

Legislative Council

Thursday, the 24th September, 1970

The PRESIDENT (The Hon. L. C. Diver) took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS (3): ON NOTICE

1. NATURAL GAS

Pipeline

The Hon. J. DOLAN, to the Minister for Mines:

With reference to the application to the Minister for a licence to construct and operate a pipeline for the conveyance of natural gas from the Dongara gas field to the Pinjarra industrial area, will the Minister table a map of the proposed route for the information of members?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

The plans submitted with the application are at various scales over different sections and consist of a large number of separate plans.

Section 8 (4) of the Petroleum Pipelines Act requires the Minister to publish a notice that he has received the application and that a map showing the proposed route of the pipeline may be examined at the place or places and at the times specified in the notice.

This notice has been published in accordance with the Act and the place where the map may be examined was stated in the notice as the Mines Department public counter of the Surveys and Mapping Branch, Perth.

To reproduce copies of these maps would entail a great amount of work which I would like to avoid as they are available at a specified place.

2. *This question was postponed.*

3. HISTORIC WRECKS

Protection from Interference

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF, to the Minister for Mines:

- (1) Are Museum personnel at present actively working in the Abrolhos on the *Batavia* wreck?
- (2) If not, is there a Museum representative or agent stationed in the Abrolhos?
- (3) Have plans been drawn up to accelerate the work of excavation?
- (4) How long is it anticipated this will take?

- (5) In view of the possibility of further plundering, can the Minister give an assurance that the wreck site will be kept under continuous surveillance until all articles of value have been removed?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

- (1) No, work for the immediately preceding expedition finished on Friday, the 18th September.
- (2) Yes. Two members of the Museum's diving team are at the Abrolhos with instructions to keep the wreck site under surveillance.
- (3) Yes. The Museum has funds to appoint a second four man diving team so that one team can be permanently allocated to excavate the *Batavia* until the danger of plundering is removed. A permanent camp will be established in the Abrolhos until the work is complete.
- (4) At least two years but it is not possible to determine this with any accuracy because it is not known what excavation will reveal as it progresses.
- (5) Yes. The wreck site has been under constant surveillance since the 4th June, 1970, when the Museum and C.I.B. investigated allegations that plundering had occurred.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 5)

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by The Hon. L. A. Logan (Minister for Local Government), and read a first time.

FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Third Reading

Bill read a third time, on motion by The Hon. A. F. Griffith (Minister for Mines), and passed.

CIVIL AVIATION (CARRIERS' LIABILITY) ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 23rd September.

THE HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (North-Metropolitan—Minister for Justice) [2.42 p.m.]: Mr. Cloughton, in addressing himself to this Bill, went to a good deal of trouble to examine the measure and revive some of the history of the introduction of the parent legislation by me some time ago. In the time that has been available I have endeavoured to obtain some information in order to answer the various questions raised by Mr. Cloughton. In the main, there were three or four particular points on which Mr. Cloughton asked for advice or an opinion.

First of all, I am advised that the level of liability set out in the Bill is the same as that which has been negotiated internationally and is in accordance with the international agreements. I am assured of this following inquiries made by the Commissioner for Transport from the Regional Director of the Department of Civil Aviation in Western Australia. We endeavoured to make an additional check with that department in Melbourne but as today is show day in Melbourne we were unable to contact the appropriate authority.

I have been informed that under the Act liability of an operator would be limited to \$30,000 for death or injury to a passenger. One exception to that would be in a case where there was wilful misconduct on the part of the pilot. In such a case it is felt that something more than negligence on the part of the company would be required to sustain a civil action for damages beyond the \$30,000 mentioned in the legislation. I believe that in the United States there was a case in which an aircraft and its passengers were lost when the pilot failed to adhere to the approved flight plan. I would like to emphasise that more time would be necessary in order to verify these points. The information I am now providing is what I was able to obtain this morning.

As regards quoting the Commonwealth legislation or international agreements in the Act, I am advised that is not necessary. As Mr. Claughton said, to do so would provide some measure of convenience in ascertaining what the provisions were, but the legal position, as expressed in the Bill, is perfectly clear. The main basis of this legislation is the Commonwealth legislation. Reference is made in the Act to the Commonwealth legislation, and this Bill gives effect to it as far as the law in this State is concerned.

Another point raised by Mr. Claughton was as to whether it would be legally practicable for the Commonwealth to make amendments after we have adopted the provisions of the Commonwealth Act. I remember that when Mr. Wise was sitting directly opposite me he raised this question, but I cannot recollect exactly what was said on that occasion. Mr. Claughton suggested that whatever was done would be automatically imported into our Act, but that is not the case. Our Bill is drafted in such a way as to protect this situation, and clause 2 of the Bill specifically refers to the Commonwealth Act of 1959-1970. If the Commonwealth made amendments in 1971, the reference would be to the Commonwealth Act of 1959-1970, so the situation referred to by Mr. Claughton would not arise.

The Hon. R. F. Claughton: I referred to the amendment of the Commonwealth Act of 1962. I have not found any indication that that alteration has been incorporated, by amendment, in the State Act.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I think the honourable member was referring to the extent to which it might affect us. I stress again that complementary legislation which has been passed by the other States of the Commonwealth is worded in a similar way to this Bill, without quoting the full context of the Commonwealth legislation.

If the limit of liability is fixed at a higher figure, insurers will either decline to insure or will require extremely high premiums, which could result in steep increases in fares. The figure of \$30,000 has been selected as being one which would be attractive to insurance companies and would still provide a reasonable measure of protection to the travelling public. I do not think it has anything to do with the case but I merely comment that I understand the chances of being killed in an aircraft are very much lower than the chances of being killed in a car on the road.

I think that covers the points raised by Mr. Claughton and that it is not necessary for me to make any further comment. I thank Mr. Claughton for his contribution to the debate.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (The Hon. F. D. Willmott) in the Chair; The Hon. A. F. Griffith (Minister for Justice) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1: Short title and citation—

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: I thank the Minister for the trouble he took to obtain the information he did to clarify the questions I raised. However, I cannot say that I am altogether satisfied. I would refer to a 1962 amendment in the Commonwealth legislation and I wonder what is the position in this State in relation to the change that amendment brought about. During my second reading speech I stated that the definition of "carrier" was enlarged to include the actual carrier and not just the contracting party. If that has not been incorporated in our State legislation does the provision apply here or not? Whilst the Minister can rightfully say it is not necessary to include the subject matter of the Commonwealth legislation as schedules to the State Act, it is necessary that the State should have this information available.

For example, Mr. Wise, in securing the adjournment of the debate on the parent Act, and speaking on the following day, may have found that the information was necessary so far as he was concerned. Even though the Commonwealth Acts are available somewhere in the building, this one was not so readily available, or as readily available to each honourable member as are the State Acts.

The other thought I have in regard to this amendment is that when the Commonwealth legislation is amended, in order that it shall apply here, will it be necessary to amend our own State Act? It might be a more satisfactory arrangement to do this from the State point of view. I am not only talking about this Act, but every piece of legislation that is introduced by the State and is complementary to Commonwealth legislation. For any Commonwealth amendment to be effective, an amendment to our State Act would also be required so that the State Parliament would be aware of the changes that were being made.

I would agree also with the statement made by the Minister in regard to negligence on the part of a pilot. The relevant provisions are included in international agreements, and the condition the Minister elaborated on does apply in this State. In our own State, I am not sure that the Minister's explanation in regard to the level of insurance is acceptable. If \$30,000 is the limit of the liability acceptable by airlines, it is not the acceptable limit for liability in other areas of insurance. As an example I quote the Motor Vehicle Insurance Trust.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Where a special premium is paid.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: The Minister also said that the chance of death or injury in an aircraft is not as great as it is whilst travelling in a vehicle on our roads.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I said that I was told it is not as great.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: I disagree with the Minister, and it should be possible to obtain a higher degree of liability without increasing the premium, because the actuarial figure would not demand a higher premium.

The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It seems to be that in either case the gentleman would be of no account if his wife is a widow.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: That last remark made by Mr. Wise seems to have sat Mr. Cloughton right down in his seat. I think Mr. Cloughton is perhaps forgetting that the insurance cover is being increased from \$15,000 to \$30,000 in the first place. That is one of the main principles of this Bill. I do not regard as being very important the question of whether our legislation contains, in the schedules, the subject matter of the Commonwealth legislation. I can visualise all sorts of difficulties in the event of following a practice such as that.

There are many State Acts which are complementary to Commonwealth Statutes, but the significant point here is that this legislation has reference to a Commonwealth Act as at a certain date. It should be noted that section 3 of the

principal Act is now being amended in respect of the definitions. In the principal Act at present it states—

In this Act—

“the Commonwealth Act” means the Civil Aviation (Carriers' Liability) Act 1959 of the Commonwealth.

The Hon. R. F. Cloughton: That would include any amendments?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Yes, up to that date. The title of the Act will now be “the Civil Aviation (Carriers' Liability) Act 1959-70,” so that will include the 1962 amendment.

The Hon. R. F. Cloughton: I must agree.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: So I do not think I need waste any further time on the point.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 2 and 3 put and passed.

Title put and passed.

Report

Bill reported, without amendment, and the report adopted.

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND BANKING GROUP BILL

Returned

Bill returned from the Assembly without amendment.

ROAD AND AIR TRANSPORT COMMISSION ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 16th September.

THE HON. F. J. S. WISE (North) [3.00 p.m.]: This is a most interesting Bill and, in some particulars, most unusual. The parent Act, of which this Bill is the child, was introduced in 1966 to clarify certain matters and to segregate certain provisions from the State Transport Co-ordination Act; and in that segregation the matters that were separated included licensing of commercial goods vehicles, omnibuses, and public vehicles and, in addition, aircraft were covered under a separate division, division 4. The legislation also provided for road transport tenders and the issuing of licenses to be authorised and controlled by the commissioner to be appointed under that Act—the Commissioner of Transport.

In the division which dealt with aircraft, the licensing of aircraft and the declaration of rates and the routes to be prescribed within the area of the State, passenger limitations, fares, and freights, came under the control of the commissioner to be appointed under the Road and Air Transport Commission Act, as distinct from the authority prescribed in the State Transport Co-ordination Act.

When the Road and Air Transport Commission Act was introduced there was no thought of adding to it any provision dealing with shipping and, indeed, the first thought one would have, knowing that, in the Minister's own words, the reason for the Bill is to give protection to the State Shipping Service, is that anything dealing with the State Shipping Service would be dealt with under the Western Australian Marine Act. One would have thought that would be the Act to amend to cover what is proposed by this measure.

The Hon. R. Thompson: It would be more appropriate.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Certainly more appropriate at first glance. However, after an examination of the origin of this Bill a doubt comes to one's mind as to whether this approach, with certain modifications and suggestions I propose to make, might be the better way to do it.

When the Road and Air Transport Commission Act was first passed it did not imply that a board as such would be appointed; nor was it used for that purpose. The only appointments made under that legislation have been of the commissioner, an accountant, and the secretary; the commissioner being Mr. Howard—he is the Commissioner of Transport—the accountant, Mr. R. M. Sharp, and the secretary Mr. D. J. Dyson. These people do not work as a board in the normal sense, nor is there provision under the Act for a board to be appointed.

With legislation such as this, which contains some unusual features, I believe it is always necessary to seek the reason for its introduction and, if possible, to find its origin. In the Minister's introductory speech there were many references to the State Shipping Service and the coastal shipping trade. I had a serious look at the Western Australian Marine Act, No. 72 of 1948, and I wondered why it could not be used for the purpose; and, of course, as an Act it could be but for the purpose of the proposals contained in this legislation it may not be so suitable. It is obvious that the purpose of this Bill is to control within the Road and Air Transport Commission's authority all goods either landed at ports or being transported from ports by road to inland centres, as well as all road transport to and from the distant parts of the State.

I looked for reasons for the introduction of the measure because I did not think adequate or clear reasons were given in the Minister's introductory speech. In my view more specific points should have been made. The Western Australian Marine Act is another one of those Acts which require the King's prerogative in proclamation, but in what the Government desires to do, I do not think that Act fits the bill.

There were two separate entities which should have been consulted, and may have been consulted as regards the origin of this

Bill. As a matter of fact, I think we have ample evidence in the last annual report of the Road and Air Transport Commission that they were consulted. However, I would like the Minister, if he replies to my remarks on this measure, to tell us whether the Bill or its principles were referred to the Coastal Shipping Commission; and whether the legislation had that commission's approval as the operator of the State ships. I doubt whether the matter was referred to that commission; and I say that because I have studied the reports of both authorities. However, I would like to know whether that commission was consulted and whether it approved of what is being done by this Bill; because if anyone has the worry and responsibility of serving the people by sea it is certainly the Western Australian Coastal Shipping Commission.

I was very interested to read certain remarks contained in the report of the Road and Air Transport Commission dated the 30th June, 1969. That commission works under the authority of the legislation that this Bill proposes to amend. In part IX there are four paragraphs which are pertinent and relevant to this legislation. They read—

Although the regulation of shipping services is not within the jurisdiction of the Transport Commission, regard must be had for the operations of all transport services, including shipping, in determining applications for road transport licences. This follows from Section 36 of the Road and Air Transport Commission Act.

In the last Annual Report it was explained that because of the relative time/cost factors applicable to sea transport and land transport, it appeared that the coastal shipping service should be able to retain its volume of business at an economical and satisfactory level without any special "protection." Hence the policy was adopted of allowing the consignor or consignee of cargo freedom to choose whether sea or land transport should be employed in each case.

I interpolate to say how obvious it is that when freedom of the use of our roads is granted, without the necessity for licenses or permits, the persons who would be prejudicially affected would be those in charge of State ships. The commission went on to say—

This policy still applies but it has not yet been possible to obtain a clear indication of the effect it has had on the economy of the State Shipping Service and perhaps a final picture will not be possible until there has been some reorganisation of the service—such as by the introduction of specially designed barge-carrying vessels or "LASH" ships as they have been called. It is obvious from those words that those in charge of road and air transport wished

to have the authority vested in them for all movements of transport facilities by road, including those radiating from the ports in our north. However, if we look at the last available report of the Western Australian Coastal Shipping Commission we see the conflicting views immediately. The following is on the first page of the report tabled on the 11th August last:—

There can be no question but that the relaxation of restrictions on road haulage into the Pilbara has had a marked adverse effect on cargoes carried by our vessels. No accurate assessment is possible because it is agreed that quite substantial tonnages travel without permit.

Therefore, having been associated for a long time with the activities of the State Shipping Service, I am concerned as to whether that commission has expressed an opinion on the move that this legislation contemplates, and if it has, whether it could be given to the House.

There is another angle, of course; that is, whether it is necessary to keep a rigid control through the one authority over all movements to and through the north, whatever the origin of the transport—in other words, whether it is from the city, the manufacturers in the city, the agents in the city, or whether it must include also the transport and traffic from the ports themselves.

To deal specifically with the Bill for a few moments: members will notice that there is a proposal to include a reference to shipping in the long title of the parent Act so that that long title will read—

AN ACT to establish a Commission to control and license the transport of passengers and goods by Road and by Air and to control the operation of ships engaged in the coasting trade and for incidental and other purposes.

That, of course, will vest in the Road and Air Transport Commission the right to issue licenses for vessels wishing to call at our coastal ports or from port to port. This, of course, again at first glance, suggests this should be something for a marine authority to control.

In an analysis of the Bill itself, I would point out that if we are to amend the long title of the Act in that manner, we should for record purposes, and to facilitate the work of our Clerks of Parliament and the ability of members to locate an indexed law in our Statutes, amend the short title. After all, all Statutes in a bound volume are listed and indexed by the short titles.

I raised this question on an earlier Bill this year. If in a few years hence, or even next year we are looking for an Act dealing with something to do with the control of shipping, and if we are not conversant with the subject, we will look in the title for something that is appropriate to the law we are seeking. However, when we

read that the Act will be cited as the Road and Air Transport Commission Act, this, I suggest to the Minister with respect, does not give us the true picture. The short title, in addition to the long title, should be amended to include some reference to the coastal shipping trade. I think it is an important matter in the indexing of our Statutes to be able to find easily the Act for which we are looking without having to search through several volumes to locate one with the correct reference. So, as the long title of the parent Act is to be amended to include the control of the operations of ships, I suggest a small amendment is necessary in clause 1 to alter the short title also.

This very interesting Bill also contains a provision that its proclamation is in the hands of Her Majesty. In his speech the Minister said that this is a matter which is constitutionally necessary; but that is not quite the situation. As a matter of fact, there is no reference for that need in the Australian States Constitution Act of 1907, or any written portion of our Constitution Acts. It is implicit in the Instructions to the Governor of the State, which is a different matter. That is something traditional and historic from the very commencement of authority being given by England—from St. James Palace, as a matter of fact—to Governors of States, which prescribes the sort of legislation the States and their Governors cannot themselves approve.

In the Instructions to the Governor is specifically mentioned the legislation which the Governor of the State may not approve, and this includes Bills relating to divorce, Bills relating to the currency of a country, and the following, which has particular reference to this measure:—

Any Bill of an extraordinary nature and importance, whereby Our prerogative, or the rights and property of Our subjects not residing in the State, or the trade and shipping of the United Kingdom and its Dependencies may be prejudiced.

That is in the Instructions to the Governor sent to this State on the 29th October, 1900, which were amended a few years later.

That is the origin of the need for Bills of this nature to be referred to, and proclaimed by, the Queen. I am mentioning something which has very deep roots so far as our tradition and history are concerned. It involves such things as signed manuals, letters patent, and so on. It is an interesting point, but I do not wish to dilate any further upon it. It is the reason for the inclusion of clause 2 in the Bill.

We find in clause 3 the words which are to be added to the long title of the principal Act, to which I have already referred. Again, I ask the Minister to look kindly at the benefit to be derived

from the point of view of recording and indexing by the addition of appropriate words in the short title.

Clause 5 seems rather strange since the general purpose of the Bill is to do with shipping. Indeed, the Minister himself said that it appeared to be strange. The clause deals with omnibuses which, of course, come under the Road and Air Transport Commission Act. It is easy to see why the amendment is necessary when we refer to section 32 of the principal Act. It says—

A license shall not be granted for an omnibus under this Part unless the vehicle is licensed as an omnibus in accordance with the Traffic Act, 1919.

The words "as an omnibus" are proposed to be deleted from this section. The reason is that, in some districts, inter-town and district transport is not undertaken by omnibuses but by taxi-cars or other motor vehicles. Under the Act, as it stands, these cannot be licensed as an omnibus, but they must be licensed. The deletion of the words from the parent legislation will enable all such vehicles to be licensed, although they may not necessarily be licensed as an omnibus. I understand the vehicles in question are called passenger cars and, as far as I know, they operate in the district of The Hon. E. C. House and in other districts in the great southern. The alteration will simply mean that it will be possible for them to be licensed under this legislation.

I raise one point in connection with proposed division 5 which refers specifically to ships. I wonder whether the Minister can inform me whether the authority will be able to control such vessels as iron ore carriers which go southabout on the voyage to Yampi. They mostly go northabout and do not call at any ports after they leave their port of origin. However, some vessels occasionally pick up provisions in Fremantle, such as perishables and other commodities, for delivery to Cockatoo and Koolan Islands. I wonder whether proposed new section 47A (2) means these ships will have to obtain a license for this purpose. The clause reads as if it would be necessary. I assume that even in the case of Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited ships it will be necessary to obtain a license on those occasions when the masters wish to pick up goods at Fremantle.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: The clause would read that way to me.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: From the wording of the clause it appears that these ships, too, will not be exempted.

The effect of clause 7 will be to limit the operations of privately-owned ships so far as trading between ports on our coast is concerned. Of course, this is age-old. In earlier days ships which were commonly called black ships, because of the coloured crews, and were handled by Dalgety &

Company, used to call at the north-west ports. At the commencement of either the wool or the cattle season the company made sure, through its agents on the coast, which were usually branches of the firm, that any substantial cargoes offering at Port Hedland, Onslow, or Point Samson, were on the wharf in time to suit the arrival of those ships and the State ships missed out on the business.

Unfortunately, there is less cargo today. The quantity of wool from the north has decreased by 70 per cent. from what it was in the days of which I speak. However there is an arrangement to pick up live cattle, although that trade has seriously diminished, too. It has decreased by approximately 60 per cent. Cattle on the hoof is not the attractive trade from the north which it once was.

As this is the situation, there is now very little trade to protect. Therefore, I wonder why the provision is necessary because there is very little in the way of cargo from north-west ports to Fremantle to attract overseas vessels.

The measure seems to anticipate that ships, manned by foreign crews, will call, because provision has been made for interpreters to accompany officers on foreign-manned ships. Surely this must refer to a contemplated port-to-port coastal trade by vessels which are registered in countries other than Australia. As I said, the type of trade involved is diminishing from year to year and, perhaps, there is not the need for the protection which was required 10, 20, or even 30 years ago. In those days the few State ships lost cargo on every trip because of the pirating—it cannot be described as anything else—by overseas vessels which called in to pick up lucrative cargoes.

The Minister's first sentence in his speech reads—

The major feature of this Bill gives protection for the State Shipping Service against loss of business to other shipowners seeking to enter the field when profitable cargoes are offering, while not accepting the responsibility of maintaining a regular service to the public.

I repeat that this is age-old but, conversely, the need for rigid protection has never been less than it is now.

I would like to see a table submitted to the House to show how that trade has declined.

In another portion of his speech the Minister mentioned the pirating to which I have referred, and went on to say—

In some of the less distant places, such as Carnarvon, road transport has been found to be an adequate substitute for shipping, but as we move further north—particularly into the Kimberley—we must still regard the shipping service as essential to the economy of those areas.

That is the crux of the whole situation. One is prompted to ask whether the days have gone when the State ships were regarded as the lifeline to the north, supplying foodstuffs and perishables, and bringing tired families from the north to the south. I hope those days have not gone.

The last available report of the Western Australian Coastal Shipping Commission shows a serious drop in the amount of cargo carried. The amount was down 26,288 tons in one year. That is most serious when vessels of 4,000 tons capacity, and upwards are involved. One can understand what this drop means to the commission. There was an increase in the number of passengers carried, but they were mostly tourists and not north-west residents.

Of course, the evolution of better roads must have made serious inroads—and will continue to make serious inroads—into the ability of the State Shipping Service to carry on. On that point, the Coastal Shipping Commission stated in its report—

Serious consideration is being given to offering an attractive reduction in passenger fares during the off season. If by this means we can keep the vessels full it would be worthwhile because they still have to carry their normal complement of crew whether full or not.

Let us consider what the losses mean. The loss on working, which includes depreciation, interest, and provisions amounted to \$3,396,555 in the last financial year. When we were subject to a review of the State Shipping Service by the Grants Commission, that commission used to tell the Under-Treasurer—and in one year did so in my hearing—that \$1,000,000 was to be the largest amount for State Shipping Service losses the State Government could expect to claim from the Grants Commission.

This is not a State trading concern; it is a public utility of great importance which has been the lifeblood of the people of the north. I can see very serious days ahead owing to the lessening of the cargoes available today. Therefore, what appears to be a conflict between the two interests—the Road and Air Transport Commission and the State Shipping Service—is a most vital matter when considering this subject. The State Shipping Service has received wonderful support in the past from the people of the north; that is, the older residents of the north. However, the newer residents of the north have little regard for the State ships owing to the better roads which are available today.

I can recall the days when the first State ship—the *Kangaroo*—showed a profit of £1,000,000 during the World War by performing extra services outside Western Australia. However, when the ship was sold £500,000 of her original purchase price was still owing because of the method of State bookkeeping. Although the *Kangaroo*

earned so much money which was paid into Consolidated Revenue, she was sold still owing money.

I would hope that with the introduction of the ships to be known as LASH ships we will find something of an answer to our problem. We have to bear in mind that those ships will not be available for perhaps 18 months or two years, and in the intervening period the position of the State Shipping Service—unless the line receives more patronage—will be very serious indeed. I can only hope that the LASH ships will provide part of the answer. I think the Government must pay strict attention to the use of the State ships for its own requirements, whether in the building of dams, or in the carriage of heavy cargoes for some of the mining companies, rather than encourage the fleets of road trucks which at present operate to our north.

I think that is a most important matter which should be looked at in the interests of the wonderful service which is provided by the State ships and their officers and men of great repute and capacity. Indeed, without their service a large portion of the far north would have great difficulty in carrying on and keeping costs at a reasonable level. I support the Bill. I have raised some angles concerning the conflict of the two interests which appear to me to be very important. I would like to hear some comment from both commissions; and I would like to feel confident that the Road and Air Transport Commission is better equipped to handle the problem.

Debate adjourned, on motion by The Hon. J. Heitman.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE: SPECIAL

THE HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (North Metropolitan—Minister for Mines) [3.37 p.m.]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, the 6th October.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 3.38 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, the 24th September, 1970

The **SPEAKER** (Mr. Guthrie) took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS (35): ON NOTICE RAILWAYS

1. *Timber and Concrete Sleepers*
Mr. **GRAHAM**, to the Minister for Railways:

(1) What is the present price of timber sleepers?