

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 16th October, 1945.

	PAGE
Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, cable in reply to resolution	1205
Question: Bulk-handling of wheat, as to plans of Fremantle Installation	1205
Motion: North-West, as to action to restore economy	1205
Bills: Government Employees (Promotions Appeal Board), 3a.	1205
Supply (No. 2), £1,800,000, 1a.	1222
Builders' Registration Act Amendment, 1a.	1222
National Fitness, 2a.	1222
State Government Insurance Office Act Amendment, 2a.	1222
Soil Conservation, 2a.	1227
Closer Settlement Act Amendment, 2a.	1229

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

RT. HON. WINSTON CHURCHILL.

Cable in Reply to Resolution.

The PRESIDENT: I have received the following message from His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor:—

The Lieut.-Governor has the honour to inform the President of the Legislative Council that he has received the following cable from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs:—“Please convey the following message from Mr. Churchill to the President of the Legislative Council:—‘I am deeply honoured by the resolution unanimously passed by the Legislative Council of Western Australia and shall always value most highly this expression of their kindness and goodwill. Winston Churchill.’ Secretary of Dominions.”

QUESTION.

BULK-HANDLING OF WHEAT.

As to Plans of Fremantle Installation.

Hon. A. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary: As the Government, in its proposed expenditure of £350,000 on bulk-handling of wheat at Fremantle, has only started work on the gantries, which does not necessitate the continual use of the plans, will the Chief Secretary request the Public Works Department to take blue-prints immediately of the plans of the proposed scheme with a copy of specifications, and place them on the Table of the House for the information of members?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: There are approximately 170 40in. by 27in. drawings, some of which have not yet been traced. Each print would cost 3s. If the hon. member will inspect the tracings at the office of

the Under Secretary, Public Works Department, and indicate which prints he considers essential, these will be printed and will be placed on the Table of the House. The specifications have not yet been finalised.

BILL—GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES (PROMOTIONS APPEAL BOARD).

Read a third time and returned to the Assembly with amendments.

MOTION—NORTH-WEST.

As to Action to Restore Economy.

Debate resumed from the 11th October on the following motion by Hon. F. R. Welsh:—

That, in view of the serious position existing in the northern part of the State, this House considers that the Government should take immediate action to restore the economy of the North Province.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [4.38]: Since Mr. Welsh submitted this motion, the Chief Secretary has made an important statement regarding the North and has indicated something of what is in the Government's mind. Members will recollect that the Chief Secretary said that last year the Government was so impressed with the need for doing something worthwhile that it appointed a committee which he considered was probably the most representative committee ever appointed by a State Government to deal with such a matter. He was advised, he continued, that considerable attention had been given to the requirements of the North, and that a report had been furnished. That report had not been fully considered by the Government and until that was done it could not very well be published. He added that the State Government was co-operating with the Commonwealth Government in the matter. That statement, and the action of the Government, may be considered to cut across Mr. Welsh's motion, rendering it unnecessary for us to support it, but I, for one, do not think so, because I consider Mr. Welsh is rendering the people of the North and of the territory he represents a valuable service in putting this motion forward, in order that it may be debated, because of the national importance of this vast territory of the North. It is so big that I think we often fail to comprehend its size, and the extent to which the Commonwealth is in duty bound to play a part in its further settlement and development.

I interpret Mr. Welsh's action as one designed really to back up the State Government's representations to the Commonwealth Government.

We all know that it is quite beyond the ability and resources of the State Government at the present time—it probably will be so for a number of years—to restore the economy of the North Province. The North not only needs the restoration of its old-time economy, but a rapid and comprehensive extension of it. Progress must be made on considerable lines before the North can hope to take its place, with other portions of Australia, as a wealth-producing area. It demands a programme that will mean permanence in settlement and development, and in industry. I consider the passing of this motion will indicate to the Commonwealth authorities that the Legislative Council, on this occasion at all events, is strongly behind the State Government. We recently had the spectacle of the Premier, in the Eastern States, excusing the State Government on some matter by indicating that the Legislative Council was not in accord with the State Government and would probably not support it. On this occasion, when this motion is put to the vote, I think the Premier and the Government will know that the Legislative Council is in full accord with the Government.

The Chief Secretary: I said this was a motion that we could all support.

Hon. W. J. MANN: That is so, and I have not denied that. The Commonwealth Government is constantly calling for more population, and is continually urging people not to congregate in the capital cities, but to go out into the country and the outback areas and work to increase the national wealth. I contend that here is an opportunity for the Commonwealth Government to make possible what it so regularly and glibly preaches. It is my firm conviction that we still have a tremendous amount to learn about the North, particularly regarding its water potentialities. A lot has been said during this debate on other aspects of the development of the North, but I think they all largely hinge round the question of how far it is possible for adequate water supplies to be provided. In that connection I think the report of the Commission to which the Chief Secretary referred should be of considerable interest. We have been told that it covers

every aspect of the situation and I look forward to reading what it has to say from that point of view. We might, for a moment, consider the supplies of underground water in Australia, including the North-West. It is not generally recognised how much excellent service has been rendered by the geologists in determining the extent of artesian basins, which are one of Australia's greatest assets. Not one, but many basins have been located all over the continent and, if members are interested, I commend them to the Geological Report of Western Australia, No. 95, in which appears a map showing the extent of the artesian basins of this State. They are considerable.

It is true that there is a large area in which, so far, artesian water supplies have not been located and I think it is still open for a good deal more exploration in that direction. I believe that in the North there are excellent prospects of still further water supplies being gained in that way. The artesian water supplies of this continent are outstandingly great. There is the great Australian artesian basin, a vast reservoir underlying most of Queensland and extending beneath portion of New South Wales and portion of South Australia, and few people are aware of that. That basin covers an area of 600,000 square miles; its length is about 1,500 miles, and it has a maximum width of 1,100 miles. The next, in area, is in this State, the area known as the Desert Basin, which stretches from a point a little north of Derby right out to the Western Australian-Northern Territory boundary, and down to near the 25th parallel. In that area there are 129,000 square miles.

A lot of that water is at present being tapped by people in the Kimberleys, and a great deal more is available if we had the people to use it. Then there is what is known as the North-West Basin, including the Gascoyne. That is on our coast, commencing at Onslow and running down almost to Geraldton. That is an extensive basin already known to cover 48,000 square miles. There are many smaller ones, some along the south coast, as well as a huge basin towards Eucla. When this water potentiality is thoroughly investigated, I believe it will play a big part in making settlement in the North possible on a larger scale than we have known in the past. This side of the Commonwealth, unfortunately, has few great rivers. I believe there are some good rivers

in the North—I have not had the privilege of visiting that part of the State—but although we have no great rivers, it might be that Providence, in its wisdom, has given us these and other artesian supplies yet to be discovered in order that we may utilise them to advantage. It hardly seems feasible that such a huge section of the continent should not be provided for by Nature in the most essential of all things for human existence, namely, water. We need men and Governments with vision and courage to tackle the problem of the North-West.

We have a very good illustration—although it does not deal with artesian water—of the courage of a man a good many years ago when Alfred Deakin brought to Australia Sir George Chaffey to assist to establish the Renmark and Mildura irrigation settlements. Chaffey, notwithstanding every possible sort of opposition and pettifogging humbug by Victorian bumbles, not statesmen, who could scarcely see beyond their own backyards, showed what could be done with what appeared to be worthless mallee country which, before he came to Australia, was rented by the Victorian Government at the rate of 14 acres for 1d. per year. That is the country Chaffey went into and made such a success of, that today it is one of the prides of Australia. The same land, which was previously rented at a rate of 14 acres for 1d. a year, is now worth many pounds per acre. I made some inquiries recently as to whether much of that land was on the market and was informed that those areas very rarely change hands. The people who hold them take good care to keep them.

A solution of the water problem will open the way for all other development in many parts of the North on an extensive scale. This will cost much money but the expenditure would be justified. I feel that the amount of money we would be likely to expend in further exploration of the North and in making use of the water known to exist in good areas will amply pay for all the trouble and all the cost. Victoria spent £27,000,000 in order to bring its hot, dry and thirsty areas into productivity.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Would you compare any part of Victoria with the North-West?

Hon. W. J. MANN: I would not compare any North-wester with a Victorian.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Victoria is a very different country.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Victoria has a water conservation and irrigation scheme in what, when I was a lad in Victoria, was called the bad lands, and from these lands many thousands of pounds now flow into the coffers of the State every year and provide comfortable livings for thousands of men and women and their families. New South Wales has spent £20,000,000 for similar purposes, and I understand that State proposes to spend still more.

When speaking to the motion, Mr. Cornish dealt with other important aspects of the restoration of the North, such as the necessity for assistance to settlers, transport, and assistance by way of remission of taxation. What I have said refers to but one phase of the question, namely, that of further development, but it is a supremely important phase. In my view, neither the State nor the Commonwealth operating alone will be able successfully to restore the economy of the North. I incline to that opinion when I look back over the years and see how little the Commonwealth had done, until the advent of the war, for the development of the Northern Territory. Seemingly, but for the war, the Northern Territory would have remained for another century as it was when the Commonwealth took it over. Consequently, I have not very much faith in the Commonwealth's doing much for our North. Still, I believe we shall need Commonwealth assistance.

This is a national matter and probably the best results will be achieved by both Governments working together through an active executive residing in the area. In order to accelerate the opening up of the North and to make it what we hope it soon will be, thoroughly capable men must be sent there to solve the many problems that confront us. When there is population, industry and assurance of progress, the further status of the North can be determined by those most directly concerned. Over a period of less than 100 years, the North has produced for this State a good deal of wealth, and I am of opinion that the achievements of the past are infinitesimal as compared with what they will be if the North is properly expanded and properly governed. I have pleasure in supporting the motion.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [4.59]: I am very glad that Mr. Welsh introduced the motion in order to give publicity to the North and to afford representatives of the people an opportunity of expressing their views on this most important subject. I and my family have been connected with the North for a generation or more, and during the last 20 or 30 years a great deterioration has taken place in the prospects of the northern areas. The questions I ask myself today are: What is wrong with the North? What can we do to put the wrongs right? The first drawback, to my mind, is isolation. People who go north must be prepared to live a very isolated life. They are cut off from the social amenities that are enjoyed by people in the agricultural areas. They have to be prepared to live within themselves, as it were, and make whatever amusements they can amongst their own families. Another great drawback due to isolation is the lack of educational facilities.

It is a tremendous aggravation to parents who have young children to know what they are going to do with them. They either have to take correspondence courses themselves, and very often many weeks pass before the correspondence lessons are answered, or they have to endeavour to accumulate sufficient funds to send children to school in Perth. It is no small matter to send children a thousand miles by air—they have to travel by air—and then find £150 a year for their education. Another reason for the unpopularity of the North is the inadequacy of the mail service, which adds to the isolation. It may be asked what the State can do about that. I do not think it can do very much; on the other hand I think the State has done a pretty good job on the whole. No State Government of any political party could have done more than the present Government has for the North-West. It has reduced land rents and has endeavoured to keep the shipping service going. The next thing wrong with the North is the climate.

Unless one is inured to such a climate it is a horrible one to live in. There are some places in the North I would never live in. It is all right for young men who are physically fit, but on the whole the climate, above the 26th parallel, is very bad indeed. It is tremendously hot in the summer at Port Hedland, although it is not so bad as

is Marble Bar. Probably for five months in the year the average heat in the summer is 100 degrees. On the coast the climate is very humid, not dry as it is at Marble Bar. The humidity is dreadful. People in the North also suffer from droughts and floods, and other severities of nature. A few years ago we lost thousands of sheep in a week owing to a flood. All the accumulation of years in the way of breeding sheep can be lost through a flood in a few days. That particular flood was followed by the fly menace.

Another important drawback is taxation. I remember when I was a boy my father discussing the wonderful price he had received in London for his wool, namely, 1s. per lb. It was the first time wool had reached that figure, because prior to that it ranged from 10d. to 11d. per lb. We thought what a wonderful price it was. We made our stations pay on a wool price of 1s. per lb.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You had no income tax to pay in those days.

Hon. L. CRAIG: No.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: And costs were lower.

Hon. L. CRAIG: That is the point. Costs were lower. The natives on the stations in those days were far happier than they are today. There was a community which was governed by the station owner, and so far as I know the natives were treated extraordinarily well. They received little or no pay, but they enjoyed all the amenities such as tobacco, blankets, tea, sugar, etc. They were a happy, laughing community, but today they are not so. Today a man is moving around amongst them urging them to strike, to leave the North and give up work on the stations. That sort of thing is unsettling the natives. Taxation is imposed on limited companies. Many stations in the North are compelled to form themselves into limited companies made up largely of members of the family. The children have grown up and so we get a number of people who are owners of a station, and for safety sake they must form themselves into a limited company. A limited company has to pay 6s. in the £. before any profit distribution is effected, and on the distribution a person is subject to the special property rate of taxation.

Hon. H. Seddon: Is not the taxation on the property rate?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes, 6s. in the £. paid by the company, and dividends are payable by each shareholder at the property rate, which is ridiculous. There is no difference between a private pastoral company and a pastoral partnership. Another drawback is the income tax assessment which is averaged over five years, that is, the current year plus the four previous years. That does not enable the station to meet its current losses through drought and other causes and get sufficient income to make up the loss. If that was altered to a 10-year average it would be an important concession to the North. People who go north today have no possible prospect of ever leaving it. With taxation as it is there is no chance for a man going there ever having sufficient money to retire from the North. Everyone who goes North does so with the intention of leaving it as soon as he has sufficient money on which to retire. The climate is bad; there is too much isolation and there is no social life. I have three sons of whom I am particularly proud. They are all good boys. We have one of the best stations in Western Australia; we think it is the best.

Hon. G. B. Wood: What is the name of it?

Hon. L. CRAIG: The hon. member knows it quite well, and it is not necessary for me to give the name. If anyone has prospects in the North-West my sons have. The place is free of debt, and the seasons are reasonably safe, and everything that a station should have this one has. I am not advising one of my sons to go north; and they are not going there. I am opposed to their doing so. I see no future for them there. Many thousands of pounds have been spent on the station, which is beautifully equipped, but I can hold out no future for my sons in the North. They would have to live in a rotten climate and they would have no prospects of retiring at a reasonable age. I am not exaggerating.

The tendency is for people not to go north because there is no incentive for them to do so. If it is desired to send people into unattractive places they must be provided with an incentive. It is no use saying to them, "We will provide a good railway service or other trans-

port." There has to be incentive to make up for the natural difficulties and the hardships that people have to undergo from their youth to middle age. Unless the North is made attractive people will not go there. Young people will not go, and I do not blame them. Not one member of my family is going north, although we have three fine stations to which they could go. If any of my sons asked me about going to the North, I would say, "Do not go," although they would have greater opportunities than any other young men I know of. I may be asked, "What about all these disabilities?" That would be a fair question. Because of the isolation there is really no solution of the difficulty.

Anyone who goes north must be prepared to put up with that isolation. No doubt the position is a little easier than it was. In the early days people had to put up with tremendous hardships, but they had an objective, an incentive, in that they felt if they stayed for 20 years they could retire. That incentive has been taken away, and consequently people are not prepared to put up with the hardships because there is no goal to be gained at the end of their time. I can offer no solution for the isolation. The position has been improved a little by means of the radio and the aeroplane service. What can we do about the climate?

Hon. W. J. Mann: There is just as bad a climate in other parts of the world.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Not when white men and white women have to live and do their own work. In other parts of the world in climates such as that in the North native labour can be obtained. In the Port Hedland district women have a hell of a time. Not only have they to cook for the people in the house but very often for the employees, and even for the natives. Many of the women feel that their lot is intolerable. One sees bright young women going up there, and in a few years they are burnt and their hands are hardened with excessive work, and in addition, they are endeavouring to teach their children. If native labour is available as it is in the Sudan and Somaliland—the climate is similar to that in Somaliland—living becomes a different thing. White women were not made for excessive work in such heat as we find in the North.

Hon. G. W. Miles: For four or five months in the year the climate is perfect.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes, but how many people can stay for four or five months and then go away?

Hon. A. Thomson: Do you suggest getting Indonesians to do the work?

Hon. L. CRAIG: I do not know anything about Indonesians. I am referring to the difficulties in our own country compared with the fewer difficulties found in similar climates in other parts of the world. I am a white Australia policy man. In the early days people living in the North, as Mr. Welsh and Mr. Miles know, could get tropical fruits. Boats would come in from Singapore with bananas, mangosteens, paw-paws and other tropical fruits which made a great difference to the people concerned. Those who live in the North need fruits which are natural to the country.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It was possible to get a case of fruit from the south for 5s., but today it costs 30s.

Hon. L. CRAIG: In order to protect a few banana growers for example, people in the North are prohibited from obtaining those fruits which are so necessary to their health. There seems to be a fetish about protecting the industries in the other States. Governments have made no concessions to these people who are living in this bad climate. I am not blaming the State Government any more than I am the Commonwealth Government. I would render life as easy as possible for these people by making available to them those fruits which are essential to their well-being. If one sends a case of apples to the North, by the time the fruit has arrived it is not worth eating. It has sweated, has been put into a refrigeration chamber, may have had to be carted 100 miles under a tarpaulin in a hot climate, and, of course, has suffered accordingly. What should we do next? I know what I would do. I have not lived in the North; I am not pretending I have. Every family has its drone, and I am the drone of ours.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Hear, hear!

Hon. L. CRAIG: I have enough sense not to live in the North, but I have considerable capital invested there and I think the North should be transferred to the Commonwealth because the State Government is quite in-

capable of doing justice to it. It has not the finance nor the capacity. The North is a separate country altogether; it has nothing in common with the south. It requires the expenditure of huge sums of money—that is, comparatively huge when its population is taken into account. The Commonwealth Government could, with its powers, make valuable concessions to the North. I have no doubt that by an amendment of the Constitution customs and tariffs could be lowered for the North. In the years gone by we could get goods direct from England. They could be brought in via Singapore and not go, in a roundabout way, through the southern ports of the State.

There is no reason why ports like Broome and Port Hedland should not, for a period, be made concession ports in order to keep the people there. They could be made low tariff ports or customs-free ports. I am not suggesting exactly what should be done, but something along those lines could be done by the Commonwealth Government. The State has no power to do those things. Let me deal with the question of shipping facilities. The Navigation Act could be amended in some way for special ports of the North. All these things are necessary and could be done by the Commonwealth Government. Taxation is one of the most important matters and special provision in connection with it could be made for people living in the North. Unless concessions are made in these ways the North will retrogress. I had something to do with the sale of a station that was completed two days ago. I told one or two members about it. The station was in good order. The mills and wells were properly equipped, the fences were fairly good—they were down in places—and the house was in fair order. The station had about 5,000 sheep on it, and a debt of £51,000. It was sold this week for £6,000.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: What became of the debt?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Like all bad debts, it has become someone's loss. That case is only one of many. I know of a station—I am not interested in it—that will sell for £25,000. It has a debt of £120,000. The station is in good order. That is the story of the North, and there are many such instances.

Hon. A. Thomson: What is the cause of that serious depreciation?

Hon. L. CRAIG: It is because there is no incentive to go to the North. If a man makes £5,000 there in one year he pays £3,500 in taxes. The next year he may experience a drought and lose 6,000 or 7,000 sheep, and what is his position? I will instance the case of a squatter. This man does not live in Australia, but in England. His father, and I think his grandfather too, invested all their capital—about £250,000—in pastoral properties in Western Australia and in Queensland. This man's assessable income last year was £20,000. The income of a station is not all cash. Part of it is made up by increased stock. If there are 10,000 lambs on a station and they are valued at 10s. per head, £5,000 would be deemed to be profit. In addition, certain expenses, such as erecting a cottage for a station employee who gets married, are not deductible; they are considered to be of a capital nature. The assessable income of the man I am talking about was £20,000 last year and the income tax, which must be paid in cash, amounted to £18,000 leaving a balance of £2,000. Because of the expenses and because part of his income was due to increased stock, which is not cash, he drew not one shilling for himself; indeed, he owed more money at the end of the year than he did at the beginning! With an assessable income of £20,000 he was not able to draw £100 for himself.

Is it any wonder that people are not willing to go to the North? Is it any wonder that I do not advise my sons to go to the North? These questions have to be faced. I do not think this State can deal with the North, but somebody has to do something about it or the North will deteriorate. Mr. Mann mentioned the question of providing water. We have found that the providing of water has led to a tragedy. We think that on one of our places we have 50,000 kangaroos because we have 80 wells. We have provided water for the vermin. The increase of vermin in the North has to be overcome. A man went out on one of our places the other day and returned with £150 worth of kangaroo skins in three weeks.

Hon. G. B. Wood: How is the Commonwealth going to cope with that trouble?

Hon. L. CRAIG: It cannot, but if it makes conditions worth while the people living there will endeavour to do so. Unless some incentive is given to the men going to the North, they will not be able to cope with it.

Hon. A. Thomson: Taxation is taking the lot.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Taxation is making it impossible for anyone with any sense to invest money in the North.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: That is a legacy of the war.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I must ask members to allow Mr. Craig to proceed.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I do not think so. A special concession is given to mining companies.

Hon. H. Seddon: Would you rather put money into a mining company?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes, I would rather do that than put money into a sheep station.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Into something like the Lancefield?

Hon. L. CRAIG: I have already had trouble with the Lancefield, but that is dead like some of the station properties. The mining companies receive certain taxation concessions and those concessions could be extended to the stations. Why should not a station be put on the same footing as a mining company and be free from taxation until the capital is recouped. Is that unreasonable? Let us not forget the conditions under which the people live there. It is almost impossible to get alert young workers in the North. On some of the big stations the youngest men would be 65. They are inured to the climate.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: You will get plenty after the war.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Not if they have any sense, because they will be able to get more money in Perth. The squatter is unable to pay big money. One cannot pay what one has not got. A young man would be foolish to go north when he can get the same or better money here, and better living conditions. The problem must be faced in a broad way and I do not think the State can do anything about it. I would say, "Let the Commonwealth, if it will, face up to the position and take over this territory." If the Commonwealth Government is sincere and really appreciates the position there, something can be done.

Hon. G. B. Wood: What latitude do you suggest?

Hon. L. CRAIG: I do not know enough about it: that is for people better versed in the North.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The Commonwealth has had the Northern Territory long enough.

Hon. L. CRAIG: At least money is being spent there. I remind the hon. member that people in the Northern Territory get bounties from the Commonwealth Government for sinking for water. They get pound for pound for every foot that they put a bore down. In addition, some of the squatters in the Northern Territory have been entirely free of income tax. Do not members think something might be done? Do not they think our North is worth saving? Millions of pounds have been invested there and there are no finer people in this country than those who have battled in the North. I am glad that Mr. Welsh brought this motion forward. The publicity given to it will do some good. The people living there are entitled to more than lip-service from the rest of the community of Australia. I support the motion.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East) [5.25]: The last speaker has put about as clear a picture of the conditions obtaining in the northern parts of this State as has been put forward for a very long time. He spoke not only from personal knowledge of the North but also from a knowledge of the general set-up in Australia which has produced this state of affairs. It is a condition that will not be confined to the North but will inevitably have a blighting effect on the economy of the whole of this country, as it has had there, unless and until somebody wakes up to the position. This is no new question. It has for many years been a source of serious concern to those who have the welfare of Western Australia at heart. Propositions have been made to this State which would have had the effect of materially altering, for the better, the conditions of those who pioneered and engaged in wool production in the State of Western Australia. In some respects the Commonwealth Government has assisted materially, but we cannot get away from the fact that the influence that has caused the sapping of the economy of the North is almost entirely Federal policy.

The Commonwealth Government, even 20 years ago, recognised that it was necessary for an entirely different state of affairs to be created in the North than existed then, and the position is infinitely worse today.

At that time certain proposals were made by the Commonwealth Government as a result of investigations into the conditions of the North. Those proposals involved the surrendering of the North-West of this State to the Commonwealth Government. A paper was placed before the House in 1926 containing certain suggestions that were made to the State Government with regard to the transfer of that territory. It was pointed out that if the State made arrangements for the handing over of that part of the State certain alterations could be made in the Commonwealth Constitution that would enable the North to be treated as a territory and thereby dealt with under conditions that could not possibly be applied to a State. Section 111 of the Commonwealth Constitution provides:—

The Parliament of a State may surrender any part of the State to the Commonwealth; and upon such surrender, and the acceptance thereof by the Commonwealth, such part of the State shall become subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Commonwealth.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is what is wanted now.

Hon. C. B. Williams: By doing that we would lose seven members of Parliament—three here and four, who are Labour, in another place.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I am pointing out the possibility that existed and that does exist under the Constitution as it stands today, and I am also pointing out that, as a result, there could be a material improvement in the economy of the North. Other conditions involved in the offer were that the Commonwealth would take steps to preserve all the existing rights under the State regime. It would provide for local administration and developmental schemes and would arrange to take over and subsidise a shipping service. These proposals were made at that time by Mr. Bruce as the result of an inquiry by the committee of scientific development which was operating. I know from discussions that took place at the time that there was under contemplation a scheme whereby many of the conditions that applied in the south-western part of the State were to be waived in favour of the North, thereby enabling the people there to carry on in a way that would not be possible if that section of the State were to

continue as part of Western Australia. There are many factors that are involved. Mr. Craig has set them out far more clearly and more definitely than I could possibly do.

To me, however, there are three aspects that stand out strikingly today and which are responsible more than anything else for the deterioration that is apparent in the North and will have a similar effect on all outlying parts of this State. The first of these is the tariff which, directly and indirectly, has pressed most heavily on those industries that depend for their existence on markets oversea. We have only to look at the North to realise that all those products that have helped to build it up are those that are exported oversea, and then we can realise what the cost of producing those goods has been in the North. If we do that we will appreciate the tremendous blight the Commonwealth tariff has been on those industries that constitute the greater part of the economy of the North.

Take the position in the pearling industry! It could not be carried on in northern waters before the war except by means of indentured Japanese divers and the employment of native crews on the luggers. Although the practice was winked at, the fact remains that the pearling industry was maintained entirely by Japanese divers participating in the work and thereby enabling the pearlers to make a success of the industry. What will happen today? Are we to make conditions in the North so encouraging that young men will go up there and take part in this industry? The other day I heard from an old pearler that never before had there been a better opportunity for the pearlers in the North than exists today. He said that as a result of the war the oyster beds had had an opportunity to recuperate and, of course, poaching by the Japs had been a thing of the past.

Those two factors combined to provide one of the best opportunities that has ever confronted the pearlers and in addition to that the price of pearl-shell today is higher than it has been for many years. Are we to be sufficiently awake to the possibilities of the North—I speak with regard to the attitude of the Commonwealth Government—as to bestir ourselves to encourage our young men to go north and help in its development?

We will certainly not encourage them under existing conditions.

Hon. G. W. Miles: We could get Koepangers and Malay divers to take their places on the boats.

Hon. H. SEDDON: When I visited the North with the hon. member the divers were Japanese. The next factor is the Navigation Act. The State Shipping Service was inaugurated and operated almost entirely with the object of keeping the North going, and it has done very good work. The fact remains, however, that the effect of the provisions of the Navigation Act has been that whereas a number of small ships might have been encouraged to trade along the coast and by working from the North to ports oversea or to the nearest Asiatic islands, thereby establishing trade direct much good would have resulted, whereas under existing conditions ships trading up the northern coast are required to bring their produce to Fremantle so that it can be despatched oversea from the southern port. The conditions that have been set up under the Navigation Act, sound as they were from the angle of providing adequate wages and conditions for the men engaged in the Australian mercantile marine, have proved nevertheless very detrimental when the provisions of the Act were applied outside the ambit of the chief ports. Once we proceed north of Geraldton, I contend the conditions are such that some latitude under the Navigation Act should be permitted to enable shipping and transport to be carried on at a reasonable cost.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: But that latitude has been available by means of permits, and so on.

Hon. H. SEDDON: And how has that system worked out?

Hon. C. F. Baxter: It worked satisfactorily until the arrangement was cancelled.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The latest development under the Navigation Act is, I understand, that no ship is to be allowed to trade on our coastline unless it was built in Australia. When we compare the cost of shipbuilding in the Commonwealth with that prevailing oversea, we are at once forced to a realisation of the further terrific burden we are to impose on the people who are producing the wealth of the country that enables it to meet its obligations oversea. The third factor was dealt with very clearly by

Mr. Craig when he referred to the effects of our present burdensome system of taxation. That system works badly enough in the settled areas and in the cities, but it works infinitely worse in the outback parts. As Mr. Craig pointed out it operates in a way that will absolutely prevent any man of enterprise or of initiative from going north to engage in an industry that normally should offer plenty of opportunities and the winning of a competence and even of a fortune. After all, the prospect of winning a fortune is the best incentive that I know of to influence a young man to embark in an occupation outside the ordinary routine, in an occupation that involves some hardship and privations together with isolation and is devoid of those amenities that can be availed of so easily in the city. Instead of encouraging young men in that direction we are preventing them from doing so because of the incidence of taxation and the way the whole system operates.

Do not let us make any mistake! Ultimately the standard of living of a country is determined by its production. If we retard that production, as we are doing by destroying and hampering industries, the obvious result will be a lower standard of living for the whole community. The effect will be that in a generation or so, perhaps less, the standard of living of the people will be reduced to something like that existing in other countries where production is much lower. The history of Rome furnishes one of the best illustrations we could have of such an economic trend. As a result of that whole territories in North Africa that at one time were heavy wheat producers, as a result largely of the policy of the Roman Empire, its war-like operations and its impoverishment of other peoples, were adversely affected. Whole communities were destroyed and vast areas of productive country abandoned to Nature. Then set in the rot that inevitably comes from the destruction of natural vegetation and the country suffered from the evil effects of the desert encroaching until what were formerly settled areas reverted back to Nature and set up conditions that are existent even today. That is a prospect that awaits Australia unless we have a definite approach and a better understanding of what are the economic conditions that should obtain in this country.

The outlying areas of Australia which produce the wool that has played such an important part in her economy can never be maintained under existing conditions. It cannot be otherwise while we have the prevailing control from the Eastern States, particularly the control that is exercised by one section of the community that neither knows nor cares what the conditions may be in industries that create the wealth of the Commonwealth. On the other hand we have many wonderful prospects and advantages in the North—and some wonderful projects in view. We have far-sighted men who are really anxious for the well-being and welfare of the country and are endeavouring to put those projects into operation. I give credit to the State Government for the work it is doing in the investigation of such works as the Ord River project. I give credit to both the Commonwealth and State Governments for the attitude they have adopted with regard to the search for oil. I give credit to that great organisation—the Broken Hill Pty. Company—for what it is doing in the development of the iron-ore deposits at Yampi Sound.

Incidentally it may be interesting to members to know that last year the Broken Hill Pty. Company paid more in Federal taxation than it expended in the form of dividends to its own shareholders. That is the state of affairs that we have created in Australia. That particular company did more to keep Australia free than any other institution the country possesses. Instead of looking to the East for our policy we must have a western policy, more particularly a country policy. Until we approach our problems from that angle, we will continue to retrogress. Mr. Craig put the position clearly; no-one could have pointed it out more clearly. I emphasise to members that if they have any ideas about looking overseas for capital for investment here, in view of the existing conditions in Australia it can only be a dream. They must realise that the opportunities that are apparent elsewhere in countries where the value of capital is appreciated and really encouraged, will induce people to make their investments there.

The very industry of which Mr. Craig spoke—the wool industry—is at the present time expanding rapidly in South Africa where the conditions are infinitely better, economically, than in Australia. South

Africa is a very serious competitor against Australian fine wool, and will become an even greater competitor than she is today because the conditions applying to the primary industries in that country are satisfactory compared with those operating here, conditions that are threatening to drive our industries out of existence. It should not be beyond the capacity of the statesmen of the Commonwealth and the States, if they are serious about the matter, to evolve some scheme whereby special conditions could apply to the backward parts of Australia, even if it meant the creation of new States. To continue as we are today is merely to make the position worse instead of better. Sooner or later it will have to be faced. If we do not move quickly, we shall have to face conditions that will be far worse than those that obtain today. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion and I trust that the Commonwealth Government will realise the tremendous responsibilities resting on its shoulders to promote the interests of the outlying parts of this great continent of ours.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East) [5.44]: I would not have spoken to this motion had it not been for the fact that I have had some association with the North-West. In my early years I spent some time in that part of the State where many of my relations are closely connected with the ownership of stations. I was sorry to hear Mr. Craig's very pessimistic remarks regarding the North.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Were they not true?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Particularly was I sorry to hear him say that it was not a fit place to live in. I wonder what some of the pioneers in the North would say could they hear his remarks.

Hon. L. Craig: I did not say it is not fit to live in.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: The hon. member painted a very black picture of everything in the North. I know people who have lived there for many years and have come out of it very well indeed.

Hon. L. Craig: They have come out of it!

Hon. G. B. WOOD: They could have had a holiday every two or three years, and sometimes every year, if their circumstances so permitted; but I agree that there is much to be done for the North-West. I will not

say that the best thing to be done is to hand it over to the Commonwealth. I think that is the last thing I would do if I had any say in the matter. This debate is a most important one. In view of the remarks which have been made, I am of the opinion that something has to be done for the North-West; but we should not talk as some members talk, particularly Mr. Craig. In my opinion, he is adopting a too pessimistic attitude altogether.

Hon. L. Craig: What would you do?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I will tell the hon. member what I would do. His suggestion was to hand it over to the Commonwealth.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Quite right!

Hon. G. B. WOOD: My friend from the North is entitled to his view, but I say no. I believe the State should make representations to the Commonwealth Government with a view to securing some relief from the taxation burden. Mr. Seddon mentioned the Navigation Act. I remember when I was in the North-West, that five steamers were running there, four of which belonged to the W.A.S.N. Co. and the other to the Adelaide Steamship Co. That was before the days of the State Steamship Service. I believe that if similar steamers could be running to the North-West again, things would improve there. Mr. Craig also mentioned the question of service in the homes. I agree with him. In my time practically every station had a Chinese cook; it was not necessary on any station I was on to employ native cooks.

Hon. L. Craig: I said nothing about native cooks.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I thought the hon. member did. I am sorry. Anyhow, that is a matter which can be fixed up; surely it is not necessary to hand over to the Commonwealth Government on that point. What has the Commonwealth Government done for the Northern Territory? I do not think conditions there are any better than those obtaining in the North-West.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Worse!

Hon. G. B. WOOD: They might be worse. The State Government in Queensland appears to be getting on quite well in running the north of that State. As regards our North-West, great necessity exists for relief in such matters as taxation, over-capitalisation and the writing-down of debts. I believe the State Government is handling the writing-down of debts; there has been a

voluntary writing-down. Perhaps if it were compulsory that would be better. I believe much more could be done in that respect.

Hon. L. Craig: Would you send your son to the North?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I have not got any sons to send there, but if one of my daughters desired to marry a squatter, I would give my consent, provided the marriage was a reasonable one.

Hon. L. Craig: You were there a long time.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Yes. My first impressions of life were gained there.

Hon. L. Craig: And you left it because you did not like it.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: No. I will tell the hon. member why I left. That terrible disease, leprosy, broke out and I got the wind up and left. At that time, in 1907, as probably Mr. Baxter will remember, the outbreak was serious.

Hon. L. Craig: You did a wise thing.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. G. B. WOOD: It was very wise, because I was associated with native boys and used the same saddles that they did. These boys were badly affected by leprosy, although at that time it was thought to be another disease. There was in the North-West at that time a Dr. Maloney, who came from Queensland. He said it was not venereal disease, but leprosy. I consulted him—I was young at the time—and asked him what risk I ran of contracting leprosy. He replied, "Not very much, but there is always a risk." I told him I was a young man and what my circumstances were, and he said, "Perhaps you had better get out." I did. That is the reason why I left the North-West, not because I did not like it—I did like it—it was a great life for a young man. It still is a great life for young men and men up to middle age. However, that has nothing to do with the matter in hand. I support the motion. I think the Government should appoint a Royal Commission or some committee to make full inquiries into the matter, in order to make representations to the Commonwealth Government. Many of the matters affecting the North-West are in the hands of that Government, although I will not agree that the solution of the problem is to hand over that great area to the Commonwealth.

HON. G. W. MILES (North) [5.50]: I have listened with great interest to the debate on this motion and I desire to congratulate my colleague, Mr. Welsh, for having brought it forward. It has been gratifying to me to listen to the various views expressed by members upon the North-West. I also take this opportunity to congratulate the people of the North upon having formed their Advancement League in different portions of the North-West, at Whim Creek, Derby, Broome, Port Hedland, Marble Bar, Hall's Creek and other centres. It is very necessary for those people to get together and make their requests publicly known. I also desire to thank "The West Australian," "The Kalgoorlie Miner" and the "Daily News" for the publicity they have given to the necessity for doing something to rehabilitate the North-West. I was very pleased at the way in which the Chief Secretary spoke to the motion. He told us of the work which the committee to which he referred had been doing and said that we would get its report later on.

Last year I was in communication with the late Prime Minister, Mr. Curtin. He told me then that the Commonwealth was appointing a committee consisting of representatives of the Queensland Government, the Western Australian Government and the Commonwealth Government to consider and report upon the possibilities of the North-West. According to the Premier, the matter was brought up and discussed at the last Premiers' Conference and the Prime Minister asked our Premier, Mr. Wise, to frame the terms of reference for the committee which the Commonwealth is about to appoint. Personally, I think that committee will investigate the whole question, and no doubt the debate that has taken place on this motion will help it in arriving at some decision as to what should be done. My personal view—and I hold it more firmly than ever—is that the only solution is to hand the North-West over to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth could then give the residents relief from taxation. I refer not only to the primary producers, but to the workers as well; in fact, everybody residing in that area should be relieved of payment of income tax. In that way the cost of production would be reduced. That

is one thing which the Commonwealth could do if the whole area were handed over to it.

I was delighted to hear Mr. Baxter at last admit that the Commonwealth had done something for the Northern Territory; for the past 20 years the primary producers there have not paid income tax. I pointed this out many years ago and also referred to the fact that they were subsidised for boring, fencing and other things; and, as I have indicated, only the primary producers are relieved of income tax. As Mr. Craig has said, people must be offered some inducement to settle in the North-West. The inducement in the old days was that there was no income tax. A pioneer who settled anywhere in the North Province could thus put all his money into the development of his property and, incidentally, of the North-West. Besides the pastoral industry, there are the following industries to be developed and expanded:—Mining, pearling and fishing. As Mr. Seddon has said, the pearling banks have had a spell now for five years and we should be able to employ Koepangers and Malays to do the diving. White people were tried for that work, but they could not do it. In my opinion, there are sufficient fish off the coast in the North to provide work for 50,000 or 100,000 people eventually, directly and indirectly.

Another project which I would like to see investigated is the harnessing of the tides. I have brought this matter up on several occasions. I understand that experiments have been made in both England and America by which a successful scheme has been evolved for harnessing the tide. It is an expensive proposition, but it would provide the cheapest electrical power in Australia. Enough electricity could be generated to supply not only the whole of the North, but also the Northern Territory. This would obviate the freight on oil fuel. Both my colleagues have pointed out the disabilities under which the North-West labours with respect to shipping, tropical fruits and other matters. Mr. Craig also mentioned these matters. In the days before the Apple and Pear Board came into existence, the Government had evolved a scheme under which people living in the North, as well as in other portions of the State, could buy a case of fruit from a grower and get it trans-

ported to any part of the State for 5s. But that scheme has been knocked on the head.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Why was it knocked on the head?

Hon. G. W. MILES: I do not know. With the Apple and Pear Board in power, one cannot do anything like that now. However, that is only a trifling matter and I want to deal with bigger questions. We grow some of the best wool in Australia in the North and produce some of the best cattle there. In addition to mining and fishing, we have large iron-ore deposits, as well as asbestos deposits in the Roebourne district. Geologists say that the value of the asbestos is equal to the total gold output of the State, that is, £250,000,000. What pleases me is that the Colonial Sugar Refining Co. is investing money in this asbestos. That company is not a mining or a speculative company and would not spend its money without being sure of a return.

If the Commonwealth took over the North-West and the people there were relieved of income taxation for 20 years at least and could be given tariff concessions, then the cost of production would be reduced. I have been told that the goldmines, in order to be worked profitably in the North-West, must yield at least 10 dwts. to the ton. That will give members some indication of the high costs. As I say, if there is relief from taxation, then it follows, as night the day, that wages can be fixed at a lower sum and so the mines could be worked and the stations carried on with less expenditure. Mr. Heenan pointed out that some of the disabilities were war-caused, such as shortage of manpower. Then dogs have invaded the country. The Government is doing what it can to stem this invasion; I understand it has employed one of the best dog-trappers in the State to combat the pest, but more men are required. At least a few hundred men are needed to destroy the dogs. Mr. Craig did not mention this pest, because the dogs have not yet got to the inner stations near the coast. When all these matters are taken in hand, as they will be, conditions will improve.

The essential thing, in my opinion, is the functioning of the committee that is to be appointed. I hope that the point that the Commonwealth should take over

the whole area will not be lost sight of. We should have freedom from taxation for at least 20 years, and a modified tariff. Such relief would be an incentive to people to go into that country. Mr. Craig spoke about his sons. I am in the same position as he. He referred to his boys not wanting to go back, but I think he was a bit severe on the climate—more severe than he should have been. For four or five months of the year up there the climate is absolutely perfect.

Hon. H. Seddon: Who is going there for the other part of the year?

Hon. G. W. MILES: One cannot get away from the heat, but it is not as bad as it has been painted. Inland, there is a dry heat. I have previously pointed out that for four years I lived at Marble Bar without seeing the ocean, and for seven years without coming south. My family was born in the North, and they are as healthy as any family born and reared in the southern portion of the State.

Hon. L. Craig: Look what it did to you!

Hon. G. W. MILES: Yes; but it does not matter what it did to me. The climate is not as bad as the hon. member made out. I want to thank all members who have taken an interest in this debate, and also members of the public who have given us publicity in regard to this matter. There have been a number of letters in the Press, and I have already thanked the Press for the publicity given.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Did one man put them all in?

Hon. G. W. MILES: No. Mrs. Cardell-Oliver has done good work in that direction, not only here but also in the Eastern States. Dr. Hislop, too, gave us a review of what happened at the Whim Creek meeting. I again thank all of those people for what they have done, and once more congratulate my colleague for having introduced the motion. It will do a lot of good, especially when the committee has considered the problems connected with the development of the North. Attention must be given to these matters now if we are going to hold Australia for the white race. That area must be developed. In that way the southern portion of the State will derive a benefit without incurring any liability. I support the motion.

HON. F. R. WELSH (North—in reply) [6.3]: I wish to express my thanks to members who have taken such an interest in the problems and disabilities of the North-West. I can assure the House that those difficulties are very real. The Chief Secretary pointed out that the committee appointed by the Government had discussed this question, had come to certain conclusions, and had made recommendations for the betterment of conditions. I am hoping those recommendations will not be pigeon-holed, but will be given effect to as soon as possible. Any delay will be of no use to the North. All the recommendations are well within the capabilities of the State Government, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Government. As things are, many residents are leaving the North. Mr. Craig pointed out that owing to lack of social amenities, and other disadvantages, they will not stay there. Many of them have been there for a good number of years, but they have given up hope and are getting out. One of the remedies is to bring down all costs. In the North costs are excessive. If that part of the State is to progress costs must be adjusted; and that applies to the mining industry as well as to the pastoral industry. A recent visit to the North-West convinced me that if costs are not reduced, mining will fade out. Mr. Miles has indicated that it takes at least 12 to 14 dwts. to make a show pay. In the old days that was not so, and the cost must come down if mining is to survive.

Transport is another problem. All roads are, to a large extent, impassable; although I was agreeably surprised at the road from Meekatharra to Marble Bar, portions of which are in good heart. In the wet season, roads become almost impassable because of the heavy rains. With a little attention, the particular road to which I have referred could be made not exactly an all-weather road but quite a good one. People outback are paying £7 per ton on top of rail freight in order to get their goods delivered to them. That, added to the other problems, makes living there out of the question. Mr. Miles made reference to vermin, particularly wild dogs. The present position is largely due to lack of manpower, and the dogs are doing a tremendous amount of damage. On one station, out from Nullagine, 93 dogs were caught in three weeks. That will give members an idea of the prevalence of those animals. A dog catcher has been appointed,

but one is no good. Nothing but a systematic crusade will achieve the desired result.

Mr. Craig mentioned kangaroos. Their multiplication has been brought about because stations have established water all over their runs and enabled them to breed, and lack of manpower has prevented a check being kept upon them. In years gone by, one station poisoned as many as 9,000 in one year, and that number could be doubled to-day. The number of kangaroos is astounding. They are an infinitely worse pest in the North than rabbits are in the south. They are mobile; they eat the best of the feed; and the fences cannot keep them out. They hop the fences quite easily. There is no incentive for people to go kangarooing, because there are not enough facilities available. There is good money to be made from kangaroo skins if they could be obtained. The tax would not stop people, either; I think there is a royalty of one penny. Thousands are being destroyed by ordinary station labour, but the station-owners can ill afford to send men out kangarooing. They have to do it, however, in order to protect the carrying capacity of the country.

I do not think we have ever had worse shipping facilities on the coast than at present. I am not blaming the Government; owing to war disabilities it was not possible to keep the service operating. Nevertheless, the holding up of the "Koolinda" was not justified. It left the residents of the North-West without requirements, and the boat missed the tide. That was a domestic difference between two unions; it was not an industrial dispute. Those are the things that make the North-West a hard place in which to live. Mr. Craig spoke about the climate. No one can alter that. It has existed as long as I can remember, and I have lived there for 54 years. Admittedly, for four or five months the climate is trying, but the winter months compensate. People live a simple life in accordance with the climate, which is no worse than the climate in some other parts of this State. The isolation would still exist no matter who had charge of the North-West—whether it be the Commonwealth or the State. Some believe that the Commonwealth should have control of this territory, but I do not agree with that.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Hear, hear!

Hon. F. R. WELSH: I consider that the State, in collaboration with the Commonwealth, could overcome the difficulties that exist.

Hon. A. Thomson: The State Parliament reduced taxation.

Hon. F. R. WELSH: The Commonwealth exploits every avenue of taxation. It has control of our ports so far as tariffs are concerned. That might easily be adjusted.

The Honorary Minister: What about water?

Hon. F. R. WELSH: On the stations, water for the sheep is adequate. In the Pilbarn district, I think the average depth at which it can be obtained is 60 feet. On the place I was at, there were 53 windmills and there was remarkably fresh water at 45 feet. I think there were only two bad wells on the station. Lower down, there is artesian water in the Gascoyne. Some of that is all right; some is not. Some of the bores have cut out, and the stations have had to pipe water. There are 50 miles of piping on one station. In some instances the supply from bores has ceased; in other instances the bores have collapsed. The artesian water exists from the Gascoyne as far as Geraldton. Port Hedland is out of the artesian area, but there is artesian water again at Broome.

The Honorary Minister: What about the pearling industry?

Hon. F. R. WELSH: There are rivers the waters of which could be conserved. I have never heard of a serious drought in the Kimberleys; and there is enough water in the rivers to conserve all that is likely to be needed. That might apply elsewhere, but there are no means of conserving the water in the lower districts. In the Kimberleys, where the rainfall is so heavy, people will never be short of water, and the soil will grow anything. Mr. Seddon referred to pearling. The pearling industry is non-existent today but it can be re-established. The shell has naturally increased during the war years, during which no shell fishing has taken place. The Japanese pearlbers could be replaced by Koepangers and Malays.

Hon. G. B. Wood: What about the price?

Hon. F. R. WELSH: I cannot state the price, but Mr. Seddon says it is higher than it has ever been.

The Honorary Minister: What are the prospects of reviving the cattle industry?

Hon. F. R. WELSH: It does not need reviving. It is in existence, and it is doing all right. All that is wanted are shipping facilities.

Hon. L. Craig: Shipping is all that is required.

Hon. F. R. WELSH: When things return to normal, shipping will be available. At one time, cattle were shipped to the East Indies and there was a good trade to the islands from Derby. That went by the board when the war broke out, but the trade could be revived.

Hon. L. Craig: We cannot get the shipping. It is not possible to get a ship at Port Hedland.

Hon. F. R. WELSH: There are no cattle there.

Hon. L. Craig: Yes there are; but it is not possible to get a boat.

Hon. F. R. WELSH: When things are normal, it will be. There are plenty of cattle in the Kimberleys.

The Honorary Minister: What about the mining industry?

Hon. F. R. WELSH: There is the Comet mine at Marble Bar. That is one of the best mines.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. F. R. WELSH: Before the tea adjournment I was asked how mining was progressing in the North-West. At Marble Bar there is the Comet mine, one of the richest we have had in the North, which carries quite a number of men. There is also the Blue Spec mine at Nullagine, which was subsidised by the Commonwealth Government, and which is producing antimony, and there is a considerable number of men employed on that mine. There are the asbestos mines in the Hamersley Ranges, which are very rich. The Comet mine has been going for a number of years and I think it is likely to continue in production for years to come. There is also an option that has been taken by the same company at a place called North Pole, which has not yet been touched at all. When the manpower position is easier I think that mine will be opened up and may well develop into quite a big thing. There are numbers of prospectors round the district, operating small shows with quite good results. The Blue Spec, at Nullagine, is causing quite a stir and I under-

stand values have increased. When I was up there last week I was given to understand that the prospects of the mine are bright. There are about 40 men employed on that mine, and perhaps more.

I do not wish to be taken as criticising the Postal Department, but, as an instance of the disabilities under which the North-West people labour, I endeavoured to send a telegram on a Friday, on a station 100 miles out from Nullagine but connected to Nullagine by telephone. I was informed that the post office closed on Friday once every fortnight to allow the postmaster to go out to the mine, 16 miles away, to transact banking business for the men on the mine. I think that is unique in Australia. I have never before heard of a post office being closed to allow the postmaster to go away to do banking business for the Commonwealth. Probably there is a certain amount of justification for it, up to a point, because the men on the mine would probably want to send money to their wives and families. but in the old days I have known men to walk at least that distance to send money away. At all events, under that arrangement the people of Nullagine, including women and children, as well as the people on neighbouring stations, where accidents might occur, are debarred from communication by telephone with the doctor, and there is no pedal set available there. I think that is wrong, and I mention it as one of the many disabilities under which the people of the North labour.

All those things tend to make the place untenable. I was struck by Mr. Craig's remark about the bad living conditions in the North. I think they are bad in every sense of the word, and there are many aspects besides the climate that make conditions bad. While such conditions obtain, people will not be inclined to go there. My object in moving this motion was to see whether we could better the conditions of people living in the North, and induce others to go up there. The rehabilitation of the pastoral industry must also be considered. Mr. Craig referred to the indebtedness of some of the stations, and to the small number of sheep left on them, which has reduced production to a mere nothing. All those things must be considered in an endeavour to bring those stations up to a payable condition. In

the old days, people were able to make a fair living there, but the incidence of taxation has made that impossible. Mr. Craig pointed out that taxation was driving people away from the North, because no man could pay off a debt, such as Mr. Craig mentioned, with taxation at its present high level.

I think the State Government could come to some arrangement with the Commonwealth Government which would be of advantage to the North. As Mr. Miles pointed out, taxation in the Northern Territory has been reduced to almost nothing, and there are also tariff concessions. I do not see why there should not be reduced taxation, as well as tariff concessions, where almost identical conditions obtain in the North-West. I believe most of the taxation should be handed back to the State, to be put back into the country from which it came. People living in the south and enjoying all the amenities of life, pay the same rate of taxation as those living under the bad conditions obtaining in the North. I believe we could get some relief from the Commonwealth Government, through the State Government. I have that much faith in the State Government, that I think it will endeavour to do its best to get some relief for the North-West. During the floods and willy-willies, such as that which knocked down windmills and houses at Roebourne recently, many of the pastoral properties suffered severe damage.

Some relief should be given to those pastoralists, by a Commonwealth grant through the State Government, to enable them to repair the damage and make good the losses. Even apart from help such as that, at present manpower is not available and materials are not to be had. If the people of the North have to wait indefinitely for some help in those directions the stations will simply fade out. Quite a lot of wool is brought down, and a lot of ore shifted from the North, but if there were ships available they could bring more cattle down as well. When conditions return to normal I hope there will be shipping on the coast sufficient to give relief in that respect. At present one never knows when goods will be taken to the North. There is only one passenger boat and on the last boat that went north I think there were about 100 tourists. The people of the North should, in my opinion, have some priority of passage when they wish to

come south on business, or return from the south. There is an excellent plane service to the North via Port Hedland and Meekatharra, four or five planes per week, but the planes are filled to capacity and it is often difficult to get a passage down. If, under present conditions, one has to wait for a booking to be cancelled before one can get a seat, what will it be like in peacetime? Many people have to come down from the North for business reasons, but are unable to return when they want to owing to the congestion of the traffic on the planes.

The Broken Hill Proprietary Company, in opening up the iron-ore deposits on Cockatoo Island, is reported to be intending to spend £1,000,000 in the development of that project. That will be a big thing for the North-West, particularly as the possibility still exists of finding oil in the Kimberleys. If oil could be found and the ore smelted in the North, instead of being sent to Newcastle or elsewhere, it would be a great thing for Western Australia, as there are millions of tons of excellent iron-ore in that area. I believe there is still a possibility of oil being found in the North and I understand that it is intended to continue boring on the Freney oil concession. If oil is discovered there that portion of the North-West will develop itself. I would like to see many improvements effected along the coast, such as the provision of adequate water supplies at Port Hedland and Onslow. At both those places there is no adequate water supply, and at Port Hedland it is sometimes impossible to get a bath. The drinking water has to be brought 64 miles by rail and it is sold at 3s. or 3s. 6d. per 100 gals. The pearling boats used to operate from Port Hedland at one time, but they have had to go elsewhere owing to the shortage of water. I think all these matters could be dealt with by the State Government in collaboration with the Commonwealth Government and I hope there will be no delay in implementing those improvements. I am glad members have taken an interest in the problems with which the people of the North are faced, and I hope this motion will be carried.

Question put and passed; the motion agreed to.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Supply Bill (No. 2), £1,801,000.

2, Builders' Registration Act Amendment (Hon. G. B. Wood in charge).

Received from the Assembly.

BILL—NATIONAL FITNESS.*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 10th October.

HON. A. L. LOTON (South-East) [7.48]: I propose to support the second reading of the Bill, not because it is all that is to be desired but because it is at least a step forward. As a country becomes more industrialised, so does the health and physique of its people decline unless steps are taken to rectify the cause, and this is where national fitness comes in. Poor posture brought about by bad seating accommodation and malnutrition by improper food will not be remedied by physical exercise, but can be improved by it.

I would like to see more done in the way of medical and dental treatment for children, especially in the rural areas. At present there is one mobile dental van, and this is being replaced by a trailer van that can be attached to another vehicle. To attend to these needs, we have two qualified dentists, though until recently there were three. In the large schools only children between the ages of six and eight years are treated. Most of those large schools are in the metropolitan area.

In the small schools, classed as Class VII, all children are inspected, and, where necessary, treatment is carried out. Most of those schools have up to 20 children. Arrangements for the medical side of the children's health are in the same sad state, one doctor attending to the metropolitan area and one to the whole of the country districts. There are over 600 schools in the State and I ask, how is it possible for two doctors, however well qualified they may be, to carry out those examinations thoroughly? In some of the schools, I understand, it takes nearly three years to treat the children, and if a child in the six to eight age group happens to miss the first visit, the treatment cannot be completed. If we are going to raise the physical well-being of the young children we must prevent the occurrence of disorders, and I believe most of these disorders arise from lack of proper atten-

tion to the teeth. Dr. Hislop may disagree with this statement, but in this country bad teeth are prevalent amongst children. Many at the age of 14 have had all their teeth extracted and have to use dental plates.

It has been reported in the Press that the Education Vote this year is to be increased by £26,000, but of that amount £21,000 will be paid out as salaries. Consequently, only £5,000 of the £26,000 will be available to benefit education, and I am afraid that of the sum set aside for national fitness, the greater proportion will be swallowed up in salaries. For national fitness purposes one camp site has been selected at Bickley. This is a good site and will cater well for metropolitan children, but I think that sites could be established for country children, particularly on the seaboard. Then country children would have the benefit of an organised holiday under ideal conditions—in short, they would have two holidays in one. If only a couple of youths from a country centre attended one of these camps, they would be able to return and put their knowledge at the disposal of other pupils and perhaps even the teachers at their schools.

There is one point I should like to raise—perhaps I shall be ridiculed for so doing—but I do not want to see the worshipping and glorification of the human body leading us to the same goal as it led Germany. There, the worshipping of the human body instead of the spiritual side led Germany to make war. If there is any tendency in that direction, I would prefer to see the whole national fitness scheme abolished. In Committee I shall have several amendments to move.

On motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter, debate adjourned.

BILL—STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE ACT AMENDMENT.*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 10th October.

HON. J. A. DIMMITT (Metropolitan-Suburban) [7.54]: This Bill seeks to broaden the scope of the activities of the State Insurance Office by altering the definition of "insurance business" as contained in Section 2 of the Act. This alteration will enable the Government Insurance Office to undertake two new classes of insurable risks

which at present are not within the scope of its business. These are risks that are normally insured against by municipal councils and road boards, and also the risks which are insured against by friendly societies. I understand that those would be risks of fire damage, etc., that apply to real estate. Friendly societies have invested a good proportion of their funds in real estate by way of mortgages.

Let us consider the reasons given by the Honorary Minister for introducing the provision relating to local governing bodies. The Honorary Minister stated that for some years local governing authorities had been making representations for the State Insurance Office to be empowered to handle their business. He also stated that the most interested of the local authorities comprised an organisation known as the Great Eastern Road Board Association, which includes 21 road boards. There seems to be little justification for amending an Act on the representation of 21 road boards when we realise that there are 148 municipalities and road boards in Western Australia. While I recognise the right of minorities to be heard, all said and done the wishes of the vast majority are the wishes that should receive consideration.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Do the others object to it?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: They have not pressed for this amendment. Those 21 road boards have been the moving spirits in inducing the Government to bring this amendment before Parliament.

Hon. L. Craig: I do not think they question the amendments at all.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: As a result of the pressure, this Bill has been introduced. I point out that these 21 road boards are all in the one area, that area covered by the Great Eastern Road Board Association. The rest of the vast territory of Western Australia has apparently not been sufficiently interested to press for any alteration of the Act. Parliament would soon be in a chaotic state if the pressure of small groups were regarded and effect given to that pressure. These 21 road boards represent only one-seventh of the local governing bodies in the State. Suppose the residents of the suburb of Nedlands decided that they would like a State butchery opened there, would the Government bring in a measure to pro-

vide for State butcheries throughout the metropolitan area simply because of the pressure from Nedlands? Of course it would not. Yet the cases are about parallel, because Nedlands represents roughly about one-seventh of the metropolitan area, outside of Fremantle; that is, the central metropolitan area. So it seems to me that the Government is grasping at the opportunity to broaden the scope of State insurance activities rather than to meet the wishes of a small group.

Hon. L. Craig: They do not have to insure with the State Office.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: No, but the Government is apparently seeking an opportunity to broaden the scope of the State Insurance Office. The Minister in another place stated that the local governing authorities had passed resolutions dealing with this matter ever since 1934. If such is the case—and I have no doubt it is—then the Government has been rather neglectful of the pressure that has been brought to bear on it, because it has taken 11 years to be galvanised into some activity. So, after all is said and done, little weight can be attached to the argument put forward by the Honorary Minister. The Minister also stated that local governing bodies felt that by forming a pool and having it administered by the State Insurance Office they would effect considerable savings in their expenditure and that this financial advantage could be applied to the benefit of the ratepayers. The information I have been able to gather in this matter makes it appear that the Honorary Minister has used a specious argument because the very favourable rates that the insurance companies, both tariff and non-tariff, give to local governing authorities make it absolutely impracticable for the hoped-for savings to be effected.

Hon. G. Fraser: One municipality saved over £200, according to the Press, by changing from a tariff to a non-tariff company.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I think the hon. member will find that the quotation available to municipalities is so low that the State Insurance Office could not get lower. I think I am right in saying it is 2s. per cent. No office, State or otherwise, could get below that. I also note that the new definition of "insurance business" includes not only municipal councils and road boards, but any local authority

within the meaning of the Health Act. It also includes vermin boards, hospital boards or any other statutory board that the Governor in Executive Council declares to be a local authority for the purpose of the Act. This looks like a subterfuge to increase gradually the activities of the State Office. These subterfuges are introduced session after session so that eventually the State Insurance Office will cover every insurable risk. That is the aim and object of this amendment; that is just part of the grand plan. The Bill also provides for friendly societies to be able to insure with the State Office.

Whilst the Honorary Minister had very little to say on this point, the Minister in another place, in introducing the Bill, said that most friendly societies invested their money in house mortgages and if they could arrange for cheaper insurances, then friendly society finance would be increased. That is a fallacious argument because, after all, it is not the friendly society but the owner of the property who pays the insurance premium. The owner would benefit but the society's funds would not be relieved at all. As far as I can gather, the so-called demand from friendly societies apparently came from only one or two. It did not come from the chief executive body known as the Council of Friendly Societies. I do not know that that council has ever applied to be allowed to insure its risks through the State Insurance Office. I am not prepared to help the Government in its obvious efforts at infiltration. If we allow this Bill to become an Act, I feel that, session after session, further efforts will be made with the sole object of seeing that the State Insurance Office covers the whole gamut of insurable risks. I intend to vote against the second reading.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West) [8.5]: This Bill is really the outcome of a request made by the Road Board Association. The Government is not altogether to blame for its introduction.

Hon. G. Fraser: Do you say it is from the whole of the Road Board Association?

Hon. H. TUCKEY: No, it is from the executive representing the Road Board Association.

Hon. G. Fraser: That is a bit different from what we were told by Mr. Dimmitt.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I want to explain the circumstances leading to that request. About two years ago, the Merredin Road Board, after obtaining certain information from various other boards, compiled a scheme for pool insurance. At the Road Board Conference two years ago, a resolution instructing the Government to bring about a scheme with the State Insurance Office was passed. The proposal was that all the boards should come into it and, by so doing, a great deal of money, that could be used for road construction and for other purposes, could be saved to the boards. They felt that the system then in vogue was costly and that there was no need to carry on with it if it was possible for the State Insurance Office to bring about what was termed "pool insurance." The executive committee had nothing to go on. It first of all, therefore, circularised its board members, numbering 118, to get certain information and their opinions about the proposal. Very few replies were received. Some boards preferred to carry on as usual and place their insurance where they pleased. Others were quite agreeable to the suggestion, but many boards did not reply at all. That left the executive committee where it was without the necessary information to put up a scheme to the Government.

After some time it was decided that a deputation from the executive committee should wait on the Minister for Works to see whether the State Insurance Office would be prepared to do business on the basis recommended by the Merredin Road Board, which took the matter up in the first place. When we went to the Government with this proposal, I thought the authorities would be pleased to get the business and there would be no difficulty. To my surprise, however, that was not so. The representative of the State Insurance Office could not fully agree with the figures submitted by the Merredin Road Board and the executive committee was instructed to collect further details. That was done. The boards were again circularised, but still we did not succeed. As a result we could not help the State Insurance Office, or the Minister, any further. The question was then allowed to stand over and the Eastern Districts road boards—the Merredin board and others—kept asking for the scheme to be put into force. The executive committee asked the Minister what was being done, and what was proposed to be done, in the matter. Finally this Bill was prepared,

but it does not really give the Minister or the road boards what they were after. In the first place, a comprehensive scheme to embrace all boards was desired. I think it would have to be compulsory; otherwise the State Insurance Office would not be able to give a reduced rate, or to say at just what rate it could do the insurance. If the scheme is to be optional—that is, to allow boards to remain out of it if they desire—the State Insurance Office would not be able to get a definite figure on which to work. As a result, the comprehensive scheme first thought of by the Merredin board could not be brought about, but we finally got the Bill now before the House.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: The Merredin board seemed to be the one that was pressing.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: That board evolved the scheme in the first place and circularised various other boards.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Do you know the name of the chairman of the Merredin Road Board?

Hon. H. TUCKEY: No, the secretary of that board did the work. I think all road boards would welcome some reduced rate if it could be made available. No doubt if a comprehensive pool could be instituted, considerable savings could be made. I do not know that, under this Bill, any saving can be effected. The measure provides for a number of boards to join together in one policy, but I do not know what saving there would be. If there could be a saving, it would be a good thing. I want to see the boards get the best consideration possible. If the Bill will mean an advantage to them it should be passed. I intend to vote for the second reading. I can only explain the position as it has been brought about. Great difficulty is experienced in getting 118 road boards to be unanimous on a matter of this kind.

Hon. A. Thomson: Were the 21 boards unanimous?

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I cannot say. It was unfortunate from the executive's point of view that it could not get replies from the various boards. Had it received those replies it could have sized up the matter and done something about it. As it was, the committee was unable to do anything. Finally, the Government has been good enough to introduce this Bill, which is really the outcome of a request from the Road Board Association.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East) [8.14]: I support the second reading. Mr. Tuckey has traced the early history of this movement. I intend to deal with the request of the 21 boards in what is known as the Great Eastern Road Board Association. Mr. Dimmitt has said a lot about only 21 boards asking for this measure. I can assure the House that many other boards do not object to it. The proposal was to form an insurance pool—not compulsory—so that road boards would have the right to go into this pool which would be administered by the State Insurance Office.

Hon. A. Thomson: What is there to prevent their doing that now, without a pool?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I do not quite know. The idea was that the State Insurance Office was the only one interested in it. I must admit that I do not quite know just how it is going to be administered. In my opinion it is a great experiment for these 21 boards. It will be interesting to see how they get on and whether they will effect any saving. The matter was placed before the York Road Board, of which I am a member, and while we did not object to the scheme we decided not to participate. I believe there are some 30 odd boards in the Great Eastern Road Board Association and most of them have agreed to participate in this pool insurance scheme. There is nothing compulsory about it.

Hon. L. Craig: This is not a pool scheme of insurance, such as they put up.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: It is not a comprehensive pooling scheme but it allows those 21 boards to deal with their own insurances.

Hon. A. Thomson: No, it does not.

Hon. L. Craig: Nothing of the sort.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I think it is a pooling scheme.

Hon. L. Craig: Certainly not.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: The Merredin Road Board sent out a circular suggesting the pooling scheme. I consulted the head of the Local Government Department and he said legislation would have to be passed to make it possible for the boards to embark upon a pool insurance scheme.

The Honorary Minister: This is a pool insurance scheme.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I do not know what it means if it does not mean that.

The Honorary Minister: It certainly does mean that.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: If this proves successful, other boards will participate in the pool. We were anxious to get other opinions in this matter and we spoke to representatives of the Northam Road Board. They said they were interested in the scheme and did not object to it but were not participating. I do not know that any of the other boards are opposed to it although some may not be participating. I can see no objection to a little bit of competition. If the State Government Insurance Office can handle the work better than the insurance companies, the result must be helpful to the boards. If the State office is successful it may mean that the private companies will reduce their premium rates. I shall vote for the second reading of the Bill in order that an opportunity may be given to try out this experiment.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [8.18]: I support the second reading and for the life of me cannot appreciate what Mr. Dimmitt is afraid of. As he wants the Bill to be defeated it must be because he is fearful of something happening. Its provisions involve no compulsion upon boards.

Hon. G. B. Wood: That is the point.

Hon. G. FRASER: It is left entirely to the discretion of a board whether it will participate at all or whether it will participate in the pool or deal with the State Government Insurance Office separately.

Hon. A. Thomson: Cannot a board do that now?

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not know, but evidently not, otherwise the boards would not have asked the State Government Insurance Office to act for them. In the course of his remarks Mr. Dimmitt said he grouped the tariff and non-tariff companies together. By interjection I informed him that I knew of one municipality that had changed over from a tariff company to a non-tariff company and had effected a saving of £220 a year on its insurances.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: What will the change-over from the non-tariff company to the State office mean?

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not know. If there is no difference, the boards will not continue to avail themselves of this oppor-

tunity. It is quite optional and the boards are not compelled to participate. I can see nothing wrong with the Bill at all. It merely deals with friendly societies and local governing bodies and the appointment of a manager. Why should we debar the State office from dealing with public utilities? I regard the State Insurance Office as a public body.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: I regard it as further extension of State trading and for that reason I disapprove.

Hon. G. FRASER: Mr. Bolton would have some force in his argument if the Bill contained anything that would compel the boards to place their business with the State Government Insurance Office.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: That is to follow.

Hon. G. FRASER: That is not proposed at all.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Not yet.

Hon. G. FRASER: The Bill merely gives the boards the right to place their insurances where they so desire. If they do not wish to deal with the State Government Insurance Office and consider it better to continue operating through the tariff or non-tariff companies, they will continue to do so. I support the second reading.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [8.21]: There seems to be some misapprehension about the Bill. I remember the Merredin Road Board circularising the local Government bodies regarding this matter and the intention was to induce the boards to conduct their own insurance organisation, fix their premiums, build up reserves from profits and eventually have sufficient reserves to enable them to reduce premiums to a minimum. That was the original intention.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is so.

Hon. L. CRAIG: In effect, the intention was to run their own insurances. They want someone to run the scheme for them and they desire the State Government Insurance Office to act on their behalf. The money and the premiums will remain the property of the boards and the profits should belong to them as well. As the profits improve the premiums will be reduced. That was the original intention indicated in the circular dealing with this proposal. On the other hand to my mind that is not what the Bill amounts to.

Hon. G. B. Wood: It does, with regard to the 21 boards that will be in the pool.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I do not think it means that at all.

The Honorary Minister: It does mean that.

Hon. L. CRAIG: My reading of the Bill does not suggest that that is the meaning at all.

Hon. G. B. Wood: That is in the minds of the Eastern Districts Road Board Association.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I know, but I cannot see that the Bill means what was originally intended.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: That is in my mind.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Some difficulty was expressed with regard to local governing bodies effecting their own insurances because, for instance, of the necessity to provide a £5,000 bond before they could deal with workers' compensation business. There is only a small amount of other than that type of insurance associated with local government work and in those circumstances the boards would naturally prefer to stick to the companies. I am sorry if I have misinterpreted the meaning of the Bill. If I have done so there are others who think similarly. I will withhold my decision as to whether I shall or shall not, vote for the Bill for the time being.

On motion by Hon. A. Thomson, debate adjourned.

BILL—SOIL CONSERVATION.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 10th October.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [8.25]: This is a measure that we all should welcome. I hope, too, that when it becomes an Act it will not be treated merely as just another statute but that effect will be given to its provisions vigorously. It is an important piece of legislation because it seeks in the ultimate process to preserve for future generations land upon which they will have to rely for their sustenance. The Chief Secretary, in his very interesting introductory remarks when dealing with the Bill, referred to the discoveries that archaeologists have made indicating the part that soil erosion has played in undermining and obliterating ancient civilisations. He reminded us of empires once spread over fertile and wealth-producing lands, the ruins of which have

been found buried beneath what are now uninhabitable deserts. He pointed out that soil erosion caused by man's mismanagement is taking place in almost every country in the world. In that assertion I think the Minister is correct.

It is surprising just how much erosion is going on in various countries. Although only a comparatively small scale it is in evidence in Australia, and in the circumstances I think the action taken by the Government is most commendable. If we do not move in the matter, before long we may suffer a similar fate to that of other countries and find that much of our productive land has disappeared. Recently I read a book by Mr. Stuart Chase entitled "Rich Land, Poor Land." He dealt most interestingly with the subject of soil erosion and gave much valuable information in a very acceptable way. His book is a comparatively new one and in it he shows just what has been done, and is being done, in the work of soil conservation in various countries. He points out that the surface layer of the earth as we see it day by day is manufactured by thousands of generations of plants as they have died and decayed and he points out that this surface soil is the most precious of all a country's resources. Mr. Chase remarks that in the surface layer it is said we find six per cent. organic matter—he gives his figures as representing an average—while 12 inches down the organic matter drops to three per cent. and three feet down it falls to one per cent. It is estimated that one inch of top soil is laid down over the earth's surface generally every 500 years and in some instances it takes 1,000 years.

Hon. L. Craig: And some people believe in bush fires.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Yes, and in burning it away. In another publication I read that soil has been likened to a bank account. Under natural conditions, plants, animals, insects and the like die and return to the earth what they have taken from it, plus a margin to spare. Deposits exceed the withdrawals at the rate of an inch of soil for every 500 years. Under the old-fashioned conditions of our forefathers, before the advent of machines, farm waste and manures returned essential minerals to the soil at about the same rate as they were taken out. In that case the bank account would just about balance. But the soil seldom receives an aug-

mentation of humus under present-day conditions. Few farmers are able to operate with success without artificial manures. That applies more or less the world over. The only possible exception, as far as I am aware, is England, where some authorities believe the soil to be better now than in the Roman days, chiefly because of the extensive use of cover crops and grass pastures. The pastures have been grazed, but not overgrazed.

So we have a slow-growing credit bank account under primeval conditions and a balanced account under the old fashioned handicraft conditions. But when commercial agricultural conditions come into the picture, with one-crop farming and maximum exploitation of the land, the formula changes suddenly and then the retrogression sets in. The minerals and essential elements go out of the soil, mostly in the shape of foodstuffs that are railed away to the cities and never returned. It might be said that artificial fertilisers help to restore a balance, but I think most people who are conversant with land will agree that artificial fertilisers, while they are valuable for the moment, in the aggregate are pitifully inadequate in the way of building up humus. In the South-West we are not very much troubled with erosion to date. We have very little wind erosion.

For years there have been in parts of the coastal areas some sand drifts, which may be likened to erosion and which have been spreading over the country. In the area between the Margaret River and Karri-dale huge sand drifts advanced quite a distance over forest country, very excellent country, too; and today they are 80 to 100 feet deep. That erosion, if it may be so termed, was arrested by the use of marram and other grasses, and so far as the position there is concerned—unless it has altered within the last year or two—I think the trouble has been overcome. But we have a little water erosion and there are evidences, even in our country, of the damage that will ultimately take place unless it is arrested, particularly in the flats below the foothills. I recollect, when I went into the South-West 40 odd years ago, that many rich farms alongside the railway showed no evidence at all of small rivulets or creeks: but each

year, as clearing has taken place and heavy rains have fallen, I have found quite a number of places between Perth and Bunbury where it is possible to see watercourses of fair size that are gradually widening in extent. Unless they are arrested in some way, they will ultimately wash away much of the land and result in depressed values of the properties. I was interested during the recent floods in observing the Swan River. I noticed as I came across the Causeway that the river—this also applied to Melville Water—had turned a dark chocolate brown. That condition continued for quite a time—some weeks—and it occurred to me that a tremendous quantity of our good topsoil was in solution and being washed away into the sea. I suppose we shall always have that occurrence more or less, but it is a matter we must take into consideration. If we do not, we may find that our experience will be similar to those which I shall quote in a moment or two.

The quantity of soil that is brought away by our rivers is more than we really suspect. Some little time ago I was speaking to a man who does some work in the Bunbury harbour. He was speaking about some underground experiments that were being made and to my astonishment he told me that in some places there were three or four inches of excellent soil in the bottom of the harbour, soil that had been washed down by the river and deposited there to be of no further use to mankind. I mentioned Stuart Chase's book, and it might interest members if I quote instances he mentioned with regard to water erosion. Of course he refers to big rivers in North America, but the principle is the same and the danger is the same. He says—

The three billion tons of solid material washed out of the fields and pastures of America every year by water erosion contain 40 million tons of phosphorus potassium and nitrogen. To load and haul this incomprehensible bulk of rich farm land would require a freight train 475,000 miles long.

I looked up the term billion to make myself conversant with what it meant. I found that in France a billion is 100,000,000, but in England, 1,000,000,000. Even if it is only 100,000,000 it is a tremendous quantity and it shows what is possible. Chase continues—

Approximately 400,000,000 tons of solid earth is dumped into the Gulf of Mexico alone, the greater part of it super soil richer than that of the Nile.

Soil erosion can be very serious, and it is essential that every country should protect its rural and agricultural land by an Act of this description. Plant food can be restored to the soil by cropping, but when the water takes the soil itself, the mineral, the humus and the microscopic organisms, only Nature can restore fertility and that, as I have shown, is a very long process. I have one other quotation and it is to the following effect:—

100,000,000 acres of formerly cultivated land has been essentially ruined in North America by water erosion. In addition, this washing of sloping fields has swept the greater part of the productive soil from another 125,000,000 acres now being cultivated. Erosion by both wind and water is getting under way on another 100,000,000 acres. More than 300,000,000 acres—one-sixth of the country—is gone, going, or beginning to go. And this refers to land originally the most fertile and prolific in supplying the nation's needs.

We know what is happening in the Eastern States. Some little time ago I travelled from Tailem Bend to Renmark and I saw an extraordinary condition of affairs. The land had been the subject of wind erosion; the whole topsoil had gone and all that remained was a hard clay infertile subsoil, which was practically useless. I think the Government is to be commended for bringing down this Bill. While up to date our losses by erosion have not been great, if this Bill is passed and vigorously applied, and a constant watch kept over the country, the measure will be well worth while. I support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. A. Thomson, debate adjourned.

BILL—CLOSER SETTLEMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 11th October.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West) [9.44]: There has always been some need for closer settlement in certain districts, but I think the existing Act should have been sufficient to meet requirements for resumption of land in this State. The parent Act of 1927 has never been put into force, and

that rather indicates there has not been any difficulty in obtaining land. After all, our population is small and we have still a very large area of Crown land waiting to be taken up and developed. There are many large tracts of country in various parts of the rainfall area, and there is one exceptionally fine area extending along the back road between Augusta and Nannup. Those two towns are approximately 50 miles apart, and I know that there is a large belt comprising thousands of acres of land in that area that have never been touched for land settlement. I have often wondered why, in days gone by, an area such as that was by-passed by people who went to distant places such as Northcliffe and other centres. That land is not heavily timbered. There is practically no milling timber on it—no jarrah—and there is every indication of moisture and suitability for dairy purposes. I do not think we have arrived at the stage when it is necessary to resume land that has been worked or used for production.

I think that the existing Act which provides for taking undeveloped land is all that is required for the time being. If we resume land that is now being used, it is going to kill the incentive in people to go to the country and make their homes there with an eye to the future. No-one wants to go to the bush and make a bare existence. People look forward to the day when they will have sufficient on which to retire or sufficient land from which to make farms for their families. We have certainly not reached the stage when we are so short of land that it is necessary to interfere with those land-owners. I agree that no-one should lock up land and do nothing about it. We have large estates that have never been developed, and I know one or two properties whose owners do not live in the State at all. In those cases, there could be no objection to immediate action being taken to resume the properties. I think it would be wrong to interfere with areas, whether large or small, that are being used, though perhaps not to their full capacity at present.

Then there is the question of values. I have in mind a recent case in which two farmers wanted to do business. One wished to buy from another farmer in the same district; but although they were experts and well qualified to fix a price, they were not allowed to do so, because the Commonwealth valuer decided that the price should be £2 per

acre less than that on which they agreed, with the result that the farm remains unsold. It seems to me that when practical farmers agree on a price, it is wrong for a Government valuer to tell them, in effect, that they do not know their business, and prevent a sale from taking place. I was trustee for a small estate and had two cash offers of £600 from different buyers. When the official valuation was made, the figure was reduced to £415, which meant that no business was done. I did not push the price up; I did not advertise the property, or praise it in any way. Nevertheless the people were prepared to pay the figure I have mentioned; but they were not allowed to do so. I think the present Bill could have been set aside for some time to come. The set-up of the board in the parent Act is satisfactory—more so than that which would apply if the Bill were passed. I have at least one amendment I propose to move at the Committee stage. In the meantime, I propose to support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. V. Hamersley, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.50 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 16th October, 1945.

	PAGE
Questions: Dairying Industry, (a) as to mastitis campaign literature, (b) as to treatment for contagious abortion	1230
Superannuation Act, 1871, as to claims of railway men	1231
Bills: Electricity, 1R.	1231
State Electricity Commission, 1R.	1231
South-West State Power Scheme, 1R.	1231
Supply (No. 2), £1,800,000, message, Standing Orders suspension, all stages	1231
Builders' Registration Act Amendment, 3R.	1232
Constitution Acts Amendment (No. 2), 2R.	1232
Government Employees (Promotions Appeal Board), returned	1236
Medical Act Amendment, 2R.	1236
Annual Estimates: In Committee of Supply, general debate concluded	1240
Votes and Items discussed	1270

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

QUESTIONS.

DAIRYING INDUSTRY.

(a) *As to Mastitis Campaign Literature.*

Mr. McLARTY asked the Minister for Agriculture:

1, Has his attention been drawn to a statement headed "Mastitis Campaign" in the "Dairy Farmer" of August, 1945, in which it is stated the Victorian Government is distributing 30,000 coloured wall sheets and booklets to farmers giving information in regard to the spread and prevention of mastitis?

2, Will he obtain a supply of these wall sheets and booklets and have them distributed amongst the dairy farmers in this State?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied:

1 and 2, Wall sheet and booklet upon mastitis as issued by the Department of Agriculture, Victoria, have been sighted by appropriate officers of the Department of Agriculture. Certain aspects of this pamphlet are considered unsuitable for conditions in Western Australia, and the Department is preparing another pamphlet and wall sheet for issue in the near future. In the meantime a reprint from the "Journal of Agriculture" on mastitis is available, and large numbers have been issued to farmers.

(b) *As to Treatment for Contagious Abortion.*

Mr. McLARTY asked the Minister for Agriculture:

1, Is he aware that the Victorian Government with limited supplies of Strain 19 has had 400 Victorian dairy herds vaccinated, and that "The Australian Dairy Review" of the 24th September, 1945, states that the Victorian State Department of Agriculture reports that this effort to prevent contagious abortion is meeting with very satisfactory results?

2, In view of the importance of this information to the dairying industry, would he state what action is being taken by his department to obtain supplies of Strain 19, and with what results?

3, Is it proposed to conduct any courses of instruction amongst dairy farmers in the near future instructing them as to its use?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied:

1, Yes, the Department of Agriculture is fully aware of, and has complete information in respect to the work done in Victoria in connection with the vaccination of cattle with Strain 19. The vaccine was prepared and supplied by the Council for Scientific