

of latitude is incapable of being fully developed if wholly dependent upon such finance as is only obtainable from State resources.

It therefore requests—

(a) That the Government present a programme for the development of that portion of the State to a committee consisting of the Premier (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, M.L.A.), the Minister for the North-West (Hon. H. C. Strickland, M.L.C.), the Leader of the Opposition (Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, K.B.E., M.L.A.), the Leader of the Country Party (Hon. A. F. Watts, C.M.G., M.L.A.) and the Speaker and Member for Pilbara (Hon. A. J. Rodoreda, M.L.A.).

(b) That this Committee consider the programme as presented to it by the Government and, if thought necessary, amend the programme.

(c) That the Committee submit such programme personally at Canberra to the Prime Minister and the Federal Treasurer.

(d) That a special annual grant of an amount considered necessary for such developmental work be requested for a period of 10 years in order to carry out the programme.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

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

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 24th August.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 8.20 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 18th August, 1954.

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

MOTION—URGENCY.

As to Removal of Electric Cables from Streets.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received the following letter from the member for Claremont—

I wish to move the adjournment of the House this afternoon to discuss a question of urgent public importance, namely, the destruction by fire of valuable refrigerators, radiograms and other property in various houses in Leederville recently, due to a surge of excess current in the electric mains. Yours truly, Charles F. J. North.

I have agreed to allow the hon. member to move his motion if the necessary seven members rise in their places to support the proposal.

Seven members having risen in their places,

HON. C. F. J. NORTH (Claremont)
[4:37]: I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

I have taken this action because of an accident that occurred in Leederville the night before last. The only report I have to bring before the House covering the details consists of a few words that appeared in "The West Australian" this morning, under the heading of "Claims Follow Power Break at Leederville". The report was as follows:—

Claims for damages had been lodged with the Tramways Department yesterday following the electrical-power short circuit at Cambridge-street the previous night, said a spokesman.

A trolley-bus boom came off the lines at the corner of Cambridge and Oxford streets, Leederville.

It broke a phase wire which came into contact with a 500-volt direct current trolley-bus feeder.

About 100 houses were affected by the resultant short circuit.

The account meters on nearly every house in the affected area were damaged.

Refrigerators, radios and gramophones were also damaged.

That is the account that appeared in the paper. In addition—and this is what first moved me to bring this matter before the House—information was given over the air yesterday to the effect that valuable articles, such as radiograms, had actually been on fire in rooms. In one case a child was listening to a wireless programme with its father; and as there was somebody in the place, the matter was attended to promptly. The point I want to make, however, is that if such an accident can happen once, it can happen again.

I would ask members to consider what this new danger will mean if we are no longer liable merely to blackouts, which are harmless in themselves, but are faced with the prospect of current flowing into a room and setting fire to valuable articles such as radiograms and refrigerators. I think that the broadcast report said that one refrigerator was on fire.

This situation has arisen largely because, with the rapid growth of Perth and the metropolitan area, and the laying of electric cables all over our streets, there is an enormous quantity of dangerous wire carrying current above ground. We have not been in the position up till now, as a struggling city, to consider doing what has been done in larger cities in the world—namely, to ground the wires. Consequently we have had trouble with blackouts during storms, and wires falling down, and people have had to stand by and warn their neighbours against electrocution.

In this instance two different sets of current were mixed up. It appears that a trolley-bus pole swung away from its own cable and was able to cause contact with a 250-volt series, which, as members know, is really 440 volts in three phases. That resulted in a terrific surge of current, which led to the damaging of instruments in rooms. We cannot let this sort of thing go on, and I hope the Government will be willing to obtain from the State Electricity Commission a full report on the matter with a view to steps being taken to ensure that accidents of this description will not recur.

The Minister for Works: How could you stop a trolley-bus pole from coming off?

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH: What could be stopped is the carrying of ordinary house current on the roads near cables. It is quite obvious that while we have trolley-buses, we must have cables, though there are places where an attempt is being made to do without them. I think that in one country the cables are under the road; but, so far as this State is concerned, that is a futuristic idea; and while we have trolley-buses, the overhead cables are essential.

But is it essential to have in streets electric cables for taking power to houses? Is it not possible at least to consider having them removed from trolley-bus routes? Such a project would be expensive. But in a modern community such as ours there are quite enough accidents on the roads without our having this new menace of people being in their own homes—or absent from them—and having valuable pieces of furniture set on fire, through no fault of theirs. I do not think that this is a matter for the S.E.C. to finance. I consider there is need for some fund to be provided for this purpose, apart from that required for the transmission of current. The S.E.C. is having great difficulty in keeping down the price of current, and it could not face the cost of the removal of cables and poles from our streets.

But there are other aspects to consider. We will shortly have our big town planning scheme, and then there are the aesthetic side and the possibilities of the city from a tourist point of view. I am of opinion that funds could be found from the profits accruing from these sources to finance the gradual removal of the poles and cables which are such a hideous disfigurement of our city today. Pictures can be taken of this situation which show that it looks like a ring-barked forest with magnificent buildings of the latest design alongside a monstrosity. It may be that in the long run these accidents—nothing fatal has resulted from this one, fortunately—will direct the attention of the Government and the people to what the position really is and will show the need for the removal of these unsightly wires and poles. Other speakers will detail other troubles that have occurred in various places.

MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood) [4.41]: This matter is one that is properly raised in this Chamber. It is not my wish to attempt to lay the blame on anyone, but since the State Electricity Commission has taken over the responsibility for electricity supplies, certain difficulties have arisen. It may be that the S.E.C. has been particularly unfortunate, inasmuch as some of the accidents may not have occurred previously; and they may be the types of accidents that are not likely to recur with great frequency. I draw attention to the fact that in my electorate, four people were killed by electrocution a year or two after the S.E.C. took over the distribution of current at Bridgetown.

The Minister for Lands: That is likely to occur anywhere when poles fall down and trees fall across the line.

MR. HEARMAN: The Minister for Lands seems to be getting unnecessarily touchy about this.

The Minister for Lands: No, I am not.

MR. HEARMAN: I said I was not attempting to lay the blame on any particular person. I did say earlier that the S.E.C. may have been the victim of unfortunate circumstances, and I believe that was so at Bridgetown, but, none the less, four people were killed. That is not a matter which should be treated lightly. It is of interest not only to Parliament but to the State generally, that this question should be thoroughly investigated and proper steps taken, if it is possible to take them, to prevent a recurrence of such accidents, with the consequent loss of private property that there has been.

The Government should consider the question of compensation, and it should also see that the confidence of the general public is restored in the competence of the S.E.C. I am not trying to suggest, either by implication or directly, that I regard the officers of the S.E.C. as incompetent. I believe these accidents could have occurred previously. The S.E.C. may easily have been the victim of an unfortunate run of circumstances. Nevertheless four people in my electorate were killed through technical reasons; a fuse that was there to give protection just did not work.

The Minister for Lands: Someone chopped down a tree. Is not that so?

MR. HEARMAN: People, or children will chop down trees, and such things happen, but the death of four people is a fairly high cost to pay for the provision of electricity. One might almost ask whether it is worth while having it at that price.

The Minister for Lands: I was not criticising you, but was wondering why you raised the matter on this motion.

MR. HEARMAN: Two incidents have occurred recently, in one of which there has been loss of life and in the other,

extensive damage. I think it is desirable that every effort should be made to restore public confidence in the S.E.C.

MR. JOHNSON (Leederville) [4.45]: The accident which is responsible for this motion occurred at the corner of Cambridge and Oxford-sts. which is one of the most important intersections in my electorate. As far as I can ascertain, the accident could be classed as being as unavoidable as any accident could be.

MR. Oldfield: It would not have happened if you had looked after your district properly.

MR. JOHNSON: The last time I spoke, the hon. member took refuge in flight. I wish he would do it again.

MR. Oldfield: He came back pretty fast, do you remember?

MR. JOHNSON: I could make some fairly caustic comments at this stage, but I will not. This accident is an unfortunate occurrence, and such an accident is most unlikely to occur again under similar circumstances.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Why?

MR. JOHNSON: First of all, for it to recur it is necessary for a trolley-bus pole to come off and hit one particular wire and break it, and for that wire to fall across another particular wire. That is why, and it is drawing the long bow to expect it to recur at all readily. Although I have not interviewed everyone affected, inspectors of the State Electricity Commission appear to have been on the spot with commendable promptitude. I have reason to believe, although I have not been able to confirm it personally, that they have been into every house affected.

The Minister for Works: That is quite correct.

MR. JOHNSON: I have communicated with the principal administrative officers of the trolley-bus administration, and they have advised me to tell those affected to have their damaged instruments repaired by their normal repair contractors, and to send in a detailed statement as, quite naturally, the Tramway Department does not want to pay for damage that has occurred by other means. It has, however, already indicated that it will accept responsibility for the damage that has resulted.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Why? Whenever there is an accident, is this department going to accept responsibility?

MR. JOHNSON: Apparently it feels it has some responsibility.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Perhaps the Minister will have something to say about that.

MR. JOHNSON: I imagine it would be a normal procedure for anyone to accept responsibility for his own damage.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: When there is no negligence?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Ask the Minister for Railways what he thinks about it.

The Minister for Railways: Ask the Leader of the Opposition what he did when he had the power.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Do not make a speech! You are upsetting the member for Leederville.

Mr. JOHNSON: As far as I am aware at this stage, the officers of the two departments most directly concerned have acted as promptly and efficiently as any member of this Chamber would wish.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Do they claim there was no negligence?

Mr. JOHNSON: They have not said so to me.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Did they say there was negligence?

Mr. JOHNSON: I have not discussed that question with them.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: It is rather important.

Hon. A. F. Watts: It is your job.

Mr. JOHNSON: It does not concern me whether there was negligence, but that the accident has happened.

Mr. Oldfield: Are you not concerned about your electors?

Mr. JOHNSON: If the hon. member had been listening instead of making silly noises, he would have heard me say that the department was prepared to provide compensation. This unfortunate occurrence indicates, however, that there are some weaknesses in regard to our attitude towards safety, and on that point I am, to some extent, in agreement with the member for Blackwood.

I have mentioned before in this Chamber that I feel we should become more aware of the danger factor—or possibly we should call it the safety factor—in all our doings. People responsible for safety in the electrical field come under the control of the S.E.C.; people responsible for machinery safety come under the control of the Minister for Mines, while others are under the control of the Minister responsible for the Factories and Shops Act. I think this is an opportune time to say that in our developing community it would be wise to have all safety factors brought under the one responsibility and that one Minister should be in sole charge.

It might follow from an investigation of that thought that the correct Minister to handle it might be the Minister for Health because health dangers are associated with his department and the facilities for the treatment of accidents also

come under his control. Or, because the greatest proportion of danger factors occur in the factories branch, they might all be co-ordinated under the factories and shops branch and thus come under the control of the Minister for Labour. However, I bring that thought forward for consideration.

On this occasion, as I have already indicated, the officers of the two departments concerned acted with the most commendable promptitude. But officers from two departments were required to deal with one single occurrence and in actual practice the electrical wires concerned belong to two different departments—the household power lines to the S.E.C. and the line which was responsible for the trouble to the Tramway Department. That in itself indicates the need for an integration of those two factors, which are related to each other.

There is a further announcement in today's paper which impinges on this particular accident; that is, a statement that trolley-buses to Mt. Hawthorn will shortly be running over the Horseshoe Bridge. When that occurs, the trolley-bus route to Mt. Hawthorn will be along Newcastle-st. and then along Oxford-st. The corner, at which the accident occurred two nights ago—the corner of Oxford and Cambridge-sts.—will no longer be a turning point for the Mt. Hawthorn trolley-buses. So the danger of a recurrence will be even further reduced. Incidentally, I hope that the bridge will be resurfaced at the same time.

I have no doubt that the departments concerned will guard against the possibility of a similar accident occurring, but I take this opportunity of saying that there are too many accidents, of every kind, occurring in this State and there is not one single person or body in Western Australia that is charged with the duty of reducing the number. Practically every accident is the result of some kind of human failure—either failure to take care or deliberate mischance. I hope that real thought will be given to the possibility of bringing under the control of one Minister the responsibility for reducing all kinds of accidents.

HON. SIR ROSS McLARTY (Murray) [4.55]: I think the member for Claremont was justified in raising this matter at this juncture. I do not know anything about it, other than what I read in the paper, but the member for Leederville said that this class of accident was likely to occur at any time. I hope the Minister, when he speaks, will be able to tell us that either that is not so or else that immediate steps have been taken to prevent similar accidents happening in the future. Such accidents as have been referred to are not the only cause of burning out electrical equipment, because at Safety Bay, which is

in my electorate, I have had complaints about certain electrical equipment being burnt out through power failures.

Of course, I am not an expert on power, but I have asked the Minister to make inquiries in regard to this matter, and I hope he will be able to furnish the information as early as possible. Mention has been made that compensation will be paid; in this case I think the member for Leederville said that it will be paid by the Tramway Department. Perhaps the Minister will also indicate whether he considers the S.E.C. has any responsibility in this direction.

MR. MAY (Collie) [4.57]: I want to make a few comments with regard to this motion and, firstly, I would point out that this accident is not an isolated incident. I do not believe that any scare talk, as a result of this discussion, will do any good. When some fault occurs in our electrical system, the S.E.C. takes every care to ensure, as far as possible at any rate, that a similar accident does not happen in the future. The staff of the S.E.C. is highly trained and efficient. The first power house for the South-West scheme was built at Collie, and I know from my own experience that every care is always taken to avoid accidents similar to that which occurred at Leederville.

This type of accident occurs all over the world, and we must realise that it is most difficult to be completely safe when handling electricity. Frequently our engineers are not able to discover how current leaks. It is a very difficult problem. Accidents do happen and they will continue to happen where electrical current is concerned. Discussion on the motion moved by the member for Claremont might serve a useful purpose, but, on the other hand, it is liable to put fear into some people in relation to the use of electricity. Anything that happens and is unusual concerning the distribution of electricity is well and truly looked into by the S.E.C. We can have every confidence in that body and can be sure that it will at all times endeavour to prevent accidents from taking place. Such steps are always taken by the S.E.C., and I do not think we have any ground for believing that any accidents that occur are not given the maximum amount of attention by the commission.

MR. O'BRIEN (Murchison) [5.3]: Having driven a trolley-bus and a tram for many years, I have good reason to know that mishaps can occur. Immediately a short takes place, however, provision is made at the power house, by means of a circuit breaker, automatically to cut out, and this results in power being cut off from that section. The member for Collie has already said that electricity is hard to control. It is harnessed, and through that harness we are able to make use of it. Mishaps will take place from time to time with

electricity because of our overhead system for trolley-buses and trams. No blame can be directly attached to the S.E.C. because it is doing everything possible to avoid accidents.

Up at Menzies recently, a power plant which is controlled by the hotel proprietor had the bomb; it was finished, and there was a black-out. Anything could have caused that blackout, and it was necessary to obtain power for the town. An approach was made to the S.E.C., and, to show members how careful the department is, I would point out that before it would even consider any move at all, it sent its inspectors and qualified electricians along to go into the whole matter. Accordingly, although this motion was introduced in good faith, I would emphasise the fact that the authorities are well acquainted with what has happened, and they will see that the matter is rectified.

MR. WILD (Dale) [5.5]: I only wish to make one or two observations about the overall picture concerning the transmission of electricity in this State. I appreciate the fact, as the member for Collie has pointed out, that electricity is a very difficult medium to control.

The Minister for Works: Do you know what the motion is about?

Mr. WILD: Yes. It is to adjourn the House in regard to these accidents that are taking place.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The motion deals with the accident at Leederville, and the hon. member must confine his remarks to that.

Mr. WILD: That being the case, I shall reserve my comments on other accidents that have taken place in the State, with particular reference to my own district. Accidents such as this one where a trolley-bus pole comes off the wire and knocks one wire on to another cause a good deal of damage to people's properties, but I wish to refer particularly to accidents within the transmission circuits. In view of your ruling, however, Mr. Speaker, I shall reserve my comments for a more appropriate occasion.

HON. A. V. R. ABBOTT (Mt. Lawley) [5.6]: I think it is appreciated that an unfortunate accident did occur, but that it is one that is not likely to happen very often. Nevertheless, it did result in considerable damage to a number of people.

The Minister for Works: Damage to the property of a number of people.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: That is so. I was going to add that fortunately that damage was of a material nature, and not personal. I hope the Minister will inform the House whether or not there was any negligence. That is the point in which I am most interested. Was there negligence by the Tramway Department or by

the S.E.C.? The member for Leederville said he made inquiries and to the best of his knowledge from those inquiries no negligence was attributable.

There is a most important principle is involved because, if the Minister admits negligence, however small, then, in my view, it is only right that the Government should recognise that negligence and should not contest it but make due allowance to those who have suffered injury by it. I would like to hear the Minister on the principle involved. A case was mentioned by the member for Blackwood, of which I have knowledge, of an ex-employee who lost his life trying to do what he could to save other life. In all probability, and as far as I was aware, it was an accident.

But had he been on the scene a little earlier and had he been an employee of the S.E.C., it might have been held that, owing to the exigencies of the case where he, as an employee, tried to prevent harm occurring through an accident relating to the organisation that employed him, some compensation should be made to his dependants. I would like to hear the Minister's views on an accident where there is damage to goods of a comparatively small nature. Does he recognise that as a principle? What is the point of view of the Government when it relates to those who need help perhaps on a much greater scale and more urgently than is the case in this accident?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. T. Tonkin—Melville) [5.10]: From the terms of the motion moved by the member for Claremont I gathered that he had one reason, and one reason only, for moving the adjournment of the House, namely, that he regarded it as a matter of urgent public importance to discuss the destruction by fire of certain refrigerators, radiograms and other property, resulting from a surge of electricity through the mains. That was his motion.

Hon. C. F. J. North; Excess surge.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is so. As a matter of fact, the hon. member went even further than would ordinarily be done to make his complaint specific because he said, "namely, the destruction by fire." So he definitely limited it to what was in his communication, namely, that the destruction that resulted from an excess surge of current was a matter of urgent public importance. It may or it may not be so. To my way of thinking, it was not of such magnitude as to be of urgent public importance because there would be far greater disruption if a charge of lightning struck the wires, or if some road vehicle left the road and struck a post, bringing the wires down. What happened was that a trolley-bus pole came off the wire and, in doing so, it fouled a wire carrying a heavy charge of direct current; it brought that wire down over the wires carrying

alternating current, with the result that the direct charge entered certain premises, with disastrous results to refrigerators and radiograms.

Mr. Hutchinson: That is no cause for complacency.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, the destruction of property is never cause for complacency; but whether it is a matter of urgent public importance, justifying a full discussion in Parliament, is another matter. One can be concerned about many things, as we are from day to day; many things which are of far greater magnitude and importance than this particular incident. But if we were to seek to move the adjournment of the House on every such occasion, there would not be much time left to do much else. I want to emphasise the fact that the S.E.C. accepts no responsibility or blame for this matter in the slightest degree. There was no negligence on the part of the S.E.C. and no responsibility attaches to it for what happened. No method has yet been devised to prevent trolley-bus poles or tram poles from coming off the wires occasionally. I have seen tram poles come off wires ever since I was a boy in knickerbockers.

The Premier: What a memory!

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not recall any motion being moved to adjourn the House because of it. Of course they will come off!

Mr. May: What, knickerbockers?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: But they do not always bring down power lines, although they might cause a rise in blood pressure. It has not been suggested this afternoon that any member possesses some device which will prevent trolley-bus poles from coming off the wires; even if there is such a device, its use might, under certain circumstances, be more disastrous than to leave the poles free to come off. There is less likelihood of wires being brought down under existing conditions than if the poles were attached to the wires.

These accidents are not frequent, that is, where wires are brought down. We have to face up to the fact that this occurrence might happen in the same way as a house might be struck with lightning, in which event nothing could be done to prevent the occurrence. These rare incidents happen on occasions. It has been suggested by the member for Claremont that one method of overcoming this possible danger is to put underground all cables carrying electric current for household or factory use, other than cables carrying power for trolley-buses or trams. That would be a tremendous undertaking.

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: It is done in many countries and in many towns.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: At present the S.E.C. is fully engaged in trying to supply the needs of consumers; this is being advocated strongly by various members of this House. They have pressed for the extension of the supply of electric power. The S.E.C. was obliged to refuse to carry out some of the extensions because they were uneconomical owing to the need to supply poles and copper wire for the comparatively small returns which could be expected from consumers who would be connected up; and because more urgent work was required elsewhere.

Is it suggested that we should immediately stop the extensions in hand, which are being carried out with great rapidity, so as to divert our resources and manpower to putting the cables underground? That would involve years of work and much of the financial resources of the commission. So under those circumstances it is inevitable that there would be a tremendous slowing-down in the tempo of extensions, which are now being undertaken, and which are not being carried out with sufficient haste to satisfy some members of this House. Surely members are not in earnest when they suggest that the S.E.C. should immediately take in hand this tremendous task of putting all these cables underground. It is not a practical proposition.

Hon. C. F. J. North: Not all the cables, but only those along the routes.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: But the danger exists not only along the trolley-bus routes. It also exists along the tram routes.

Mr. Oldfield: There are only two tram routes left.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: So in all streets where trolley-buses and trams are running, this would require the mains that carry the current for household and factory use to be put underground. It would be a tremendous task. I am of the same mind as other people in saying that if it is at all possible to prevent loss of life and destruction of property, steps should be taken in that direction. But there are limits. We have to consider whether the incidence of danger in regard to these matters, as indicated in this instance, is as great or greater than in many other spheres of which we have knowledge. Why, compared with this, the loss of life on the roads is absolutely colossal, but there has been no motion put forward to adjourn the House so as to discuss the loss under that heading.

Hon. A. F. Watts: That is not a matter of urgency. It arises every day of the week.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: But the incident under discussion has not arisen suddenly, because trolley-bus poles and tram poles come off many times each day.

Hon. A. F. Watts: But they have not caused an accident such as this before.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: And power failures could occur.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: The object of the motion is to ascertain the attitude of the Government to the loss suffered by these unfortunate people.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That can quite easily be ascertained by questions.

The Minister for Railways: It was ascertained by the member for the district concerned.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I think we are all entitled to know.

Mr. Hutchinson: The Minister has not acquainted us with the attitude of the Government as yet.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Minister for Railways who controls the Tramway Department will decide whether compensation is to be paid or not. So far as the S.E.C. is concerned, it accepts no responsibility or blame. There is no shortcoming on its part; there is not the slightest hint of negligence, and there is no indication whatsoever of its failure to observe proper precautions with regard to setting up of the mains or anything else. This is the type of accident which can occur in many countries and towns, and they do occur now and again, but fortunately not frequently. I suppose a trolley-bus or tram pole can come off a hundred times without bringing down a wire, as happened in this case, with the result that a charge of direct current was put into the other wires and the charge entered a number of houses.

I shall not attempt to deal with any other aspects of the matter which have been raised in the course of discussions regarding other parts of the State. An opportunity will certainly be afforded to deal with that and I shall take advantage of that opportunity. But in connection with this motion and the destruction of the property in question, the responsibility does not lie in any degree with the S.E.C. No fault has been found with the subsequent action of the officers of the S.E.C. who, when they became aware of what happened, were, as the member for Leederville said, quickly on the job.

They made inquiries as to the extent of damage and advised the persons concerned of the course they should take. No more can be expected of those officers. In my opinion, they did all that could be expected of them in the circumstances. In conclusion, I must point out that the S.E.C. endeavours, and I think with considerable success, to carry out its work efficiently; it does not hesitate to remedy faults when they are discovered or to advise persons what course should be taken if they suffer damage in any way. I shall leave the question of compensation to the Minister for Railways, as it is one for his department to deal with.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS
(**Hon. H. H. Styant—Kalgoorlie**) [5.25]:
As Minister in charge of the Tramway Department, I want to say that it regrets

very much that an accident of this type should have occurred. It is what might be rightly termed a freak accident. I do not propose to outline what happened because it was clearly explained by the Minister for Works. As he said, trolley-bus and tram poles leave their overhead cables on a score of occasions every day.

This was a freak accident because of the acute angle, 180 degrees, at which the trolley-bus pole slewed when it left the cable and came in contact with a bare spot on the overhead cable of the Tramway Department, which precipitated it on to the low tension or domestic mains, thus causing an overcharge of electric current to enter the electrical implements mentioned. The rapid growth of the community referred to by the mover of the motion has nothing to do with this matter at all, because the accident could have happened ever since the first tram ran in Western Australia, and certainly since the trolley-bus system was first inaugurated in this city.

I do not know of any other occasion when such a disastrous result was brought about by a trolley-bus pole leaving the cable. I do not think any attempt should be made to bring about a panic on the part of the people concerned. It was, as I said, a freak accident which occurred for some unexplained reason. Similar freak accidents could occur, such as an aeroplane with a full load of passengers crashing and killing its full complement, a ship foundering at sea without any cause.

Mr. Hutchinson: Could this accident happen again in this particular place?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I believe it could.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: And many other places?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, particularly at an intersection such as this where the Mt. Hawthorn line branches off. Other freak accidents have occurred, such as submarines which, for unexplained reasons, refuse to surface and the crews are lost. Of course, in this case before us the department endeavoured to find out the reason. It considers it is aware of the reason. It attempted to find out the reason so as to effect a remedy to prevent a recurrence. I can assure members that that is what the department will do.

Mr. Hearman: Will it make good the damage?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I shall come to that in a moment. The point raised by the member for Claremont that consideration should be given to prevent the high tension mains, in the event of their breaking, from coming into contact with the low tension mains, is a good one. I feel certain that not only the Tramway Department, but also the

S.E.C. and possibly the Perth City Council will give consideration to the removal or the adjustment of these mains so that in the event of the high tension main again being severed, it will not come into contact with the domestic or low tension main.

As regards the damage done, early yesterday morning the member for Leederville, the district in which the unfortunate accident occurred, saw me. I contacted the Tramway Department and advised Mr. Johnson to go there, which I understand he did. The department has indicated that it is prepared to pay for the damage done and it has given some advice as to the method by which claims may be made.

I have discussed the accident with the manager of the Tramway Department and he said that it was an unavoidable occurrence, a freak accident that would perhaps not happen again in 50 years, and he considered that the department should accept the responsibility for the damage. I think we should reassure the public mind; we should not allow the people to become panic-stricken, but should assure them that every possible investigation will be made to devise ways and means whereby a recurrence of such an accident may be prevented. We do not want them to adopt a frame of mind that there is something particularly dangerous in our having overhead electric cables. I have seen trolley-buses running in the other States, and without exception they have used overhead electric cables. I have also seen the trams which have been run similarly.

It has been suggested that the danger would be completely eliminated if the cables were put underground. That idea is wrong. If high tension cables were put underground, there would be a possibility of their coming into contact in the conduits through earth movements and constant vibration and, if that happened, there would be highly charged wet earth in the vicinity. Hence the undergrounding of the cables would not be a complete remedy. I assure members that consideration will be given to the points raised by the mover of the motion, and that we shall see whether it is humanly possible to take precautions that will avert a recurrence of such an accident.

HON. D. BRAND (Greenough) [5.33]: I support the motion. If it achieves nothing else, it has drawn from the Minister representing the department certain assurances in respect of action to be taken to avoid a recurrence of such an unfortunate accident. I am of the opinion that the State Electricity Commission has, up to this stage, taken every precaution considered necessary to avoid such an accident—one which in this instance has caused damage to some hundreds of instruments in the homes of people living in the vicinity. It may be time that the

commission and the Tramway Department took a second look at the set-up of such lines to ascertain whether any additional precautions could be taken to guard against accidents of this sort. The Minister has pointed out that it was a freak accident caused by the pole of the trolley bus swinging around at such an acute angle that the wire was pulled down. Perhaps the placing of a stop on either side of the boom to prevent such a swing might be a solution of the problem.

Regarding the suggestion by the member for Claremont that these wires should be placed underground, I agree with the Minister that, in the event of the Government's undertaking to do that, a huge expenditure would be involved and the necessary extensions demanded by the development that is taking place could not be proceeded with at the same time.

Mr. Hutchinson: He did not say that the high tension wires should be put underground.

Hon. D. BRAND: If it were intended to put any wires underground, it would be those that would be likely to cause any damage. At the Causeway, all wires are laid in conduits of one sort or other, and I am told that at Riverside Drive and various other places, wires have been put underground. I am not aware that vibration would cause damage that could not be prevented if insulated wire were laid underground. The Minister for Railways suggested that danger could arise from underground wires, but I believe we shall see the day when most of the wires will be laid in conduits, thus eliminating the danger that might arise as well as the unsightliness of the overhead wires. This in turn would be helpful to planning.

On the point of planning, it is to be hoped that the State Electricity Commission and the authority associated with extensions of this nature will take into consideration the possibility of laying the wires underground and, as far as possible, avoid a continuance of the system of erecting them on poles. Outside the city, I think the undergrounding of cables would entail unnecessary expense. We must plan for the future and profit from mistakes of the past. I believe the motion is timely. It may not be the means of preventing a recurrence of accidents, but it will give the people concerned an assurance that the Government is doing everything possible through the medium of its technical officers to safeguard their interests.

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH: I wish to thank those members who have spoken to the motion.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member has not a right of reply on this motion.

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH: Then I ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

QUESTIONS.

WATER SUPPLIES.

(a) *As to Completion of Wellington Dam.*

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) What is the intention of the Government regarding the raising of Wellington Dam?

(2) Could not the many large contracting firms now working in new industrial areas be asked to tender a price for its completion?

(3) Is it a fact that irrigation areas centred on Wellington Dam suffer some restriction of water supply?

(4) What is the estimated cost of completing the dam?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The Government intends, this financial year, to undertake certain works in connection with the off-take pipes, which are a necessary preliminary to the raising of the wall. Subject to the availability of loan funds, it is the intention of the Government to proceed with the raising of the wall commencing at the end of the 1955 winter.

(2) The engaging of a contracting firm to do the work has already been considered. The department, however, has done some necessary preliminary work, has the necessary plant on the site, and has an experienced organisation capable of completing the work when finances permit.

(3) Minor restrictions have been imposed in the Collie district late in the irrigation season during the last three years.

(4) At present ruling rates, the estimated cost of raising the dam is approximately £1,200,000.

(b) *As to Piping Contracts for Country Scheme.*

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What contracts have been let to local firms for the manufacture of piping of 10in. diameter and over, which is to be used for the country areas water supply?

(2) For what districts are these pipes ordered?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) Goldfields main conduit:
24,030 lin. ft. of 36in. diameter pipes.

Cunderdin-Minnivale main:
42,240 lin. ft. of 18in. diameter pipes.

Bruce Rock-Narembreen main: 52,400 lin. ft. of 10in. diameter pipes.

Wellington Dam-Narrogin main: 269,070 lin. ft. of 30in. diameter pipes.

Kalamunda water supply: 10,300 lin. ft. of 10in. pipes.

Geraldton water supply: 22,704 lin. ft. of 12in. diameter pipes.

By agreement, the above quantities can be exceeded by 25 per cent.

Tenders have been invited for—

Goldfields main conduit: 15,510 lin. ft. of 36in diameter pipes.

Tenders are being prepared for—

Goldfields main conduit: 13,050 lin. ft. of 36in. diameter pipes.

Wellington dam-Narrogin main: 168,960 lin. ft. of 30in. diameter pipes for completing the main.

LAND SETTLEMENT

As to Surveys of Unsettled Areas.

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) How many land surveyors are employed on land west of the Midland line between Moora and Geraldton?

(2) Does he not consider that the work of surveying land, other than that set aside for Government land settlement, should be expedited in order that interested persons with adequate plant and financial backing could obtain blocks and proceed with the development and consolidation of the large areas of unsettled land?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Three and two cadets.

(2) Yes. The department has engaged all the contracts of those possible and, in addition, has advertised extensively in the Eastern States for additional surveyors.

POLICE FORCE.

As to Adequacy.

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH asked the Minister for Police:

(1) Is the present strength of the Police Force considered sufficient for this vast State with its growing population?

(2) Is not the ratio of personnel to population lower than that of other comparable States?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) At the present time the strength of the Police Force is sufficient, but it is anticipated that in the near future, the growing population in some districts and the creation of new centres of habitation, as well as consequential necessity for increased traffic control and investigation of crime, will progressively require an increase in the strength of the force.

(2) On a State basis, the only comparable State is Queensland, which has a lower ratio than Western Australia—a ratio of 511 in Queensland as compared with 677 in Western Australia. Other States have a slightly higher ratio, but are not comparable as they have a higher population in a much lesser area.

ROTTNEST ISLAND.

As to Allocation of Accommodation.

Mr. HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) Can he inform the House what method is adopted by the Rottneest Board of Control in allotting rental accommodation at Rottneest Island?

(2) Does the board perform the allocations, or does it merely adopt the recommendations submitted by the managing secretary?

(3) Is it a fact that during the most sought-after periods of the Christmas, New Year and Easter holidays, a large part of the accommodation is secured every year by the same people?

(4) If this is so, what is the reason?

(5) If this is stated to be untrue, can he inform the House why it is that the belief expressed in No. (3) is so widely held by regular visitors to Rottneest?

(6) Does he know that this apparent unfair allocation is causing concern to a large number of people who have had regular applications rejected for some considerable time?

(7) Will he endeavour to correct this anomalous position?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Mines) replied:

(1) A subcommittee is appointed by the Rottneest Island Board of Control which, in conjunction with the managing secretary, reviews all applications for accommodation. When a determination is finally reached, lists are submitted to the full board for approval.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(3) No.

(4) Answered by No. (3).

(5) As there are normally between 1,200 and 1,400 applicants for the limited accommodation available, especially in school holiday periods, it is regretted that a large percentage must be subjected to disappointment.

(6) During the past 18 months, only three people have directed my attention to the fact that several applications have been lodged by them without achieving a satisfactory result. In one of these cases, investigation disclosed that this particular applicant had been overlooked because, when previously in occupation of accommodation, the premises were vacated in a most unsatisfactory condition. One other

applicant had lodged an application on two occasions after allocations had been made.

(7) The alleged anomalous position is greatly exaggerated.

CHILD WELFARE.

(a) As to Hicks Report and Government Action.

Mr. WILD asked the Premier:

(1) On what date was the report received from Mr. Hicks who investigated child welfare in Western Australia, at the request of the Government?

(2) Was the report considered by the Government and, if so, what action was taken on the criticism offered by Mr. Hicks?

(3) Was the report treated as confidential?

(4) What date was it decided to make the report available to the Press, and at whose instigation?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Early in October, 1953.

(2) Yes, the major recommendations were approved and, where the criticism was considered to be justified, appropriate action was taken and is still being taken in regard to major matters.

(3) Yes.

(4) I handed the report to a section of the Press on Thursday, the 5th August, on the basis that only the recommendations were to be published. As is now known some sections of the report were also published. My own thought in regard to the Salvation Army Boys' Home at Seaforth is that the criticism in the report was rather severe on some points.

(b) As to Tabling Report on Seaforth Home.

Mr. WILD (without notices) asked the Premier:

Further to my previous question about the Hicks report, in view of the unfair criticism which has been levelled at the Seaforth Boys' Home, will he now lay that report on the Table of the House?

The PREMIER replied: No, not at present. I will be prepared to give the hon. member an opportunity to see it, however.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What is the objection, if it has been given to the Press?

The PREMIER: That is the point. It has not been given to the Press for publication.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You said it was given to a reporter—

The PREMIER: It has not been given to a section of the Press for publication. It was made available to a section of the Press on the understanding that only the

recommendations would be published. I might say that soon after the report was presented, I made a copy of it available to the previous Minister for Child Welfare, on a confidential basis, and there would be no objection to any member who is particularly interested being given an opportunity to peruse that report.

MILK.

As to Low Solid Content.

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is he aware that several leading milk producers in the Armadale-Byford district have recently been warned in regard to the low solid content in their milk production?

(2) Is it by feed and breeding, or slaughter, that this anomaly can be overcome?

(3) If it is feed and breeding, what advice can be given to the milk producers in this regard?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Breeding and feeding are the most important aspects of management determining the level of solids not fat in milk.

(3) Technical advice upon all aspects of milk production is available to producers.

HOUSING.

(a) As to Men Employed on Day Labour.

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Works:

(1) How many building tradesmen and labourers are now being employed by the Public Works Department on day labour house building?

(2) How many tradesmen and labourers were engaged in similar work at the 1st August, 1952, and the 1st August, 1953?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Including apprentices and trainees, 565.

(2) Including apprentices and trainees—1st August, 1952, 342. 1st August, 1953, 451.

(b) As to Supplies of Building Materials.

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Did he see the report attributed to the president of the Master Builders' Association of Western Australia (Mr. W. L. Brine) in "The West Australian" on Saturday the 14th August, in which he stated that "instead of the building supplies position easing to a stage where builders could satisfy their needs without undue delay, the position was becoming increasingly worse each day"?

(2) Does he agree with this report?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) No.

(c) As to Allocation of Brick Supplies.

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Is it correct that the State Brick-Works, and other brick makers, have announced that future brick production would be mainly directed to housing and Government jobs, including the State Insurance Office building, which were being constructed by day labour?

(2) Is it a fact that a form of brick control has now been instituted in that builders were asked to submit copies of plans for which they were ordering supplies in order that their priority of delivery should be determined?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) As there are no building controls in existence, I am unaware of any details of the manner in which private brick companies conduct their business.

NORTH-WEST.

As to Hold-up of Ships, Carnarvon.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY (without notice) asked the Premier:

(1) Has he anything further to report regarding the waterside dispute at Carnarvon?

(2) Will he confirm that the terms of settlement made in April in respect of the last waterside dispute at Carnarvon, as set out on page 11, of "The West Australian" this morning, in a report from Mr. Golding, secretary of the A.W.U., are, in fact, the terms on which the April dispute was settled?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) This dispute was referred to the Arbitration Court and I understand that the court has decided to ask the Conciliation Commissioner, Mr. Schnaars, to proceed by plane to Carnarvon tomorrow morning.

(2) Yes.

PETROL.

As to Conference Regarding Service Stations.

Mr. HEARMAN (without notice) asked the Premier:

Further to a question I asked recently about a conference of interested parties in connection with service stations, has the Government taken any steps to convene such a conference, has any request been received from any interested party or parties for such a conference and is he in a position to indicate the Government's attitude in relation to service stations?

The PREMIER replied:

No steps have been taken to convene a conference as suggested and, as far as I am able to recollect, no request has been

received from any organisation for a conference, although I think one organisation did write in, following the raising of the question in this House on the first occasion by the member for Blackwood, indicating that it favoured the holding of such a conference and would be prepared to be represented if a conference were convened.

As regards the other question, the Minister for Labour received a deputation a few days ago from one of the interested organisations and he will submit the request of that deputation to Cabinet in the next few days.

BILL—WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT SCHEME.

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

BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—PRICES CONTROL.

Report of Committee adopted.

MOTION—NORTH-WEST DEVELOPMENT.

As to Commonwealth Financial Assistance.

Debate resumed from the 11th August on the following motion by Mr. Ackland:—

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

It therefore requests —

- (a) that a programme for the development of this portion of the State be drawn up by a committee consisting of the Premier (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, M.L.A.), the Leader of the Opposition (Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, K.B.E., M.L.A.) and the Leader of the Country Party (Hon. A. F. Watts, C.M.G., M.L.A.);
- (b) that this committee submit such programme at an interview with the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister and the Federal Treasurer;
- (c) that a special Federal grant of £3,000,000 a year or an amount considered necessary for this work for a period of 10 years be requested in order to carry out this vital developmental work.

This house also desires that the Legislative Council be acquainted accordingly and asked for its concurrence.

which had been amended, on motion by the Premier, to strike out all words after the word "that" in line 1 of paragraph (a), and to which the Premier had moved a further amendment as follows:—

That in lieu of the words struck out, the following words be inserted:—

the Government present a programme for the development of that portion of the State to a committee consisting of the Premier (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, M.L.A.), the Minister for the North-West (Hon. H. C. Strickland, M.L.C.), the Leader of the Opposition (Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, K.B.E., M.L.A.), the Leader of the Country Party (Hon. A. F. Watts, C.M.G., M.L.A.), and the Speaker and member for Pilbara (Hon. A. J. Rodoreda, M.L.A.).

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

HON. D. BRAND (Greenough—on amendment) [5.52]: Being numbered among those who have not gone further north than Carnarvon, and therefore not being in the group which is charged with being porthole north-westerners, who have discovered the North per medium of the State ships, I desire to support the motion, inasmuch as I believe that if any Government is successfully to tackle the problem of populating the North—it is population that is required there if that part of the State is to make any progress—it must be done per medium of finance and will require a very liberal supply of money, at that.

One can speak only very generally on a motion such as that moved by the member for Moore and as suggested to be amended by the Premier, who thinks that a plan should be prepared by the Government for the committee which is to represent the Parliament of the State at Canberra.

There have been many reports prepared on the question of the North-West and many committees have been appointed to

advise various Governments on that subject, the last of them being known as the Kimberley Developmental Committee and comprised of Mr. Diamond, the Engineer for the North-West—from the Public Works Department—and Mr. Nunn, officer-in-charge of the North-West branch of the Department of Agriculture, as State members and Mr. Grenville Ruddock, Director of the Division of Regional Development of the Ministry of National Development and Mr. Read, acting Assistant Director of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, as Commonwealth members.

That committee prepared a wordy and voluminous report, which in due course was handed to the then Premier of this State, the present Leader of the Opposition, and Senator Spooner, Federal Minister for National Development. Certainly that report has application strictly to the Kimberleys and many recommendations are listed in it by the committee. One of them, in which I am particularly interested, is that for the construction or development of a deep sea port in the North-West, the suggestion of the committee being that that port be established at Derby.

I have been prompted to mention this by the publicity given in this morning's Press to the destruction by fire of the hotel at Derby. To what extent that conflagration will benefit Derby, or otherwise, I am not certain, but we can be sure that some means of accommodating travellers and others at that centre must now be provided, and it is to be hoped that a modern and permanent structure will be built. Nevertheless, according to this report which I have mentioned, the whole matter hinges on whether the Government of the day sees fit to proceed with the recommendations and construct a deep-sea port at a point in King Sound known as Point Torment, or Black Rock.

During the time when I was Minister for Works a good deal was done in the preparation of plans for this proposed harbour. Col. Tydeman was asked to report on the project and his report was favourable. He went to some pains to point out the difficulties involved because of the very sharp tide—something like 30ft.—at King Sound and I think you, Mr. Speaker, must know more about that than I do. However, Col. Tydeman said he would recommend the construction of such a port. On the decision of the Government in this matter depends the shifting of the meatworks from Broome to Derby and perhaps the gradual transferring of the township, too, and the building of the new hotel on the site chosen.

I am advised that there are many problems arising out of the establishment of a townsite in the area concerned, because it is largely a swamp district, but, nevertheless, if a deep sea port is to be provided for the North—even on a long range plan—the necessary planning will have to be done and when that is completed the problem of the establishment of a town nearby

should not present great difficulty. I know, as you do also, Mr. Speaker, as a member representing that area, that there is controversy as to whether Broome should be established as a port or whether Derby is better situated to serve the Kimberleys and the rest of the hinterland.

Looking at the map, and not having been to that part of the State, I would imagine that Derby should be the port for that area, in the event of its development, and particularly now as Air Beef is increasing its activities and is proving more and more successful each year. It is to be hoped, therefore, that a decision will be made in the near future as to whether the meat works are to be shifted to the district I have mentioned. The problem, of course, is one of finding the necessary money.

I am advised, and this report points out, that the Black Rock deep water port should be developed over a period of five or six years with an estimated annual expenditure of some £200,000. It could be £300,000 now. This would include the jetty, goods shed, water supply and associated equipment which I understand would embrace special cranes for handling goods during the rise and fall of the tide. From what I can read, Liverpool experiences a very marked difference of some 33 feet in tides. Surely there would be firms in England with some experience of construction of such harbours which could be called upon to advise the Government in the event of any decision being made to proceed with this work.

Should this port be established—and there are reports by the Commonwealth survey ship "McLachlan," and latterly the "Warrego," as to the soundings in this bay—no doubt there would be a report made on the suitability of the bay as a desirable port. In any case, if, ultimately, as a result of this move by the member for Moore, or the State or the Commonwealth Government, we make some progress towards solving the problem of populating the North, I think it would be desirable to have a deep-sea port somewhere along the north-western coast to which ordinary world shipping could call.

Even if we do not allow for that, I am certain that the Blue Funnel line, which trades between this State and the countries to the north of it, could provide a better transport service or augment the one that already exists. The question is: Is the State to continue constructing ships that are suitable for berthing in the shallower ports now provided, or is to face up to what I believe is the modern demand and provide a port that would meet the needs of present-day shipping and concerns associated with sea transport?

I raise this point now because it was submitted by the previous Government to Senator Spooner for consideration by the Commonwealth, but the Commonwealth Cabinet decided not to proceed with

the suggestion of providing the money on a £ for £ basis. Following upon the comment that was made during the Commonwealth election campaign by both parties, I gather that they recognise that if the North-West of this State and, in fact, the north of Australia as a whole, is to be developed, they must be more liberal in making money available to the authorities that are attempting to develop these areas.

The Minister for Lands: More labour, you mean.

Hon. D. BRAND: The Minister for Lands has said that more labour would be needed.

The Minister for Lands: I meant more Labour than Liberal.

Hon. D. BRAND: I was not thinking in political terms, because I am of the opinion that this matter has been a political football for too long and for that reason we do not make any progress. The motion by the member for Moore has suggested that the matter be considered by members of both Houses in order that we can have a non-political approach to a problem which surely must be tackled, even if it is only in the interests of defence. I do not say that defence in depth is the solution, because I cannot imagine that in our time we will have sufficient people, spread over that huge north-western area, to constitute anything like a means of defence for our country. It must be done by some other way.

Nevertheless, if it is to be defended, and we are to desist from adopting a dog-in-the-manger attitude by not being able to do anything ourselves and not allowing anyone else to do it, we must realise it is a national problem that must be faced. I wish the member for Moore every success with his motion and, in the event of it being carried, I trust that the Premier, together with the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Country Party, will be able sufficiently to impress the Commonwealth to accept the responsibility of a long-range plan in order that it can proceed to develop the North. I support the motion.

MR. ACKLAND (Moore—on amendment) [6.6]: I reply to the debate on the motion standing in my name—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I would point out to the member for Moore that the question before the Chair is the amendment to the motion moved by the Premier.

Mr. ACKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I was just about to say, when you set me down, that I should have said that I was about to reply to the amendment that has been moved by the Premier. I will now confine my remarks entirely to the amendment. The Premier's amendment will, in effect, bring about the same result, I hope, as was intended by the original

motion. If agreed to, the only real difference that will be effected by the amendment is that it will take away the preparation of a plan from a purely non-political committee—a committee consisting of the leaders of the three parties represented in this House. In other words, the amendment put the preparation of the plan in the hands of the Government.

I am of the opinion that if the constitution of the committee were to remain as proposed in the motion, a Government departmental committee would have been made responsible for the preparation of a plan to be submitted to the Prime Minister of Australia. If the amended motion is agreed to, the committee which will present this plan to the Prime Minister will, in effect, be much the same as the one I envisaged in the motion. It will consist of the leaders of the three parties, the Minister for the North-West and yourself, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the committee, as proposed in the amendment, will be stronger than the one suggested in my motion.

After listening to the Premier debating this question and having carefully read his speech since, I would have been much happier if the Premier had put a little more enthusiasm into his remarks, whilst speaking, than he did. It may be recalled that, when introducing his amendment, the Premier went to some length to find excuses why the Prime Minister of Australia should not agree to our requests. If I am given sufficient time, I will go further into that matter before I resume my seat. I believe that, because of the greater knowledge of the position held by the Minister for the North-West and yourself, Mr. Speaker, as compared with the three other members of the committee, you will be able to speak with more authority and engender more enthusiasm than the Premier did while speaking.

The Premier: Evidently you cannot avoid being nasty, even on a question that is not a party matter.

Mr. ACKLAND: No specific amount is mentioned in the amendment. That is of great importance, because I think that the amount that will be required will be very considerable. I have no doubt that it will be far greater than the amount mentioned in my motion. I think the sum will be governed, to a great extent, by the labour that is available to undertake these works. In March, 1952, the Premier was speaking on the legislation relating to the Kwinana undertaking, and he mentioned that £10,000,000 taken from the finances of this State would have considerable repercussions on industry and the rest of the State as a whole. That has proved to be a fact.

With the far greater expenditure that will be necessary to develop the north-west of Western Australia, if this State had to rely upon its own finance, on its

own revenue, on the refunds from the Commonwealth Government and on the special grants that are made available to a claimant State such as ours, to do a portion of the work that is necessary in the North, the State would be in an impossible financial position.

The finding of oil, as mentioned by other speakers, is going to involve the State in the expenditure of many millions of pounds. In the North we need roads, all-weather aerodromes, and harbour facilities which do not now exist. No matter which Government is in power, under present conditions, it would be impossible to find the money necessary to finance these works. The expansion of mining development, the fostering of increased mining activity and the discovery of new minerals will require a great deal of money. I believe we have wonderful potential wealth along the rivers in the North.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. ACKLAND: Before tea, I was speaking on paragraph (d) of the Premier's amendment. I said that I thought his was a very much better idea than no specific amount should be mentioned when an approach was made to the Federal Government. I went on to say that if the £10,000,000 to which the previous Government was committed at Kwinana had affected the finances and development of the State to the extent that some of us know it had, an appropriate sum of money spent in the North-West would make it necessary to stop all development work in Southern Western Australia. I think I also mentioned that the amount of labour available would be a very necessary factor to take into consideration when programmes were being drawn up.

I would like to suggest to the Premier that, if the amendment is carried, consideration be given to bringing contractors from overseas to do some of the vital work that is necessary in the North. We have had the experience of the huge cost and long period involved in building the Causeway across the Swan River; we have had the instance of the failure of day-labour to do the dredging that was necessary at Albany; and we have before us the shining example of how quickly the Dutch firm is attending to the dredging through the two banks into Cockburn Sound.

If the Premier had an amount of money available for a period of ten years, I believe he could encourage people from overseas to bring in their own labour to do the essential work that will have to be carried out in the North. I have already made reference to the need for all-weather roads and aerodromes. Mention has been made also of the need for better harbour facilities. But all this is far beyond the resources of the State.

When speaking to the motion, the Premier said it was difficult to find a Federal Government which regarded the North-West as being of sufficient importance to warrant large-scale Commonwealth financial assistance to carry out works there. It was because of the difficulty Western Australia has experienced in finding a Commonwealth Government willing to assist the State—as, for instance, when approaches were made both by the McLarty-Watts Government, and later, by the Labour Administration under the Premier, in connection with the very urgent and national project at Kwinana—I believed that, if we could arrange for representatives of all parties in this Parliament to approach the Prime Minister with a united front, all asking for the same thing at the same time, and urging the necessity for this work to be undertaken, we would have a much better opportunity of reaching a more satisfactory conclusion than has been achieved in the past.

I am sorry that the Premier resented my remarks about his lack of enthusiasm. I want to see all members of the committee as enthusiastic as it is possible for them to be, because I believe they will need to be 100 per cent. enthusiastic before the attitude of the Federal Government will be changed.

The Premier: They will also need to be realistic.

Mr. ACKLAND: The work in the North is of urgent importance. Mention has been made of the fact that there are fewer sheep there than previously. We know that many stations have been abandoned during the past 20 years because the feed has been eaten out, for one reason or another. It is necessary that the pastoral industry should be rehabilitated, and the Government has already started along those lines. If members have read an article written by Mr. Nunn, they will have seen there is hope that something more will be done in the future than has been done in the past.

I am not trying to speak as an authority, but I believe that the Fitzroy Basin could be a miniature Mississippi scheme if tackled in the right way. I had the privilege of meeting a young engineer by the name of Dewing who was looking for a means of harnessing the Fitzroy and its tributary, the Margaret River. He showed me aerial photographs and contour maps of that area, and said he was of the opinion that, with the expenditure of something less than £750,000, not only could those rivers be harnessed to stop the periodical flooding and the great damage which is done every time floods occur, but there was sufficient water to make possible a large irrigation settlement.

It is a tragedy to find that a man of his enthusiasm and apparent capabilities left the Government service because of

frustration, not through the fault of the State Government but because it did not have sufficient finance to develop the land and provide amenities in the area. In consequence, he had to leave and take a position with a local governing authority in the Great Southern. I admit that local authorities anywhere in the State need good men; but here was a man who should have been retained by the Government because of his calibre but who, since he could see little prospect of work being done in the North with the limited finances of the State Government, and because of lack of amenities, had decided to take a job—by comparison, it is only a job—in a place where his children could be educated more satisfactorily than at Derby, and where his wife could have amenities far superior to those at present to be found in the North-West.

Again, in Darwin, I met a young man named Fitzgerald, who was spoken of most highly. He was attached to the Department of Agriculture, but left it and went to the Federal Government because he was able to receive more money from that Government, and because the conditions of service were better. It is necessary that the State Government should ask the Commonwealth for enough money to enable it to make conditions sufficiently attractive to keep men of that type in the North-West.

There was in the Premier's speech another statement which I would rather he had not made, and I do hope that he will not stress it when he goes to Canberra. He had something like this to say: If we were to look at the problem on the basis of economics, we would probably say it would be better for the Government of Western Australia, supported by whatever financial help it could obtain from the Commonwealth, to concentrate on development in portions of the State where production would be more certain and where more population could be supported. That might be perfectly true; but the North is a responsibility of ours, and one which we cannot neglect any longer.

I read in the paper quite recently that the islands of Japan support a population of 3,400 per square mile. The North-West of Western Australia supports a population of one person to more than 70 square miles. While a condition like that exists, we have an obligation to try to do something about it, to approach the matter with enthusiasm, and with a great deal of energy. Is it thought that we are going to be allowed to continue holding the North-West indefinitely? We have the instance of Chinese wanting to grow rice out of Darwin 80 years ago. We are told by agricultural advisers that 1,000,000 tons could be grown annually, and could be produced more cheaply than in any other part of the world. It is considered, also, that nearly 1,000,000 bullocks could be fattened in the same area.

We have no moral right to think we can hold this country much longer, unless we realise that we have something to do; and it is a national responsibility. It is just as much a national responsibility as are the projects which the Commonwealth Government is already assisting in the Eastern States. I doubt if we would ever need to spend as much money in the North—certainly not in ten years—as will be spent on the Snowy River project.

Mr. Hutchinson: Would it not be easier to get money to spend there than to get men to go there?

Mr. ACKLAND: I am glad that question was asked, because I found people in the North very happy with their living conditions, in some instances. At Cockatoo Island I found men—not only the employees of B.H.P., but also carpenter-contractors who were working there, and had been there for more than three years—who said that they and their families were very happy with conditions and, except that they liked their periodical holidays, were quite content to remain there. But they enjoyed amenities and lived under some of the prettiest conditions I have ever seen. They had fine homes which were electrically lit and equipped with hot water, refrigerators and stoves provided free. They were also sewered. These two-bedroom houses cost them from 28s. to 32s. per week for rent. I am told that these people paid Perth prices for their foodstuffs.

At the Ord River experimental station, I met a young man I have known since he was a child. He is the son of a manager who was at the Merredin research station where he lived for many years. He is now a member of the C.S.I.R.O. Both he and his wife told me that they were far happier living under their present conditions at Ord River than they were at Merredin. I do not know what the member for that district thinks of this, but they were perfectly sincere, I am sure, in what they said. They would not, however, be willing to live there, and neither would the engineer nor the C.S.I.R.O. officer of the agricultural station, if conditions were not made attractive to them.

So I feel that we have a good case to put before the Federal Government in this instance. The Premier, towards the conclusion of his speech, said something along the lines—these are really the reasons why I ask members to approach the matter with a great deal more enthusiasm than he appeared to show when he spoke—that Cabinet had given consideration to the wording of the motion, to which they were not opposed, in principle, and he did not intend to make any attempt to defeat it or sidetrack it because Cabinet considered the North-West, as part of the State, had very special and difficult problems.

He also said that Cabinet believed an approach could be made on the basis of a motion; that it could very well be made—it

might not succeed—but there was no harm in making the approach. I have not by any stretch of imagination dealt with this matter in any way other than on an all-party basis. But I think it will need the enthusiasm of all five members of the committee to persuade the Federal Government to do what is so vital, not only for Western Australia or the people who live in the North-West portion of the State, but for the whole of the people of Australia.

Someone said—I think it was the member for Greenough—that the putting of a few people into the North-West would not, in itself, be a defence. I agree with him entirely, and I agree that there is a definite limit to the number of people who can live in the North. We know that rice has been grown along the Fitzroy River and I know that both rice and sugar have been grown on the Ord River. I think, however, we must cut out sugar, although it would carry a far denser population than would rice-growing because it happens that Australia has a quota of 600,000 tons in the world sugar pool, and in the last two years we have tried to sell 740,000 tons and 725,000 tons. The other sugar-growing people of the world, with every justification, would strongly resent any further expansion of the sugar industry.

The communist people have taken much of the rice bowl in South-East Asia and are much nearer this country than previously, but if in the North and the Northern Territory we were able to produce large quantities of rice so as to be in a position to fill the stomachs of the people of North-East Asia we would, by that action alone, create a defence barrier against any aggressor. I believe we have this obligation, and that the making of roads, airstrips and harbours would be a large contributing factor towards the defence of the northern part of our State.

If I may be a little parochial in this matter, I should like to say that because £10,000,000 has been spent and is being spent at Kwinana, works in my electorate and other country electorates have had to be abandoned or curtailed. If we could persuade the Commonwealth Government that it should have a monetary interest in assisting the North, there would be the possibility that works in the south could proceed without hindrance as they have done during the last three years.

So I support the Premier's amendment. As I have already said, I believe it is an improvement on the motion that I moved. I consider that the committee of five in which you, Mr. Speaker, and the Minister for the North-West, are included, is a much better committee than the one I suggested. But I do hope that the committee, which also includes the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Country Party, will go as a unanimous body and put this case before the Federal Government because, as

a result of past experience, I believe we are not likely to get very far unless we approach it on such a footing as I suggested.

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

As to Concurrence of Legislative Council.

MR. ACKLAND (Moore) [7.53]: I move—

That the resolution be conveyed by message to the Legislative Council and its concurrence desired therein.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [7.54]: I cannot see the use of sending the resolution to the Legislative Council. We have formed a very good committee which is representative of all parties. The Leader of the Opposition represents the capitalist class of Western Australia, the Leader of the Country Party represents the agriculturists, and you, Sir, and a couple of others represent the working class of this country. There is also a representative of the Legislative Council on the committee.

What is the use of wasting time by sending the resolution to the Legislative Council to let members there have a go at it? They will want a conference on it in order to put another four or five members on the committee. Here we have a nice handy-sized committee of five members and we do not want more. We represent the people of this country, but the Legislative Council represents only the capitalist class and the property owners. If we agree to this, we will not in the future be able to do anything unless we ask the Legislative Council about it.

The member for Moore did not say why he wanted the resolution sent to the Legislative Council. He simply moved the bald motion. It was his duty to tell us why he wanted it sent there. We have this committee, so let us go ahead with the job and not waste time sending the resolution to the Council because I feel sure that members there will say, "We ought to have a conference with the Legislative Assembly; and we should be represented." They already have representation as the Minister for the North-West is a member of the Legislative Council. It would be much better to let it go at that.

MR. JAMIESON (Canning) [7.56]: I feel the same in regard to this matter as does the member for Fremantle. The committee has been appointed by this Chamber which consists of democratically elected persons. We should not taint the resolution by the concurrence of the other Chamber which does not have such democratic rights as we have. At this juncture, I must oppose any move which seeks the concurrence of the other Chamber.

HON. SIR ROSS McLARTY (Murray) [7.57]: I hope that the suggestion of the member for Moore will be agreed to. I suggest to the member for Fremantle and the member for Canning that it is not wise at this stage to throw a spanner into the works. After all, the Legislative Council, whether we agree with it or not, is part of our parliamentary set-up and has a constitutional standing.

Mr. May: Unfortunately.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The member for Moore has explained that the motion was not moved in any party sense at all but with the idea of having all parties represented so as to help the North. Surely if such a motion is to be conveyed to the Federal Parliament, it is better for it to come from the whole of the Parliament of Western Australia because that would indicate that not only the members of this Chamber, but those of another place, too, are favourable to it, and so the motion would have that added backing. The Premier has not conveyed to us that he is favourable to the motion being transmitted to the Legislative Council but, if I might judge by his attitude, I do not think he will offer any opposition. Taking all the factors into consideration, I think it would be wise for us to transmit the motion to the Legislative Council and seek its concurrence therein.

HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [7.58]: I would first of all remind my old friend, the member for Fremantle—

Hon. L. Thorn: You are friends now, are you?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: We have been friends for many years. It is well known here that one can be politically opposed but personally quite friendly. I remind the member for Fremantle that the member for Moore, when introducing the motion, gave a number of reasons why he wanted it sent to the Legislative Council for its concurrence.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What were they?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: If the member for Fremantle will take the pains which he takes in so many other matters and peruse the remarks of the member for Moore, he will find out what they are. I recollect that the motion as originally moved by the member for Moore contained words to that effect, if I remember correctly.

I must say that I agree with the views expressed by the Leader of the Opposition a moment or two ago. The Federal Government knows just as well as we do that as our Constitution stands at the present time it takes two Houses to make this Parliament. I think, with him, that it would be better pleased if it could be informed that the resolution had received the consent, probably unanimously, of both Houses. It would then come from the Parliament of the State which, after all,

is the body which I think the Federal Parliament would naturally look upon, and, in fact, to which the Federal Constitution refers, as being the governing body of the State.

The member for Fremantle, to come back to him as he has returned to his seat, suggested a few moments ago that the Legislative Council would probably ask for a conference on this subject, but I think that is (a) unlikely; (b) probably contrary to Standing Orders; and (c) something which in the most unlikely event of the Council doing it, could easily be dealt with by this House refusing it, which I should be quite ready, in those circumstances, to support because I think it would be utterly ridiculous to ask for a conference, as the hon. member suggested it might do. Whatever may be the sins which he cares to lay at the door of the Legislative Council, I am sure making itself ridiculous in connection with this motion is not likely to be one. So I hope—the small sparks of humour aside—that the House will be prepared to agree to this, because I really think that the proposal should emanate, when it does go to Federal circles, from the Parliament of this State as it is known by the Constitution.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [8.11]: This is a motion which provides for an all-party approach to the Commonwealth Government and has been carried unanimously in this House. I think the Legislative Council would unanimously endorse it and it would then be a motion which would carry the approval of the Parliament of Western Australia. We on this side might have our views about the present set-up of our Parliament and we might feel that the Legislative Council side of it is undemocratic. Nevertheless, our main care should be what impression an approach to the Commonwealth Government might be if it is on the basis of a motion endorsed only by the Legislative Assembly as against the impression which might be made if the approach were made upon the basis of a motion passed by our Parliament as a whole.

In the circumstances, I think an approach by our Parliament as a whole would be likely to carry more weight and we will need all the weight we can gather when we approach the Commonwealth Government. Therefore, I think there should not be any objection to our asking the Legislative Council, in this situation, to endorse the motion we have carried this evening.

MR. BRADY (Guildford-Midland) [8.3]: I think I should have a few words to say on this motion and what I have to say will be caustic as far as the Legislative Council is concerned. I think we should express our opinion now, having regard to the way the other Chamber has dealt with legislation we consider to be urgent

and important. After all, the members of that Chamber are elected under a restricted franchise as compared with the members of this Chamber; we represent all the people of Western Australia whereas the members of that Chamber represent only a selected few—vested interests.

As far as I am concerned, the other Chamber has not shown a great deal of regard for the North-West, particularly the most important people in the North-West—those people who are doing the work in that part of the State. I refer to the aborigines and the half-castes who are doing the manual labour, the small and the large jobs, in the northern part of our State. When this Chamber passed legislation to give these people certain rights, the Upper House rejected it. So while I am sympathetic to the remarks made by the Premier that we should lend all the weight possible to a motion of this character, I do not agree that we should ask for the Legislative Council's concurrence. I, like the member for Moore, have been on a tour of the North-West and, in my view, members of another place have not shown a great deal of regard for the human beings in the North-West, nor for those people who own property in that area.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Only for the absentee land owners.

Mr. BRADY: From that angle alone I wish to oppose the motion asking for the Legislative Council's concurrence. I want to see the people in the North-West getting all that to which they are entitled, particularly the aborigines, the half and quarter-castes and the Asians. I do not think the Legislative Council could be of any assistance to us in regard to this motion.

Having regard to the Federal Government's reaction to past requests for assistance, I think we will get very little help on this occasion. But at least this Chamber has expressed a desire to do something for the people in the North-West and so I think we should present this resolution to the Commonwealth Government. But I do not think the Legislative Council has earned the confidence of this Chamber, and we should not ask it for its concurrence. So I oppose a motion which asks us to consult the Legislative Council.

Mr. SPEAKER: It is quite unusual for a debate to take place on a motion of this nature and I doubt whether our Standing Orders would allow it, without a direction from the House itself. However, as the original motion moved by the member for Moore contained this request to the Legislative Council, and the Premier, when moving the amendment, inadvertently neglected to include it, it was agreed that a separate motion should be moved. It was taken for granted that that motion would go through without debate. However, I was

prepared to allow a certain amount of debate, but I do not want members to indulge in remarks which are outside the scope of the motion and I ask them to confine themselves strictly to a discussion of the proposition that has been moved.

MR. ANDREW (Victoria Park) [8.7]: I also wish to enter my protest about asking for the Legislative Council's concurrence. This is the House of government in Western Australia and, unfortunately, we are forced to go to the Legislative Council and ask for its leave to do certain things. If we obtain that permission, everything is in order; but if that leave is not granted, nothing can be done. The three speakers from the other side presented their views and put forward no reasons why we should ask for the Legislative Council's concurrence. The Leader of the Country Party said that the member for Moore had stated certain reasons why the Legislative Council should be consulted but I do not remember hearing his remarks. Of course, that is nothing unusual.

Hon. L. Thorn: You were not in the Chamber.

Mr. ANDREW: How does the hon. member know; he is hardly ever here. However, if one wants to present a case, one should give one's reasons why it should be supported. My main reason for opposing this motion is that the Legislative Council is not a democratic House. If we look at the figures we find that members of another place represent only 91,000 people—

Mr. SPEAKER: I cannot allow the hon. member to start a debate on the respective merits of the two Chambers.

Mr. ANDREW: This is one of my arguments against asking for the concurrence of the Legislative Council. The Premier said that if the Legislative Council, as well as the Legislative Assembly, agreed to the motion—though he said that he did not like the other House—

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: He did not say that.

Mr. ANDREW: We will let that pass.

Hon. L. Thorn: He knows the value of it.

Mr. ANDREW: The Premier said that the motion would carry more weight with the Commonwealth Government if it received the concurrence of the Legislative Council. However, if a committee is formed it will represent both sides of this Chamber and the committee's recommendations will be presented to the Federal Government. The fact that the committee was an all-party one, would carry all the weight required by the Commonwealth Government. My opinion is that the Legislative Council is not democratic and, as this is the governing Chamber and the committee will be an all-party one, I oppose the motion.

Question put and passed, and a message transmitted to the Council accordingly.

BILL—DROVING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 20th July.

MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood) [8.11]: This Bill has been on the notice paper for some time and the Minister, in his second reading speech outlined the proposed amendments. I think the House will generally agree with the views he expressed. Briefly, the intention behind the Bill is the prevention of stock thieving. However, on examination, the Bill appeared to present some difficulties, inasmuch as the amendments were not sufficient to remove considerable practical difficulties; the main difficulty being that the Bill amended the definition of "travelling stock" to include stock conveyed by a motor-vehicle. The Act would then have read that motor-vehicles conveying stock would have been confined to stock routes; and that is a practical impossibility. As most members are aware, stock routes, in many instances, are not roads.

However, the Minister was most helpful in this matter and suggested that I should discuss the question with Inspector McLernon of the Police Department. I did so in company with Mr. Adamson, the chairman of the Pastoralists' Association, and I found that both Mr. Adamson and Inspector McLernon recognised the difficulties and both agreed that it was desirable to take all reasonable steps to prevent stock thieving. They also agreed that the Act, as it would be amended by this Bill, would be completely unworkable. However, since then the Minister has placed an amendment on the notice paper and that simple provision will make the Bill completely workable. It meets the requirements of the Pastoralists' Association and seems to conform to the requirements of the Police Department. Consequently, I think the House could safely pass the measure.

Although this may not be strictly relevant to the Bill, with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw attention to the provisions of Sections 15 and 15A of the Act. Those sections are the only ones that apply to the South-West Land Division and Section 15A in particular is honoured only in the breach in that area. According to the provisions of Section 15A a man who delivers sheep must fill in a prescribed form in duplicate and hand one copy to the people to whom he delivers the sheep and must retain the other copy for six months. Obviously that is a provision which has been honoured only in the breach. I have also discussed this matter with the Farmers' Union but that body has no direct interest in the Droving Act.

We are now aware that Section 15A does apply in the area where they are mostly concerned and they do not wish it to be removed from the Act. Accordingly, I draw the attention of the House to this somewhat peculiar state of affairs though I do not suggest that anything particular should be done about it. The Bill is a simple one and when amended will fulfil the requirements of the police; it has the support of the Pastoralists' Association which is chiefly concerned. Without taking up any further time of the House, I emphasise my belief that members could support the measure with confidence.

MR. NORTON (Gascoyne) [8.16]: I feel I should make a few comments on this Bill. As the measure was first presented to the House it was far more unworkable than has been suggested by the member for Blackwood. The hon. member's main objection was that it more or less forced motor transport to go on stock routes. I consider that this was not the main obstacle in the Bill. The main obstacle was the time factor which required a person moving stock to notify the pastoralists or station-owners through whose country he would be moving within a specific time, namely, 18 hours to three days of his moving through those properties.

This might not seem a great hardship. Members might say that a transporter who was to pick up stock could notify the various stations that he would be passing through their properties on his return. During my recent tour of the Gascoyne, there was an incident in the moving of stock of which I would like to make mention. The stock were being moved for agistment purposes and it would have been impossible for the owner of that stock to have notified all the pastoralists en route in conformity with the Act.

His mail route radiated through Meekatharra and the mail had been transported to Meekatharra, thence to Cue by rail; it was also transported from Cue by motor-truck to cover the various stations required to be notified. There is also the possibility of break-downs and rain and so on which might prevent a man from giving the necessary notification required under the Act. The amendment that the Minister has placed on the notice paper overcomes practically all these obstacles.

But there is one more provision that I, personally, would like dealt with in the Bill. I refer to the portion of Section 5 that requires the owner transporting stock from one place to another to send a copy of the weighbill to the nearest police station before such stock are moved. My reason for asking that that should be dealt with is that that provision is not practicable. Even if the forwarding of this weighbill were delayed until after the stock left, it would serve no good purpose because

the stock would have been delivered long before the police could have been notified that the transport of the stock was taking place. Accordingly it would not be of any assistance to the police whatever. If some provision to deal with this phase were included in the amendment, I would then consider that the Bill would be quite workable in so far as it related to the transporting of stock by road.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. H. H. Styants—Kalgoorlie—in reply) [8.20]: I am indebted to the member for Blackwood and the member for Gascoyne for the interest they have taken in this Bill. The intention of the original measure and the amendment to the Act is simply to provide for a definition of "motor-vehicle" and an alteration in the definition of "travelling stock". Those amendments would, in effect, mean that any stock being moved in a motor-vehicle would come within the provisions of the Drovers Act.

Being practical men in their own sphere, however, the member for Blackwood and the member for Gascoyne realised that there were certain provisions in the Drovers Act which it would not be practicable to apply in so far as the transport of stock in a motor-vehicle was concerned. The member for Blackwood drew my attention to it immediately after the introduction of the Bill, and I suggested that he had a discussion with Inspector McLernon, who had supplied the material for the drafting of the Bill.

I arranged with Inspector McLernon and the president of the Pastoralists' Association, Mr. Adamson, to go into the question with the member for Blackwood. The member for Gascoyne also drew my attention to the impracticability of applying the provisions of the Act, as they would be amended, to the transport of stock in a motor-vehicle. A meeting was accordingly held, and, in addition, I met the president of the Pastoralists' Association and the member for Blackwood.

After Inspector McLernon had suggested the amendment I have on the notice paper, I received from the Pastoralists' Association the following letter:—

My committee has now given consideration to the proposed amendments to the Drovers Act, and we are agreed that the amendments as proposed to the above Act, namely, definitions of "motor vehicle" and "travelling stock" should stand provided that in the case of stock being transported by motor vehicle Sections 10, 15, 17 and 19 of the Act shall not apply. I take this opportunity of thanking you for the consideration you have given us in connection with this matter.

The member for Gascoyne questioned whether Section 5 of the Act should also be amended. I sent this suggestion to Inspector McLernon for his views. He

has forwarded them and I have shown them to the member for Gascoyne. While he is still of the opinion that if there is not a necessity, then there is the desirability of altering Section 5, he said that if the police and the Pastoralists' Association were satisfied, it would suit him. This is what Inspector McLernon said—

I respectfully report that the matter of Section 5, paragraph 4, was considered at the conference which I attended with members of the Pastoralists' Association and others. I pointed out on that occasion, when the question was raised, that the matter was one for administration. The wording of the Act says that the proprietor or manager or agent shall "send", etc. It does not say shall "deliver". No provision is made as to how he shall "send" the advice in question.

What the Act says in effect (and it is not affected in any way by the proposed amendment) is that before commencing to move stock, the responsible person shall start the necessary notifications on their way. If it were proposed to move stock on the hoof or by motor vehicle on the 10th of the month, the responsible person should make out the necessary notifications on or before that date and prepare them for despatch by the first available mail (as by enclosing them in a stamped envelope and placing them with other outgoing mail). It would then not matter if there were no mail pick-up from that place for another fortnight. No person would ever be prosecuted for a breach of Section 5 in such circumstances, which, no doubt, have occurred on numerous occasions, even when droving has been on the hoof. The matter is thus not one which is affected by the proposed amendment.

The other persons attending the conference were satisfied that there was no necessity to make any alteration to Section 5.

If the member for Gascoyne desires to move an amendment, and if it is agreed that the amendment can be moved within the Title of the Bill, I shall raise no objection. But in view of the fact that the Pastoralists' Association is satisfied and Inspector McLernon considers that from the police angle the position is adequately protected, we should at least agree to the provisions of the Bill and to the amendment on the notice paper. If it is found that either of Sections 4 and 5 is causing any inconvenience or embarrassment, a further amendment at a future date will meet the case.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Moir in the Chair; the Minister for Transport in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

New clause—Section 22 amended:

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I move—

That the following new clause be inserted:—

3. Section twenty-two of the principal Act is amended by adding a subsection as follows:—

(3) The provisions of sections ten, fifteen, seventeen and nineteen of this Act do not apply to travelling stock which is conveyed by a motor vehicle.

The new clause will make an addition to Section 22 of the Act, which contains provisions relating to sections that do not apply to the South-West Land Division.

New clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 3rd August.

MR. PERKINS (Roe) [8.34]: I have examined the Bill and perused the speech delivered by the Minister when moving the second reading, and I consider that he has fairly stated the position. The measure is a purely domestic one dealing with the staff and, as the Minister pointed out, relates solely to an amendment to Section 78, which provides for a punishments appeal board. This Bill merely alters the position in order to conform to the present practice as compared with what was provided years ago when the original provision was inserted in the Act.

The other point deals with the election of the punishments appeal board. The Minister told us that it would be very much more convenient if the poll could be taken later in the year when there was less likelihood of the Electoral Office being busy with State elections. I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 20th July.

HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [8.38]: This Bill proposes to repeal Sections 15, 16 and 17 of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act. Those sections deal with the qualifications of electors for the Legislative Council. The passage of this Bill is therefore a necessary pipe-opener for consideration of the proposals also brought down by the Government to be incorporated in the Electoral Act.

I have a variety of objections to the passage of this measure and will endeavour in a few minutes to work them out so that the Minister in charge of the Bill will be able to read them later on and possibly appreciate them. Meanwhile, I regret that he is not present this evening. My prime objection is quite apart from the question whether or not we should alter the franchise for the Legislative Council. It is the fact that the Government proposes to take those provisions out of the Constitution Act. In the opinion of some members, I may hold curious views on the subject, but I am convinced that the proper place for the qualifications is in the Constitution Act itself.

Had I been in this House at the time the alterations were made, and the Legislative Assembly qualification were taken out of this Act and put in the Electoral Act, I no doubt would have expressed precisely the same view. I think that when a community has an institution such as Parliament, which derives its authority from a written Constitution, there should remain in that Constitution as there does remain in the constitution of virtually every other organisation, the methods by which the persons who control it shall be elected; and the rights of such persons. The situation today is that we have these qualifications in the Constitution Act; and quite apart from any views I may express later as to the desirability or otherwise of altering the Legislative Council franchise, I contend that the provisions in the Constitution Act should remain as they are. That is my prime objection to supporting the Bill.

The second one is that I do not believe the qualifications for the electors for the Legislative Council, as set out in the Constitution Act, have yet been given a fair trial. It seems to me to provide, as it is obviously intended to provide if this measure is passed, for what is virtually adult suffrage for the Legislative Council but that should not be attempted until there is conclusive evidence that the electoral qualifications which exist in the Constitution Act at the present time have been given a reasonable trial, which I say they have not. Although, prior to yesterday, I was fairly well acquainted with the figures, because I had made some slight research

into this matter, I am indebted to the member for Canning for asking questions and having the figures recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

From these figures I find that the total enrolment for the Legislative Council at the present time, in all 10 provinces, is 91,066. The Constitution Act provides that—

Every person of 21 years of age, being a natural born or naturalised subject of Her Majesty, and not subject to any legal incapacity, who shall have resided in Western Australia for six months, shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, if qualified as in this section is provided, be entitled to be registered as an elector.

It then goes on to say that if such person has a legal or equitable freehold estate in possession situate in the electoral province of the clear value of £50 sterling; or if he is a householder within the province occupying any dwelling-house of the clear annual value of £17 sterling, he shall be entitled to vote for the Legislative Council.

I propose to take the second one first. The amount of £17 per annum is, as near as does not matter to 6s. 10d. a week, so the householder of any dwelling-house of the weekly value of 6s. 10d.—

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: There are none at 6s. 10d. now.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: —is entitled to qualify. The amount of 6s. 10d. is the minimum.

The Minister for Education: What would be the franchise for the Senate?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I am not concerned about it. I am not dealing with the Senate but with the Legislative Council. I shall elaborate the point to make it clear to the Minister, if that be possible. In Western Australia at the present time, as I gather from the Government Statistician's figures in the Year Book, plussed up by the figures in the quarterly abstract of new dwellings completed since the publication of the Year Book, there are just over 161,000 dwellings. That was the figure as at the 30th June last. If anybody knows of a house in Western Australia which can be obtained for less than 6s. 10d. a week, I wish that he would show it to me.

But I shall make a generous allowance and say that 5 per cent. of the 160,000 houses cannot be, for one reason or another, included in this category. This is a generous allowance because it amounts to 8,000 houses, but even so, it leaves more than 152,000 householders. So, of householders alone, there are 61,000 who are not on these rolls, because the total number of persons enrolled is 91,060. In fact, there must be more than 61,000 who are not enrolled because the 91,060 includes some persons who have several of the other qualifications which are contained in Section 15 of the Constitution Act.

Then I come to the first of the qualifications which enable a person to be registered who may not be able to claim as a householder, and that is the possession of a legal or equitable freehold estate in possession situate in the electoral province of the clear value of £50. In this day it is a very poor person who has a block of land at all which is not worth £50. While I have no actual figures, because they cannot be obtained, of the people who do own pieces of land worth £50, there are undoubtedly a great many of them who could qualify and register if they took the trouble to do so.

Next we have the leasehold estate in possession, situate within the province of the clear annual value of £17 sterling which must include a few more; then we have the holders of leases or licences from the Crown to depasture, occupy, cultivate or mine upon Crown lands within the province at a rental of not less than £10 per annum, which would add a few more. Further, the Act states—

or if the name of such person is on the electoral list of any municipality in respect of property within the province of the annual rateable value of not less than £17 or the electoral list of any road board district in respect of property within the district of the annual rateable value of not less than £17.

So we have, in addition to this obviously minimum shortage of 61,000 householders on the roll, to take into consideration the number of persons possessed of the very small qualifications—who could have been enrolled—which would increase that number of 61,000 very considerably.

In addition to that, it is a well-known fact that if the wife happens to be the house-owner, the husband can be classed as the householder and therefore both of them can be registered under the existing law. I have no doubt whatever, on all these figures, that if all the persons who today are entitled to enrolment on Legislative Council rolls were enrolled, the total enrolments would be much nearer 200,000 than 150,000. They would certainly be over 150,000, on householders alone.

The Legislative Assembly enrolments are only approximately 325,000, so when one analyses the position and reaches the conclusion, as one must on any reasonable computation, that the number of persons who could be enrolled on the Legislative Council rolls would not be less than 200,000 if all persons qualified made application, it appears that a great deal of the argument that goes on about the franchise of the Legislative Council is considerably less justified than appears at first sight, and also indicates, in my view, that it would be a great deal better for us all to ensure that the persons already qualified sought enrolment before we started tinkering with the Act in the manner which this measure and its corollary propose.

The Minister for Education: You do not believe in adult franchise, then?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I have already observed that we would be better employed, for the time being at least, in obtaining the enrolment of persons qualified under the existing law than in tinkering about with this Act in the manner proposed.

There has been, of course, a small vendetta conducted by the Labour Party against the Legislative Council for quite a considerable time, and I am not referring, when I make this reference, to happenings in the last few months. I ignore those completely and go back quite a period of years. It has always been asserted that the franchise of another place was unsatisfactory, that members there represented nobody in particular, that it was an undemocratic House, and so forth and so on. I have no doubt whatever that among those 150,000 odd householders who ought to be on the roll, but most of whom are not, there are probably just as great a proportion of supporters of the Labour Party as there are anywhere else, but there is an old saying, which I think has some application to the present case, that "the proof of the pudding is in the eating."

Because the Legislative Council voting is not on a compulsory basis, which, in my opinion, should be regarded as the negation of democracy, we find that there is so much enthusiasm invoked in Legislative Council elections that it is difficult to get a 50 per cent. poll! I ask myself, in conclusion, therefore, what is the use of providing adult suffrage when the people who, up to date, have been persuaded to exercise their rights as qualified persons in respect of Legislative Council elections do not, as far as 50 per cent. or more of them are concerned, ever bother to exercise their franchise?

Why do we not satisfy ourselves, first of all, with endeavouring to enrol all those entitled to be enrolled and, having done so, or as near to it as we can, ascertain the best means, without compulsion, of bringing them to the poll? If there is the public demand that is frequently alleged for the considerable reform of the Legislative Council, which is obviously contemplated to be begun by means of this Bill, then there will be a response from the public, who will vote at Legislative Council elections.

In my view, what I have said sums up pretty well the position in regard to the Legislative Council, and the reasons why this Bill should be defeated. As this measure, if it is to be passed, requires, I understand, an absolute majority of the whole number of members of both Houses, on both the second and third readings, unless somebody from this side of the House supports it, which I think is extremely unlikely, it will be defeated—

The Minister for Education: How do you know?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I do not know. I said I thought it extremely unlikely. I repeat that it will be defeated, and that will give me intense satisfaction.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [8.57]: The member for Stirling rather cleverly avoided the real issues, even though the Minister for Education tried to put them squarely in front of him. The principle contained in this Bill, as is very well known to the member for Stirling, is that of granting to all persons over 21 years of age in Western Australia, irrespective of sex, the right to claim enrolment and the consequent right, if they do that, to vote at Legislative Council elections.

Hon. A. F. Watts: Not in this Bill.

The PREMIER: I am speaking of the principle, and I think the member for Stirling would agree that my interpretation of the principle is on the beam. What a fanciful argument he put forward to try to justify his opposition to the principle! What was the essence and total of his opposition to it? It was just that, because a percentage of those entitled to be enrolled for the Legislative Council today have not taken the trouble to be enrolled, no further liberalisation of the franchise rights should be granted by Parliament? Why did the member for Stirling not give some consideration, during his speech, to the thousands of people in the community who are anxious to be enrolled for the Legislative Council and would become so enrolled immediately if Parliament were to give them the opportunity?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: How do you know that?

The PREMIER: Could I speak for my own household?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Yes, you could do that.

The PREMIER: Is it a fair thing to say to other adults of my household, "You are not to be given the right to enrolment for the Legislative Council and therefore you are not to be given the right to have a voice in the election of members to the Legislative Council, because some people in the community, who have the right to become enrolled under the present law, have not taken the trouble to become enrolled." I ask the hon. member, is that a logical argument for anyone to put up in opposition to this Bill? That is no argument against granting the adult population of Western Australia the right to become enrolled.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: It shows that they do not want to be.

The PREMIER: It does not necessarily show anything of the kind.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: It is a very keen indication.

The PREMIER: I do not think the hon. member has grasped the point.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Yes, I have.

The PREMIER: I am saying, and surely he will agree, that there is a large number of people in the State who would become enrolled for the Legislative Council if Parliament were to give them the right to do so. I know of many within my own circle of personal acquaintances. Does the member for Mt. Lawley, for instance, not think that a considerable number of women within the community, who have no right to become enrolled for the Legislative Council today, would, in fact, become enrolled if the right were given to them?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I think this: There are so many people entitled to be enrolled that it is a fair average indication of the point of view. Of course, there are some who would want to be enrolled.

The PREMIER: I suggest to the hon. member that his conclusion in that regard is off the track. If the contention put up by the member for Stirling has some justification, and the somewhat similar point of view put up by the member for Mt. Lawley by way of interjection has some reasonable basis, we could apply the same arguments and objections in regard to the Legislative Assembly. If the contention put up by the member for Stirling, that only 50 per cent. of those entitled to be enrolled are enrolled, and that only 50 per cent. of those who are enrolled take the trouble to vote, is right, I suggest that we abolish compulsory voting for the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It might not be a bad idea.

The PREMIER: We would find that the same situation would arise from time to time in regard to Legislative Assembly elections. The fact that a considerable number of people actually enrolled for the Legislative Council do not, in fact, vote at elections for that House, is not an argument against giving to the whole of the adult population the right to become enrolled for the Council. It is only an indication that there is among all too many of our population a lack of interest in public affairs. That is all the member for Stirling actually proved. I suggest that the same lack of interest would be demonstrated if voting for the Legislative Assembly were voluntary instead of compulsory. Therefore the member for Stirling raised no legitimate objection to the proposal in this Bill.

So let us face up to the real issue in this measure and do not let us try to skate around it. If members opposite are opposed to the Bill, let them stand up and say so and give some legitimate reasons, if there are any such reasons which they can

work out in their own minds. Our case, as a Government, in support of this Bill is that in these days at any rate there is no justification for the franchise for either House of our Parliament being restricted or qualified.

We all know that within our own lifetime two world wars have been fought and one of the principal reasons given to the common peoples of the world for the fighting of these wars has been to save our democratic system of parliamentary government from destruction. There is no justification in modern times, especially with the great advances in education in this and other countries, for the placing upon the adult population of the State restrictions and qualifications in regard to enrolment for any House of Parliament.

What legitimate objection can there be to giving all the adult people in Western Australia the right to enrol for the Legislative Council and the right to vote at elections for that House. No one can put up the argument successfully that the issues which have, from time to time, to be decided by this Parliament are so important or vital that only a selected number of people in the community should be given a final voice as to whether those issues should be decided in the affirmative or in the negative.

That argument could not be successfully put forward because we all know that the national Parliament of Australia deals with issues far more extensive and, in some instances, far more vital to the welfare of the people of Australia than does any State Parliament. Yet for both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament there is no restriction of franchise, except that the man or woman concerned must have reached the age of 21 years. Why deny to a number of citizens in this State the right to take a citizen's part in the election of representatives to both Houses of this Parliament?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Do you consider that the Senate has been altogether satisfactory?

The PREMIER: I would say that it has been a thousand times more satisfactory than the Legislative Council of Western Australia. Would the member for Mt. Lawley advocate that the franchise for the Senate should be amended?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Yes.

The PREMIER: Does the hon. member say that restrictions should be placed upon the Australian people in regard to those sections which should be entitled to be enrolled and to vote at Senate elections?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I think further consideration could be given to the Senate, and probably will be.

The PREMIER: I am asking the member for Mt. Lawley straight out whether he favours a restriction of the franchise of the Australian people in regard to the Senate.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: It all depends upon what kind of restriction you refer to.

The PREMIER: Is the member for Mt. Lawley in favour of any restriction?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I am in favour of amending the Senate system.

The PREMIER: The member for Mt. Lawley avoids the issue and covers up! If the members on the opposite side oppose the Bill, they have to justify their opposition. The member for Stirling knows he did not justify his opposition because he is aware that there is no real justification for opposing this principle.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: When do you propose to bring the voting age down to 18?

The PREMIER: We propose to take the first step probably next session. However, that has nothing to do with this issue.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You can look forward to some opposition to that, too.

The PREMIER: Well, that is quite all right. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his advance information to me on the matter. We, on the Government side, say that there is every justification why every citizen in Western Australia should have the unrestricted right to enrol and vote for Legislative Council elections. They have an equal right to enrol and vote for Legislative Assembly elections.

Take the situation from the point of view of true and real democracy. The people of Western Australia are called upon, every three years, to participate in the election of members to this House, the Legislative Assembly. They do that. That vote, by the whole of the citizens of this State, decides the complexion of the Government, which is to manage the affairs of the State for the ensuing three years. So all of the people of the State go to the polls for the Legislative Assembly and they all vote.

The majority of them decides which party is to form the Government by giving that party a majority of members in this Legislative Assembly. By their vote, the majority of all the citizens endorses a policy as put before them at that election, and they expect the Government they elect to carry that policy into operation. The Government sets to work to carry out its responsibility in that regard, introduces the requisite legislation and passes it through this House in the normal way.

The legislation then goes to the Legislative Council, the members of which are elected by a minority of the citizens of the State. Yet, the members in the Legislative Council, elected by a minority of the citizens of the State, can vote down and vote out the legislation introduced and

passed through this Chamber, which legislation has the support of the majority of the people. Is that true democracy?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: How do you define "true democracy?"

The PREMIER: There are some young men on the other side of the House. Not many, it is true, but perhaps nearly as many as there are on this side. Is that their conception of real and true democracy? Is that their conception of the ultimate in citizenship?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Name some countries whose way of life is more democratic than ours.

The PREMIER: I can name the United Kingdom, New Zealand and other places.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Did you find that their way of life was more democratic than ours?

The PREMIER: Yes, indeed; beyond any shadow of doubt. Surely the mind of the Leader of the Opposition, in its conception of democracy and the full and true expression of citizenship, rises well above the existing set-up of our Parliament in this State?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: How do you define "true democracy?"

The PREMIER: As briefly as I can, I define it as being the self-government of all the citizens of the State by the vote of all the citizens in the election of all the members to Parliament.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I suppose they have true democracy in Queensland? That is based on an adult franchise.

The PREMIER: That would depend upon circumstances. But I would say that the members of the Queensland Legislative Assembly, which is the only House of Parliament in Queensland, are elected by people, each one of whom, over 21 years of age, irrespective of sex, has the right to vote.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: There are other factors, too.

The PREMIER: Of course there are. Nobody more than the Leader of the Opposition knows how valuable those other factors are and how valuable they can be if they are manipulated this way or that way. I should say that the parliamentary system of New Zealand is miles nearer to being a real democracy than is the parliamentary system of Western Australia. New Zealand has only one House of Parliament. It was not a Labour Government that abolished the Legislative Council in that Dominion either. It was a Government made up of representatives similar to those who sit on the Opposition benches in this Parliament at this time.

Mr. Oldfield: I think people such as we make mistakes sometimes.

The PREMIER: With respect to the member for Maylands, I would move to delete the word "think." As I have already stated, I hope that members of the Opposition will not skate around this issue and will not raise fanciful suggestions such as were put up rather cleverly by the member for Stirling. I always notice that when that hon. member is debating his weakest case, he puts up his strongest effort. When he has a good case he just floats along logically and smoothly and impresses us all. I should have hoped that he would have been frank on this issue.

Hon. A. F. Watts: It is not always wise to be frank.

The PREMIER: I will readily admit that it is not always wise to be frank, and I think I realise what the Leader of the Country Party is trying to tell me. In conclusion, I hope that members opposite will face up to this issue. Of course, they are entitled to oppose the Bill but only if they can put forward a logical reason to justify their opposition.

Mr. O'Brien: They have no reason.

The PREMIER: They have to prove, not only to us, but also to the citizens of the State generally, that it is reasonable, right and proper in this year of grace, one thousand nine hundred and fifty-four, to put chains upon our democratic system; to put shackles upon it and to deny to a considerable section of our citizens the right to be enrolled for the Legislative Council; the right to participate in Legislative Council elections.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Is there much public interest in this proposal?

The PREMIER: It would not matter if there were no public interest in it.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Oh, yes, it would!

The PREMIER: It would not. I submit that the issue is one of principle. It is an issue as to whether it is right and reasonable, especially in this progressive age when education is widespread, when it is freely available in all directions to all of our children and, as they grow up beyond the child stage, for any group or section of our citizens to be denied the right to participate in the election of members to either House of our Parliament.

The Leader of the Country Party knows only too well that there are very large groups of our citizens who could not enrol under the present restricted franchise; the biggest group would be the women of the community. They are not householders. Where a family is running a home, the husband is the only one who can claim enrolment for the Legislative Council. The wife has no right to claim enrolment under the present law, unless she has some qualification of her own. Adult sons and daughters living in the home have no right to claim enrolment unless, they too, have qualifications of

their own. There is not, in fact, any legitimate argument against this principle or against the Bill.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Oh, yes, there is.

The PREMIER: There is not.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: There is.

The PREMIER: There is only the political argument.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Be just!

The PREMIER: If we are to be frank, we will find that under the present restricted franchise, the dice are loaded to a large extent in one direction.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I do not see that.

The PREMIER: There is only the argument, if those concerned were frank enough to admit it, that the existing restrictions in relation to the franchise tend very strongly in the direction of placing a legislative dictatorship, in the final analysis, in the hands of certain sections within the community. I sincerely hope and trust that the Bill will not only pass through this House, but that it will also help this Chamber to become the Parliament of the State. The citizens of Western Australia deserve an unrestricted right to be enrolled for the Legislative Council; they deserve an unrestricted right to participate in Legislative Council elections, just as they deserve and possess the right to vote in elections for this House and also in the wider sphere of the Commonwealth Parliament, the right to participate on equal terms in the election of members to both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

On motion by Mr. McCulloch, debate adjourned.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 29th July.

MR. MOIR (Boulder) [9.23]: This Bill goes hand in glove with the Bill that has just been debated. Like previous speakers from this side of the House, I only hope that members will see fit to pass the measure. When we look at the franchise for the Legislative Council, we realise it is the most restricted in Australia. As a matter of fact, it is the most restricted franchise that I know of. I do not know of any franchise more restricted than that pertaining to the Legislative Council election in Western Australia.

Mr. Oldfield: Elections for the local authorities are more restricted.

Mr. MOIR: I will quote some information taken from the Year Book of 1953. This information will be found on page 73 and it details the franchise for the various second Chambers in the other States of the Commonwealth. We find

that Victoria amended its franchise not so very long ago and it is given to every adult natural-born or naturalised British subject. In New South Wales there is a slightly different set-up. The election is held with the members of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Did you say slightly different?

Mr. MOIR: They elect the members to the Council.

Hon. D. Brand: Do you not think that is restricted?

Mr. MOIR: Queensland abolished its Legislative Council on the 23rd March, 1922, and I would like to say here that the Queensland Government has functioned very well since that time.

Mr. Oldfield: Did you say your name was Gerry Mander?

The Premier: You are thinking of Gerry Playford.

Mr. MOIR: There has not been any major collapse in Queensland, and it is one of the most prosperous States in the Commonwealth. In South Australia an elector for the Legislative Council must be a natural born or a naturalised British subject and over 21 years of age; he must have certain war service or property qualifications. Again that is a wider franchise than we have in this State. In Tasmania an elector for the Legislative Council must be a naturalised British subject; he must be over the age of 21, with certain freehold or occupancy qualifications and with certain academic or professional qualifications; he must be a member of the defence force or have war service qualifications. Again we find that the qualifications are much wider than those in this State.

I can never understand what legitimate opposition there should be to the franchise in this State being on an adult basis, particularly if it is good enough for the Senate of the Commonwealth. The only qualification necessary for the Senate is that a person shall be over 21 years of age and be a natural-born or a naturalised British subject.

When we look at the composition of our Legislative Council it seems to be rather remarkable. As we all know, it is set out in provinces; there are 10 of them, and three members for each province. Those provinces are made up of various Assembly districts. They do not appear to follow any regular pattern, as there seem to be different groupings of Legislative Assembly districts in those provinces.

For instance, the Central Province has six Legislative Assembly districts in it; the Metropolitan Province has nine; the Midland Province, three; the North-East Province, three; the North-West Province, three; the South Province, five; the South-East Province, three; the South-West Province, seven; the Suburban Province,

eight; and the West Province, three. A perusal of the manner in which these provinces are arranged causes some surprise, when we consider that there are 21 country members returned as against nine metropolitan members.

I do not doubt that a move would have been made years ago by the Opposition in this Chamber, if the Legislative Council was really and truly a non-party House, although it is fictitiously supposed to be one. It would mean that with a large number of country electorates, Country Party members would completely dominate that House. We know it is not a non-party House, despite the polite fiction that exists. We know that it is just as much a party Chamber as this is. We know that there is a sharp division of interests between the political parties. We know that the Legislative Council colleagues of members of the Opposition religiously vote against legislation brought forward by a Labour Government in these times.

Mr. Ackland: How do you account for the fact that the Legislative Council threw out so much of the legislation of the previous Government?

Mr. MOIR: In reply to that interjection, one would not have to rack his brains a great deal to find the reason. I take it it would be very convenient for a Government introducing such legislation to have it thrown out there. I have seen the legislation introduced in this House by the Opposition when it was in office, which was thrown out in another place. The Government which introduced it knew that—

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It did not know anything of that sort.

Mr. MOIR: I could give instances of that but, as I have been speaking for ten minutes of my allotted one hour, I would not have sufficient time to give them all. It would take a considerable time to give all the instances. The Leader of the Opposition is just as well aware of the instances as I am, or as the newest member is.

Mr. SPEAKER: I would remind the hon. member that he has only three-quarters of an hour.

Mr. MOIR: All the more reason why I should not be drawn aside by these interjections. The Legislative Council of this State is the most undemocratic institution that could possibly be imagined in this year of 1954, in this supposedly politically enlightened community. We have a set-up whereby the Government party is elected on a democratic basis on an adult franchise on the policy which it has placed before the electors. After the electors have returned that party to form the Government, and it endeavours to put its policy into operation, its legislative proposals can be contemptuously thrown out by the Legislative Council, or thrown out by the

party that had been rejected by the people. Of course, the Government can do nothing about this, because unlike the Commonwealth Constitution there is here no provision for a double dissolution in this State, or a dissolution of the Legislative Council.

We know that within recent years, to be exact in 1949, the Menzies Government, which had been elected democratically by the Australian people, found, because there was a hostile Senate, that it could not pass legislation through the Senate. So the Government exercised its powers under the Constitution and had a double dissolution. It went to the country on that issue, and the electors, to use a colloquialism, believing in a fair go, returned the Menzies Government with a majority in both Houses. That was because they believed that a Government elected by the people should have the right to govern. But that is not the case in this State.

As I have said, the Government of this State can be elected on issues that are regarded as highly important by electors, but it has no chance of passing legislation through the Legislative Council, if members of that House do not wish to endorse it. In effect, the rule of the people can be flouted by a mere handful of men sitting in the Legislative Council who are not democratically elected by the people of this State and who are not responsible to the electors. I have heard one prominent gentleman say that he was not responsible to the electors of this State.

Even the House of Lords in England has not the power of the Legislative Council of this State because when the House of Commons forwards a Bill on a certain number of occasions to the House of Lords and it is not passed, the Bill automatically becomes an Act. We do not have that saving provision here. I contend that every adult citizen who is a worker, a producer or who has been called on to defend this country in time of war should have the right to say what type of Government should control the State. We know that at present they are denied the right.

The whole set-up not only of the franchise of the Council, but also the way in which the Council works, is entirely undemocratic. I have taken out figures, which have been supplied to this House, to show the number of people enrolled as electors for the Legislative Council. They are enlightening. Take the electorate of Wembley Beaches: There is an enrolment of 14,162 for the Legislative Assembly, but only 2,504 for the Legislative Council. In the Melville electorate there is an enrolment of 14,178 for the Assembly, but for the Council the enrolment is 4,985. These figures are entirely out of all proportion. In the Canning electorate the Assembly figures are 16,077, while the figures for the Council are 5,328. For Bunbury the Assembly figures are 5,637 and the Council 1,391.

Mr. Ackland: Do not the present franchise provisions allow for a greater number of electors to be placed on the rolls?

Mr. MOIR: Stirling has 5,371 electors enrolled for the Assembly and 1,226 for the Council; Murray, 5,173 for the Assembly, and 1,353 for the Council. Evidently, the Leader of the Opposition is not greatly concerned about getting people enrolled for the Council.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I shall have to shake them up a bit.

Mr. MOIR: Collie has 4,874 electors enrolled for the Assembly, and 990 for the Council; Warren, 4,992 for the Assembly and 816 for the Council. It would not be right if I did not give the figures for Boulder, which are 4,164 for the Assembly and 1,855 for the Council. Kalgoorlie has 3,739 enrolled for the Assembly and 1,869 for the Council; Hannans, 4,053 for the Assembly and 2,154 for the Council.

From those figures it will be seen that only a small proportion of the people are eligible or enrolled to vote for the Council. But the second Chamber is not elected even by that small number of people as only 49 per cent. went to the poll and voted. Thus, we can see what a small proportion of the people elect the Council in comparison with those who elect members to the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Can you make a comparison between voting that is compulsory and voting that is not compulsory?

Mr. MOIR: The Leader of the Opposition may make those comparisons. I should like to hear him do so and try to justify his attitude. If it is good enough for the Commonwealth of Australia to be governed by Governments elected on an adult franchise, it is surely good enough for the State of Western Australia to be governed by a Government elected on a similar franchise.

Recently I have been reading a book that was kindly lent to me by another member. It was written by a Commonwealth parliamentary journalist of some 20 years' standing, and in it he explains the functions of the Federal Parliament. Leading up to that, he gave an account of how Federation came into being, and proceeded to deal with State Legislative Councils. His remarks are so applicable to the Legislative Council in this State that I propose to read them—

The ten years immediately before Federation were years of struggle and compromise. The forces at work to bring Australia to the threshold of wider nationhood were too powerful to be gainsaid, but toryism and conservatism, the haunted nostalgia of the man of property who fears for his acres and his shekels, were also strongly at work. In the State Parliaments a system had grown up which was very strongly favourable to the men of property. The States enjoyed and made

much of their status as responsible self-governing entities, and in their Legislative Assemblies (or Lower Houses) had indeed achieved a great measure of democratic parliamentary representation.

But side by side with the democratically-elected Houses of Assembly, there were also Legislative Councils, institutions elected by the men of property on a restrictive franchise, mainly for the benefit of the men of property. These Legislative Councils were the strongholds of reaction and conservatism. Having power to reject or amend legislation passed in the "popular" Lower Houses, they strove mightily to maintain the social and economic status quo throughout the land against the new forces of change and progress which were stirring through young Australia, and were especially careful in the direction of making sure that nothing should disturb the holding of the men of property on their property, and that the lower classes of wage-earners were kept in their places.

I cannot help thinking how appropriate those remarks are when we consider our Legislative Council and the franchise for that House. In this year of 1954, it is high time that we made this change. I know that members on the opposite side of the House will not agree with me. We heard the member for Mt. Lawley, by interjection—although he did not seem game enough to come right out with it—imply that he favoured a restrictive franchise for the Senate. Of course, it is easy to understand why members opposite favour that. When they are in office, the Bills they desire to be passed by the Legislative Council will be passed, and when they are in Opposition, the Bills they are opposed to will not, they know full well, be passed by the Legislative Council.

They know that a Labour Government is a Government in name only. It is a Government that administers and cannot get through both Houses the legislation which it desires should be passed and which the people have elected it to get passed. The people elect a Labour Government, just as they elect Governments of other political complexions, to put into effect the promises which were made on the election platform and which the people believe should be given effect to. It is absolutely undemocratic that in such circumstances, when a party is returned to office, it has not the power as a Government to get its legislation passed by both Chambers so that it may become the law of the land. I whole-heartedly support the Bill, and cannot see any valid reason why there should be any objection to it.

On motion by Mr. Hutchinson, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.48 p.m.