experience as a child, when some natives saved his life, he decided to devote the rest of his life to promoting the welfare of natives. The member for South Perth ignored that fact and tried to make out that the only experience he had was in New Guinea.

Mr. Grayden: He has not had as much experience as some members of the select committee.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: I challenge that statement.

Mr. Grayden: What about the member for Kimberley?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: The commissioner has lived among the natives just as the member for Kimberley has done. How does that prove that the member for Kimberley has more knowledge of natives than the commissioner? I would say this for the commissioner: Professor Elkin who is in charge of the anthropology section of the Sydney University was the one who asked Mr. Middleton to make application for the position of commissioner in Western Australia at the time when the post was vacant. Would one think that Professor Elkin would ask a person to submit an application if he did not consider that person was capable of holding the office?

Mr. Grayden: Who selected Mr. Lee as Assistant Commissioner of Railways?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: The Government which the hon. member supported appointed Mr. Clarke, the other assistant commissioner.

Mr. Oldfield: And also appointed Mr. Middleton.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: It was not a Labour Government, but the present Government is defending the commissioner who is honestly trying to carry out his job and will continue, I am sure, to do so.

Mr. Rhatigan: Why does he not confine himself to the job, instead of indulging in journalism?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: The hon. member brings in the subject of journalism. While Mr. Middleton is alleged to have some knowledge of journalism and to apply journalism in his annual report, so does the member for South Perth who is considered to be an authority on journalism.

Mr. Grayden: I stick to the facts.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: So does the commissioner. I shall proceed with the story. I would remind members that the subject of native welfare is very controversial at all times. In 1934 there was a Royal Commission inquiring into native welfare, long before Mr. Middleton came to this State; in 1948-49, just before Mr. Middleton arrived in this State, another Royal Commission was appointed. Mr. Middleton was responsible for neither of these.

So it can be seen that this is a very controversial subject, and various people hold different views. Whilst Mr. Middleton is alleged to be indulging in journalism and rushing to the Press, I would point out that in this controversy I have not known any man to have kept quieter through the medium of the Press than he. He made practically no statement in regard to the report of the select committee.

Mr. Grayden: He started the controversy and said it was grossly exaggerated.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: I deny that he started the controversy.

The SPEAKER: Will the Minister resume his seat? I ask hon. members to maintain more order. Some members have been cross firing from one side of the House to the other. When the member for South Perth was moving his motion, the Minister was silent and did not interject. I expect him to give the Minister the same consideration. Furthermore, as the mover of the motion, the member for South Perth has the right of reply. I suggest that he takes down all the points that he wants to refer to. This is a very controversial subject, but the proceedings will not get anywhere if heated interjections are fired from one side of the House to the other. I consider interjections of that kind to be disorderly, therefore I hope the member for South Perth, who has been given the opportunity to speak at length on the motion and who will have the right of reply, will give the Minister an opportunity to state his case.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: In my opinion, the Commissioner of Native Welfare remained remarkably silent considering the battering he was getting, the public condemnation and the letters that were pouring in—

Mr. Rhatigan: What rot!

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: —to myself, to the Premier and to the Department of Native Welfare. They were not light in their abuse of the commissioner. This particular report has disorganised the department as no other report has done in the whole period the commissioner was in charge of the department. As Minister responsible for the department, that report has caused me a lot of work in studying the submissions and such matters.

Another point that has been overlooked is this: It has been the policy of all State Governments, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Government, to leave the desert natives in their natural state.

Many of the natives who are the subject of this report are nomadic. They have been left in their natural state by all Governments, not only the Labour Government. In connection with this motion, I consider it important whether, as the responsible Minister, I should encourage departmental officers to criticise reports of select committees. I asked myself this question: Should the commissioner be encouraged to criticise such reports or should he be discouraged? I came to the conclusion that this House should know the facts.

A select committee inquiring into matters connected with the Department of Native Welfare or any other department, could be given wrong information, and its report could be based on wrong information. If that is the case, it is the duty of Mr. Middleton or the head of any department concerned, to direct the attention of Parliament to that fact. If Mr. Middleton considers that his officers have been carrying out their duties, he should defend them. It is an unfortunate aftermath of this motion and the controversy that has taken place, that within the department there is a feeling of "rock-n-roll". The department has been rocked to its foundations by the accusations which have been made on its general administration.

The most diligent, enterprising, industrious and conscientious officers in the department have conferred with Mr. Middleton as to the outcome of this controversy. They ask if the skids are being placed under the department, and are they all about to lose their jobs, as other officers in the Government have lost their jobs as a result of public controversy on railway administration? These officers are really upset. I consider that this State is most fortunate in having officers of the type and calibre found in the Department of Native Welfare.

One or two of them might not measure up to what the member for South Perth or I would like. The fact remains that the great majority are conscientious in their job. They work long hours, often overtime, in going to various places to help the unfortunate natives who have had a very rough spin over the years. This controversy has disorganised the department in many ways. In view of the knowledge possessed by the commissioner, the comments he made in his annual report were not unreasonable, and the member for South Perth quoted a few of them. It is an unfortunate thing that the member for South Perth feels the statements of the commissioner are pointed at the select committee or himself. Such was not the intention of the Commissioner of Native Welfare.

As a matter of fact, I started my address tonight by saying that we should have the history; and I pointed out that all sorts of people rushed into the Press claiming to be authorities on the position and generally condemned the commissioner. Mr. Middleton remained remarkably silent and then came out with his annual report. He made a number of remarks himself and then included the official reports of the Health Department and the anthropological body from the University which made a separate investigation of the reports bearing on the investigations made in the Warburton-Laverton area.

The hon. member addressed the House at great length and I feel that members would become very weary if I covered every point touched on by him. However, I feel he will be disappointed if I do not refer to some of the matters which he raised.

The first matter he touched on was in regard to the noisy suburbanites, and he quoted Mr. Middleton from the paper. As I said before, Mr. Middleton did not necessarily reflect on the select committee. He has quoted to me three or four people who could be put in the category of "noisy suburbanites" who claim to have a right to criticise. Although the member for South Perth holds that Mr. Middleton has only been here for a few years and his experience was mostly around New Guinea, he was born on the west coast of Queensland and associated with natives in his early life. He has had nine years' experience in this State under several Governments, and under at least seven Ministers.

The member for South Perth made the statement that no departmental officer had been out beyond the Warburton mission. I understand that the hon. member, when he went to find Leichardt's box, waited on Mr. Middleton and requested that Mr. Tillbrook be allowed to accompany him, and he did so. Therefore, it is not quite fair for him to say that departmental officers have not been past the Warburton mission.

The hon. member also had something to say about the native welfare officers in the Giles area and particularly referred to Mr. McCaulay trying to warm up a battery in a fire and becoming lost five miles from the mining camp. He also spoke about his taking personnel from the Giles meteorological station to bail up two unfortunate men. I cannot see that that is any reflection on his anthropological knowledge. I understand that he was selected to go to Giles because he specialised in anthropology at the Sydney University.

In connection with statements made regarding Mr. McLarty speaking 30 words of the native language, the member for South Perth stated that Mr. Douglas, who is a linguist, devoted seven years of his life to studying this language; has written several books; and is still unable to speak

the native language fluently. I do not think there are many men in Parliament or outside Parliament about whom it could be said they speak the language fluently, although it is their native language. Therefore, how can that be held against Mr. McLarty, or how can it be something in favour of Mr. Douglas? I cannot see it.

The member for South Perth referred to the fact that natives at the Warburton mission were concerned because children sent down to the hospital were not immediately returned to the mission. The explanation is that they are out of the hands of the Commissioner of Native Welfare when they go to the hospital. They are in the hands of the doctors and the Medical Department. When these children are discharged from hospital they have to wait for the mission truck before they can be returned.

Mr. Rhatigan: When are they in the control of the Native Welfare Department?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: Until they go into the Royal Perth Hospital or the Children's Hospital. At that stage they leave the control of the commissioner and are under the control of the hospital authorities. Mr. Middleton and his officers cannot do anything about the children even though they may wish to have them discharged to connect with a train or a mission vehicle.

Mr. Rhatigan: You mentioned that when they came down to hospital from the Warburton-Laverton area they were under the control of the Native Welfare Department.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: I wish the member for East Kimberley would listen. The member for South Perth declared that when they came down for treatment they were kept for long periods and the parents were worried about them.

Mr. Rhatigan: East Kimberley or West Kimberley?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: For West Kimberley as well. With the progress they are making at Liveringa rice project I hope we will have one extra area on top of them.

Mr. Rhatigan: I hope we do not have Mr. Middleton there.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: The children are out of the control of the commissioner while they are in hospital. The member for South Perth, in another statement, said there was a crippled native at Well 40 when the helicopter was there and no attempt was made to do anything with that native. He made the point that there was another native woman suffering from a disease at Well 22 and nothing had been done in regard to that particular case.

It may be of interest to the member for South Perth to know that in the early part of October a departmental officer was in the area around Well 22, and it is hardly justifiable for the hon. member to make statements that nothing has been done in regard to these matters if he is not in possession of the facts. He has not asked questions in recent times in regard to this woman, but there is a report on the departmental file where the district officer at Geraldton returned at the end of October after having done a survey of that area.

Mr. Grayden: That was 12 months after the case was reported.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: The member for South Perth knows very well it was reported that there were 30 or 40 natives at Well 48 and when the helicopter arrived there, three or four days after, there were five or six natives. The member for South Perth knows that. In fact, in his own report to the House he points out that the natives are a nomadic type and are on the move all the time. It is unquestionable that if a departmental patrol went out to an area, not knowing where to pinpoint a particular party, it might chase them around hundreds of thousands of square miles of country and not find them. Such patrols cannot go out on half a story.

The hon. member criticised the fact that Mr. Middleton did not accept a donation of £150 from an organisation in the Eastern States whilst claiming he was short of money. I understand it is a rule that the department cannot claim money in that way; that it must go into Consolidated Revenue. The Treasurer allots to the department certain moneys each year. Last year the estimate was cut considerably, and this year it has been cut by half. So the commissioner can be well justified in saying that he is short of money. He has frequently called on me, as the Minister, to allow him to put on extra staff, but I have declined because in my opinion too much money is spent on staff now and not enough on amelioration; and I want to see more money spent on amelioration.

The member for South Perth criticised the fact that there were 89 foolscap pages of the report in connection with the select committee. Someone mentioned earlier that the commissioner had a flair for journalism. It would appear that he is not the only one. If members will go through the reports from 1949 to 1955 they will see that in nearly every instance the commissioner spread himself.

Mr. Rhatigan: Journalism!

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: It might be a flair for journalism if that will satisfy the member for Kimberley! Is this the only time the commissioner has submitted this type of report to be tabled here? The answer is, "No." The commissioner from time to time has pointed out in his reports that he thought certain legislation was wrong and that we should get rid of it because it was not in the best interests of the

natives. He is to be given full marks for that. He has a job to do; and if members of Parliament are not on top of the position, as he would like them to be, it is his job to draw their attention to what he thinks should be done.

In addition, the member for South Perth was inclined to criticise the fact that the commissioner included a lot of photographs in the report. I wanted photographs published in the last annual report, but the Commissioner did not think it advisable in view of the small amount of money he had to spend. This year I sent him a definite instruction that they must go in. That was my instruction as the Minister because I take the view, like the army, that an eyeful is better than an earful.

Mr. Grayden: Wait till the Minister sees the type of photographs that have gone in.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: I saw the photographs of the central reserve taken by the district officer, and those of the Mullewa reserve and the new houses built there, and of the new houses built at the Geraldton reserve. I have also seen the photographs of the improvements to the native huts on various reserves. This is not the first time that these photographs have appeared. If members look at the reports for previous years they will see that in the 1954 report, photographs of the children at Alvan House and McDonald House appear and also photographs of the new houses built by the State Housing Commission for natives at York. I cannot see the point of the criticism of the member for South Perth in this regard.

The hon. member also drew attention to other matters that the commissioner mentioned in his report. He criticised the commissioner for making the statement that there was no evidence in regard to the actual position in the central reserve, outside of what came before the select committee, apart from that which came from the missionaries and those at the mission itself.

There are two things arising out of that. In the report, the chairman of the select committee—the member for South Perth—points out that he made certain information available. He was not giving evidence before the select committee and I question whether it is ethical and correct for him, as chairman, to intrude into the report things he had observed on an earlier mission. In addition the hon. member said that no one apart from himself had gone further east or north than 10 miles from the mission, and therefore the evidence was not available.

Mr. Grayden: By vehicle.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: Yes, if the hon. member likes. In 1931 a party went through to the Livesey Ranges; and in 1932 another party went through to the Livesey Ranges, and on their return they reported back to the department. The party in 1932 comprised Messrs. Talbot, Stuckey, Langlein, Weekes and Whelan. I remember seeing Mr. Talbot's name as the leader of a party that went through the ranges that we passed through in February last. In 1932 another party in the charge of Mr. Whelan went out. I am pointing this out just to contradict the statement made by the member for South Perth that he was the only one who had gone east prior to the select committee going out to that area.

Mr. Grayden: I wish to ask the Minister to withdraw that statement. It is completely untrue. I made no such claim.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: I will quote what the hon. member had to say. I have taken a copy of what he said.

Mr. Rhatigan: Is this of any benefit to the natives? It has nothing to do with the present position.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: This what the hon. member had to say—

> That is a remarkable statement for this reason: The Warburton mission is situated near the western boundary of the reserve, and up to the time that the party I accompanied traversed the reserve some years ago, no vehicle had been east or north of the mission more than 10 miles.

Mr. Grayden: They went by camels. What are you talking about?

Mr. Rhatigan: Whom did they benefit?

The SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: In addition to the party in 1932, another party, under Mr. Stuckey, went out looking for Lasseter's Reef. In 1934 another party, under Mr. Finlayson, came from the other way; and in 1935 a party with Mr. Finlayson went through. Also, in 1935 Det. Sgt. Lewis and Constable Walter travelled to the Warburton-Rawlinson Ranges-Sladen Waters area for the purpose of making investigations concerning the alleged murder of natives. In 1947 Constable Anderson, the protector of natives, at Laverton, patrolled between the Warburton Ranges mission and the South Australian border. In 1952 another party under Mr. C. K. Blair, together with Mr. V. R. Lloyd, and Mr. J. Carlisle went out there for the vermin control branch; and others have been there.

I want to read out this letter because this man wrote to me last February when the controversy was at its height and enclosed a number of photographs showing the marvellous feed out there for pastoral purposes. He also enclosed photographs of a number of natives from the Warburton mission in country further out, and also his car, in feed 6ft. high in

that area. Another photograph shows a party of 12 natives out there, in the nude—

Mr. Grayden: That was afterwards.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: The hon. member does not know when it was or who sent me the letter.

Mr. Grayden: It was Pollard.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: It was not. Unfortunately the hon. member intrudes such mistaken thoughts into his reports and submissions.

Mr. Grayden: Who was it?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: I will read the letter out and I think it will surprise the hon. member. The letter says—

> I am enclosing a couple of snaps which may be of topical interest to the Minister for Native Affairs.
>
> I have read a lot of bunk in the newspapers recently on the shocking way in which the aboriginal has been neglected in general—in W.A. in particular.
>
> If this hullabaloo should prise a few thousands from the Commonwealth coffers for the advantage of Wangi I am all for it.
>
> But if certain interests who are doing the most squealing at the moment get their fingers on said thousands it is doubtful if King Billy and his subjects will benefit much—one can almost hear a lot of chop licking going on already—and they are not Wangi chops.
>
> If a native welfare institution which has been established for over 20 years right in the heart of the area which is causing most of the stir, can show so few results (shades of the past! you can almost hear Buchanan's bones rattle) in 20 years in that country a cattle man would make a fortune or bust.
>
> However when I started this I did not intend to criticise or compare (both are odious) but I am too lazy to tear it up and start again.
>
> Somewhere amongst all the tripe that I have read on the subject someone suggested a cattle station in the area and to me this shone out like a piece of gold in a slag heap.

Mr. Grayden: That was the select committee.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: Of course. They did a good job, in some respects as even the Commissioner of Native Welfare is prepared to admit. The letter continues—

> One of the snaps shows my truck travelling through milk thistles; this is not an isolated patch. It is crossing a flat through which a creek runs down from the north prong of the Tomkinson's Range. There are a number of these flats in both prongs of the Tomkinsons and also in the Cavanaghs representing in the aggregate quite a few thousands of acres.
>
> These in themselves would not provide much feed for a cattle station but they would prove there would be no difficulty in producing vegetables to go with the beef. However, there are vast flats between the two prongs of the Tomkinsons and also north of the north prong, right the way east from Mt. Aloysius to the South Australian border and further north than one would wish to carry a water bag, that carry herbage that would make a Kimberley cattle man's mouth water. The same applies to the Cavanaghs and to a lesser degree the Blackstones, Murray and Morgans Ranges. These ranges all consist of basic rock and the run-off of water from them would undoubtedly be trapped in the flats and I have not the slightest doubt that ample water could be procured by boring.

I have read that out to show that other people have been out there by vehicle.

Mr. Grayden: In what year?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: This was written to me in January, 1957.

Mr. Grayden: But when did he go out?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: He did not put a date on it but he points out that other people have been going out there since 1874.

Mr. Grayden: But not by vehicle.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: Among them were people who could have given evidence before the select committee in connection with those areas.

Mr. Grayden: Why did they not offer evidence?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: I do not know. I am simply correcting some of the statements that have been made. I think the hon. member was upset because the Minister reported at length in connection with the affairs of the department. He complained because a lot of photographs were put in and apparently felt that the commissioner had made wrongful deductions in regard to certain matters. The commissioner has tried to state the position as he sees it, as head of the department, and he has not picked out only the select committee's report to give his views before Parliament. He has taken similar action over the years in his report when he has felt that legislation was not favourable to the natives.

I feel I should oppose the resolution, as I do not think it desirable to try to stop departmental heads from commenting on

reports made to the House. I do not think it could be termed the annual report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare if appended to it was a further report condemning certain statements made by the commissioner, because he might then feel he should make a further report on that, and that sort of thing could go on forever.

We all want to see the natives benefit at the earliest possible moment. I believe the member for South Perth, with his initiative and drive, will continue to work in their interests, as I will, to the best of my ability. In moving this motion the hon. member has given members of the select committee an opportunity to justify all they said in the report which he presented as chairman. I do not mind him having that opportunity, but would point out that several of the statements attributed to Mr. Middleton with regard to statements to the Press about grossly exaggerated reports were not factual.

He said certain things were grossly exaggerated, but not in the select committee's report. He said that statements appearing in the Eastern States' Press along the lines of a horror story, suggesting that natives were dying of thirst and starvation, was a grossly exaggerated report. He admits writing to a gentleman in England and saying that it was the consensus of opinion of those in authority that the report was exaggerated; and he might have used the words "grossly exaggerated."

The commissioner, submitting his annual report to this House, drew attention to the fact that authorities such as anthropologists, officers of the Medical and Health Departments and independent journalists from the local Press did not agree with the findings of the select committee. The anthropological section of the University agreed that many of the things said by members of the select committee were factual and needed attention. Dr. Berndt and his wife said a number of the recommendations made were desirable, but the Commissioner of Native Welfare would be mentally sterile if he had not come back with some sort of report to this House to show that he was not falling down on his job as the select committee's report would indicate. I have not discussed this point with the commissioner, but I am amazed that his reaction has been so mild as regards this recommendation of the select committee—

> The facts disclosed by this inquiry provide ample justification for a similar parliamentary investigation in other parts of this State and this committee recommends accordingly.

Mr. Rhatigan: Why not?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: The commissioner must reply to a statement of that kind, and do so in the only official way open to him—in his report to Parliament. The commissioner is lauded on all sides, by all the missions of all denominations—

Mr. Grayden: Not all.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: —by all advisory bodies and by all those well wishers who have the welfare of natives at heart. They all say that he is doing a very good job; and, as I said earlier, we in Western Australia are in my opinion singularly fortunate to have officers of the calibre of those at present working in the department in this State.

Over the last nine or ten months this controversy has developed in such a way that the departmental heads asked, "When will this rock-n-roll session finish?" They feel that they have been rocked to the foundations and that any day their heads will roll. That does not help to build up morale; it does not help the natives; it does not help Parliament; and it does not help the State of Western Australia. Therefore I must reluctantly oppose some of my comrades in this House, who were members of the select committee, and ask members to disagree with this motion. I have to do that in my position as Minister.

I feel that the purpose of the member for South Perth would be served if, after having given members of the select committee an opportunity of speaking to this motion, he withdrew it. The debate will appear in the Hansard of Western Australia, and it will record the protests voiced by members of the select committee. Individual members of it will have had an opportunity of justifying what they said.

But having regard for the position as the commissioner saw it, I feel that his report is not an unfair or an unreasonable one. I think in some ways the commissioner acted with mildness when he replied to what was a violent attack upon the department in the recommendation which I read. It appears to have taken no cognisance of the recognised policy, either of the department or of other authorities throughout Australia, to agree that desert natives in a nomadic state be left in that condition.

MR. OLDFIELD (Mt. Lawley) [10.13]: The Minister has stated the position of the Commissioner of Native Welfare; and I think it is just about time that members of the select committee stated their position in this controversy. Last December, when the report of the select committee was presented to the House, members accepted it. Some six or seven weeks afterwards, when the controversy broke out, the Commissioner was credited in the Press with having made certain statements about gross exaggeration and about recommendations being made without foundation. The Minister, on behalf of the Commissioner, has explained that this evening, and I will come back to that aspect shortly.

As a member of that select committee there was a time when I got a little het up about it because of the amount of criticism

thrown at the members of that committee for making the recommendations which they did. Members of the committee based their recommendations purely upon evidence placed before them by witnesses. We called witnesses when we sat in Perth; and when we went to the Warburton-Laverton area we subpoenaed certain witnesses—the same as we had done in Perth. No volunteers came along to give evidence.

The Minister said that there were a lot of others who could have given evidence, and who would have been good witnesses, but they did not do so. We are unaware of them. We advertised through the Press that the committee was anxious to get in touch with people who would be in a position to give evidence on the question. No such evidence was forthcoming, and no statements were made about it until after the report was published. When the report was published all these critics stated that the report was wrong.

Mr. Grayden: Including the Commissioner of Native Welfare.

Mr. OLDFIELD: That is true. Also, the Minister said this evening that some of the findings were based upon what the chairman of the committee had seen during one of his earlier visits to the area. That was not the case, and there is no reference to that visit in the findings of the committee. We based all our recommendations on what we saw and what we were given as evidence. If members peruse the report they will see that there is no reference to the chairman's earlier visit.

As the Leader of the Country Party said last Wednesday, after having read both the findings and evidence of the committee, the recommendations were based purely and simply on the evidence placed before the committee. That hon. member has had legal training and he knows what to look for. The evidence was given by such witnesses as departmental officers—Mr. McLarty, who was the district officer, and Mr. Middleton. When Mr. Middleton was called he was not anxious to give evidence. He preferred Mr. McLarty to be called because he said that Mr. McLarty was the officer concerned with that central area.

Mr. Middleton said that he did not have much to say, and that he was not well acquainted with the area, and he gave members of the committee to understand —and the transcript of the evidence will disclose this to be a fact—that Mr. McLarty, the district officer concerned, would be able to give us the information which we sought.

Other witnesses whose evidence appears in the transcript were the missionaries from Cosmo Newbery and Warburton. These people are God-fearing, Christian people; and they were told, when they gave their evidence before the select committee, that they came under the provisions of the Criminal Code and were liable for a term of imprisonment with hard labour for up to seven years if they gave evidence which was false, or if they perjured themselves in any way. Consequently I have no reason to disbelieve any of the statements made by those witnesses who appeared before the select committee.

Another witness was Sergeant Anderson, who spent a number of years in the Laverton area. He has made no fewer than five trips to the Warburton and Rawlinson areas on horseback. The anthropologists, who later made a visit to the area and reported to the commissioner, gave evidence; and that appears in the transcript. We made no recommendation in our report which cannot be substantiated by the evidence which was placed before us. That was the only way the select committee could make a report and recommendations —to study the evidence which was placed before it, plus visual observation. The same thing applies in courts and in all inquiries.

I feel that we should take this matter a step further. The commissioner's annual report this year was a most amazing document in one aspect, and the commissioner cannot expect this House, especially members of the select committee, to receive it without adverse comment. If we accept that report without comment, and tacitly give it our support, it is an indictment of members of the select committee. It is also an indictment of the House which appointed the committee, and later adopted the report. Indeed, the House adopted the report to such good purpose that the Minister himself saw fit to travel to the Eastern States with the chairman and one other member of the committee, to seek Federal aid.

If, as the Minister has explained, the Commissioner of Native Welfare has denied that he made such a statement to the Press, or that he ever said that the select committee's report was grossly exaggerated or completely without foundation and not factual, I would point out that one of his own departmental officers who put up a report to the commissioner —which appears in his annual report tabled in this House on the 22nd October and which, I believe, will be dealt with by the member for North Perth—says that the select committee's report was full of patent inaccuracies. That is contained in Mr. McLarty's own report to the commissioner. He said that the select committee's report had no foundation, and was not based on fact.

That is what the commissioner accepted from Mr. McLarty, and submitted to the Minister, and which later was tabled in this House. So what is to be the position of the members of the select committee, or of this House that appointed that select committee and adopted its recommendations? I would like to point out to the House and to the Minister and, in turn, to the Commissioner of Native Welfare, that far from being based on

patent inaccuracies, and without foundation, the select committee's report was based purely on evidence submitted to it by parties who were called to give such evidence.

These critics who came into the controversy later, and who are supposed to be so full of knowledge of the area in question, and who pose as knowing so much about the native problem, were not forthcoming as volunteers to give evidence to enable the committee to bring in a more comprehensive report. If these people were in a position to provide such evidence, then they should have done so. The attitude of the commissioner towards this House is most obvious. If one examines what has happened during this session, one can see that the commissioner has not only shown a complete disregard for this House but he has also been a source of considerable embarrassment to the Minister by virtue of the answers he provided in reply to the que stions that were asked of the Minister in this House. One of these related to the matter of the helicopter. When the member for South Perth asked if anyone had visited a certain area prior to a helicopter being available he said that they had done so by helicopter. When the member for South Perth called for a certain file to be laid on the Table of the House, the Minister refused to do so, and no doubt he was acting on the advice of his Commissioner of Native Welfare. Once again the Minister was embarrassed, not so much by the House carrying the the file in question.

When that was pointed out to the Minister, it was necessary for him to go back to the commissioner and ensure that the missing papers were placed on the file which was laid on the Table of the House. In spite of all the embarrassments that the Minister has suffered he is still faced with the position of having to stand up here and defend the actions of the Commissioner of Native Welfare. I must impress on this Chamber, and everyone in this State who is interested in this commotion and the file being eventually laid on the Table of the House, but because certain papers were removed from troversy that the findings of the select committee and its recommendations were based purely on evidence given under what tantamounts to oath. The findings were not based on guesswork or the say-so of the chairman of the committee who had done the trip previously.

Once again I would like to refer to the commissioner's annual report—this amazing document in which he criticises the findings of the select committee after he himself no doubt has read the evidence—and point out that he was one of the witnesses. The report of the commisisoner has already been accepted by the Minister and has been presented to the House; and we can do nothing but accept it. But in accepting that report, I feel that we should do so with some adverse comment.

We cannot amend the report, or add to it, or take anything away from it, because it is the report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare. I propose therefore to amend the motion that is at present before the House by deleting the word "as" in line 2 of the motion. If I am successful in deleting that word I will then move to strike out all the words after the word "area" in line 9 of the motion. If these amendments are carried the motion will then read—

> That in the opinion of this House the annual report of the Commissioner for Native Welfare for the year ended 30th June, 1957, which was tabled on the 22nd October last, contains many inaccurate and misleading statements in respect of the report of the select committee appointed to inquire into the conditions of aborigines in the Warburton-Laverton area.

I move an amendment—

> That the word "as" in line 2 of the motion be struck out.

On motion by Mr. Sewell, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.28 p.m.