

# Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 4th December, 1945.

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

## QUESTION.

### WOOL AUCTIONS.

*As to Buyers' Support of Small Markets.*

Hon. H. L. ROCHE asked the Chief Secretary:

1, Has the Minister's attention been drawn to the statement in "The West Australian" of the 24th November, 1945, attributed to the W.A. Woolbuyers' Association and similar organisations in other States, that the wool-buying trade under auction conditions will not support at full strength small wool markets in Australia should their establishment be made possible by Government action, or by other means?

2, Will the Minister investigate the position to ascertain if the small markets referred to include present appraisal centres such as Albany and Geraldton?

3, If it is the woolbuyers' intention, by restricting competition in small centres, to force all wool in this State into one centralised market, will the Government make immediate representations to the Commonwealth Government and the Wool Realisation Commission emphasising the importance of maintaining such realisation centres as Albany and Geraldton in the interests of the State?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

1, Yes.

2, Although no definite information is available, it is inferred that the small markets referred to would include the appraisal centres at Geraldton and Albany.

3, The Government, when all the facts are available, will take measures to support methods for the sale of wool which are likely to be to the greatest advantage of producers and the general community.

## TRANS. RAILWAY, KALGOORLIE-FREMANTLE SECTION, SELECT COMMITTEE.

### Extension of Time.

On motion by Hon. A. Thomson, the time for bringing up the report was extended for one week.

## MOTION—STANDING ORDER SUSPENSION.

On motion by the Chief Secretary resolved:

That Standing Order No. 62 (limit of time for commencing new business) be suspended during the month of December.

## MOTION—ADDITIONAL SITTING DAY.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, resolved:

That during the month of December, the House, unless otherwise ordered, shall meet for the despatch of business on Fridays at 4.30 p.m. in addition to the ordinary sitting days.

## BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Public Works Act Amendment.
- 2, Criminal Code Amendment.

*Passed.*

## BILL—STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION.

Reports of Committee adopted.

## BILL—WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT (LAND ACT APPLICATION).

*Second Reading.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [4.42] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is introduced for the purpose of authorising the execution of an agreement between the Commonwealth and the State in respect to war service land settlement. It will be recalled that at a

conference held at Canberra on the 22nd August, 1945, of Commonwealth and State Ministers, agreement was reached on certain proposals concerning this most important project. In order that effect might be given to these proposals it was considered advisable that they should be submitted to the Commonwealth and the State Parliaments for approval. The Commonwealth Parliament, by a measure known as the Commonwealth War Service Land Settlements Agreement Act, 1945, has quite recently ratified the proposals. The agreement in question has not yet been signed by representatives of the Commonwealth and the State, and this will not be done until such time as the State Parliament has approved of the Bill.

Before embarking on an explanation of the Bill it may be of interest if I were to recapitulate the circumstances from which the present position has evolved. Schemes for land settlement are not a novelty in Western Australia, nor in the light of experience can they be regarded as having been very successful. I do not wish, however, to digress for long upon the errors and omissions of previous ventures, except to emphasise that the experiences gained from past projects will be of incalculable benefit in the implementation of the new scheme. Subsequent to the war of 1914-18, a soldiers' settlement scheme was entered into throughout the Commonwealth, and 37,561 ex-servicemen were placed on the land; and of this number 5,030 were settled on holdings in Western Australia. It is very difficult to state with any degree of exactitude how many of them are still farming, but it is authoritatively considered that the number would not exceed one-third of the original settlers. The financial loss to Australia in this connection has been estimated at approximately £45,000,000, which represents £6 5s. per head of the population, or a cost of £1,200 for each settler included in the scheme.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Do you know the percentage of loss in Western Australia?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No, I am told it is very hard to get definite figures.

Hon. W. J. Mann: It would be helpful if you had them.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, but it is not always possible to get what one likes in that way. However, I have some in-

formation on that aspect which may be of use to members. In addition to this loss, many settlers made heavy inroads into their private capital, and numerous merchants and other unsecured creditors were unable to recover moneys that were owing to them. It has been said that there were four main reasons for the failure or partial failure of the previous schemes. These have been classified as overcapitalisation, depression and droughts, increased cost of production and the unsuitability of many of the settlers for farming. Overcapitalisation is a bugbear which was responsible for the failure of numerous settlers under the previous schemes, and it is intended on this occasion that it shall be avoided.

We are all aware of the circumstances under which many men were placed on the land. They were first usually presented with the tremendous problem of clearing a virgin block of land, heavily timbered or covered with an excessive growth of vegetation, and in doing this work to have to rely on inadequate equipment. A further additional handicap in many instances was the men's own lack of experience. By the time the block had been cleared and a house and essential outbuildings erected, a settler had incurred a debt which, before he had even commenced his farming operations, hung over him like the sword of Damocles. This is an experience of which there must be no repetition. In the present scheme it is not intended that the settlers shall purchase the properties, but that these shall be held on perpetual leasehold; and, in addition the land will be ready for cultivation, whether it is a virgin block or a re-purchased property, before the settler enters into possession.

Hon. J. Cornell: One of the biggest factors in the wheatbelt was price.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is intended that a house and necessary outbuildings will be ready for the settler upon his taking over the property. None of the costs of these arrangements will be the responsibility of the settler, who will commence his new farming career free from the incubus which has broken the spirit of so many men. The expense will be shared by the Commonwealth and the State, the former paying three-fifths of the difference between the valuation of the land and improvements and the cost of acquiring, developing and im-

proving the holdings; the State paying two-fifths.

The farmer will pay a rent computed on the productive capacity of the block. This capacity will be assessed by experts and an average struck to cover good, bad and indifferent seasons, and such average will not be subject to reappraisal. Each settler will therefore be fully aware of what his commitments in this regard will be for years ahead. Depressions and droughts are circumstances which the ingenuity of man will find it far more difficult to defeat than the problem of overcapitalisation and are difficulties that farmers as well as Governments should make provision for. Increased cost of production is another worry but it is considered that this can be overcome to a certain extent by mechanisation.

To obviate the possibility of an unsuitable type of settler being included in the scheme, a classification committee of five, three of whom are returned soldiers, has been appointed on a full-time basis, and up to the 12th November last had interviewed 304 ex-servicemen and their wives. Of this number 20 per cent. were classified as suitable and sufficiently experienced to commence operations, 39 per cent. required a short period of intensive training, 35 per cent. needed practical training on approved farms, and 6 per cent. were unsuitable for farming. Examination of the Bill reveals that it is composed of a clause by which the execution of an agreement between the Commonwealth and the State is authorised, together with a schedule which comprises the proposed agreement.

The agreement is based mainly on the recommendations of the Commonwealth Rural Reconstruction Commission, of which the Premier of this State was Chairman, and which travelled extensively through Australia and collated a great deal of valuable data. The Premiers' Conferences of 1944 and 1945 gave a great deal of consideration to the Commission's report, and it was during those conferences that the agreement was drafted.

Subsequently, representatives of this State, led by Mr. Fyfe, who is now Director of Land Settlement, conferred at Adelaide in February and November of this year, with officials of South Australia and Tasmania who are also negotiating similar

agreements with the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Director of War Service Land Settlement and Director of Research recently visited Western Australia and provisionally approved of the plans that have been made in this State.

The first clause of the agreement states that it shall have no force or effect nor shall it be binding on either party until such time as the State Parliament has given its approval. Then follows a number of definitions, the most important of which is the interpretation of an eligible person, which is stated to mean an honourably discharged serviceman or a person who is regarded by the Commonwealth and the State as suitable to participate in the scheme. The Bill provides that settlement shall be undertaken only where there are reasonably sound economic proposals for success for each farmer. No person approved as suitable for the scheme by the Classification Committee shall be excluded owing to lack of personal capital, but it is proposed that each man shall invest a reasonable proportion of his financial or other resources in his holding.

Although the sponsors of the scheme are wedded to the idea of perpetual leasehold in preference to the purchase of the land, it is considered that it would be wise to give settlers the opportunity to own the house and other structural improvements on the block. This will tend to give them an interest in the care and upkeep of the buildings which may be lacking if they have no personal equity in the property. It will, however, be optional for the settler to decide whether he wishes to purchase or to lease the buildings. South Australia is contemplating a similar policy but Tasmania, it is understood, does not intend that settlers shall have this right of option. In addition, in Western Australia, the farmer will be required to buy his own stock and plant, but he will be financed for this purpose and his repayment of the advances will be spread over a lengthy period.

The Controller of Stores is acquiring large supplies of plant, tools and equipment in preparation for the inauguration of the scheme, and preliminary arrangements are being made with the Department of Agriculture for the establishment, where necessary, of machinery pools. The most serious current difficulty in this regard is

the acquisition of heavy equipment, such as motor vehicles, tractors, bulldozers, etc., but it is hoped, however, that the position in this regard will show an early improvement. In respect to stock, the Department of Agriculture has, for some considerable time, been purchasing heifers, and I understand it has already obtained about 1,000 head.

Adequate guidance and technical advice will be available; and arrangements for intensive courses of training are being made by Mr. N. Davenport, of the Department of Agriculture, who has been appointed Deputy Co-ordinator of Rural Training. Each road board throughout the areas to be settled has been asked to appoint a committee of five, including a representative of the R.S.L., to assist, inter alia, in the training scheme. The administration of the scheme will be the responsibility of the State, but the Commonwealth will make the major financial contribution and be responsible after fully consulting the State for policy decisions and will exercise general supervision over administration.

The Commonwealth will meet the cost of acquiring, developing and improving land which is selected for settlement. It will also provide training facilities for selected settlers, who require this assistance, together with living allowances, transport and other expenses needed by the trainees. I have already mentioned that training courses are being arranged by the Deputy Co-ordinator of Rural Training. Authority is given for the State to reserve Crown lands for settlement purposes or with funds made available by the Commonwealth to resume Crown land and acquire by agreement or compulsion private land included in an approved plan of settlement. Where Crown land is reserved or resumed for settlement the Commonwealth will credit the State with such an amount as both parties agree represents the interest of the State in the land. This also applies when Crown land is resumed or acquired compulsorily or by agreement for this purpose.

Any eligible person may apply for inclusion in the scheme provided that he does so not later than the 15th August, 1950, or not later than five years after the date of his discharge from the Services, whichever date may be the later. Applications will be lodged with the appropriate State authority which will select and classify suitable

applicants and institute the necessary training which is provided mainly by approved farmers. The Commonwealth will assist with the payment of portion of the trainees' wages.

In order that settlers may be given every opportunity to become established it is proposed, where necessary, to make available from Commonwealth funds a living allowance at a rate approved by the Commonwealth. This assistance will be rendered for the first year that the settler is in occupation of his holding, and can under special circumstances and with the Commonwealth's approval be extended for a further period. During the term that any settler is receiving this assistance all net proceeds from his holding will be collected by an approved authority and credited against future obligations of the settler in connection with rent and advances for stock, plant, etc. This requirement may be waived in special circumstances.

Should any settler be forced to surrender or terminate his lease, compensation will be paid him by the Commonwealth for any improvements he has effected to the property, after taking into consideration any amounts owing by him to the Crown, or for approved advances. No lease can be transferred by the settler unless the approval of the State and the Commonwealth is obtained and conditions required by those Governments are complied with. This provision, however, is to be reviewed in five years, when, providing there is mutual agreement between the Commonwealth and the State, it may be possible to convert into estates in fee simple.

Hon. J. Cornell: A pious hope.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That may be so, but we are making provision for it. It will be necessary to have a mutual agreement between the State and the Commonwealth in that regard. Any dispute between a settler and the State is to be determined by an authority, the constitution of which is to be agreed upon by the State and the Commonwealth. I have given members an outline of the agreement and of the events which have led to its introduction. A tremendous amount of work is being done by the Government and departmental officers to ensure that the scheme will commence in such a manner that its development will have every opportunity of success, and that

where possible no settler will be forced to leave the scheme through circumstances beyond his control.

A sum of £120,000 is being spent by the State on the purchase of private land and on reconditioning suitable reverted Rural Bank holdings. This very essential work has been hampered by the lack of manpower, but an increasing number of men are now becoming available and are being employed both in Perth and on the farms. The shortage of manpower and the essential nature of the work have made it necessary to employ 200 prisoners of war who have commenced clearing operations on reverted holdings at Northcliffe. In addition, eight civilian clearing gangs are also occupied on this work and an increase in that number is shortly expected. The accentuation of demobilisation is expected to make the services of 500 ex-servicemen available within the next few months, so it can be seen that every effort is being made to hasten the preparations.

A Land Purchase Board, of whose members four are returned soldiers, has been appointed under the State Land Act and is actively engaged in determining the purchase of several hundreds of properties, whose owners have offered them for sale. At present the board is concentrating on the purchase of one-man farms. When this is completed consideration will be given to subdivisional propositions which are not fully developed. The purchase of 25 private areas has been recommended and has been forwarded to Canberra for consideration. This figure will be considerably augmented with the discharge from the Army of a number of valuers and surveyors whose services will become available for this work. It is the lack of professional officers which has to a great extent prevented much further work being done in this direction.

If the programme drawn up can be adhered to, it is expected that 500 farms at least will be ready for occupation within 12 months, with an ultimate objective of 3,000 to be attained. It is considered that details will be shortly available for submission to Canberra on a proposal which will include 50 dairy farms and 15 sheep and wheat farms. This is portion of the No. 1 project which visualises the adaptation of 300 dairy and 100 sheep and wheat farms from

reverted Rural Bank holdings. Arrangements have been made for sales of large properties which are not fully developed and which are suitable for War Service Land Settlement, to be postponed until such time as it is decided whether they will be purchased or resumed by the Crown.

The preparation of the scheme has called for the co-operation of many departments and highly placed officers. This has been given unstintingly, and I trust will result in success so far as this State is concerned. In any event, I think it can be said that we in this State have endeavoured to take every precaution to prevent a repetition of our experiences in connection with previous land settlement schemes. While there has been some delay in bringing matters to this stage, I hope that when the scheme is put into operation it will not only be appreciated by the returned soldiers but that they will take full advantage of it, avoid the mistakes of the past and eventually be successful primary producers in this State. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**HON. J. CORNELL** (South) [5.5]: In offering some remarks on this Bill, I see no alternative but to accept it as it is. The delay concerning any scheme for ex-soldier land settlement cannot be laid at the door of the Returned Soldiers' League of Australia. As far back as March, 1943, a Commonwealth conference was held on State representatives to deal with the question of future land settlement. That conference evolved a scheme, it met again in June, and members of it appeared before the Rural Reconstruction Commission two and a half years ago. Delegates of the league put forward their scheme to the then Prime Minister. It was a self-contained soldier settlement scheme. Subsequently, the Commonwealth Government embodied the soldier land settlement scheme in their comprehensive scheme of rehabilitation. The representatives of the league of Australia originally agreed to the leasehold principle, but provided that at the expiration of five years the soldier settler should have the right to convert to freehold under prescribed conditions. Time and again the league has revived that question and has asked, though without avail, that the Commonwealth Government should embody that proposal in the agreement.

It may not be amiss to tell the House that in this scheme of soldier land settlement, Western Australia, Tasmania and South Australia have been treated as mendicant States, and as a result have had to pay the penalty of no Commonwealth assistance unless they agree to the leasehold principle. That does not apply to the three major States, which do not participate in this scheme, namely, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Those States have the exclusive right to apply their own land laws and their own State land tenure. That is not the case in this State. The words inserted in the Bill in another place, that the leasehold be reviewed in five years are, after all, an expression of piety. So long as the present Labour Government remains in office, I am satisfied it will be adamant on the question of leasehold. If there is a change of Government, I am also satisfied there will be a swing back without much argument to giving soldiers the right to convert to freehold if they so desire.

We have an anomaly in this State that our land laws provide no machinery for leasehold. That is now to be tried out upon ex-servicemen. The Land Act has been amended in another Bill to allow that to be put over ex-servicemen. A prominent officer in the Lands Department told me that ex-servicemen who bore arms to protect what we have in Western Australia according to the law can own most things but the bit of land on which they stand, and they have to take that under leasehold conditions. The result of leasehold conditions has been shown in connection with the Workers' Homes Board. Almost invariably, where most of the loan or capital advance was paid off, the holder of the property converted to freehold. One point that appears to me ludicrous or ridiculous is that where a leasehold is allotted to a settler, he can build a home for himself and have a right in the house, but he cannot transfer his lease without the consent of the Commonwealth or State Governments. Where a man is given the freehold or the leasehold and has settled upon it, he has always built something in which to live. Is he going to build at his own expense a residence on land in which he really has no title and which he cannot transfer? The only value he can get out of it is when he walks off it, but would it then be possible for him to sell the house? The house would have to go to the person

who took over the land. I place no value whatsoever on that provision.

The Chief Secretary has told the House how many prisoners of war have been put on to recondition some of these holdings, and how many civilians have been put on. He has not told us that the treatment meted out to prisoners of war, in the matter of housing, bathing facilities, etc., is far superior to that accorded to our own kith and kin. Housing accommodation is provided for the prisoners of war. The Geneva Convention provides that they shall have baths, but so far as our people are concerned they are living in tents, and are living anyhow. Representations on this point have been made by the State executive of the R.S.L. to the powers that be.

The Chief Secretary: To whom do you refer when you speak of "living in tents"?

Hon. J. CORNELL: To civilians who are reconditioning these properties. The prisoners of war have superior housing accommodation provided for them, as laid down by the Geneva Convention. What the R.S.L. of this State is asking for is that every effort shall be made to give at least the same living conditions and facilities to our own kith and kin as are given to prisoners of war. That is not too much to ask. I could enlighten the House on many other aspects of this question, but will content myself by saying that representations have been made to the proper quarter by the proper authorities on behalf of those concerned for a rectification of the position. As to the reconditioning of farms, my idea of the scheme—and I have had a lot to do with it—is that it is, so to speak, letter-perfect. It is the professor saying that we are going to have a sort of Garden of Eden or something perfect to start off soldier settlement, despite the fact that after nearly six years of war, I believe there is not one soldier from this war on the land in Australia. Do members think that this agreement can be lived up to? Do they think that the average settler can be taught what he is supposed, under the agreement, to do when he goes on the land? I was born on the land and was starved off at an early age, but my experience is that some of the most successful land settlers in Australia knew little or nothing about the land when they took it up whereas some men who had been reared on the land proved gigantic failures.

I think we are expecting too much of the ex-servicemen and that they will be unable to fulfil conditions. I have met two or three men who have appeared before the classification board. Two of them, to my knowledge, farmed for 10 or 12 years in the Yilgarn district, where they grew record crops and ran sheep, but low prices and drought forced them off their holdings. After five years or more of service with the Forces, they appeared before the board, and they have to undergo two or three months of sharpening up; that is to say, they have to learn to keep accounts. If those men were not fit to go on the land, I do not know that two months' training will make them any better.

The R.S.L. has only one direct representative on each of the boards. I have every confidence in the Director of Land Settlement, Mr. Fyfe, and in the Premier, but I happen to know that their views never have coincided and probably never will completely coincide with the views of the Federal authority on land settlement. They have had to subordinate their views so far as the State is concerned to the views of the Canberra authority, and it is the Canberra authority that is largely to blame for the delay and the hanging-up of the scheme. I think it is understood that the authorities of the W.A. branch of the R.S.L. have taken the line of reasoning that this proposal is the best that could be obtained for the ex-servicemen of this State. They have no fault to find with the Premier or with the Director. At all times they have been given wholehearted support and co-operation, the exchange of confidences has been mutual, and it is safe to say that all the help of which the R.S.L. is capable will be given. They realise the difficulties and they will be helpful wherever it is possible. They expect much better results from the State representations than from the Federal representations. I shall support the second reading of the Bill because there is no alternative. If we amend the schedule to the Bill in a positive direction, we will immediately throw a spanner into the works.

Hon. L. CRAIG: What about leasehold and freehold?

Hon. J. CORNELL: We would throw a spanner into the works if we qualified the leasehold provision to give a specific right to convert to freehold. This would not in-

volve the three major States, but it would involve the three mendicant States, because the agreement would have to go back to the Commonwealth and be adopted by the Premiers and the Commonwealth representatives. I understand that before the Commonwealth Parliament adjourned, it agreed to this proposal. Consequently all we can do is what was done in another place—hope that the arrangement will be reviewed in five years' time. This will obviate further delay. The question now is to prevent any further delay and get on with the job. Day by day the headquarters of the R.S.L. is deluged by men wishing to know what chance they have of going on the land. A very good procedure has been adopted by the R.S.L.—we are turning applicants over to the people who are responsible; we are referring them to the members of the Commonwealth Parliament and, according to Press reports, those members have been getting busy. They are wanting to know how soon something is going to be done, and it is more their obligation than that of the State.

**HON. L. CRAIG** (South-West) [5.22]: I am very glad that this Bill has been introduced because there is an insistent demand from men who wish to go on the land. I hope that on this occasion the board will pay the closest attention to the calibre of the men who want to go on the land or are allowed to go on the land. At present many people are seeking a rural life, people who have had no experience of rural life. It is extraordinary how wars change the outlook of some young men. I know two or three returned men who formerly had jobs in the city and, strangely enough, they hate the thought of returning to indoor work. They say they are desirous of going on the land; that is the type of life they want. We have to guard against this sort of thing because such men, with few exceptions, would be calamities. They would work hard for a few years until their hearts were broken and then they would leave their blocks, as many men did after the first world war, dispirited and with a grouch against society and nothing but blame for the Government for everything that had happened.

With the provision for leasehold tenures, I do not agree at all. I think the basis of land settlement in the good rainfall areas

is a desire to make a home. Above all, people in the South-West want to live in a place that is their own. They want to plant trees that will be for the benefit of their children or their grandchildren. When I was young I planted oak trees and today they are 30 ft. high, and I want them for my grandchildren, not for somebody else. There is something desirable about having a property that is one's own. Provision must be made somewhere in the land settlement scheme for these men at some time to be able to say, "This is my home and my land to do with as I like." I am not at all enthusiastic about a perpetual lease. Call it what one may, it is never one's own.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Not a 999 years' lease?

Hon. L. CRAIG: There is something attractive about agricultural land which one is able to build into one's home and farm and which one may leave to whom one likes. Nobody likes to have conditions imposed upon him in a matter of this sort. I hope it will be possible for any settler who makes good to be able eventually to acquire the land and own it.

If the recommendations of the Rural Reconstruction Commission are carried out, we have nothing to fear for land settlement in this State because the report was sound from beginning to end. I hope that the board will never lose sight of the provisions in that report. No matter what pressure may be brought to bear, the members of the board should remain adamant about the dangers of land settlement. If they use the Rural Reconstruction Commission's report as their bible or handbook, with due regard for odd cases where men have had no rural experience but have had good business experience—these often make good farmers—there need be little fear, and I do not think we shall have the tragedies of land settlement that occurred after the 1914-18 war.

On that occasion it was not the land that was wholly at fault. I was a member of the board that purchased a great deal of the land, not all of it, and I do not know one property that I assisted to purchase that was not worth the money paid for it. The land was bought at a fairly low figure and at that time the price of wheat was 9s. a bushel

Hon. T. Moore: Your values were wrong.

Hon. L. CRAIG: No; the worst failures were those men who went on to single farms. The holder of the property perhaps had not been successful and somebody else took his place. The values of the repurchased estates, however, were fairly sound.

Hon. H. L. Roche: There was as much writing off on those holdings as on others.

Hon. L. CRAIG: That is not to say that the properties were over-valued. The factors responsible for failure were interest charges and the type of men. I was not concerned with the purchasing of Peel Estate or of the Mickey Brown estate.

Hon. W. J. Mann: What about Northcliffe?

Hon. L. CRAIG: That was not a repurchased estate.

Hon. J. Cornell: Or Noombling?

Hon. L. CRAIG: No. The land values of the estates we purchased in the South-West have more than doubled. On the estate on which I settled, blocks were abandoned. I took up one block and since then have acquired others until I have five or six, because no-one else wanted them. Others were taken up by returned soldiers, and every one of them walked off. Today there is not one returned soldier on that estate, and yet there is not one of the blocks that would not bring up to £40 an acre. I have some I would not sell for £50 an acre, without the irrigation. Members are looking for excuses for people who have made good. The land was always good; there was never anything wrong with it. People who eventually took those blocks, people who were thrifty, have all made good and today have fine little farms.

Hon. A. Thomson: They were prepared to work.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes.

Hon. J. Cornell: Did they have any capital when they started?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Some had, but others had practically none. I would quote the case of a lumper, a man with three little boys going to school. He came straight from the wharves and asked me whether the land was good. I told him it was very good. It was £17 an acre, just the bare block. He had saved a little money and he went on the property. He started to complain from the day he got there, but he worked. Hard



workers often complain, because they are tired. After the first year or so, he said he thought he would sell the land. I said "Put that in writing and give it to me"; but he never did. One day he said, "Do you think the banks would take me over? I would like to pay off the debt. The Government has given me 30 years' terms, and I would like to pay off earlier." I wrote a letter to the bank and said he was a first-class worker and the land was good; and they gave him an advance of £16 an acre. A few days ago I said to him, "How about selling your little farm?" He replied that there was nothing owing on it today, and there was nothing to put money into except war loans. I know that that man has over £1,000 in the bank. His is a 70-acre farm, and that is what thrift will do with good land. If we get right men in a good rainfall area and the land is first class, they cannot fail; but they must know something about it and must be prepared to work.

Hon. A. Thomson: Did the lumpers know anything about the land?

Hon. L. CRAIG: He was a worker and used his brains. He copied the man next to him; it was not myself.

Hon. A. Thomson: But did he know anything about working the land?

Hon. L. CRAIG: I do not think so. I do not think he had been on the land. He was one of the exceptions I was speaking about, who are thrifty and have commonsense. I think it advisable to put people with little capital on small farms in good rainfall areas. Provided the land on repurchased estates is first class, the price paid does not matter much to within a pound or two. The difference between £20 and £23 an acre at four per cent. in the best irrigation land is neither here nor there. If a man will fail on land at £23 an acre, he will fail on land at £20 an acre. It is foolish to go 50 to 70 miles away in order to save a pound or two. Above all else, it is essential to have quality. There cannot be failure if there is quality. Mr. Moore knows; he is our best wheat-grower and he agrees with everything I say.

Hon. A. Thomson: Not always!

Hon. L. CRAIG: In this matter he does, because he knows. I support the second reading, and I hope with all my heart that we shall make a sound job of this land settlement scheme. I hope we shall try to im-

prove the production of the State and not break the hearts of many of these people who are coming back from the war.

On motion by Hon. W. J. Mann, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT.**

### *Second Reading.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [5.36] in moving the second reading said: This is a supplementary Bill to the War Service Land Settlement Agreement Bill and to the Land Act, 1933-1939. It is necessary owing to there being no provision in the Land Act for perpetual leaseholds, which are to be the basis of the war service land settlement scheme. It would have been possible to achieve this purpose by amending the Land Act; but in view of the fact that the leasing of land perpetually is intended to apply to war service land settlement only, it is considered preferable to introduce a separate Bill which can be read in conjunction with the War Service Land Settlement Agreement Bill.

The essence of the Bill is contained in Clause 4 (b) which provides that, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the Land Act, it shall be lawful to grant leases for a term of 999 years, in order to give effect to the scheme contained in the proposed agreement between the Commonwealth and the State in respect to war service land settlement. Authority is also given for the making of regulations under the Land Act where necessary, and such regulations shall not be invalidated should it be found that they are inconsistent with or repugnant to any section of the Land Act; but they must not be inconsistent with the Land Settlement Agreement.

That is all that is contained in the Bill; and, just as Mr. Cornell said it was essential we should agree to the previous Bill, so I say it is also essential we should agree to this. I would have liked to say when speaking on the previous measure that the Director of Land Settlement was present, but I was not aware of it at the time. He has with him a chart which I would like your permission, Sir, to pin on the wall of the Chamber for a period, so that members may get a very clear conception of what is involved in the scheme which we

have been discussing. It has no direct connection with this particular Bill except that this is the Bill which is to provide the means whereby land may be used for the purpose of land settlement under perpetual lease—or a 999 years' lease—rather than under freehold. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—Short Title:

The CHAIRMAN: There seems to be some error. It appears that the Bill which was read a second time and which is now being considered is the Bill the debate on which was adjourned.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Perhaps I am somewhat responsible for the discussion that has taken place at the clerks' table. It was my intention to move that Order of the Day No. 5, the War Service Land Settlement Agreement Bill, be taken before Order of the Day No. 4, the War Service Land Settlement Agreement (Land Act Application) Bill but I did not do so. Therefore I spoke to Order of the Day No. 5. I am sorry; the agreement Bill is the main one.

Hon. T. Moore: What are we dealing with now?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: We should be dealing with Order of the Day No. 4—War Service Land Settlement Agreement (Land Act Application) Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Order of the Day No. 5 has been taken as Order of the Day No. 4. I will put the short title.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I should like to have progress reported.

Progress reported.

*Point of Order.*

Hon. H. Seddon: On a point of order Mr. President. Of what Bill have we just passed the second reading?

Hon. J. Cornell: The Chief Secretary has made the explanation that he omitted to move that Order of the Day No. 4 be considered after Order of the Day No. 5. He proceeded to deal with Order of the Day

No. 5, and moved its second reading, and several members took part in the debate, Mr. Mann securing the adjournment of the debate. The Chief Secretary then proceeded to deal with Order of the Day No. 4, and the second reading was agreed to on the voices. The Assistant Clerk, in the absence of the Clerk, read the Title of the Bill that was adjourned, and that is where we are. I think it will sort itself out.

The President: Committee progress has been reported on the Bill, which was read a second time.

**BILL—INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT  
(RESUMPTION OF LAND).**

*Second Reading.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [5.47] in moving the second reading said: This Bill, if approved by Parliament, should have an important effect on the development of secondary industries in this State. It proposes that authority shall be given for the resumption of land and for its disposal to persons engaged or preparing to engage in industrial enterprises. The progress of secondary industries in Western Australia has not so far been spectacular, but for some years prior to the war a steady rate of development was being maintained, and, of course, during the war a considerable expansion in some quarters took place. The Government is fully aware of the importance of secondary industries, and it is desirous of encouraging and assisting in the extension of established undertakings and in the organisation of new projects.

A notable effect of the gradual development of a number of enterprises is that they have outgrown the possibility of further expansion on their existing sites. They are therefore faced with the alternatives of obtaining adjoining land on which to extend their buildings, of moving their businesses to other and larger sites, or of transferring a part of their undertakings to other sites. This latter alternative would not, I think, be viewed favourably by the majority of firms, and would probably be accepted only as a last resort. There can be no doubt that where an industry requires land for development purposes it would be far preferable for it to be in the position to utilise adjacent property.

There is a number of metropolitan concerns that have endeavoured to purchase adjoining land for the development of their enterprises, but without success. The main difficulty appears to be that of price. The owners of the land required appear in some cases to wish to capitalise the necessity of the industries to expand, and therefore demand a prohibitive price for their property. Other factors, of course, enter into the matter, but in order to meet the position and so assist in developing some of our industrial concerns the Government has decided to introduce this Bill. It must be emphasised, however, that there will be no resumption of land that might cause genuine inconvenience or distress to anyone.

The landowner is protected in this regard, as the Bill gives him the right of appeal against resumption and against the price offered. It has found that persons who are holding land for speculative purposes are very chary about relinquishing their property in favour of resumption for industrial purposes. The Government considers that, provided they obtain a fair price and have the right of appeal, these persons should not be allowed to be a stumbling block in a scheme of industrial expansion.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Does that apply to house property?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes.

Hon. W. J. Mann: What if people are bundled out and cannot get another house?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: We will have to face that when it arises. It will be observed that the Bill is subject to the provisions of the Health Act, 1911-1944, and to the regulations and by-laws made thereunder. It provides for the establishment of a committee which will be entitled "The Land Resumption for Industries Committee." The members of the committee will be the officers who, from time to time, occupy the positions of Surveyor-General, Director of Industrial Development, and Chairman of the Town Planning Board. The committee shall elect one of its number as Chairman, and two members shall form a quorum.

Any person or company desiring to acquire land for industrial purposes may lodge an application in writing with the Minister for Lands and shall provide full details of the land that is required, including a statutory declaration stating, inter

alia, the reason for which he is unable to obtain the land by his own efforts and whether he desires an estate in fee simple or a leasehold estate. The application shall then be referred by the Minister to the Land Resumption for Industries Committee, which may require the applicant to attend personally before the committee and submit any further information that may be desired. If the committee should decide to reject any application, the decision shall be final, but shall be reported to the Minister.

Should the committee resolve to recommend an application to the Minister, it must provide at least 30 days' notice of its intention to the local authority concerned, to the Town Planning Board, and to the registered proprietor of the land. If the local authority or the Town Planning Board intends to raise any objection to the compulsory acquisition of the land, it may, within 30 days of receiving the notice, submit a detailed statement, together with its reasons, or objections. The committee shall, prior to making any recommendation to the Minister, take into account these objections.

The registered proprietor of the land, entitled, within 30 days of receiving the notice, to lodge an appeal at the nearest local court against the resumption of the land, and the decision of the court shall be decisive. If the owner fails to appeal, or if his appeal is disallowed by the local court, the committee, in the event of there being no objections from the local authority or the Town Planning Board, or having disallowed objections from those sources, must submit its favourable recommendation to the Minister, who may adopt or reject it. If the Minister approves of the recommendation he shall submit it to the Treasurer, and should there be an unfavourable decision by the Treasurer the applicant shall be notified that his application has been refused.

If the Treasurer approves, the applicant will be required to execute an agreement to lease or purchase the land, subject to such conditions as the Governor may approve. When this is completed, the recommendation shall be submitted to the Governor, who may grant his approval, regardless of the provisions of any Act, town planning scheme, or local authority's by-laws. Arrangements can then be made for the resumption of the land according to the pro-

visions of the Public Works Act, 1902-1933, as if it were required for public works purposes. As a result of this method of action, the owner of the land resumed will have the right of appeal against the price offered, and his appeal will be heard by a Compensation Court.

The Bill also gives the Governor the power to dedicate any Crown land for industrial purposes. The Governor, on the recommendation of the committee, which must be approved by the Minister for Lands and the Treasurer, may also purchase or compulsorily acquire under the provisions of the Public Works Act any land, and may reserve it until such time as it may be required for industrial purposes. The Bill provides that the disposal of any Crown land so dedicated, or of any land so purchased, shall be carried out in accordance with the procedure I have already explained, except that the Minister shall be empowered to over-ride the committee's rejection of any application for the land.

It is considered that the Minister should possess this power of review, as the land in question will be the property of the Crown. By these particular means the Government will be able to acquire a reserve of land for the purpose of industrial expansion, which will assist in obviating any delay which might otherwise ensue in the obtaining of suitable land at some future date.

Hon. A. Thomson: Is there any particular land resumption in view for industrial purposes?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know at the moment of any that is required under this Bill, except that several cases have been reported to the Government where industrial concerns have not been able to secure adjoining land. The Bill includes precautions against trafficking in any land obtained under the provisions of the measure. Should such an offence be committed, the transaction in question shall be rendered null and void, and where the offender is the lessee of the land, his lease shall be liable to forfeiture. Should a person use the land for other than the purpose for which it was obtained, he shall be regarded as guilty of an offence. In that direction the Bill provides that an offence shall be punishable by a penalty of £100, and also a daily penalty of

£5 for each day or part of a day during which the offence has been committed after notice has been given by the Minister in writing to the offender.

Authority is provided in the Bill for the appropriation of moneys by Parliament and for the gazettal of regulations. In my remarks I have outlined the provisions of the Bill, which I feel are eminently fair to all parties concerned, and which will be of vital assistance to the Government in its plan for encouraging the expansion and development of secondary industries in W.A. I commend the Bill for the approval of the House. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. J. A. DIMMITT (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.58]: I think this Bill will find favour in this House because of its apparent intention to aid in the development and expansion of secondary industries, and to obviate the difficulty that can exist where it is proved that some owner of land is unreasonable in his attitude to the expansion of an industry that requires that particular land. I am not happy about the make-up of the committee proposed. This Bill provides for a committee composed of the Surveyor General, the Director of Industrial Development and the Chairman of the Town Planning Board. I can see no objection to the Surveyor General or the Director of Industrial Development, nor can I see any objection to the Town Planning Commissioner because he is Town Planning Commissioner, or because he is Mr. Davidson, but for the good reason that this Bill provides that the Town Planning Commissioner shall act in a dual capacity. Paragraph (c) of Subclause (5) reads—

On receipt of a statement of objections from the local authority or the Town Planning Board, as aforesaid, the committee shall examine and give due consideration to such objections before making any report or recommendation to the Minister.

So the position would be that the Town Planning Commissioner could lodge an objection with the committee and in turn would be one of the committee to adjudicate on his own objection. That seems to be fundamentally unsound. For an appellant to be a judge to determine his own appeal appears to me to be entirely wrong, and I suggest the Government should give that phase some consideration.

The Chief Secretary: Are you not making a mistake? One reference is to the board and the other to the Town Planning Commissioner.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: The Town Planning Commissioner is the chairman of the board, so I am not making any mistake. In suggesting that the Government give consideration to changing the personnel of the committee, I would like to see a representative of the Chamber of Manufactures selected for a seat on that body. I am not wedded to the idea, but certainly the Chamber of Manufactures is as vitally interested in the industrial expansion of Western Australia as any other body that could be named.

Then again paragraph (a) of Subclause (5) of Clause 7 sets out that before the committee can make any report or recommendation to the Minister respecting an application that is to be approved, at least 30 days' notice of its intention must be lodged with the local authority concerned and with the registered proprietor of the land affected. I intend to place on the notice paper an amendment that will provide for the notice being also given to "any other person financially interested in the title." It would be quite easy for such land to be subject to a mortgage, for a caveat to be lodged against it or for a contract of sale to exist in connection with it. Due notice should be served on all having an interest in the land so that they could be safeguarded.

The Chief Secretary: Would it be possible to get all that information?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Yes, the Titles Office would have it.

The Chief Secretary: I doubt if it would.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: It would have information about any mortgage or caveat, although perhaps not about any contract of sale. My sole intention is to safeguard the interest of people concerned.

The Chief Secretary: At any rate, the matter can be considered when we see your amendment.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Under the Bill the decision is to be left in the hands of the Minister as to whether or not the recommendation of the committee should be adopted. In my opinion any such recommendation should not be adopted before

the proposition has received the approval of Parliament. One of my reasons for suggesting that course is that in Clause 9 it is provided that land may be resumed, if the Governor approves of the application notwithstanding any provision of any other Act or of any town planning scheme or by-law made by a local authority. That means that if the Bill becomes an Act it will over-ride all other enactments concerned. A local governing body that has developed its area in accordance with a well-defined plan, with its industrial undertakings in one area and other activities in other areas, could find its whole arrangements upset without that local authority having an opportunity to appeal against the Minister's decision. If the consent of the Parliament had to be obtained, those important interests could be more adequately safeguarded.

Clause 11 seems to provide very wide power, for under it the Minister could compulsorily acquire all land suitable for industrial purposes, which, in effect, would make it obligatory for industries to be established or to expand on Government-owned property or else would mean that the Government could acquire huge tracts of country for the purpose of industrial development and then insist on any person who desired to establish a factory doing so in the area so purchased. I do not think that is right. I would like Clause 11 either to be materially altered or deleted from the Bill. To me it seems undesirable and unnecessary and quite beyond the objective of the legislation. I think the provision of the Bill should be limited to individual applications as circumstances arise, and they should not be broadened to give the Government an implied monopoly with respect to the establishment of industrial development undertakings.

The Chief Secretary: The monopoly is purely implied—and that is all.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Industry is confronted with enough difficulties already without adding still further to them. I support the second reading of the Bill but I trust the Committee stage will be deferred till Thursday so that amendment may be placed on the notice paper.

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, debate adjourned.

# **BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [6.6] in moving the second reading said: Members will be perfectly familiar with the provisions of the Bill which proposes to extend the operations of the Financial Emergency Act for a further period, which will end on the 30th November, 1946.

Hon. A. Thomson: Do you really mean that?

**The CHIEF SECRETARY:** The Government hopes so, and from all appearances at present that should be the position. At any rate, this House will have full opportunity to approve or disapprove of any further extension of the legislation, should it be sought. The Act, which was passed in 1934, provided for a 22½ per cent. reduction in salaries and wages and for the control of interest rates. As a result of amendments in 1934 and 1935, the Act now only provides for the control of interest in certain cases. All mortgages in existence prior to the 31st December, 1931, are subject to the Act, by which the interest rates were reduced to 5 per cent. or the original rate, less 22½ per cent., whichever was the greater. It is felt that mortgages suffer no hardship as a result of this reduction, as money rates at present are much lower than they were in 1931. The Government considered proposing that the time was now opportune to allow the Act to lapse, as most mortgages entered into prior to 1931 have expired, and those that are still in force have been substantially reduced.

Hon. L. Craig: Hundreds of them.

**The CHIEF SECRETARY:** However, it was thought that a certain amount of warning of the intention to finalise the Act should be given, which would permit mortgagors to obtain fresh accommodation at the lower rates of interest that are now offering. I might add that the Government proposed that this period should terminate on the 30th September, 1946, but, at the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition in another place, agreed that it should be extended a further two months. The reason for this amendment is that the extension of time will be of value in ascertaining whether the proposal that the Bill shall lapse next year will inflict any hardship on interested

parties. I hope the position will be such by the end of November of next year that there will be no necessity for any further extensions of the Act. I move:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**HON. H. SEDDON** (North-East) [6.13]: I quite agree with the Minister's remarks although I cannot understand why it has been necessary to extend the application of the Bill from September to November. The conditions with regard to mortgages are such, as the Minister pointed out, that there is now no difficulty in raising money and an extension until the end of June next would be quite adequate to enable any person to make necessary arrangements regarding finance. I leave the matter in the hands of the House but it appears to me that the 30th June would have been a reasonable date to fix rather than to carry on the legislation for another five months.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

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

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

# **BILL—PUBLIC SERVICE APPEAL BOARD ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 29th November.

**HON. J. G. HISLOP** (Metropolitan) [7.32]: I wonder what the real intention behind the Bill is. I realise, of course, what the Chief Secretary said was its intention, and I do not question it for a moment. I wonder whether it has been appreciated that many of these men, who have been employed temporarily in the Public Service during the whole duration of the war, have given very fine service; yet by this Bill they will be prevented from making application to be appointed to the permanent staff. I can see little need for the Bill because, under the parent Act which it seeks to amend, the Public Service Commissioner is given the right to say whether such an appeal shall be granted. It would do no harm to read the section which it is proposed to amend—

Any person who has been employed at a daily or weekly rate of wages for not less than

five years continuously in a department of the public service within the Public Service Act, 1904, and whose duties are similar to those of an officer on the permanent staff, or such as are proper for an officer on the permanent staff to perform under such Act, may apply to the Public Service Commissioner for appointment to the permanent staff.

The Act does not in any way say that the temporary employee shall be appointed to the permanent staff. It seems to me to be grossly unfair to say deliberately, by a short amendment of the Act, that men who have served for five years during the war as temporary officers should not have the right of appeal. They should still be granted that right. I realise that when introducing the Bill the Minister pointed out that it was obviously the intention to protect the members of the Public Service who had been away on active service; but these officers surely are protected by the original Act. However, if an officer has rendered five years service as a temporary employee and there is a possibility of his appealing and asking to be placed on the permanent staff, he should be given that right. We are not taking it out of the hands of the Public Service Commissioner and compelling him to appoint such a man.

Personally, I consider the Act in its original form is very much better than the amendment, because we take away by the amendment the right of the temporary men to apply for a permanent position on the staff, whereas under the parent Act we give them the right to apply and also give the Public Service Commissioner the right to hear the appeal. Surely that is the fairer way. I am not trying to interfere with the right of any public servant, who has undertaken war service, to obtain his rightful place on the permanent staff of the Public Service; but, as I said, a temporary man who has served for five years should have the right to become a member of the permanent staff if there is a vacancy, and that is all the original Act says. We should leave the Act as it stands. I shall vote against the Bill, because the parent Act covers all contingencies. I, for one, cannot see the need for the Bill.

**THE HONORARY MINISTER** (Hon. E. H. Gray—West—in reply) [7.36]: Dr. Hislop has misunderstood the meaning of

the Bill, which is designed to clarify and make certain the intention of the original amendment passed in 1941; that is, the temporary clerks then in the Public Service and those appointed during the war should not have that service counted for the duration of the war and 12 months thereafter. Unless we have this clarification of the provision, everyone is given the right to apply for an appointment in the Civil Service. They will also have the right, if refused, to appeal to the board. This will place the appeal board in a most awkward position.

I stress the fact that large numbers of men who were juniors when they left for the war are now returning to take up positions to which they were appointed permanently when they joined the Forces. They have been given their periodical increases and were promised the right to join the service again. To deal with those men alone will be a full-time job for the Public Service Commissioner. It would be wrong to give the temporary men who have rendered such splendid service as public officers an incorrect idea as to their rights. Many of them are fairly aged men, but they took on the employment to help the war effort and on the understanding that it would be temporary only, and that they would have to stand aside when the permanent men returned. A doubt arose as to the legal interpretation of the amendment made in 1941 and this amending Bill is to clarify the position. I think we shall be doing justice to all concerned by passing the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

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

## **MOTION—NURSING, HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL SERVICES.**

*As to Inquiry by Royal Commission—  
Passed.*

Debate resumed from the 13th November on the following motion by Hon. J. G. Hislop:—

That this House urges the Government to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate and report upon:—

- (i) Any re-organisation considered necessary to provide adequate nursing facilities (a) immediately, (b) in the future;

- (ii) The hospital policy of the State, and make recommendations thereon in regard to (a) administration and finance, (b) construction, (c) distribution;
- (iii) By what means the present system of medical practice can be increased in efficiency and availability.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [7.42]: I have on a number of occasions expressed the view that any proposals or suggestions relating to the general well-being and health of the community are most important, and therefore should receive the earnest consideration of every member of this House. That being so, I must accept Dr. Hislop's motion as a contribution designed to assist in improving existing facilities and services in the very wide field which the subject covers. In the course of his remarks, the hon. member referred to many matters associated with hospital, medical and nursing services in this State, some important and others only of a minor nature. I propose therefore to deal with the first-mentioned items; and, having been supplied with considerable data and information, I hope to convince members that the Government is alive to all the problems involved, and that there is no justification whatever for the Royal Commission.

In dealing with a subject such as the question before the House, Dr. Hislop, of course, has the advantage of being a medical practitioner. He therefore has an intimate association with the matters concerned, but in my opinion the whole question must be approached from the point of view of the ordinary citizen using his own knowledge of the State and its resources in an endeavour to decide how far, without detriment to other important and needful services, the community can afford to go along the rather special avenues opened up in the speech of the hon. member. Broadly speaking, the subject-matter may be divided into certain disabilities due to six years of war and the consequences thereof; and, on the other hand, the basic disabilities of a huge State like Western Australia; having in its 1,000,000 square miles a population only as large as a medium-sized provincial town in England.

I have a statement which was recently prepared showing the comparative sizes of hospitals in the States of Australia and in New Zealand, and I have a few spare copies

for those who are interested. I commend this statement to the very careful study of members and to ask them at the same time to bear in mind many of the statements made by Dr. Hislop. The statement shows, as we would expect, that a large proportion of Western Australia's hospitals are very small. No less than 59 per cent. average 10 beds or under, and of these 32 per cent. are under five beds. If one looks further at the statement one finds that a further 23 per cent. are over 10 but under 20 bed capacity. This has very wide repercussions. It is obvious that, as with schools, a small hospital cannot possibly be as efficient and provide the same range of treatment as a large hospital, and another most important matter—which I will refer to later—is the bearing it has on the training of nurses. Out of the 81 hospitals only five are training schools and six others are partly recognised as training schools. In all, the number of hospitals that are utilised in any way for the training of nurses is limited to 11.

From the point of view of nursing staff this distribution of our hospitals means that an abnormal number of fully-trained nurses is required on the one hand, while the facilities for the training of those numbers are very much reduced. The statement that I have just referred to shows that, as compared with the 59 per cent. of Western Australia's hospitals that average under 10 beds, in New South Wales only 21 per cent. are in that category, and in Victoria 12 per cent. In New Zealand the comparative figure is 8.6 per cent. Those are figures of which we must take notice. Let us turn once more to the geographical distribution. It may be suggested that Western Australia has too many small hospitals, but to reduce that number would create great hardship. Excluding the hospitals in the metropolitan area and those in our sparsely populated North-West, the average distance between the remaining 61 hospitals is 47.5 miles. That is quite a different story from what can be told of States like Victoria and New South Wales, and also of New Zealand.

When the peculiar situation of Western Australia is considered dispassionately, it will be admitted by any unbiased person that the hospital situation in this State is extraordinary, and the basic difficulty



already referred to cannot possibly be overcome, no matter how many Royal Commissions may be appointed to investigate. Members viewing the situation in the respective Provinces with which they are familiar, will probably agree that no policy of ruthlessly closing down even one-third of these hospitals, and the centralisation of the consequent work at a few points, is feasible or fair, and if any policy tending in that direction were adopted it would create hardship on the populations in the areas concerned.

Turning to the North-West, we recently had a suggestion from a departmental committee that the establishment of regional hospitals in that area should be considered. I will refer later to the term "regional" which was introduced by Dr. Hislop into this debate, but in the whole of the area north of Geraldton there are nine small hospitals dotted about, and the aggregate of the average beds occupied in all those hospitals is only 39. Whatever improvements or extensions of medical or transport services may be arranged, it is obvious that none of those widely spaced hospitals could be eliminated, and it is very doubtful indeed if any concentration of hospital cases could be effected. One requires only a very limited knowledge of the far North to realise that that is the position.

The basic difficulties of the hospital situation are as illustrated by the figures that have been quoted. There is a huge area and a small population. Then again there are few large hospitals which can act as training schools for nurses and which can be justifiably built up after the provision of expensive equipment, so as to be able to render services comparable with modern standards in large communities. We know full well that in the educational field, Western Australia has an abnormal number of small schools which have the disabilities, both to teacher and children, inseparable from small schools. Exactly the same relevant conditions apply in hospitals, and the most that can be hoped for is to improve those conditions to some extent and to alleviate the disabilities which are inseparable from the basic state of affairs.

In his speech Dr. Hislop spoke as though no-one in the hospital field was aware of the deficiencies and disabilities existing in our

country hospital services. He roundly criticised the Government's handling of the matter, and then said that instead of the Royal Commission, which he had requested last year, a departmental committee was formed. As a matter of fact that committee was formed in April, 1944, six months before Dr. Hislop moved in the matter. This committee is not a substitute for the Royal Commission for which Dr. Hislop moved in that year, but is an advisory body composed of certain officials and others having intimate knowledge of the hospital position in this State and elsewhere, and includes representatives of the British Medical Association. The committee is steadily pursuing its inquiries, and it was at the instigation of that committee that arrangements were recently made for Col. Le Souef to spend some three months in inquiring into the hospital position in Europe and America before returning to this State. He has been asked to inquire more particularly in regard to the type of hospital considered necessary today where the requirements of small communities are being dealt with.

The members of that committee know, and apparently everybody but Dr. Hislop knows, that no rapid progress can be made with work of this nature, and that if the committee had completed its inquiries and was in a position to make recommendations, it is well-known that no rapid progress could be made with converting those plans into actuality. We have to realise, and I think most members do, that during the last few years, with the best will in the world, it would not have been possible for this Government to have accomplished one tithe of what Dr. Hislop suggests ought to be done and in some cases suggests that we should have done during that period. In this connection Dr. Hislop asked a number of questions and made various comments from which one might infer that his ideas were original, or that nothing was being done in connection with our hospitals. As a matter of fact, the questions that he raised are the very ones that are being tackled by the Hospital Planning Committee, whose members are by now fully aware of the peculiarities of Western Australia—more so, no doubt, than when they began their inquiries.

It might be noted here that the only two States that have set up anything in the way of a hospital authority are New South Wales and Victoria, which have provided themselves, respectively, with a Hospitals Commission and a Charities Board. Dr. Hislop in his speech expressed the opinion that there should be control of hospitals and their finance, and control in various other ways. But the organisations in Victoria and New South Wales are advisory only; they are advisory to the Minister, and neither of them possesses executive authority. Where an organisation, such as a hospital organisation, has to deal with an important phase of social service, such as hospitals, involving millions of pounds in capital expenditure and hundreds of thousands in annual upkeep, no Government could possibly think of relegating its authority to some small body such as a hospital commission.

Dealing with sites for regional hospitals, Dr. Hislop raised the questions of their size, how many beds they would contain, what services they would render, etc. He then referred to the 150-bed hospital proposal for Merredin, and asked why residents of Bruce Rock, Nungarin and Kununoppin should leave those districts for Merredin. The questions first referred to are now being considered and have from the beginning received consideration by the Hospital Planning Committee. No-one, however, is talking of setting up a 150-bed hospital at Merredin and insisting on patients from Bruce Rock, Nungarin, Kununoppin and so on being sent into Merredin.

Hon. J. Cornell: Kellerberrin, 36 miles away!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am quoting the places mentioned by Dr. Hislop. Considered thought has been given to the question of the possibility of having larger hospitals in certain centres where perhaps more comprehensive treatment might be given than at present, but I am told there has not been any suggestion of building hospitals in places like Merredin and compelling people from surrounding districts up to 40, 50 or 60 miles away to attend the larger hospital. Dr. Hislop obviously shares with the Minister for Health and the department the desire that improvements in the hospital field should be pressed on with. One knows perfectly well that ability to do

so is very much limited by the manpower, the materials and the money available.

I am getting somewhat tired of repeating statements of this sort. No-one knows better than I do the various difficulties with which departments have been faced on account of these factors. If members will only realise that, during the war years, we have been placed in an impossible position from that point of view, there is not likely to be much argument about what has happened in the past. As regards the future, I think we have indicated that when the opportunity is given to us, when we can secure manpower and materials and when it is possible to make the requisite money available for progressive improvements in our public buildings generally, these things will be done.

The first bottleneck in regard to manpower is in the serious diminution of professional staff under the Principal Architect, and until the staff there is very much increased, it will be impossible to do all the detailed investigation and planning that are necessary. This is a disability that we in this State have suffered more than have other States. Practically the whole of the staff of the Principal Architect's office—those left or made available to him—have been engaged on work associated with the war. Only a few months ago, we found it almost impossible to get the smallest drawing for civilian requirements attended to in less than several months. I am told that the position is improving gradually and, as it improves, we shall have much leeway to make up and there will be plenty of work for the staff for many years. Until the leeway is made up, I am satisfied that the Public Works Department will not be able to make anything like the progress which it would desire and which members here insist we ought to show.

Various large and important jobs in the hospital field are contemplated, such as the erection of a 200-bed modern hospital block at the Wooroloo Sanatorium; the erection of new quarters for nurses as well as not less than 50 beds of new ward accommodation at the King Edward Memorial Hospital; a new mental hospital at Wokalup; new district hospitals at such places as Bunbury and Geraldton; and new hospitals at Lake Grace and Pinjarra. When the Principal Architect has sufficient staff to proceed with work on these projects,

the next difficulty will be materials and men, having relation to other building projects such as housing and the requirements of the Education Department, but not least important is the question of funds. Dr. Hislop stated that a forward-looking hospital building scheme would necessitate the spending of millions of pounds. That is perfectly true. But all those millions can only be secured through the machinery of the Loan Council. In this connection, members are fully acquainted with the methods that are adopted, and they can judge for themselves how much money per annum is likely to be available for hospital and allied buildings when all the other projects, which are talked of and listed as post-war works, are taken into account.

We have to take a realistic view. There is leeway to be made up, not only in the matter of hospital buildings, but also in regard to school buildings. I do not think there is one member who has not endeavoured during the last year or two to secure new schools or additions to existing schools. Apart from this, there are other public buildings, many of which require much attention and some of which need to be replaced altogether. There is also the scheme for public buildings which was agreed upon some few years ago to be established very close to Government House. There is hardly a public building in the city but that some members complain that nothing has been done for years and that it is time something was done. So hospital accommodation must take its place along with other very important requirements. May I refer to the large engineering works which are so essential in the post-war period for the purpose of providing employment. We were discussing the other night electricity schemes. Associated with them are works, in the South-West particularly, which have to do with the raising of the Wellington Dam, Mundaring Weir and so on. All of those works will need large sums of money and will have to be taken into consideration when dealing with the subject which Dr. Hislop has so keenly pressed.

As I have already indicated, hospitals have to take their place with schools, engineering and other works, together with the vitally important housing programme, and it would be utterly useless to set up some

special organisation such as Dr. Hislop suggests, unless hospitals were to be given complete priority over everything else and were to be given the whole of the loan fund available. Dr. Hislop spoke of the standardisation of hospital construction, and argued that a Royal Commission should visit the Eastern States and study base hospitals in action. Obviously such standardisation, if it is feasible will be pursued in the thought of the Hospital Planning Committee and of the Principal Architect.

If we were building a number of similar sized hospitals within the space of two or three years, the same types of equipment and the same designs would be adopted. In view of the difficulty relating to provision of money, our hospital programme is not likely to go ahead by "leaps and bounds". Dr. Hislop well knows—perhaps better than any other member—how rapidly new ideas are brought forward in regard to medical treatment and hospital equipment, and standards adopted now would have to be continually revised, and equipment that might be used now could easily be obsolete in five or six years' time. The word "standardisation" cannot have more than the ordinary application which commonsense people will give to it.

Suppose a Royal Commission were appointed, it would readily be urged that it would have to consist of more than one person. No-one would suggest that a Royal Commission should consist of one medical practitioner, and Dr. Hislop would not agree to one non-medical person. That would mean the appointment of three people who presumably would be expected to have some special knowledge and experience to justify their selection. Any such commission would pursue its inquiries within the State and would probably take some weeks to pursue its inquiries in the Eastern States. That commission would finally, after say six months' work, present a report which would be no doubt very useful as at the date of its presentation. To a very large extent it would duplicate the work that is being quietly and unobtrusively performed by the Hospital Planning Committee. This committee is composed of people of our own State who have a wide knowledge of the State's peculiarities, which will be conceded to be a very considerable advantage in a matter of this nature.

I have already pointed out that any rapid progress with a hospital building plan is quite out of the question. It is impossible. If an expensive Royal Commission were set up and reported with reasonable rapidity, a good deal of that report would probably be out of date in three or four years time, whereas, the Hospital Planning Advisory Committee will continue quietly to make its inquiries and formulate its conclusions.

Hon. H. Tuckey: How long will that take?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is intended to keep that committee in existence and probably to give it some statutory standing, so that as the hospital building programme proceeds, that committee, continuing its work, can revise its standards and findings from time to time in the light of the most up-to-date knowledge and experience. I have also indicated that the Hospital Planning Committee is steadily proceeding with inquiries in various directions with a view to settling in due order some of the problems suggested by Dr. Hislop. For instance, Dr. Hislop mentioned the term "regional hospital." I do not know who coined this phrase, but it has come to be commonly used in regard to hospital and other matters.

The Hospital Planning Committee quite early in its deliberations considered that future development for regional hospitals should be mainly at certain district bases, namely, at Kalgoorlie, Geraldton and Bunbury. When existing hospitals at these places need replacing it is considered that they should be regarded as on a regional basis, and the additional facilities both in quality and quantity needed to serve the region should be centralised at the regional base, while the small hospitals in the area would remain at their present size. New hospitals of this type established in centres such as those I have mentioned would not interfere in any way with the size of the existing smaller hospitals surrounding those areas. The policy which is being formulated and which will probably take place will be the development of the regional centres, while the smaller hospitals will continue to deal with the maternity cases and the emergency cases of the smaller areas, and will be gradually improved in the direction of hot water services, septic tank installations and other amenities.

Mention of these indicates another disability of the small hospital. One cannot organise septic tank services or hot water services unless there is an ample, assured water supply, or unless considerable sums of money are spent on very large underground tanks. When one realises the number of small hospitals I have referred to, one can quite easily visualise the large sums of money that would be required for that purpose alone, quite apart from the number of new institutions or additions to existing institutions. Another disability consequential upon the small hospital is the fluctuation that arises on account of the popularity or otherwise of the local doctor. That is something of which no hospital committee or planning committee and no department could have prior knowledge.

Hon. J. Cornell: I know one locality where the medical officer is not popular.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There is a fluctuation in accordance with the popularity of the medical officer; and there are many instances where people of a particular district refuse to patronise one hospital and prefer to go 20 to 40 miles to another hospital, simply because the medical man at the second institution is more popular than the one in their own district. Again, a small hospital, apart from this last factor, is subject to very much greater fluctuations than a large one, with the consequence that a multiplicity of small hospitals is most uneconomical in the utilisation of the beds available; and, of course, the same applies to staff. Fifty patients scattered through ten or twelve hospitals could be handled by probably half the staff if they were in one hospital; but these economies of bed establishment, of nursing and other personnel, are impossible with our far-flung areas.

If we were in a position to do more in the way of improving some of these district hospitals, it would be all the better; but bearing in mind what I have said in regard to large distances, the distances between existing small hospitals, and also the small populations they have to serve, I think it must be recognised that there is a disability which, no matter what a Royal Commission might recommend, would have to remain until those conditions are altered or improved. Bearing in mind the basic facts already referred to, let us consider their effect upon the training of nurses,

which received a good deal of attention in Dr. Hislop's remarks. In Western Australia, only 16 per cent. of the hospitals are used as training schools for nurses. In Victoria, 74 per cent. are so used, and in New South Wales, 43 per cent., while in New Zealand the percentage is 55. That is one of the advantages the smaller States with larger populations have, and it is one of those difficulties which I have already dealt with as far as we are concerned. As already pointed out, this means that compared with other communities, we produce a very much smaller proportion of nurses; while, with our multiplicity of small hospitals, we need to employ a great many more.

In the course of his remarks Dr. Hislop urged the elimination of the small private hospital and the concentration of effort in larger hospitals of, say, 100 beds. Apart from certain other general economic and social considerations, which I desire to refer to later, this, of course, might be advisable in the metropolitan area, but it is certainly not practicable in the wide regions of this State. Dr. Hislop also endorsed a recommendation from certain officers of the department that the small country hospitals should not be used for training. If that policy were pursued, only six of all the hospitals in the State would be used for training schools, and the difficulties would be further accentuated.

Hon. H. Tuckey: What would be the reason for not training them in the country?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am telling members that that was Dr. Hislop's argument. He suggested that the smaller hospitals should not be used as training schools. He wants a series of larger hospitals where the trainees can get wider experience; and he referred to a training school where trainees would spend their first six months before going into a hospital at all. I would refer members again to the schedule of hospitals that I mentioned previously, having regard to this question of training schools and the use of the larger hospitals for that purpose. How do other States, such as South Australia and Queensland, manage? Each has a hospital problem. They both have larger populations than we have, and a smaller area, but the conditions in those two States are more comparable with those of Western Australia. When we examine the position there, we find that South Australia

uses every one of its hospitals, even to the smallest, for the training of nurses; while in Queensland 61 per cent. of the hospitals are used for training purposes, which means that all hospitals averaging over 10 beds occupied are used more or less for the training of nurses.

Yet if Dr. Hislop had his way, all this possible source for training purposes would be eliminated, and the resultant state would be very much worse than it is now. In this connection members will recall that Dr. Hislop stated that no private hospital used as a training school could be internationally recognised; and if that possibility be borne in mind, and the other limitations suggested by Dr. Hislop become effective, how would Western Australia be able to provide even anything like the number of nurses necessary for our minimum requirements?

Hon. J. Cornell: "The Mount" is the only private hospital in Western Australia which trains nurses.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Dr. Hislop pointed out that nurses trained there are not entitled to international recognition.

Hon. J. Cornell: If they join the A.T.N.A., I think they are entitled to reciprocity in the British Empire.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The point is that they can secure employment as nurses but not as registered nurses. Members will also recall that Dr. Hislop referred to a scheme that had been devised, known as the "block system." It was in this connection that Dr. Hislop urged the elimination of the small country hospitals for use in any training capacity. He pointed out that the commencing point in connection with this block system was six months in the proposed central preliminary training school. At the present time all nurses going to one or other of the hospitals for training spend the first six weeks in a preliminary training school; and I am informed that although utilisation of such preliminary schools is not standard practice in Australia, where such schools are established the usual period for the students is six weeks.

It will be noted that the scheme put forward by Dr. Hislop involves six months, not six weeks. This would mean that for every extra week the trainees spend in such preliminary school, they spend an equivalent period away from the wards, and consequently more staff is needed in the wards.

Furthermore, the cost of such a school is fairly considerable. It is estimated that the cost of the buildings for the school and of the consequential living accommodation would be in the region of £30,000, and the annual cost of running this preliminary school would be not less than £10,000. So we no sooner start on new ideas than we get rather a shock in regard to the preliminary cost and also the cost of maintenance. Why should Western Australia, which of all the States is least financially able and which of all the States is most urgently in need of nurses in the wards rather than in the school, be expected to embark upon this very academic proposal?

Another factor in this connection is that the hospitals, before the first 12 months after graduation have elapsed, lose about one-third of the nurses, mainly through matrimony, so that the large proportion of nurses for whom this additional and costly training is suggested would give very little service in the nursing world in return, except perhaps in a private capacity. One great and almost overwhelming difficulty with which the hospitals are at present faced was referred to by Dr. Hislop in various parts of his speech, namely, the very heavy shortage of nurses, which phase has received so much publicity in recent times. He stated that since the restrictions on the movements of hospital workers have been removed, a critical position has been reached; that disorganisation is spreading rapidly, and that measures must be taken at once, etc.

It is true that restrictions have been lifted, and that the position in our hospitals is not getting any better. Until manpower restrictions were lifted in the hospital field some two or three months ago, nursing personnel was controlled, and the position was reasonably in hand, although staff shortages certainly existed, particularly in the more distant country areas and at one or two hospitals which had become unpopular. Since the manpower controls were abrogated, however, the position has rapidly deteriorated and is causing a great deal of anxiety. With the removal of control the position a week ago was that the public hospitals in this State were 91 trained nurses short, plus 49 trainees, plus 30 nursing assistants, and, in addition, 52 domestics.

The weight of the disability caused by these shortages certainly falls more heavily

on the matrons and nursing staffs of hospitals than on the domestic staff. The medical and nursing professions naturally feel the responsibility of patients more than the cooks and maids, and when the latter are not available, or leave their positions, the nurses are frequently called upon to fill the gaps temporarily, or in some cases, more than temporarily. While the very unsatisfactory state of affairs that exists is frankly admitted and has been the subject of published statements, official and otherwise, the only suggestion that Dr. Hislop makes is that some body of A.W.A.S., or some body like A.W.A.S., should be recruited, but he overlooks the fact that this is constitutionally impossible. The A.W.A.S. and other women's services have been recruited for war purposes and war services, and I understand that there is no constitutional power by which 100 or 200 of these women can be ordered off to some civil job or jobs; nor, of course, is there any power to recruit any such body and move its members about from hospital to hospital as the need arises.

Again, Dr. Hislop is apparently a great believer in the use of legal force as well as moral suasion. He seems to think, for instance, that the creation of a nursing service under a matron would solve a lot of difficulties. Unfortunately he has had no experience of this type of administration and he fails to realise how often nurses, like other members of the community, have their own feelings and thoughts as to where they will work. The general experience of the department is that quite often nurses refuse transfers although the best of reasons may be advanced as to why they should accept such transfers. A nurse for personal reasons insists on remaining in "this" town, or refuses to go to "that" hospital, and, in a democratic community, legal force to move a person about like a pawn on a chessboard is quite out of the question.

I would like the House to realise that immediately it was announced that manpower restrictions were to be withdrawn representations were made to the Commonwealth authorities, but they appeared to be equally powerless. It must be remembered that some 6,000 female personnel have been enlisted in the various women's Services. I do not know what number still remains, but it is obvious that many thousands of women have been caught up in this way, and until the

great majority have been released and resume their normal activities, shortages of womanpower will be the order of the day.

Hon. T. Moore: Is that the position with the hospitals in the Eastern States?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes. I would like to refer to a statement that appeared in "The West Australian" on the 27th October last, under the heading of "Doctors and Nurses," portion of which reads—

Doctors and nurses were not being unduly retained on Army service, Major-General Burston, Director General of Medical Services, said today. He was replying to criticism by Dr. C. H. Dickson, secretary of the Victorian branch of the B.M.A., who said that there was a serious shortage of doctors and nurses for civilian needs and that Army doctors in Rabaul, Bougainville, Lae and Wewak were considerably in excess of requirements.

Major-General Burston said that since the cessation of hostilities a large number of medical units had been closed and most of their staffs had been transferred or were in process of transfer to the mainland for demobilisation.

Major-General Burston said the number of nurses had been considerably reduced, but the discharge rate could not be maintained without recruiting more nurses to replace some of those discharged. Between October 6th and November 17th, 73 nurses had been discharged and an additional 60 had been subsequently recommended for discharge. At present the Army had 2,343 nurses, including 61 who were out of action through sickness. Its actual requirements were 2,336. More than 140 nurses were married women who had to be discharged immediately, and many compassionate releases were under consideration. Of the 73 nurses discharged only one had gone back to civil nursing. More than 2,000 nurses were registered in Australia annually, and the Army had taken only about 300 each year. If civilian hospitals worked with the same ratio of nurses to patients as the Army hospitals, there would be no shortage of nurses.

There are two points I wish to make. Firstly, according to Major-General Burston, Director-General of Medical Services, of 73 nurses who have been discharged from the Army, between the 6th October and the 17th November, only one has returned to civil nursing, which indicates a serious position.

Hon. T. Moore: It indicates that Victoria is in the same position as we are here.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I think Major-General Burston has not given sufficient thought to his last few words, because the Press paragraph refers to 1,000 or 1,200-bed hospitals, which I understand is

the usual type of Army hospital, and in large institutions of that kind more economical use can be made of staff than is possible with the same number of patients distributed over a number of smaller institutions such as our hospitals. I understand there are large numbers of medical orderlies and other personnel available in the Army for work in Army hospitals, in addition to trained nurses. It is therefore futile for Major-General Burston to make comparisons between military hospitals and civilian hospitals on the ground that if we had the same ratio of nurses to patients there would be no nurse problem in Western Australia. That throws some light on the problem we have to face. It is to be hoped that a larger proportion of the nurses discharged from the Army will return to civilian nursing.

In dealing with this matter, Dr. Hislop refers to inadequate facilities and the examination system as some of the causes of our existing difficulties, and he quotes an instance of unsatisfactory enamel-ware dressing-bowls. It is extraordinarily difficult to follow the trend of Dr. Hislop's arguments. On previous occasions he has criticised the Nurses' Registration Board in connection with its examination system and suggested that it should be stiffened up in certain directions. Now, apparently, he complains because it is too severe as regards the final examination of a professional course. He complains that 18 nurses out of 94 failed, that is, approximately 20 per cent. Surely that is not a heavy percentage and would be quite comparable with other final professional examinations! Moreover I am informed that public hospitals do not keep their girls working as suggested; the girl finishes her three-year training and if she has to sit for another final examination she has to make her own arrangements in the meantime, and sit again at the next examination. These are held every four months. Meanwhile the nurse, in these circumstances, has no difficulty in securing work as a nurse. It should be noted that there is no bar to such a person working as a nurse, but she cannot call herself a registered trained nurse.

With regard to dressing bowls, Dr. Hislop should know that during the war first-class enamel ware has been difficult to obtain. He

does not say whether the matron had ever reported that her dressing-bowls were unfit for use or whether the hospital committee concerned had tried to secure others. Dr. Hislop knows full well that stainless steel has been almost unprocurable for most of the war period. Four months ago tenders were called for £2,000 worth of stainless steel ward utensils, and it will be many months before any of them come to hand.

It would appear that Dr. Hislop would have us believe that the remedy for the nursing situation is a good deal more pay and much better conditions. That may be so. The Government has every sympathy for and appreciation of the nursing profession and the splendid work the nurses perform. As members know, the whole of the nursing profession engaged in hospital service is governed by an industrial award, which was obtained from the court by the nurses in 1935 and amended in 1936. During the last year or two, very largely owing to staff difficulties inseparable from war conditions, nursing and other hospital staffs have become very restive and have tried, and tried again, to get their case before an arbitration tribunal. The Government has placed no obstacles in the way whatever. Indeed, the Government has urged the Federal authorities to remove the restrictions imposed by national security legislation upon the normal functioning of the State Arbitration Court. So far, those representations have met with no response, with the result that the nursing profession is tied to an Arbitration Court award last reviewed in 1936. That is nine years ago, and time is going on. In being prevented from getting to the Arbitration Court, the Nurses' Union is, of course, in no different position from virtually all the other unions in this State and, indeed, in other States.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Could not the Commonwealth Government co-operate to the extent to enabling these people to get to the Arbitration Court?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If Mr. Tuckey will listen for a while, he will appreciate, if he does not know already, the many difficulties in the way. Dr. Hislop urges that the Government itself should set the arbitration machinery aside. I do not know if that hon. member really appreci-

ates the very wide implications and repercussions that would follow the application of that course. It is hard to believe that any responsibly-minded public person, after stopping to think where such a proposal would lead, would publicly make such a suggestion. Dr. Hislop states that certain officers in the Railway Department recently received reconsideration of their salaries by way of agreement. That is not a true representation of the facts. The position is that a judge of the Federal Arbitration Court made an award in regard to certain professional officers of that department, which gave material increases to those officers, thus completely upsetting the balance in respect to a very few senior officers in the Railway Department. The anomalies thus created were corrected, but the arrangement applied to a mere handful of persons and, as already stated, was due in the first place to a Federal award.

The nurses are like members of other organisations that have been placed in a similar position and like them have felt that there was justification for their taking almost any action to secure redress. Unfortunately for them, while these disabilities remain, it is not possible under the present Act for the Nurses' Union to have access to the court. It may interest members to know what the position with regard to nurses is in other countries. Here are some particulars—

In the United States it is estimated that the community is 66,500 nurses short of requirements. During the last two years, the grave shortage of hospital aids, has, to some extent, been met by the enrolment of voluntary workers. Many thousands of voluntary workers from all walks of life have given hospital service by the half day or day, as could be managed, and particularly at weekends.

That shows that the difficulty is not confined to Western Australia. Then take the position in England:—

In England it is estimated that the nursing services are 30,000 short of needs. In the last number of the British Journal of Nursing, namely, September, 1945, comment is made on the action of four sisters from the West Middlesex County Hospital, who "gate crashed" the Ministry of Health and had an interview with the Minister, Mr. Aneurin Bevan. They left with him a letter on behalf of the trained staff of their hospital, and hospitals generally, and that letter made the following points:—

(1) We are unable to continue any longer under the present conditions of acute staff



shortage. The nature of our profession makes it impossible for us to strike. As a result we are being exploited.

(2) Patients are being inadequately nursed. Wards are constantly left in the care of inexperienced and junior nurses.

(3) Trained nurses stay on duty voluntarily long after scheduled hours. Owing to the scarcity of domestics, nurses have to clean wards and wash up.

(4) The staffing problem could be alleviated by the early release of trained nurses from the Forces and a new method of allocating nurses when training is completed.

(5) There is insufficient difference in pay between the student nurse in her last year and the staff nurse and the ward sister. There is too great a difference in pay between the ward sister and the matron.

The position, it will be seen, is that if the situation is bad in Western Australia, it is just as acute, if not more so, in some other countries. We have communicated with other hospital departments in the Eastern States and we find that their experience is very similar to ours. They do not quote numbers in their communications, but, generally speaking, we find that there is hardly any difference in the problems that have arisen and actions have been taken by various hospital authorities in the Eastern States. Such actions have had no material effect. There is one letter from the Charities Board of Victoria wherein is mentioned the fact that the Victorian Press contains daily large numbers of advertisements from all over Australia seeking the services of trained nurses. That indicates that the problem is Australia-wide, and is certainly not confined to Western Australia alone.

Hon. T. Moore: Dr. Hislop is always assuring us that Victoria is a leading State!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Quite so.

Hon. T. Moore: Nothing is ever wrong there, according to Dr. Hislop!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In dealing with nursing salaries it should be noted that in each case Dr. Hislop quotes figures after tax has been deducted. Members will agree that this is a wrong basis. Dr. Hislop states that, after deducting board and lodging and tax, a nurse's salary is £2 13s. 11d. As in other instances, he quite unfairly deducts the income tax, which is payable by everybody. As a matter of fact, his figure is wrong. The cash wage is £2 16s. after deducting board and lodging. If the income tax were 9s. 3d., which it is on the average, then the amount received by the nurse would

be less than is stated by Dr. Hislop. In one case he referred to the salary paid to a nurse in a private hospital as £2 0s. 2d. The correct figure is £2 7s. 8d. I am referring to this case particularly because it illustrates one peculiarity in the award, namely, that nurses working in private hospitals have very much worse conditions than those enjoyed in public hospitals.

I want members to have these facts in mind in relation to my subsequent remarks. The nurse working in a public hospital receives 8s. 4d. more than a similar nurse working in a private hospital. In addition to that she enjoys more than twice as liberal sick leave conditions; she has four weeks' leave per annum instead of three weeks; she is entitled to long service leave, and, if she works in a departmentally-managed hospital, she may enjoy the benefits of superannuation; but if she works in a private hospital she receives neither long leave nor any possibility of superannuation.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Did I understand the Minister to say that the award does not cover nurses in private hospitals?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The award covers nurses in both private and public hospitals, but it provides for a lower rate of remuneration for nurses in private hospitals.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: What is the explanation for such a remarkable state of affairs?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That was the decision of the Arbitration Court, and I assume was the result of representations made by those presenting the views of the proprietors of private hospitals. I am not sure on the point, but I remember the case and I imagine it was the representative of the Employers' Federation who presented the views of the private hospital authorities in the Arbitration Court. Whatever may have been the reason, that was the effect of the court's award. Nurses in private hospitals not only receive several shillings per week less than their sisters in Government hospitals, but their conditions do not include provision for long service leave, equal annual leave or superannuation as enjoyed by nurses in Government hospitals.

With this extraordinary variation, one would imagine that private hospitals could not secure staffs and that nurses would very much prefer to work under the more

favourable conditions in public hospitals. One must remember, too, that in most private hospitals the staff quarters do not compare favourably with the quarters provided in public hospitals for the nurses. But what do we find? Private hospitals—it must be borne in mind that these institutions are for the most part in the metropolitan area—do secure, generally speaking, the staffs that they need, and it is obvious that the desire to stay in the metropolitan area outweighs the advantages I have mentioned which nurses have when serving in public hospitals in the country and elsewhere. The lack of superannuation was strongly urged by Dr. Hislop as one of the difficulties. Superannuation is available to all nurses employed by the department. These nurses number 245, exclusive of trainees, but only 43 have applied to join the Superannuation Fund.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: They say it is not worth while.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That may be the reason. It may be the nurses' opinion, but Dr. Hislop suggested that lack of superannuation was one of the reasons for this difficulty. In dealing with the part of the motion relating to medical practice, Dr. Hislop makes suggestions for the organisation of the medical profession, particularly specialists. He knows full well that medical practice is purely a voluntary arrangement, subject only to registration with the Medical Board, and that a medical practitioner may put his plate up anywhere he likes, subject to certain war-time restrictions, which apply only while the National Security Regulations exist.

At the present time no specialists in Western Australia practise outside the metropolitan area. Apparently Dr. Hislop would urge the Government to create a number of lucrative salaried positions at certain country centres with a view to providing specialist medical services to the community. This would truly be a new idea, although not to be condemned on that account; a new idea may have merit. However, to attempt some organisation of the medical profession at the specialised end would certainly not appear to be the best way to begin. It would undoubtedly involve the Government or the department in arguments with the B.M.A., as is already instanced in the Federal sphere. The B.M.A. is inclined to take the view that its

dictum in regard to salaries must be accepted. It wants to be the Arbitration Court as well as the B.M.A. A few months ago when the position of Commissioner of Public Health was being advertised, the editor of the "Australian Medical Journal" refused to accept the advertisement at the classified salary, and stated that he would only insert it if the salary were increased to a figure which he thought was commensurate with the position! If any serious consideration were given to Dr. Hislop's suggestion it seems almost inevitable that the ideas of the B.M.A. of a "reasonable" salary for a specialist would be in disagreement with the ideas of the Government.

I may mention that Dr. Hislop has been the executive officer of the Medical Co-ordination Committee, which has done good work under war-time conditions, and with the aid of war-time control he has organised the profession so that its members can be best utilised. To do that in peacetime is a different proposition. The only other method of organising the profession is on a full-time salary basis. That, of course, is a matter of considerable controversy, and up to the present the B.M.A. has steadfastly set its face against anything of the sort.

The establishment of a medical school was favoured by Dr. Hislop. The Government has already given earnest and serious contemplation to this suggestion. It has appointed a departmental committee to investigate the matter, which committee has, I think, already reported. As with so many other problems in Western Australia, the crux is finance. Some hundreds of thousands of capital expenditure and approximately £12,000 to £15,000 of annual expenditure plus £3,000 to £4,000 expenditure on a dental school, which would almost certainly be worked in alliance with the suggested medical school, are estimated as being required for this proposal. The capital expenditure will not be a few thousand pounds, but hundreds of thousands of pounds. It may seem remarkable, but still that is the position. That was the report of a very responsible committee, and if members take that advice in conjunction with some of my remarks on this subject, and apply their own knowledge of the requirements of the post-war period in regard to finance, I think they must agree

that it will be very difficult indeed to implement some of the suggestions which have been made.

Then again Dr. Hislop refers to various ancillary services such as dietitians, masseurs, chemists, etc. There is no doubt that the establishment of a medical school would ease the position. Dr. Hislop also refers to radiological and pathological work, and points out the necessity of investigational work in the country areas. He may be assured that the Hospital Planning Advisory Committee is well aware of this desirability, and will no doubt make some recommendations in due course. But once more the basic difficulty is the huge area and sparse population. Outside of Kalgoorlie, which is already served through the Commonwealth x-ray laboratory, there would be no place where a full-time radiologist or pathologist could find anything like sufficient work. To employ a specialist medical officer in one of these categories would be very costly; to place him on a travelling basis would be more costly still, as well as extremely inefficient.

The travelling radiologist, for instance, would be useless without some £3,000 worth of x-ray equipment. Usefully to employ that equipment, he would have to be responsible for a very wide area, but half the calls would be of an urgent nature, so that when he was at the southern end of his area he would be just as likely to be wanted in the north. Having in view our basic difficulties, these suggestions seem to be almost unattainable ideals. What will probably happen will be that at those points designated as "regional" hospitals, more powerful and efficient x-ray equipment will be installed, and when that is done some competent x-ray technician will be placed there to operate the plant. That seems to be the sensible line of development. The same would apply in regard to pathological work, and it is probable that eventually at these "regional" centres both radiological and pathological investigations could take place up to a point, but certainly much beyond what can be done at the present time.

Ambulance services were also referred to by Dr. Hislop. The organisation of these services in conjunction with aerial transport has developed and will continue to develop. It is obvious that here again our

basic difficulties and lack of funds have to be taken into account. For every £5,000 or £10,000 that might be spent on an ambulance service or on a central preliminary training school for nurses, some other deserving and necessary object has to be deprived of aid.

I have been supplied with much more information than that which I have used in my remarks; but I feel that I have probably said sufficient on the many subjects touched upon to indicate that, with all the goodwill in the world, it is not possible to implement improvements in our hospitalisation as quickly as we would like. Even though the money might be made available, there would still be difficulties in the direction of manpower and materials which would have to be met. The programme which Dr. Hislop has touched upon represents a complete programme so far as he can see it, but it is obviously quite impossible of attainment, except in gradual stages. I admit that Dr. Hislop did indicate that millions of pounds would be required. I think he also indicated that a policy would have to be formulated covering a great many years. It was for that reason he suggested that a Royal Commission should be appointed, which could indicate to the Government and to the department a policy which would include the many points to which he referred.

The idea is a good one; but again I say I think I have shown that the Government is well alive to the position and that it has ways and means of obtaining the information desired without appointing a Royal Commission. The Hospital Planning Advisory Committee, which is still continuing its work—and which I am informed has done excellent work and is likely to be given some statutory standing—has a knowledge of the requirements of the State which no Royal Commission could obtain except under the conditions that have enabled the committee to obtain its knowledge. There is no need for us to go to the Eastern States with regard to many of these matters. We have taken all the steps open to us at present to secure the latest information, more particularly in regard to small hospital buildings. We have obtained such information not only in Australia, but overseas, in Europe, Great Britain and America. I am hoping that Dr. Le Souef will present a report containing much valuable information which in the

years to come will be utilised to the best advantage. A suggestion that he should have had an architect to accompany him is one which might have been considered under some circumstances, but not under those now obtaining. I feel sure that any information which he brings back to the Government will be accompanied with all necessary details and particulars.

So while I think it would be possible to talk much longer on these subjects, I feel—in view of the information I have submitted to the House; the disabilities I have indicated; the inability not only of this State but of other States to solve the nursing problem at present; the fact that in the post-war period there will be an improvement in several directions including, I hope, the number of persons available for the nursing services—that while perhaps the motion has served some useful purpose by being introduced, there is no necessity for the appointment of a Royal Commission. I give the House an assurance that, with the new administration in the Medical and Health Department, and because of the programme that the Government has mapped out in this connection, everything possible will be done. More than that, the Government cannot do. I sincerely hope that in the next year or two the problems and troubles from which we are suffering today, and which are really war-caused will have passed away and the criticism so freely offered in recent times, will be found to be unnecessary.

**HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH** (Metropolitan) [9.17]: I regret that the Minister cannot see his way clear to accept this motion. I freely admit the strength of many of the arguments he used, and it is all to the good that the motion has given occasion for him to submit to this House, and through this House to the country, a comprehensive and valuable statement, and one that I am sure will receive the wide and careful attention that it deserves. I am aware that Royal Commissions frequently fail in their purpose. That often happens, I think, because effect is not given to their recommendations. Today we have a Royal Commission inquiring into Garratt engines and we have another promised to investigate certain trouble that has arisen in connection with the trotting industry. I make no objection to the appointment of either of those com-

missions, but I do make these two positive assertions—firstly that public health is a question of far greater importance than either of those matters, and, secondly, that there is infinitely more public dissatisfaction about the present administration of public health than there is in regard to either Garratt engines or the difficulties of the trotting industry. The Minister has told us that a departmental committee is going to inquire into this matter and make suggestions.

The Chief Secretary: I did not say a departmental committee.

**Hon. Sir Hal COLEBATCH**: A committee of departmental officers. The position of those officers should be that of witnesses before an independent Royal Commission and not as adjudicators charged, possibly, with the duty of making suggestions that might cause grave reflection on an administration for which they are partly responsible. At present we have no Commissioner of Public Health. That office was held for many years by Dr. Atkinson. I was privileged to be the Minister in charge of the department during portion of that time and I conceived the highest esteem for Dr. Atkinson. However, the time came for him to retire. The Government was then extremely fortunate in securing as his successor a man who had the highest qualifications and an exceptional reputation as an administrator. What happened? He remained in the State just long enough to satisfy himself that the general set-up was such that he could not hope to make a success of it, and he then retired.

The Chief Secretary: He has gone back to a system that is just the same.

**Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH**: I do not know what he did, but that shows the need for some independent investigation. It is a fact that that man threw up this position because he thought the general set-up was such that he could not hope to make a success of it. Another commissioner was appointed. What has become of him? I understand that he has gone to Tokio. Whether he has gone there under military instructions or because he likes Tokio better than Western Australia, I do not know. There have been changes in the office of Under-Secretary and, I believe, in that of the Assistant Under-Secretary. Surely the way is clear for an independent and exhaustive investigation by a Royal Commission. I do not feel competent to say any-

thing regarding paragraphs (i) or (iii) of the motion, but I would like to say a few words on paragraph (ii) which states—

The hospital policy of the State, and make recommendations thereon in regard to (a) administration and finance, (b) construction, (c) distribution.

The Minister has told us quite candidly and directly that the financial difficulties are going to be enormous and that it will be impossible for any Government, no matter how earnest it might be in its desire to promote the public health, to do anything like as much as it would wish. We admit that, and it is to my mind a reason for an exhaustive inquiry; for an inquiry which is chiefly directed at the necessity for placing first things first, and to decide what shall be done. I know that the war is largely responsible for the very high cost of the Perth Hospital, just as it is responsible, I suppose, for the long delay.

But I find it rather disturbing to reflect that the interest cost alone on the capital expenditure involved in the Perth Hospital will amount to something like £2 per bed per week. I wonder how far we can go in the matter of providing facilities all over the country if the cost is going to be on anything like that scale. I do not know to what extent the possibility of making use of some of the military hospitals, as they become no longer required for military purposes, can be investigated. I profess to know nothing about that, but I do know that there is going to be extreme difficulty in providing the essential finance for hospital accommodation in the country districts. Another point that I would raise is that, both in regard to the interest on the Perth Hospital and the expenditure on additions and improvements to country hospitals, the Government is relying, to a large extent, on revenue from the so-called charities sweeps. I wonder how long that is going to last on the present scale. I suppose it will continue so long as people have their pockets full of money, to which they attach very little value, but I think it is an unsafe basis on which to rely for an essential public service.

I am reminded that a little while ago I read of an enterprising adventurer who, finding himself in one of the South Sea Islands, so impressed the chief that the chief dismissed all his advisers and made this enterprising gentleman responsible for the whole

administration of the island. He soon found himself in financial difficulties and conceived the idea of raising money by sweeps. He told the islanders that of their contributions 10 per cent. would be required for public purposes. They subscribed to the sweep in hundreds of thousands. It was a tremendous success, but it did not give him quite as much money as he wanted, so he decided that he would take 20 per cent., returning only 80 per cent. in prizes. The islanders, to a man, dropped it like a hot stick. They would not touch it or have anything to do with a concern in which only 80 per cent. of their money was running for them!

Yet here we find our enlightened people investing in a sweep in which they know full well that only 50 per cent. can come back into their pockets! I often wonder how long it will last. That makes me doubt whether contributions from the charities sweeps form a safe basis on which the Government can rely for the interest on the cost of the Perth Hospital or for the additions and improvements that are so badly needed to our country hospitals. If the Royal Commission did no more than to say, "These are essential things; these are first things that should be first and you should make sure by necessary taxation of the people that you get the money to do them," it would be justified. For these reasons, apart altogether from those covered by paragraphs (i) and (iii) to which I have no doubt Dr. Hislop will make further reference, I support the motion.

**HON. H. L. ROCHE** (South-East): [9.26]: I am supporting the motion, not because I adhere to everything that Dr. Hislop has maintained, or that I am prepared to condemn everything that the Chief Secretary stated in opposing the motion, but because I am sick and tired of having, as a member of this Parliament, to accept the so-called reasons and excuses that are constantly advanced because nothing can be done to correct a position that has become deplorable. I believe that the public of this State is equally sick and tired of it. I admit there are difficulties but I find the greatest difficulty in accepting them as insuperable. I am not prepared to believe that, if the State Government made strong representations to the Federal authorities, something could not

be done. There are thousands of young women still in the Services. While demobilisation of the Army and Air Force is being accelerated it seems to me that these young people, many of whom could freely help and would help, in the circumstances, to overcome some of the major difficulties being experienced by the country hospitals, are still being retained in uniform. Many of them are prepared to admit that they are serving no useful purpose at present.

Although we realise that the financial position of the State may not at the moment permit of any great expenditure, I cannot dismiss from my mind the fact that Western Australia, with other States, is dickering with a proposal for a standard gauge railway that will cost something like £70,000,000. Whatever may be the justification for that railway, I submit that the position in which our hospitals—and I speak particularly of the country hospitals—find themselves indicates that there is a greater need for some of these millions of money to be spent on hospital improvements before we establish the standard gauge. It does seem to me that the State Government might take a much stronger stand than it appears to have taken in that regard. I realise that that particular proposal is supposed to be a baby of Mr. Eddie Ward, and consequently it may be sacrosanct in certain quarters. Nevertheless, that is no reason why this House should hesitate to pass this motion.

I am particularly concerned at the moment with the staff position in the country hospitals. That position is desperate. Hospitals, as far apart as Lake Grace and Kojonup, in my electorate, do not know how long they can carry on. It is not as though this position had arisen overnight. This is a cumulative trouble. Up to date it would appear, so far as I can ascertain, that absolutely nothing has been done and nothing has occurred to correct the drift that has been obvious for a considerable time. If we are to go on asking these people to carry on with the sympathy and appreciation of the Government, fondly cherishing the belief that in the sweet by-and-bye something is going to happen to improve conditions, I think we shall reach the position of having no staffs at all in our country hospitals. If the move for the appointment of a Royal Commission is suc-

cessful and the Commission does nothing else but point out the absurdity of the position of the nursing profession with regard to remuneration and conditions, the inquiry will have been well worth while. In fact, as Sir Hal Colebatch reminded me, we can contemplate the expense and work associated with such an inquiry with greater equanimity than we can the cost of having a Royal Commission to inquire into the trotting industry of Western Australia.

**HON. E. H. H. HALL** (Central) [9.31]:

I wish to voice my appreciation of the many details given by the Chief Secretary in his lengthy and, to me, very interesting reply to the motion moved by Dr. Hislop. The Chief Secretary told us that he was sick and tired of pointing out the difficulties that confront the Government in trying to provide and finance the necessary amenities for the people. The emphasis he laid on the huge area and sparse population of the State was thoroughly warranted; it is a problem that is ever with us. A justifiable plea has been put up by representatives of the Government, not only in this House but in another place, that the few hundred thousand people in the State find it impossible to do justice to the outback districts through lack of finance. The ex-Premier, Mr. Willecock, admitted that the few people in this State could not be expected to raise the necessary finance to do all the things that he agreed ought to be done for the people in the outback parts. We have had almost the same plea raised by the Chief Secretary tonight. I admit that it was justifiably raised. I have no fault to find with the Chief Secretary for emphasising it. This being so, however, why does not the State Government take action to relieve itself of responsibility for a large section of the State so sparsely populated and known as the North-West?

I understand that some years ago the Commonwealth Government made a proposal to take over the northern part of this State. Had the Commonwealth done so we would have been relieved of the need for providing hospitals, schools, and other requirements which are not luxuries but are essentials. I understand it is Dr. Hislop's intention to reply to the Chief Secretary tonight, and so I shall make my remarks as brief as possible. We are fortunate

nate in having a medical man as a member of this Chamber. I was a member of the House when Dr. Saw was with us, and I know how very helpful we found his advice on medical and health matters. I welcome the arrival of another medical man of Dr. Hislop's standing. Because I happen to sit alongside him, however, it is no reason why I should go out of my way to be pleasant to him, but I do not believe he is the type of man who would use his professional knowledge for any party political purpose. I am convinced that his aim is to do something to place the health matters of the State on a higher plane than they have been in the past.

Here I wish to pay a meed of praise to an officer who has just ceased duty after many years of arduous work, a man who has not been popular. Still, a man who does his duty does not expect to be and very seldom is popular. I refer to Mr. Huelin, the ex-Under Secretary of the Health Department. For a number of years before I entered the House, my job as secretary of an advisory committee brought me into close contact with Mr. Huelin, and I must say that I always found him just. He had control not of a revenue-producing department but of a spending department, and in his service under various Governments, he became obsessed with the necessity for exercising the utmost economy, though I say it was false economy. However, he grew up in that atmosphere, and, consequently, in later years, he aroused considerable opposition.

I should like to ask the people of the metropolitan area whether they are satisfied with the set-up that controls the Perth Hospital. I definitely am not. Every member is familiar with what happened there. Several members if not a majority of the board were of the same political complexion as the present Government, and the board found it impossible to carry on the administration of the hospital and resigned en bloc. Now we have a management committee of which I believe the Under Secretary for Health is chairman, but the public has no representation on the committee. The sooner this matter receives attention by way of inquiry, the better it will be, not for the doctors or for the nurses, but for the patients. It is high time we proved that we are democratically minded by in-

sisting upon the people having representation on the controlling committee.

If my information is correct there is a system in some of the Eastern States that provides for annual subscriptions to hospitals. Subscribers at least have a say in the appointment of the managing committee, and if a move in that direction were made in the metropolitan area, I do not think it would be over-optimistic to say that there would be some thousands of subscribers at a guinea a year each, which would not only yield finance, but would give the people representation on the committee of management. It seems strange to me that the same lack of representation to the people should apply to the Children's Hospital. If any member has any doubt on that point, I can assure him that my statement is correct.

Having taken an interest in the hospital in my home town, I thought I would like to interest myself in the Children's Hospital. I read a small advertisement announcing the annual meeting. I was the only member of the public who attended that meeting, and I was looked upon as though I were an intruder. I sat out the portion of the meeting open to the public, and then was quietly informed that the public business was finished and that the board would go into committee. Consequently, I left. I subscribed my guinea in order to be able to attend what I thought would be an annual meeting of subscribers so that I might take some interest in a very worthy institution. But it was not possible to do so.

I have no complaint to make against the gentlemen, busy men occupying prominent positions in the commercial life of the State, who give their time to act on the board of management of the Children's Hospital. My complaint is that subscribers are not sought with the idea of giving the public some say in the management of the institution. In the country we find that the people regard the local hospital as their hospital, because 100 per cent. of the country and goldfields hospitals are managed by local committees. True, at times, differences of opinion occur. Last week we had a letter from the doctor at Cunderdin who claims that his hospital is one of the best managed hospitals in the State. In fact, he was taking exception to some of the remarks made by Dr. Hislop in moving his motion. Those who say that hospitals controlled by

local committees are always in a state of surge are not correct. I had experience of one of the biggest public controversies about hospitals that ever occurred in this State. That was the Wiluna hospital. In the end, the committee got its way and that was all to the good. That was one of the biggest upsets that has taken place.

When one thinks of the number of committee-controlled hospitals throughout the State, it must be admitted that we have efficient and economical administration—and when I say “economical” I use the word in its right sense. If no other good came of this proposed inquiry, it would give those who feel inclined to go before the commission an opportunity to submit a plea for different hospital control in this State, which I maintain—and I have taken some trouble to find out—would be all to the benefit, not merely of the doctors and of the nurses, much as the latter so badly need assistance and help, but of the people for whom we are most concerned, the patients.

I wish to deal with some of the Chief Secretary's remarks about nurses. I have been interested a little in this matter and was about to organise a public meeting. But this morning, I called on the secretary of the Nurses' Union, and she gave me the welcome news that, although it is a very arduous task, she is preparing a case and has arranged for it to be heard by the Arbitration Court. That is somewhat different from what the Chief Secretary said. That is a fact I obtained this morning, and I am therefore staying my hand in the matter. If ever any women have been sorely tried and tempted to do something we all are hoping they will not do, it is the nurses throughout the length and breadth of Western Australia! No Government, either Commonwealth or State, would have dared—and I repeat that word—no Government would have dared to treat a body of men as unfairly as both Governments have treated this body of women.

I would not be justified in resuming my seat if I did not suggest to members that they visit the two hospitals, one at the east end of the town and the other at the west—I refer to the Perth Hospital and the Children's Hospital—and see what happens to the out-patients attending both those institutions. If any man who goes there is jealous of the reputation of his State, I am sure he will come away feeling a trifle ashamed.

It is no use talking about what happens in other countries. We are charged with seeing that affairs are conducted here in something like a decent manner; and the treatment of the out-patients in both those hospitals is not decent. I am not blaming the doctors or the staffs, but the system which has prevailed far too long.

As Sir Hal Colebatch said, already we have obtained from the Chief Secretary an enlightening and informative statement which we would not have obtained had Dr. Hislop not moved his motion. I have said on several occasions, and now repeat, that womenfolk of the metropolitan and adjacent areas are provided with a maternity hospital second to none in the Commonwealth, and that is something on which we can congratulate ourselves. But what happens to women in the outback?

Hon. A. Thomson: Yes, what happens?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: We country members have asked this question and emphasised this point time and again. I was on the foundation committee of a community maternity hospital we started in Geraldton. The Government gave us an old building. We formed a committee and ran that hospital for the benefit of women in the Victoria district with a special emergency ward reserved for women from the country. Mr. Huelin came up in his capacity, as Under-Secretary of the department; and so satisfied was he with the service we were giving, that he recommended we should get a subsidy from the Government of £50 a year; and we got it. He was so satisfied with the subsequent conduct of that institution that I think the subsidy now stands at £100. But what do the womenfolk of the metropolitan area have? I do not want to deny them that service but why should it be reserved for them while Geraldton, which is represented by a man who had the key of the State Treasury for years, has to endure the conditions I have mentioned?

Now there is an agitation being started for a regional hospital. Until some consideration is given to the people who go out and open up these areas—to the womenfolk and the men—we shall not be able to maintain our self-respect. My close association with hospitals for many years has convinced me that the time is long overdue for action to be taken to place a certain kind of patient, of whom we all know, in a special hospital. I refer to those patients who, by



reason of old age and infirmities associated therewith, require nursing attention and occasionally medical attention and receive it in the ordinary hospitals. The same applies here in the Perth Hospital as applies elsewhere. Valuable space and nursing attention are taken up by them when it should be provided for people who are really seriously and dangerously ill. Some form of what is known as an intermediate hospital is required in which these people could be attended to instead of monopolising beds which, in these days especially, are so urgently needed by others.

I would ask the Chief Secretary whether he will ascertain from the officers of the Medical Department if it is known to them that six miles from Geraldton at the Air Force camp there is a 60-bed hospital with up-to-date accommodation for a nursing staff of eight; whilst in Geraldton our nurses are sleeping three to a small room and hanging out their washing to dry on the balcony. It is high time attention was given by the State Health Department to those buildings. When I say they are up-to-date and fitted with all the latest equipment, I am stating a fact. The sooner the department makes inquiries about that hospital the better it will be. I fail to see how this Royal Commission could do any harm. I am not too optimistic, but I do not think the Government would refuse to put into effect the wishes of this House on such a matter as the appointment of the proposed Royal Commission. Therefore, hoping for the best—because we know the Government can please itself whether or not it takes any notice of the decisions of this House—I intend to support the motion.

**HON. W. J. MANN** (South-West) [9.55]: I support the motion because I, too, know some of the disabilities being suffered in the outer areas through lack of proper hospital facilities. Quite recently, I accompanied the Minister for Health to the South-West in order that investigations might be made regarding hospital facilities at Greenbushes. In that centre exists quite a desirable hospital, nicely situated, well built and with practically every facility; and yet, because of unsympathetic treatment—I use the words employed by the people concerned—that hospital has been closed for some time. If a Royal Commission took evidence regard-

ing the position as we find it today, it would have this effect: It would demonstrate to the public that the Government is fully alive to the position. In making that statement I am not deprecating what the Chief Secretary has said about the Government being anxious to do its best.

The Chief Secretary: Do you think a Royal Commission would assist you in Greenbushes?

**HON. W. J. MANN**: I think that if a Royal Commission were appointed, the people from many of those places could give their own evidence. In that way, they would feel that they had put up their case, and if they failed they would have done their best. There is a feeling that the Health Department is not sympathetic; that too much consideration is extended to metropolitan interests. I would not say wilfully, but for any old reason, the country is forgotten. We want to try to overcome that and make these people realise that the Parliament of the State is anxious to do its best for them in this regard. We have to remember that people pay considerable taxation and they feel they are entitled to have some of the expenditure from taxation undertaken in their areas.

I know that in practically every instance country people are generous in support of hospitals. I am aware of country hospitals to the support of which residents of the district have had to subscribe very heavily and regularly in order to keep them open. Such people should be encouraged. I am sure that country folk will applaud Dr. Hislop for his effort. I am not throwing unnecessary bouquets around when I say that I have heard more expressions of gratification at the part that Dr. Hislop has played with regard to health matters throughout the country in the last year or two than I have heard in the past 10 years. I think that is something this House can take credit for, too. We certainly shall be able to claim credit if we back up the doctor in his effort to obtain what he desires. I support the motion quite gladly.

**HON. H. SEDDON** (North-East) [9.59]: The remarks of Mr. Mann and Mr. E. H. H. Hall have raised an aspect that could well be covered by such an inquiry as Dr. Hislop has suggested. For some time past there

has been operating on the Goldfields a clinic in connection with tuberculosis. It has been conducted in conjunction with Wooroloo but there is one aspect of that which I think might well be ventilated. There has been a feeling for many years—especially amongst men employed in the mines—that it is undesirable they should be requested to go to Wooroloo to get the necessary advice and treatment associated with their trouble. The suggestion has been made that something be done to enable those men to receive treatment on the Goldfields, where they would be nearer their homes and under climatic conditions that are recognised to be the best for chest troubles.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Yet they shifted the sanatorium from Coolgardie.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Exactly. There is an excellent hospital at present at Boulder aerodrome and there is every indication that it, together with other buildings, may shortly be disposed of. There is an opportunity for the Medical Department to act, before it is too late, in an endeavour to retain that hospital and its equipment for the benefit of those men who would otherwise have been drafted to Wooroloo. That could well be a matter to be dealt with by an inquiry as suggested by Dr. Hislop. Many medical men are strongly of the opinion that the best treatment for those accustomed to a dry climate is to keep them in that climate when treating them for chest complaints. Doctors in the Goldfields area have repeatedly made that suggestion. I bring this matter forward as one that could well be covered by the suggested commission. I have pleasure in supporting the motion.

**HON. A. THOMSON** (South-East) [10.3]: I have pleasure in supporting the motion submitted by Dr. Hislop. Not only this House, but the people of Western Australia—particularly those in the country areas—owe him a great deal for drawing attention to the lack of hospital accommodation and equipment. We have heard a lot of discussion, during the past six years, on equality of sacrifice, but I would draw attention to the unequal treatment provided for residents in the country as against that available for those living in the metropolitan area. Approximately half the population of the State is to be found in the 24 miles from Midland Junction to Fremantle. In

the metropolitan area the ratepayers are not asked to contribute one penny towards the construction and equipment of hospitals, but one of the conditions laid down years ago for the construction of hospitals in country areas was that the district concerned had to pay half the cost of erecting the building and furnishing it. That has been modified since the Lotteries Commission came into existence. The Lotteries Commission is now prepared to find one-third of the cost, the local residents—the country ratepayers—are expected to find one-third, and the Medical Department provides its quota.

If members consider the question previously mentioned by Dr. Hislop, they will find that the Perth Hospital is not costing either the Government or the ratepayers in the metropolitan area one penny. Interest and sinking fund are provided by the Lotteries Commission. That is one reason why I support the motion. If a Royal Commission is appointed, I believe its attention will be drawn to the present unfair incidence of the administration of the Health Department as to the erection of new hospital buildings. Mr. E. H. H. Hall also mentioned the old and the sick. That is one of the problems we are facing today, particularly in the country. Elderly people, who are not suffering from a specific disease, are not permitted to remain more than a fortnight in hospitals. I know of several cases where people have been taken away from country hospitals and, owing to war conditions, it has been impossible to get anyone to nurse or care for them, and they have been in a tragic position. That is one matter that such a commission could consider.

Those of us who represent country areas know, as pointed out by Mr. Roche and Mr. E. H. H. Hall, that we have received S.O.S. messages from various country hospitals, drawing attention to the danger of their having to close because of lack of staff. I have a great deal of sympathy for the Chief Secretary and for those administering the Health Department. Though we have been engaged in war for the past six years, it seems strange, when so many nurses and men are being demobilised, that more staff is not available. Our country hospitals are starved for staff and I asked the Chief Secretary whether it was possible to provide an inducement to women to go to country areas

by offering a bonus if they would stay for a period of three or four months. His reply was that that would be performing an illegal act. That may be so, but we know that when urgent matters are faced in private business the private individual has no compunction, in meeting a position such as we are facing in our country hospitals, in overcoming the difficulty in that way. We are fortunate in having among us a medical man who has willingly put at the disposal of members and of the Government and people of Western Australia his services, in an honest desire to place our sick and our hospital administration in a better position than they are in today. I do not condemn the Government altogether, and realise it has its difficulties. The Chief Secretary has put up an excellent case from a departmental point of view, but I feel that if this House and the Government can agree to a Royal Commission to inquire into trotting, and into Garratt engines, the State can, and must, find the money to make inquiries into the position of our hospitals. I have pleasure in supporting the motion.

**HON. J. G. HISLOP** (Metropolitan—in reply) [10.13]: I do not desire to detain the House long. I sympathise with the Chief Secretary, but I have never before heard him wander so far afield in replying to any subject before members.

The Chief Secretary: I had to follow you.

**Hon. J. G. HISLOP**: Some of my suggestions were distorted, but I think they will still bear inspection even after having been given intense scrutiny by the department. The Chief Secretary himself made out a good case for an inquiry, in view of the fact that we have such unique problems in Western Australia. We have a greater demand for nurses than any other population of equal number, owing to the vast area over which our population is spread: yet we have the smallest number of trained nurses and the greatest number of small hospitals. That is a problem that no other State has to face, and surely an inquiry into it could do no harm. We were asked where the money is to come from.

We are asked to adopt a realistic attitude, so let us do so. I believe we will shortly be asked to ratify an agreement with the Commonwealth Government, which desires to give to each individual 6s. per day

towards his hospital treatment. Why not ask for that money to be given to us for a number of years until our hospitals are on a sound basis? The amount which would come to this State under such an agreement, at the rate of 6s. per day, would probably amount to £300,000 or £400,000. If money were spent wisely within our State many problems would be dealt with that will have to be faced in the future. In a period of 10 years we could spend more than £3,000,000 of capital expenditure, but we could not even complete our full programme in that period.

The Chief Secretary: You know that is impossible.

**Hon. J. G. HISLOP**: I know that one course is apparently unwise, and that the other is impossible.

The Chief Secretary: Constitutionally impossible.

**Hon. J. G. HISLOP**: Quite so, but there is nothing in the Constitution to prevent the Commonwealth Government from giving the State a grant of money nor is there anything to prevent the State spending that money.

**Hon. C. B. Williams**: What about the other States? They get the benefit of the 6s., but we would suffer.

**Hon. J. G. HISLOP**: The Chief Secretary carefully refrained during the course of his reply from any allusion to some of the more serious complaints. One of those complaints—I make this special reference to it because of its importance to country people—was the neglect to provide a post-graduate course in midwifery for medical men when they leave the Perth Hospital. That has been urged for years past, but nothing has been done. Surely we must rectify that position and there must be some method by which that objective can be achieved. It has been brought under the notice of the department for 15 years, and yet nothing has been done. If that matter alone were placed before the Royal Commission, the importance of training young medical men in midwifery after they leave the Perth Hospital would be recognised.

Our policy with regard to infectious diseases and the relation of that work to the finance of local authorities has also been mentioned. That is a matter that must call for serious consideration when dealing with

the possible functions of the hospitals within the State. I would direct the attention of the House to the manner in which some of my statements were bent or exaggerated and sometimes referred to as of minor importance. Possibly that was done with the intention of influencing the House to a belief that I have spoken rather wildly on matters with which I am intimately associated and about which I know much. Let me instance the minor matter of dressing bowls. This House was told that I must know better than others that during the war period stainless steel was almost impossible to obtain. Let me inform members that for the last three years I have been seeing to it that hospital requirements with regard to stainless steel utensils have been complied with, and that for the last two years anyone could have visited the first floor of Fauldings Ltd. where they would have seen large supplies of stainless steel from which the requirements of hospitals were met as occasion demanded. That statement of mine was a little bent by the Chief Secretary, but I think I have rather unbent it again.

The other day I asked a question in the House because I thought it was a matter upon which the department would possibly have some reports. I asked what steps were being taken regarding the closing of the children's ward at the Mount Hospital. I direct attention to that matter because the Chief Secretary's speech was really typical of the replies given in this House to questions and in response to suggestions or letters conveyed to the department on various matters. During all the years I have been here, there has always been the same reason advanced why medical and other requirements could not be complied with. The policy of *laissez faire* is the real policy of the department and has been so ever since I have been in Western Australia. I asked the questions regarding the children's ward at the Mount Hospital to ascertain whether there was some sign of determination to face the future. I asked whether the Government intended to do anything because of the position that had arisen at the Mount Hospital, and the answer I thought I would receive was perfectly simple.

The answer I received was that as it was merely a temporary measure no action was intended. In the meantime it is extremely

difficult to get a sick child into any hospital. If the child's father is earning the basic wage or less he can send his child to the Children's Hospital, but if he is earning more than the basic wage that is not possible unless the child is declared to be an urgency case. To my mind the answer to my question should have been that as a temporary measure the Children's Hospital would be declared a community hospital. That institution has all the equipment necessary for the treatment of children and yet today it is prevented from meeting the needs of the children of parents who are earning above the basic wage or a certain figure fixed by the Children's Hospital authorities. Recently inquiries had to be made regarding the number of extra beds that could be availed of at the Children's Hospital in an emergency, and it was ascertained that there were 40 empty beds there. Possibly if anyone were to visit the hospital today they would find that those empty beds are still there. They are not in one ward but are scattered over the different wards. I hope that the department will see the advisability of the move that I suggest.

The question of turning our hospitals into community hospitals and retaining some for the training of medical men should receive the attention of any Royal Commission that is appointed. Finally it has been suggested that I am in favour of compelling people to do this and to do that. I am not in favour of compelling anyone to do anything—if it can be accomplished in some other way. I regard the health situation in this State as just as important as the winning of the last stages of the war. We are risking the whole of our national outlook in this matter, and surely the State could ask some people to undertake certain duties that should be required of them. The manpower regulations have not been removed from medical men and the Medical Co-ordination Committee can still direct doctors to go to different parts of the State if it is considered that the interests of the people will be served by that means.

Apparently, however, what is flesh for one is not flesh for the other, and in this democracy of ours we can compel some people but not others. I am certainly not in favour of compulsion, but I am in favour of a new build-up with regard to health legislation

and administration. The only way we can adequately deal with the position is to place the details before some independent tribunal. I do not want a Royal Commission packed with medical men. I would be willing to give my evidence, and so would other medical practitioners, before a man skilled in the taking of evidence. We have already had a report from one such man when Mr. Justice Wolff submitted his well-compiled report on the University of Western Australia—a rather intricate matter. It would not be beyond Mr. Justice Wolff's capacity to investigate health matters in relation to Western Australia because the facts would be placed before him by those most interested. If the Royal Commissioner required assistance from a medical standpoint, the Government would naturally appoint someone fully qualified for that work, preferably someone from without the State. I do not think the medical profession would object to the appointment of a Royal Commission so long as the commissioner was a man trained in the taking of evidence.

Question put and passed; the motion agreed to.

*House adjourned at 10.25 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Tuesday, 4th December, 1945.*

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

## QUESTIONS.

### SOLDIER SETTLEMENT.

*As to Properties Offered to Government.*

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Lands:

1, Is it his intention to lay upon the Table of the House all papers in connection with private properties that have been offered to the Government for purchase for the purpose of soldier settlement?

2, If not, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

1, No.

2, It is expected that several hundred privately-owned farms will be purchased and a great number of papers will be created in connection with each. If the papers in respect of any particular purchase are required, they may be supplied.

### WHEAT.

*As to Price and Stabilisation Scheme.*

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Agriculture:

1, Have decisions been arrived at—(a) as to the price of wheat to be paid for the coming season; (b) as to a wheat stabilisation scheme, and if so what is the scheme in outline; (c) as to necessary Federal or Federal-State legislation?

2, If these matters have not been finalised when—in view of the urgency of the matters involved—can a decision be expected?

The MINISTER replied:

1 and 2, No official information is at present available.

### BILLS (4)—FIRST READING.

1, Superannuation and Family Benefits Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Premier.

2, Legislative Council Referendum.

Introduced by the Minister for Justice.

3, Hospital Benefits Agreement.

Introduced by the Minister for Health.

4, City of Perth Sanitation.

Introduced by Mr. Cross.