

As I have pointed out, the committee also recommended that a person who had served the country by fighting overseas should have a vote for the Council. I do not think anyone would question that such a man had earned what might be termed a stake in the country. Those are the principal provisions in the Bill. It is idle for Mr. E. H. H. Hall to argue that the Bill should have been introduced by the Government. The Government did not sit by idly. It submitted a measure—a much wider one than that now before us—to deal with this unsatisfactory position, but the House would not accept it. Sir Hal Colebatch is a parliamentarian of long standing and is endowed with much wisdom. He appreciates the fact that changes must be made and that it is but fair to extend the franchise for this Chamber. Consequently he introduced this measure which, to my mind, is a step in the right direction. But I still contend that the only proper and satisfactory way to deal with the situation is to make provision for adult franchise. The House has a golden opportunity to improve the franchise for this Chamber. The Legislative Council is not appreciated by the people of the State, the reason being that too few of them take any direct interest in electing its members. It will make for a healthier state of affairs if more people are given the right to vote. Mr. E. H. H. Hall said it would make the situation more confounded than it already is.

Hon. G. Fraser: It could not be.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: The simplest qualification is the householder qualification, and if that qualification is extended to the wife of the householder the matter will be a very simple one. A man and his wife living in a house and paying rent above 6s. 6d. a week, or whatever the amount may be, will be entitled to be enrolled. That should have the effect of making this House representative of many more thousand people than it is representative of at the present time. It will be much simpler and easier to enrol people; it will create more interest in our doings and, as I have said, make the House more truly representative of the people of the State.

What should be done with another place is entirely another matter. We are only trying to avoid the problem by dragging

that matter up. I hope that when members vote on this measure they will bear in mind that it seeks to adopt the recommendation of the Select Committee which sat for some weeks and very carefully considered this problem. For years past members of this House and the public have been dissatisfied with the existing franchise. To think for one moment that we can retain the status quo indefinitely is, to my mind, a great error. The thing is to get the people of this State interested and give them an opportunity to have a vote for the election of members. If that is done, the unsatisfactory state of affairs that has existed in the past will, to my mind, be remedied to some extent. I trust that although this is only a small step forward, the House will not lose the opportunity to take it.

On motion by Hon. A. L. Loton, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.17 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 29th October, 1946.

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

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.*Section "A," 1946.*

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received from the Auditor General a copy of Section "A" of his report on the Treasurer's statement of the Public Accounts for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1946. It will be laid on the Table of the House.

QUESTIONS.**FLOORING TIMBER.***As to Disposals Sale at Nungarin.*

Mr. LESLIE asked the Premier:

1, Was any timber suitable for flooring purposes sold recently from the Ordnance Depot at Nungarin?

2, If so, will he state whether this was sold for use in this State or was it permitted to be used in another Australian State?

3, If any timber was sold, what was the quantity?

4, If not sold, is this timber still at Nungarin?

The PREMIER replied:

1, Yes.

2, Sold for use in this State for housing purposes.

3, 32,000 ft. of 5in. x 1in. T. and G. dressed.

4, See answers to 1, 2, and 3.

GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.*As to Machinery Replacements and Additions.*

Mr. DONEY asked the Premier:

1, Does he recognise that the machinery in use at the Government Printing Office is hopelessly outdated and worn, is a big handicap to the Government Printer and staff and severely limits output?

2, Having regard to the need for maintaining a heavy weekly output of important Parliamentary and departmental journals, reports and other papers, can he offer an assurance that no undue interference in that output need be feared, and that the need for new machinery is being investigated with a view to replacements and additions?

The PREMIER replied:

1, The need for new plant has already been brought to the notice of the Government and the recommendations have been approved in principle. It is proposed to spread the purchase over a short period of years and the first grant of £12,500 has been made this year. The war has been responsible for the present condition of the plant as it has been quite impossible to obtain new parts for servicing or to purchase any new machines.

2, Certain equipment has been ordered but the supply position is so acute that it is doubtful whether delivery can be effected under two years. In some cases it is stated to be three years. By the end of 1947 the position should be easier and it is proposed to accelerate the programme in order to meet immediate requirements. Replacement of obsolete machinery will be carried out after the necessary additions to the plant have been made.

BULLDOZERS AND TRACTORS.*As to Allotments to States.*

Mr. DONEY asked the Minister for Agriculture:

1, Is the Government satisfied that the number of bulldozers and tractors released for use in this State represents this State's fair share of such releases when compared with releases to other Australian States?

2, What number of (a) bulldozers and (b) tractors have been released to Western Australia during each of the last six months prior to this present month?

3, What number of (a) bulldozers and (b) tractors have been supplied to Government departments and, separately, what number have been supplied to private individuals?

The MINISTER replied:

1, The Government is not satisfied with the number of tractors and bulldozers available for Western Australia, but believes as a result of representations made that this State is receiving equitable treatment on a statistical basis.

2, (a) Delivery dates for bulldozers unknown. Bulldozers delivered between April and September, 1946, total 14, plus 14

"Crawler" type tractors. (b) April, 47 tractors; May, 36 tractors; June, 13 tractors; July, 73 tractors; August, 70 tractors; September, 49 tractors.

3, Private 299 tractors, 1 bulldozer; Government Departments 15 tractors, 13 bulldozers; total, 314 tractors, 14 bulldozers.

SCHOOL BUS SERVICES.

As to Estimated Cost of Vehicle.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Education:

What is the minimum estimated cost of a bus (including suitable new chassis) to comply with the specifications in regard to school omnibuses tabled on Wednesday, the 23rd October?

The MINISTER replied: £950.

BRACKISH WATER.

As to Treatment to Render Potable.

Mr. LESLIE asked the Minister for Works:

1, Have any further investigations been made into the process of converting brackish water into excellent potable water by putting the water through beds of granular ion-exchange synthetic resins, as is being successfully applied in the coal regions of West Virginia (America)?

2, Have such investigations, if any, permitted any definite conclusions to be arrived at in regard to the practical application of the process on either a large or small scale in the country areas of our State?

3, If no definite conclusions have yet been arrived at, and in view of the enormous economic value such a process, if capable of successful application, would be to Western Australia, will he arrange to have any inquiries and investigations being undertaken expedited with a view to definite conclusions being arrived at at the earliest possible moment?

The PREMIER replied:

1, Yes.

2, The American Cynamid Company, New York, has been asked for further information on treatment of saline waters by the synthetic resin process. No reply has yet been received. Messrs. Fletcher Chemical

Company, Victoria, consider that water from Port Hedland with an average salinity of 4,260 parts per million (298 grains per gallon) to be beyond the economic capacity of their exchange resins at present available.

3, Further information is being sought on this subject.

NORTH-WEST POLICE.

As to Transfer, Leave, Etc.

Mr. HOLMAN asked the Minister representing the Minister for Police:

1, How many members of the Police Force have been transferred from the North-West and Kimberley in the past six months?

2, How much accrued leave, if any, for the period stationed in the North-West or Kimberley is due to each of these officers?

3, How many of these officers were granted their leave on arrival at Perth?

4, How many of these officers have been transferred to other stations before the leave has been taken?

5, In view of the fact that the leave was accrued by these officers whilst stationed in the North-West or Kimberley, will they receive the North-West rate of pay for such leave regardless of where such officer is stationed at the time the leave is granted?

6, If not why not?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST replied:

1, Eight.

2, One, five months; three, two months each; two, one month each; two, nil.

3, Four.

4, Two.

5, No.

6, Would be contrary to Police Regulations.

RAILWAYS.

As to Wool Transport Delays.

Mr. LESLIE asked the Minister for Railways:

1, Is he aware that farmers are unable to obtain sufficient railway trucks to remove their wool to Fremantle in time to permit the wool being included in a particular sale or appraisal desired by the farmer?

2, That because of this, farmers are faced with the possibility of financial losses?

3, That similar serious delays occurred last year?

4, That in giving evidence before a Select Committee appointed last year to inquire into those delays, officers of his department gave assurances that a repetition of such delays would not occur this year?

5, Will he cause full inquiries to be made in order to ascertain why that assurance has not been kept?

6, Will he give such directions as are necessary to his departmental officers to ensure that the assurance of a satisfactory service this year will be kept?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Yes. It has not been possible to supply 100 per cent. orders for wool without seriously restricting supply of trucks for other traffic, but reasonable supplies have been provided and the quantity of wool arriving at Fremantle is taxing the efforts of the agents to handle it. A factor militating against a better supply of trucks is the acute shortage of engine power, which has been responsible for large accumulations of traffic throughout the country, thereby holding up trucks.

2, No.

3, To date Messrs. Elder, Smith & Co., Westralian Farmers, Ltd., and Goldsbrough, Mort & Co. have received 28,000 bales more this season than last season. Figures for Dalgety & Co. are not available, but that firm states they are well in advance of last year.

4, 5 and 6, Answered by No. 3.

SOUTH BUNBURY SCHOOL.

As to Resumption of Land for Grounds.

Mr. WITHERS (without notice) asked the Premier:

1, Is it a condition for the resumption of certain lands to increase the area of the South Bunbury school grounds that certain drainage work has to be put in hand by the Bunbury Municipal Council?

2, If the Council does not proceed with the drainage scheme will it hold up the projected work in connection with the school?

The PREMIER replied: The area to enlarge the school ground at South Bunbury is one to be re-possessed from the Workers' Homes Board and for which a design for nine homes was planned and ready to put into effect. The disability of obtaining high ground of sufficient area necessitated this course being taken. Negotiations have recently been entered into between the Minister for Education, the Workers' Homes Board and the Public Works Department in this connection and, although approval has been given for £500 to be spent on filling in and levelling the ground, I know of no contingent obligation that the Bunbury Municipal Council has in connection with drainage.

BILL—MINES REGULATION.

Introduced by the Minister for Mines and read a first time.

BILL—PLANT DISEASES ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—STATE HOUSING.

Report of Committee.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [4.41]: I move—

That the Committee's report be adopted.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [4.42]: I take it the Premier will give consideration to the matter of some protection, or at any rate the possibility of some protection, of the rights of landowners whose properties have been compulsorily acquired, which phase was discussed in Committee last week. I have no intention of delaying the Bill—I would not wish to do so even if I had the necessary power—but I think the matter I mention requires further consideration, and possibly that could be done in the Legislative Council.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne—in reply) [4.43]: I have arranged for the insertion in Clause 21 of almost an exact copy of the addition that

was included in Clause 65, which relates to resumptions for community purposes. Further than that, after a careful scrutiny of the proposal embodied in an amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition, I have made arrangements for the inclusion of a proviso to render more simple applications for leave of absence. Both those matters received my close attention and will be dealt with by the Minister representing the Government in the Legislative Council.

Question put and passed.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 23rd October.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE
(Hon. J. T. Tonkin—North-East Fremantle—in reply) [4.44]: Nearly every member who addressed himself to this measure criticised it more because of what it does not contain than on account of what it does include. The Leader of the Opposition declared that it makes no fundamental change in the methods that have been adopted over the past 30 years. The report of the Honorary Royal Commission, of which he was the chairman, certainly suggested a fundamental change, but it was one not acceptable to the Government for reasons that I will outline very shortly. In listening to the speeches by members it did appear to me that if the Bill had embraced all the recommendations of the Commission, then it would have been regarded as a good measure. It seemed to me that the praise for the Bill appeared to have depended upon the number of recommendations of the Commission that were included in the legislation.

As far as I can gather, the Commissioners made 47 recommendations, either directly stated or inferred, in their report. I have accepted 25 of them as being recommendations that could be availed of by the department in dealing with the problem of the eradication of vermin. Of those recommendations 20 can be implemented by regulations, leaving the balance of those I have accepted as satisfactory to be put into operation by means of legislation. There were 22 recommendations that the Government

did not find acceptable and a number of them depended on whether or not the proposition of shifting responsibility from the farmer to the road board was adopted. I submit that an entirely new philosophy—one that I do not very much like—has been advanced in this regard by the Leader of the Opposition and those who have supported him in his recommendations. This most remarkable statement was made use of by the Leader of the Opposition in this respect—

We therefore cast around for some method that might result in an improvement and we came to the conclusion that the farmer should by no means be prevented from destroying vermin or have any obstruction placed in the way of his destroying vermin on his own property.

What sagacity is required to come to that conclusion! The man who owns the property, whose success depends upon his keeping it clear of vermin, is not to have any obstruction placed in his way in getting rid of vermin! I should think not, but I say it is an entirely new philosophy which justifies the proposition that the farmer should be relieved of all responsibility to do anything. Surely we would expect that the man in whose interests it definitely is that vermin should be got rid of, should be the man not to expect obstacles to be placed in his way but rather that he would be the one who would immediately himself give personal attention to the eradication of vermin on his property; and if upon finding out that his own unaided efforts were not successful, that he would turn to someone else for assistance. That, I submit, would be the reasonable and sensible approach to this question. Instead of that, we get the proposition that we should take from the shoulders of the landowner—the farmer—any responsibility at all for getting rid of the vermin; that we should place that responsibility upon the road board or the vermin board, which board should come in and work the property on which the landowner had done nothing about getting rid of the vermin himself and that the job should be done for him at half cost.

How many men who are already giving attention to the vermin on their properties in their own interests would continue to do so under those conditions—without making a noise about it? Such men would say, "If I do the job myself, I have to pay all the

costs involved and do it in my own time and incur the expense for materials and so on; but if I do not do that, the vermin board will come in and do it for me at half cost." I find it impossible to reconcile the statements of the Leader of the Opposition in connection with this matter, because we find that at one time he argues that the cost of doing this by the local authority would be so great as to force the farmer to do it himself; whereas he previously said that his reason for making the suggestion was because it was physically and economically impossible for the farmer to do it himself.

Mr. Watts: That was the opinion of the Road Board Association.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: So if it is physically and economically impossible for the farmer to do it himself, how can he be forced to do it by the proposition which is submitted by the Royal Commission? It would only be putting a premium on laziness and would be no contribution to the solution of the problem at all. The reason why we have not had better results in the past is because a number of vermin boards have refused to take the necessary action. Some of the members of the boards have themselves been the worst offenders. They would not issue prosecutions against themselves and they dared not issue prosecutions against others in their district, and therefore nothing was done. The good farmer, the man who was giving the proper attention to the eradication of vermin, became discouraged because nothing was being done by his neighbours and he adopted the attitude that he would not do anything either. So the position drifted from bad to worse, and that is the root of the trouble in most of the districts where vermin has not been satisfactorily coped with.

There have been a number of districts where the job has been well done, where properties are free from vermin. Properties, fenced and unfenced, are free from vermin, because of the action taken by the landowner, the man who has gone out and ploughed up burrows. "No burrows, no rabbits," was the slogan of such men. Where they have done that and where they have systematically poisoned, they have got rid of the vermin. I have letters on the department's file from landowners who have

complained about the attitude of their neighbours, their neighbours being members of a vermin board which refused to do anything. They say they are so exasperated that they will not do anything themselves until such time as these other vermin board members are forced to take action on their properties.

The Royal Commission suggests that we should lift from the shoulders of the individual the responsibility to clean up his own land and put it on the shoulders of the vermin boards. Let them do it and charge up half the cost! There is a plan for the use of mobile units to go through the farming districts to do what the farmer individually in many cases has not done. This recommendation was rejected because of its colossal cost, which made it impracticable. I had it calculated that to do what the Royal Commission suggested ought to have been done would cost more than the total expenditure of the whole Department of Agriculture. Where is the money to come from for the purpose? Some of the properties which have been neglected by their owners are in such a condition that a mobile unit would need to be employed for months on a single property to put it in anything like decent order. Hundreds of these units would be required to do what the Royal Commission said ought to be done. In this connection, the department has much data on which to go. Some road boards have tried out this method of employing mobile units in certain places. When they have tried it, they have abandoned it on the ground of the excessive cost. We have approximately 16,000,000 acres of cleared and partially-cleared land. A calculation, on a conservative basis, shows that the cost to deal with this land would be 4½d. per acre, which would mean 230 mobile units each of three men, or approximately three to each board.

Mr. Watts: I do not think the report of the Royal Commission ever proposed a scheme of that nature.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is what it would come to.

Mr. Watts: You cannot find it anywhere in the report.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is what it would come to logically, because as soon as a scheme was proposed

which would do the work for the lackadaisical farmers at half the cost, one could not expect other farmers to continue the work that they had done.

Mr. Watts: That is a gross exaggeration in order to bolster up a bad case.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: They would expect the road board to do their job, too. Just imagine farmer A does nothing; the road board comes in and does the job at half the cost. Farmer B next door has been in the habit of doing everything that is necessary; he realises that if he does not do it the road board will do it for him at half the cost. Members can very well judge what would be the result. Farmer B will leave it to the road board, and so in the final analysis the board would be called upon to do the job for all the farmers.

Mr. Watts: Not with those mobile units.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The road board would be called upon to do the job for all the farmers where previously men, by dint of hard work and practical application, succeeded in getting rid of the vermin. The Royal Commission had plenty of evidence to prove that certain farmers were able satisfactorily to cope with vermin, notwithstanding that they had large properties. In districts where the vermin was not coped with it was because the vermin boards did not take the necessary action to keep the farmers up to the mark. The Leader of the Opposition quoted a supposititious case of a man who did not do the job. He was prosecuted, fined £2 and then nothing was done.

Mr. Watts: It was not a supposititious case. It was an actual fact.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: What would prevent the vermin board if it prosecuted a farmer and got no result from taking another prosecution and a still further prosecution until the farmer was obliged to carry out his obligation? Of course, that is not the story at all. Where the boards have done their job there has been very little trouble. The trouble has arisen where the boards have not done their job. I have had a number of applications from time to time from boards asking for exemption from levying the vermin rate. In one instance a board subsequently ap-

plied to the department for financial assistance to purchase ammunition to destroy vermin, yet it wanted to remove from itself the obligation to raise any money to do that work.

Unfortunately, vermin boards—only some of them, not all—employ inspectors only when the menace is bad, when it is obvious and worrying. That gingers up the work in the district and the conditions are much improved. Then, when the vermin is not very bad, the board dispenses with the inspector, instead of retaining his services to make sure that the vermin will be kept down to an irreducible minimum. If the boards will continue to give attention to the menace and look to the department for assistance, which is always given to them when in difficulties and when they have done as much as can be expected of them, we will cope with the vermin, and not in the way suggested by the Royal Commission of taking all responsibility for it from the landowner and putting it upon a board.

For the year ended the 30th June, eight boards applied for exemption from vermin rates in their districts, and they are districts where vermin are causing a good deal of trouble. Some boards near the metropolitan area and embracing quite a lot of the small holdings proposed to be brought under the Act, have refrained from striking a rate for many years, and some have not even sought approval for not doing so. A search of the files of the department shows very conclusively that a number of the boards have not regarded this problem as being really serious; and that is the root of the trouble. If they had realised the necessity for energising farmers in their districts, they would have had far better results. In districts where boards have taken the matter seriously and have imposed a reasonable rate on the farmers, quite a good job has been done, and the Bill proposes that the boards shall be further assisted.

The Leader of the Opposition did not see much virtue in the proposal to appoint additional inspectors. The Bill makes it possible for additional inspectors to be appointed and paid from the Central Vermin Fund, those inspectors to go through the various districts and advise the boards and the farmers. We can expect in that way to have better attention paid to the require-

ments of the problem than has been the case in the past, and I submit in that connection that the Bill makes a real improvement in the existing situation. I have had taken out for me reports on a number of representative properties in various districts. These are most illuminating, and are available for any member who desires to see them.

For example: Here is a property in the Williams district, around the 15,000-acre mark. It is in rich, hilly country, with jam free thickets, regular outcrops and large timbered and rung timbered areas. Rabbits have been well established in warrens throughout much of this property. A three man mobile unit could be employed on this huge holding 12 months of the year. Here are some other cases—

7,000 acres approximate. Rabbit-netted off 2-3,000 acres, rabbits thereon receiving considerable attention. Rabbits on balance of property very casually dealt with. Country practically all very hilly, much being cleared or ring barked. Rabbits have been very well established in warrens over much of this property for years. A 3-man mobile unit could be constantly employed indefinitely on rabbit eradication work.

4-5,000 acres. Majority of country rabbit-netted. A very badly rabbit infested property, extending some miles along the Williams River. A 3-man mobile unit would be employed many months, possible 12 or more, cleaning up rabbits and warrens on this holding.

Now let us take one or two in the Kojonup district. Here is a report on one of 7,000 to 8,000 acres—

One portion rabbit-netted in. Big creek runs through portion of the property which contains much semi-cleared and rung timbered country. Rabbits have well and truly established themselves in warrens and in fallen logs etc. over much of the holding. A gang of three men would be months working over this property thoroughly destroying rabbits, warrens and other occupied cover.

Here is another property—

4,000 acres. Containing hilly country and a number of big water courses. Large area cleared and down in pasture, but timber and scrubby areas are located through the cleared paddocks. Rabbits have established themselves firmly. It would take a mobile unit of three men months to go over this property once, dealing seriously with rabbits, warrens and other occupied cover.

Here are one or two from the Gnowangerup district—

15,000 acres station property. Suitable areas have been cleared and cropped in various parts of the holding. This in turn has helped

spread the rabbits over large areas, until now they are a major problem. A mobile unit of three men would be employed indefinitely dealing thoroughly with the rabbit situation on this very large holding.

5,000 acres (4,000 acres rabbit-netted). The Gnowangerup Brook runs through the property and a big tributary to it cuts across another portion of it. Rabbits have established themselves in huge warrens which are to be found in the cleared fields and also honey-combing some of the banks of the brooks. To deal adequately with the rabbits and the warrens on this property would take a team of three men many months, possibly 12 months or more.

4,000 acres approximate. The Pallinup River cuts through one portion of the holding, and the Gnowangerup Brook and tributaries cut across the property at right-angles to the river. Rabbits have established themselves solidly in the banks of the brooks and river. Also numerous warrens were to be seen out in many of the paddocks. A mobile unit of three men would be employed many weeks in giving this property the "once over" as regards destroying rabbits and the many warrens.

Members can realise what a colossal cost would be involved if the State had to undertake the financing of the work necessary to go over all those neglected properties, the responsibility for doing so having been removed from the owners. That is the proposition of the Royal Commission.

Mr. Watts: Supposing those wonderful figures are not grossly exaggerated, how would the owners comply with those commitments financially?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:
If the owners had done something down the years, the properties would not be in such a condition as to require so much expenditure.

Mr. Watts: You do not want to dwell on things that are over and cannot be remedied.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:
No; but the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition is one that we could not possibly face. He wants the State to shoulder a responsibility which has accumulated over the years and which should have been attended to by individual farmers. He wants the State to share the expenses of that work when other individual farmers who have done their job have had to meet the cost themselves over the years and have successfully coped with the problem. This proposition of shifting the burden is basic to a number of recommendations made by the

Royal Commission and, having rejected the main one, it was necessary for us to reject the others which were dependent upon it. I could find very few people to agree that the way to tackle any problem which concerns an individual is to remove from that individual any personal responsibility for taking some action.

Take the Bush Fires Act, for example. To protect one's own property and the property of one's neighbour, one is obliged to see that the grass is not allowed to grow up and remain in such a condition as to be a possible cause of fire. The individual has to take action to burn off the grass and to get rid of it to make his property safe. We might just as well say that the responsibility for doing that should be placed on a board or a municipal council and that it should not be the responsibility of the individual landowner.

Mr. Watts: The two cases are not comparable in the slightest degree.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I think they are because, in such instances, surely there must be responsibility attendant upon ownership to safeguard one's property.

Mr. Watts: In one case it is the owner's grass; in the other, it is the nation's rabbits.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If a man is not over-mindful about his own property, there is still an obligation on him to consider the interests of his neighbours. If there is a farmer who is not very much concerned about whether he gets rid of rabbits on his own property or not, from his own point of view, he still has an obligation to his neighbours to do something, so that if they are looking after their properties those properties will not become re-infested from the property of the lazy farmer. That is exactly the position with regard to bush fires. If a man is not inclined to get rid of grass on his own property because he is not afraid of his own house being burnt down, or is prepared to take the risk, he should not be allowed to take the risk, or make other people take it, of their properties being affected because of his inactivity. That is what would happen if a man allowed his grass to grow and took no notice of the danger that might

occur to properties next door. The same applies to the spread of vermin.

Mr. Watts: Why not apply those principles to the Railway Department?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am glad the Leader of the Opposition mentioned that. The Railway Department takes action with regard to its own embankments. It is also prepared to pay the cost of action taken on land which is contiguous to land being treated by the owners.

Mr. Watts: That does not cut any ice.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, it does!

Mr. Watts: Oh no! On your argument, it is the department's responsibility to look after its own property.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It would be a waste of money for the department to give attention to a small piece of land adjacent to a large property which was entirely neglected by the owner.

Mr. Watts: That is where I wanted to get you. That is the whole point.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Of course it is!

Mr. Watts: That is the whole point in reference to the farmer himself.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is the point of the business, all right. The hon. member wants the Railway Department to continue to spend money on clearing out vermin that are coming from a property adjacent to its own land, and in that way probably get rid of all the rabbits from infested properties for somebody else who should be doing the job.

Mr. Watts: And you want the farmer to do exactly the same!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The shifting of responsibility is the suggestion right through the commission's report—the shifting of responsibility from the individual until it finally rests on the Government. What the Railway Department is prepared to do—and does do—is to attend to its own embankments for safety's sake, and to attend to all land adjacent to property which is being looked after by the owner. That is a fair and reasonable proposition. If the owners would carry out their obligations, the Railway Department

would be attending to all its land and there would be no difficulty whatsoever on that score. The same thing applies to the Forests Department. That department says, first of all that few rabbits are to be found in the heart of the forest areas because it is well known that they live upon the fringes of the cleared areas—within a few miles. They feed on the grassland and inhabit the fringes. Only odd ones are found if we go into the forests, but nevertheless the department is prepared to pay for the cost of poisoning its land, and it does so. There is therefore no ground whatever for complaint against it. This bears out the importance of getting individual farmers to realise their responsibility to others, and the losses they themselves sustain if they do not do the necessary work, and of getting recalcitrant men to come up to scratch and do as their more successful neighbours do.

I would not continue in this vein if we did not have ample evidence that the men who devote their time to clearing out vermin succeed in doing so. There is plenty of evidence to that effect. Where a farmer has the right attitude towards the problem and knows how much it costs to feed rabbits instead of sheep, and consequently destroys every warren he sees, and poisons regularly, he is able successfully to cope with the vermin and laughs at the idea that it cannot be done. In other districts, where men neglect to do the necessary work, and where certain road board members neglect to do it, and therefore cannot force anybody else to take action, we find the problem going from bad to worse. It is hoped that the appointment of the additional inspectors provided for in the Bill will energise some road boards and be the cause of there being more effective supervision and more work done.

Mr. Watts: Hope springs eternal in the human breast!

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It would be a poor world if we were without hope. The member for Roebourne suggested that the problem, which is one of dealing with dogs in the area he represents, was so great that the Bill would make no contribution towards its solution, and was therefore of very little value. The hon. member knows that by far the greatest bulk of the money raised is spent in that area, on dogs that are being destroyed there and, when money is being paid out on that scale, it

shows that a considerable amount of work is being done by Government trappers in that area.

I have here some figures which illustrate the position. For the year 1935-36 the total number of dogs destroyed in the whole State was 10,932. The number destroyed in the area north of Broome in that year was 4,651, or 42 per cent. of the total. For the year 1936-37, 11,302 dogs were destroyed in the State and 4,804 in the area north of Broome. As the figures for the succeeding years run steadily there is no need to quote them all. For the year 1943-44, 18,174 dogs were destroyed in the State and of that number 12,380 or 68 per cent. of the total were destroyed in the areas north of Broome. For the year 1944-45, 19,402 were destroyed in the State and 13,889, or 71 per cent. were destroyed in the area north of Broome. For the year 1945-46, 17,672 dogs were destroyed in the State and 13,263, or 75 per cent. of the total, were destroyed in the area north of Broome. For the year 1945-46, the payments amounted to £10,446 for dogs, £1,408 for pups, £13 16s. for foxes and £288 for eagles. The total rates collectable in that year for the area concerned amounted to £500, so there was an expenditure of over £12,000, as against £500 collected in rates.

I quote those figures to give members an idea of what would be involved if the grandiose scheme of the Royal Commission were adopted. On a calculation, £300,000 would be involved in order to do, on behalf of the State, what we expect individual landowners to do, partly in their own interests. In every instance where a board has requested assistance from the department, either by the issue of additional poison or the engagement of men to do some work of vermin eradication, assistance has been given. Where a board has shown its bona fides and has pointed out that it could not raise sufficient revenue, without having an unduly high rate, and earnestly required assistance to deal with the problem, assistance has been given by the department, and it is believed that under the powers the Bill will afford there will be considerable success in dealing with the vermin menace. It is admitted that the present position is most unsatisfactory, and that something must be done.

The scheme outlined by the Royal Commission is not regarded as practicable, but

that proposed in the Bill is regarded as practicable, and I think it might be given a trial. I repeat that more than half of the recommendations of the Royal Commission are acceptable to the department. The bulk of them can be put into operation by means of regulations. Those that are acceptable, but cannot be put into operation by means of regulations, are to be put into operation by means of this Bill. If members will realise that the proposition submitted by the Royal Commission is not sound, and that therefore some other scheme must be devised, they will find, proposed in the Bill a method for dealing with the situation, where the central vermin board or committee will have additional powers and will be able to spend more money, and appoint inspectors who will go throughout the districts concerned to see that the work is carried out. I submit that it is well worth a trial. The proposal that has been put up by the Royal Commission is fundamentally wrong and could only result in a tremendous increase in expenditure. It would not give results commensurate with that increase. Because of that, the proposition was not acceptable to the Government.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair; the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 59:

Mr. PERKINS: When replying, the Minister did not make particular reference to the provision contained in this clause for the minimum rate of $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the pound. I think that provision is unnecessary. If local vermin boards carry out their duties properly and get the vermin well under control, more money may accumulate from the rating than is necessary for the carrying out of the work in that area. Unless the Minister can give a reason why that minimum should remain in the clause I will move to have it struck out.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: This is a recommendation of the Royal Commission which I thought was a good one, and therefore adopted. The idea is that all

the boards will be able to show that they are prepared to do something towards dealing with the problem. Three-eighths of a penny is not regarded as a high rate, and the least boards can do is to levy that amount. I do not feel disposed to alter it.

Mr. WATTS: I take it there is nothing that will deprive the Minister of the right to exempt a vermin board from the collection of rates. In the event of a board accumulating funds and proving to the satisfaction of the Minister that an increased fund is not necessary for the time being, it could be exempted from year to year, for as long as that state of affairs continued to exist and could be proved. I did not advance the argument of the member for York, because I was of the opinion that, with that power remaining, justice could be done to a board in that position, which is not unlikely to arise at some time or other. I did doubt whether it was worth while having the $\frac{3}{4}$ d. minimum in the Bill because, when I subscribed to the recommendation of the Royal Commission in that regard, it was not an isolated proposal that road boards should be compelled to strike a minimum rate of $\frac{3}{4}$ d., but part of the general scheme of increased taxation. That minimum was calculated in relation to other proposals, in the report of the Royal Commission, relating to increased revenue.

Those aspects have not been assented to by the Minister or his department and there is therefore no longer a plan for greatly increased revenue to be collected from virtually everybody concerned in the State, but only a part of the proposal—to wit, that the local authorities should be compelled to strike a minimum rate. Therefore the proposal is open to the objection that it does not really carry out the recommendation of the Royal Commission, but is only taking text from context and making an amendment to the Act. I do not feel disposed at this juncture strongly to oppose the proposition, because I do not consider a rate of $\frac{3}{4}$ d. is excessive, and I know that many local authorities have imposed a rate as great as or greater than that over a considerable period of years. I take it the measure will be administered fairly and, so long as the Minister may exempt a local authority immediately the time arrives when money is not required, there is

no reason why application should not be made for exemption and be granted.

Mr. PERKINS: In view of the explanation given by the Minister and the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition, I am prepared to waive my objection. With vermin so bad as it is at present, most boards will require this amount. We hope that with the exercise of strict control the liability may diminish but, if the accumulation of funds is such that a board will receive exemption when additional money is not needed, I shall feel satisfied.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 4 to 7, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

1, Road Districts Act Amendment.

With an amendment.

2, Anatomy Act Amendment.

Without amendment.

LOAN ESTIMATES, 1946-47.

Message.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read transmitting the Loan Estimates for the year 1946-47 and recommending appropriation.

In Committee.

The House resolved into Committee to consider the Loan Estimates, Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair.

Vote—Departmental, £200,000:

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [5.36]: Rarely if ever has a programme been placed before the Parliament of this State providing so comprehensively for loan expenditure vital to the State's progress. In fact, on no previous occasion have Loan Estimates been introduced for a sum exceeding £5,000,000. The programme of loan works submitted this year is the first that can be considered as a post-war one. Although the Loan Estimates submitted last year were discussed after hostilities with Japan had ceased, they were framed prior to the cessation of hostilities and, of course, were influenced

very materially by that fact; and there was inability during the transition period to achieve even the anticipated Estimates and give effect to them.

The Estimates now presented to the Committee reflect an accumulation of arrears during the years of war, and also signify the determination of the Government to push ahead as rapidly as possible with the development of the State. Though the economic life of Australia has not yet been adjusted to full peacetime conditions, there are opportunities for us to take advantage of the improved conditions that approaching normality presents to us. There are many factors still operating, however, that prevent us from carrying out very substantially much of the work that is planned for the future, the principal disturbing factor being the lack of manpower.

Members will readily understand that, following the effort Australia was called upon to make during the war, the adjustment of our economy to peacetime conditions is a colossal task and will take a considerable time. Men were withdrawn from industry all over the Commonwealth to such an extent that some industries languished, and very many men are still unable to make the change from wartime conditions to their normal peacetime activities. Many of our men passed almost from school into the Forces, and the training of men for civil occupations, notwithstanding the advantages presented by training schemes, will take a considerable time. There were some men, of course, who had the advantage, while in the Forces, of receiving training in some of the departments of war service and there are others whose work during the war was associated with the manufacture of munitions or occupations closely related to peacetime activities.

One of our great concerns at the moment is the shortage of materials and the fact that industries supplying these material needs have not yet had returned to them the full labour forces so necessary to step-up production. This is especially true of industries that have to operate in the winning of raw materials on which manufacturing depends, but in particular do my remarks apply to such as the timber industry which in this State is still operating on a labour force not 75 per cent. of its pre-war numbers. In addition to the shortage of labour

and material, there is an unprecedented demand for the products of labour due to the accumulation of needs during the war years.

The position in which we find ourselves in regard to the shortage of houses is typical of the general position in relation to very many of our requirements. We have to meet a demand much greater than the pre-war demand from a force of labour and a supply of materials seriously curtailed as compared with what was available before the war. With a vastly increased demand, we have fewer men and services available to meet the needs. Although we may experience serious difficulty in carrying out some of the works listed in this loan programme, so far as it is possible to give effect to the whole of the programme, this will be done.

When dealing with the State Housing Bill, I mentioned that to provide the number of homes to be erected in order to meet current demands and make an appreciable reduction in the accumulated number requisite to fulfil requirements, the labour force in the building industry will have to be enlarged by 50 per cent. above the pre-war level. This does not take into account the requirements of industrial enterprises, the construction of factories, the public building programme including the erection of hospitals, schools, court-houses and all necessary public requirements in buildings in connection with which there is a very serious lag. An estimate taken out shows that the lag in public building requirements represents a value of not less than £1,500,000.

During the next 10 years, provided the Government is able to give effect to the plans envisaged to meet the needs of the decade, we shall require to spend £10,000,000 to overtake lag and provide full requirements in buildings to meet the needs of the State. So that there is a pool of great magnitude to be anticipated and dealt with. It will require considerable organisation and all of the labour force that can be obtained and encouraged during that period. Those are aspects which normality in progress would bring to us. It is a very important thing that all of those associated with this industry should have a full realisation of the stability that is likely to be enjoyed in the building trades and all the industries associated with it over a long term of years. It is a very important thing, too, because the building industry is one the prosperity or inactivity

of which has an influence on very many trades and industries in our whole economy.

Whilst the building trade is active very much of our industry is also active. I think there is nothing to prevent, so far as we can see at the moment, a very large stimulation being given to the trades that are associated with the building trade, and therefore in such stimulation an opportunity being offered to those who normally would be engaged in it. It is easy to realise the diffidence of business men as well as operatives in the building industry who depend on such industry and its buoyancy for their living and its future when the experiences of the past are considered. In the building industry there have been very sad experiences, after considerable agitation and building up of an interest and trade and the numerical strength of the union concerned, when through depression and a shortage of money there have been serious stages of doldrums through which the men concerned have had to pass. It is one of the first trades to suffer in a general way as a result of a depression.

The outlook for the future, however, is that unless this country is to suffer from an economic depression or unless we are not prepared to plan for progress, there is room for encouragement for all those concerned particularly in regard to trade unions interested in the artisans associated with the building trade, and there is strong reason for great encouragement to be given on the basis of stability and an anticipation of improvement in their trade for many years to come. I think there is a necessity to give an assurance to such people that there is in anticipation a basis of security for a very long number of years.

Mr. North: Whatever happens outside?

The PREMIER: Of course, whatever happens outside must have an influence in some way upon Australia. Provided, as I intend to show later, Australia is prepared to regard the development of her assets, her national resources, as a liability mostly to come from within, and if we are prepared to show by our development sufficient faith in the future, and provided also that we are prepared all to work hard, there is no doubt of the great future of this country in my view. It may be trite to say that if we are to populate Western Australia we must develop it, but I think we

cannot afford to ignore not only the progress and the opportunities in our development but the responsibilities in the future attaching to the development of our resources wherever they may occur. That applies particularly to the resources in our country areas.

I think there will be found in these Estimates projects that are designed to increase the productivity of the State. Members will find Estimates designed to improve the standard of health and education and social services, which the State must provide in order to improve the living conditions of the people. Yesterday in extending a welcome to the Commonwealth Grants Commission, once more visiting this State, I had the duty of outlining my anticipation of the responsibilities of this State and its requirements and the necessity of undertaking large commitments for the national security and the economic development of Western Australia. Due to stress of space, I will presume, the remarks I made before the Commission and the comments of its members did not receive very much publicity. Some of the remarks of the Chairman and members of the Commission are very interesting and very appropriate, and I think some of them should be repeated publicly as the hearing itself was in public. For example, these are some of the remarks of Dr. Wood, a member of the Commission—

I would just like to say that I appreciate, and we all appreciate as a Commission, the enormous difficulties faced by the Western Australian Government in possession of so much marginal country. They are not problems which are new to us, neither is the courage with which the Western Australian Government and Western Australian people have faced their difficulties, and there is no confidence broken when we say that we have always regarded with the very greatest sympathy within the limits of our charter the way in which these problems have been tackled.

It was very interesting indeed to hear the Premier thinking in terms of a five or 10 year programme, and of the overall capital expenditure involved. It looked to me, on a quick survey, like a prospect of adding another £50 per head to the community debt, and that involves a tremendous effort on the part of the State to increase productivity in something like the same order. That is political courage of a very high kind—political courage that has been shown in the past—political courage, in the past, that was shown in the absence of the scientific aids of the present time. The losses of the past could, perhaps, have been avoided to a certain extent if we had known some of

the things we know now, and I am very glad to hear the Treasurer say that he is impressed with a sense of the responsibilities of the three men who now face you. We are very deeply conscious of our responsibilities, particularly with regard to the two dry States with whom we have so much to do.

These observations, coming from the second senior member of the Commission are heartening, and whilst they are heartening they also impose an obligation on the Government to make very sure not only of the scrutiny of the projects being developed but of the responsibility of the application of loan moneys in the best public interests. The attitude I would wish to adopt in that connection is to give to our community a feeling of security and hopefulness as well as faith in the future of the State. If we are to get help from outside the State we must, by our interpretation and our actions in regard to our responsibilities, establish the necessary confidence. If we have faith in our asset we can confidently borrow against it money that will be applied towards greater productive effort and visible as well as invisible returns. I think, and have often thought, that in the answer that is always suggested that although one cannot see an immediate return for an investment of loan money one may get it in invisible returns, the anticipation and expectation of getting it in that way are not sufficient.

Schemes must be planned which are so sufficient and fundamentally sound as to give a return of themselves in order to assist in financing them if the contributions from them are at all visible. If that can be, any added production that comes from the investment of borrowed money for this purpose will not be an indirect benefit only. On the other hand Government plans can be designed solely for the purpose of increasing production in order to make individuals wealthy, not only by production but by increases in value because of Government effort in aids to production. That is very important. It is important that no person should advocate a system whereby the individual can cash in on Government expenditure and apply to himself unfair profits from the result of moneys invested and applied in the development of certain districts.

In this State since we have lost the benefit of taxation as a means of obtaining revenue from private incomes, it is very

important to ensure that there shall be some recompense, as directly as possible, from the proper investment of loan moneys. In very many districts of Western Australia there have been very high rewards to some of the pioneers, but in very many instances the pioneer has had no reward. Through the years the application of moneys from Governments has been of material aid in the establishment of interests and industries where private enterprise could not possibly have undertaken the investment of public money to get the result and to provide the assistance. One often finds in these days people lamenting that the days of the pioneer are past, and many people complaining that the Government instead of insisting that the pioneering days should continue is too prone to indulge in spoon feeding.

Whilst I pay full tribute to and have a very high appreciation of the determination of our early pioneers I am fully convinced that with modern developments we shall never see people enduring hardships that those of the earlier days encountered. Without in any way discounting the value of their work I believe that Australians generally, wherever hard work is essential to their progress, will undertake work of the hardest character. I think we should not confuse hard work with hardship. In my view the hardships of the pioneers will never again be experienced in this State when amenities are not very far removed from most of the community if community planning through Government activities is properly undertaken.

The aim of the Government is to provide a considerable proportion of the requirements for a better service and better amenities in districts, particularly in country areas, where there continue to be many disabilities, some of which are those in connection with transport and accessibility associated with transport. Just as irrigation and drainage schemes are vital to ensure even production throughout the year, and more production month by month, and also to mitigate the effects of drought and to overcome climatic variability, so do water schemes, as distinct from irrigation schemes, become vital in the provision of water for domestic and industrial uses. Our approach, therefore, to these problems has been very evident in this Chamber in the debates that

have taken place during the last week or two. These projects are of major importance in the application of loan moneys and the policy of the State to service such borrowings if we are to increase our production and get not only an invisible improvement, but a contribution that is visible, which is very vital too.

In the co-ordination of land use it appears to me, in the Australia-wide sense, that the only opportunity remaining is to enlarge our population in areas that are rural. No matter what attempts we make to urbanise or industrialise our country districts, there still remains, in the broad sense in the use of our country acres, the responsibility of making them as productive as possible. Therefore, wrapped up in all schemes of better land use are the public works necessary to be designed to make the land as productive as possible and the people as prosperous as possible. It has been the responsibility of Governments rather than of private enterprise through the years to meet the needs of people, even to the extent of providing railways, in which both the Government and the member for Pingelly find much to criticise, roads, education, or facilities for the better health of the community, and to arrange the financing of loan projects.

There have been many cases, and continue to be, where private enterprise, after the Government has, for the people, borne the cost and the burden of initiating projects, has come into rewards from such Government endeavour and expenditure. That is not wholly undesirable, but it is important that there should be a full appreciation of the responsibility of the community as a whole to the Government in the service of the debt which is represented in the investments made for the community interest. In looking ahead and, for a moment, dealing with anticipated loan programmes of the future, it is obvious that much of the expenditure in the past has had to be seriously curtailed through years of depression and war. If it were possible for us to anticipate years without depression and wars and to apply the resources of the nation to its development, there is no question of the flourishing condition in which a generation could leave this country. That being so, we can but plan for abnormality which the absence of depression and the absence of war really is; it is an abnormal condition, even

in this generation. But in our endeavours to plan we can look forward, and I feel confident that there will be a tremendous buoyancy in Government undertakings of all kinds.

It will be evident in the provision not only of those things that are of direct benefit to the community but also of the many things which the community needs and from which there can be no direct contribution; for instance, expenditure on public buildings, whether of educational or hospital types, or even asylums. All those things must be provided for the welfare and well-being of the community, and they make necessary a large expenditure that gives no economic return. The size of the loan programme submitted for this State is comparable with those which were submitted by all of the States. The sum total of the loan works programme submitted by the Commonwealth and States was £67,500,000. It is by far the biggest programme ever submitted to a Loan Council, and it includes an accumulation of arrears of work which have become more pressing because of the cessation of the activities carried on during the war years. The programme approved is made up as follows:—

	£
Commonwealth	16,750,000
New South Wales	20,600,000
Victoria	8,800,000
Queensland	6,400,000
South Australia	6,000,000
Western Australia	5,000,000
Tasmania	3,900,000

In addition to the very large requirements of Governments, the semi-governmental and local authorities in some States, where heavy expenditure is always necessary because of the works being undertaken by authorities not directly associated with the Government, as compared with what happens in this State, asked for a very large sum to be included. The total programme for local authorities submitted to the Loan Council was £24,200,000, making a total approval for loan-raising of £91,700,000. When these programmes were considered by the Loan Council, it was obvious that, unless the position improved, it was likely that it would be a physical impossibility to give effect to all works planned for this year and envisaged as being possible of commencement, and which would continue through several years. Because that was so, after the total programme

was approved, consideration was given to how much money should be borrowed immediately, and approval was given to raise 75 per cent. of the total amount required; and early next year, when we can see what progress has been made and just how much the physical capacity of each State has been able to give effect to the works scheduled, we can review the position and raise the additional 25 per cent. of the total approved if it is found necessary to do so.

A rather pleasant occurrence was the attitude of the Commonwealth Treasurer in this connection. He indicated, with no tag at all, that where the States found it possible to give effect to the physical implementation of their loan programme, no bar whatever would be placed on the provision of the necessary finance. That is a new attitude on the part of Commonwealth Treasurers, and it does enable State Treasurers to plan their programmes with the certainty that if the works can be put into effect there will be no lack of funds to carry them on.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: That is a revolutionary change.

THE PREMIER: It is. The member for Geraldton has been at loan programmes when in days past, after limitations have been imposed by representatives of the Commonwealth Bank, whose suggestions were endorsed by the Treasurer of the Commonwealth, haggling occurred between the States as to which should reduce its programme by £3,000,000 or £4,000,000. On some occasions as much as £10,000,000 or £15,000,000 had to be struck out. Those limitations put many of the States in a very unenviable position.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: One year it was only £13,000,000 for the whole of Australia!

Mr. McDonald: But the Commonwealth Government holds the purse now.

THE PREMIER: Yes, but it is a strikingly different attitude on loan raisings, and it is distinct from the repayment from taxation to which the States are entitled. One or two of the larger Eastern States are in a very favourable position because of the tremendous expenditure undertaken there by the Commonwealth authorities during the war years. Some States, where there was expenditure on defence works, have accumu-

lated large cash balances which have been placed in suspense accounts for subsequent requirements. A striking example is Queensland, which has set aside an amount exceeding £5,000,000 for the purposes of post-war development from sums accumulated during the war years.

We in Western Australia were able to carry on through the war period not only from the meagre sums coming direct from loans, but the moneys that came to us from the excess of deposits over withdrawals in the Commonwealth Bank in this State. With these funds, we were able to finance our loan requirements without drawing substantial amounts from the Commonwealth Treasury. In no year since the war has the loan expenditure in this State exceeded the Estimates. Taking the years from 1941-42 as an example, the figures I shall give show how far short our expenditure fell of our estimates:—

Year	Estimates £	Expenditure £
1941-42 ..	1,561,000	792,000
1942-43 ..	1,089,000	775,000
1943-44 ..	805,000	377,000
1944-45 ..	1,560,000	695,000
1945-46 ..	1,607,000	1,082,000

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The PREMIER: I think members will be interested in ascertaining the types of works on which this large sum of £91,000,000 is proposed to be spent and I have extracted from the report of the Co-ordinator General of Works the total figures applying to the Commonwealth, State Governments and local and semi-governmental bodies. These show that the money will be spent on the following types of works:—

	£
Electricity Generation and Transmission	11,000,000
Housing	22,000,000
Water Supply and Sewerage	9,000,000
Transport, including railways, tramways, harbours and roads	15,500,000
Health	3,000,000
Education	3,000,000
Water Conservation	5,000,000
Forestry	3,000,000

So far as Western Australia is concerned the figures dealing with the types of work

upon which the money is to be spent here are as follows:—

	£
Electricity	904,000
Water Supply	645,000
Transport	1,600,000
Health	450,000
Education	250,000
Water Conservation	773,000

No provision has been made for housing in this State's programme, as most of the work to be carried out this year under that heading will be financed by the Commonwealth Government under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement. Should it be necessary, or should it be considered advisable, to re-commence the ordinary operations of the Workers' Homes Board, the borrowing of additional capital this year will not be necessary because the board has ample funds at its disposal for fairly long-term operations.

Turning now to a brief review of last year's programme, I mentioned that as against an estimated expenditure of £1,607,000, the actual expenditure was £1,082,000. It was estimated that the Railway Department would spend £133,000 but the actual expenditure amounted to only £70,000. The reason for the decreased expenditure is that the Estimates included provision for the purchase of material for six Diesel electric coaches and trailers, and that material was not available during the year. Then the tramways spent a little over £1,000 although the Estimates provided for an expenditure of approximately £30,000. The works that were included in the Estimates could not be carried out for somewhat similar reasons.

The expenditure in connection with electricity supply totalled £114,000; whereas the estimated expenditure was £293,000. The Estimates included provision for the expenditure of £200,000 on account of the South-West Power Scheme, but no expenditure in that regard was incurred. In the case of the Water Supply Department, however, work carried out, particularly in the agricultural districts, resulted in an expenditure of £79,000 although the Estimates provided for only £45,000. In connection with other operations entailing an expenditure in excess of the provision made on the Estimates, work was re-commenced on the Stirling Dam, for which no provision had been made when the last Loan Estimates were presented.

We were planning to make provision for any possible unemployment that might arise and jobs that required a lot of labour were given a very high priority so that, should it become necessary, we would be able to cushion any unemployment that followed the cessation of hostilities and the rapid demobilisation of men from the Armed Forces.

The work in connection with the Stirling Dam was one that the State was anxious to carry out, and as labour became available operations were re-commenced. There is a very great difference today in the position with regard to labour. We find ourselves with ample funds available, but labour is very hard to obtain for any works that in normal times would be designated as public works and which would form the basis for absorbing large numbers of men usually following that type of employment. Many very desirable works at the moment cannot be put in hand because labour is not available to us. Provision has been made in the Commonwealth Unemployment Scheme for shifting the responsibility in many aspects in that particular to fall upon Commonwealth shoulders instead of upon those of the State.

One difficulty we are anticipating, and are endeavouring to meet, is the availability of essential supplies for some of our major undertakings, which are really manufactured goods from the other States. For example, in connection with the South Fremantle power unit, very large quantities of steel will be required from Broken Hill Pty. Coy. and unless such materials are available to us, there is likely to be disappointment in the carrying out of the plan according to schedule. I have, by means of personal interviews and letters, taken up this matter with Mr. Essington Lewis to ensure that supplies in the order as needed will be available to us to enable this State to continue with this and other kindred works. I have found Mr. Essington Lewis inclined to be most co-operative and during the last few days I have received a letter from him saying that he would endeavour to deliver the sizes and types of steel to meet our needs as we can use them. Shipping, of course, is a difficulty in that connection and constantly we are keeping in touch with the Shipping Control Board to ensure that as materials are available from Broken

Hill and Port Kembla we shall have shipping accommodation provided.

Completing the survey of this State's programme for last year, I may remind members that £80,000 was spent on the Wundowie charcoal - iron project and £126,000 on the alunite project at Lake Champion. With regard to the former work it is hoped that the furnace and retort for the distillation of wood will be in operation next year. If the experiment at Wundowie proves to be as successful as we confidently anticipate, it will lay the foundation for the establishment of the much needed heavy iron and steel industry in this State. There will be a direct relationship between that concern and such industrial developments as that recently announced by the Minister for Works in connection with the manufacture of tractors in Western Australia. The work at Lake Champion has experienced many vicissitudes and a great volume of experimental work has had to be undertaken. The stage has now been reached where potash is being produced in quantities and the efforts of the management are now being directed to the quality of the product manufactured. Although the expenditure on this industry has been considerable, it should not be forgotten that experimental work had to be sacrificed in order to produce potash quickly at a time when it was of vital importance to primary producers throughout the State, who were unable to obtain adequate supplies of fertiliser from overseas.

Among the items included in last year's Estimates was £196,000 for public buildings, whereas the actual expenditure amounted to £105,000. The main items included in this expenditure concerned the erection of a hostel for warders at Barton's Mill prison, the Denmark Agricultural College and the junior technical school at Mt. Lawley. A sum of £110,000 was expended on work in connection with the new Royal Perth Hospital. The work in connection with the hospital has not progressed as quickly as was hoped and delays have been experienced in obtaining equipment for services such as heating and air conditioning, the direct pipe line from the East Perth Power House for heating and other purposes, and in other directions as well.

Dealing now with the Estimates for this year, I have already indicated that they provide for the expenditure of the very large sum of £5,014,000. Of that amount practically £1,000,000 will be expended on work required by the Railway Department, the principal items being as follows:—

	£
Under water stowage of coal ..	20,000
Re-organisation of buildings and permanent way at Midland Junction for regeneration of rolling stock and locomotives	53,000
East Perth-Rivervale duplication	50,000
Armada-Bunbury duplication	100,000
Coal blending plant at Collie ..	54,000
Purchase of 15 road buses ..	120,000

As members are probably aware, the last mentioned buses are to be used in areas badly served at present and the majority of the vehicles are likely to be utilised to shorten times in country travelling. Furthermore, £150,000 has been set aside for the purchase of six Diesel electric coaches and 12 trailers, and it is hoped that these will be delivered during the current financial year. An amount of £175,000 has been included in the Estimates for the purchase of 14 locomotives that are at present in the United Kingdom. They were originally built for use in the Sudan but are considered to be eminently suitable for our needs. Under the heading of "Tramways," provision has been made for the purchase of an additional 50 trolley-buses at an estimated cost of £240,000.

Mr. North: Is that for extensions?

The PREMIER: I think the member for Claremont has some ideas in that regard, but I suggest to him that he should be patient pending an announcement as to where they will be used.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: There is Subiaco, too.

The PREMIER: Obviously other districts have claims as well. Electricity supply matters will make big inroads into our commitments for the current financial year, and £846,000 has been included in the Loan Estimates to meet our requirements for electricity. A sum of £400,000 has been provided for work on the South Fremantle power scheme. The foundations for the buildings have already been laid and it is hoped that substantial progress will be made this year with the erection of the buildings. Then

again, £237,000 has been provided for work connected with the South West Power Scheme.

Under the heading "Harbours and Rivers" £31,000 has been included for work on improvements and additions to jetties in the North-West. This latter work is essential and, from my own personal experience, I know that it is absolutely necessary and should be put in hand as soon as possible. A sum of £10,000 has been included for work on the harbour at Bunbury and £65,800 for expenditure on the Fremantle harbour. The work at Fremantle includes North Quay extensions, bell-mouth dredging, North Quay reconstruction and, Fremantle members will be interested to know, additions to the fishing boat harbour breakwater. The sum of £27,000 is included for reclamation work preparatory to the erection of the new Perth Causeway. The Estimates also include the sum of £1,385,000 for work connected with water supply and sewerage. These works include many items, the larger ones being—

	£
Perth Main Sewer diversion, Claisebrook, Subiaco ..	45,000
42-inch Main Cannington to Victoria Park	61,500
New Reservoir at Mt. Yokine	55,000
Raising wall at Mundaring Weir	100,000
Harvey No. 3 Irrigation District	125,000
Stirling Dam	300,000

It always appears that large amounts are anticipated to be spent in the district of the member for Murray-Wellington. The sum of £49,500 has been provided for the development of the mining industry, to cover such work as the Eradu coal investigation, provision for the continuance of the prospecting scheme and loans to mining companies. It is also proposed to spend substantial sums on the provision of treatment plants and additions to existing State batteries, as the Minister for Mines will inform the Committee later. We feel that with the revival of the goldmining industry the Government is bound to pursue any course which will stimulate production and give to those engaged in the industry a prospect to obtain a full reward for their work while the price of gold is so buoyant. Indeed, I think gold is likely to be in considerable demand in countries which have not stored it as a means of trading with other nations.

Included in the Estimates is an amount of £16,000 for the erection of plant for the treatment of refractory ores, as well as provision for five head stamps and increased power plant at the Meekatharra battery. It is estimated that work at the Wundowie charcoal-iron project will necessitate the provision of £150,000. That work it is expected will be finished during this financial year. The sum of £45,000 has been included for additional work at the alunite industry at Campion. Under the heading of development of agriculture, the sum of £74,000 has been included for abattoirs and cold stores, of which amount £50,000 is set aside for remodelling the Midland Junction Abattoirs and £9,000 for the completion of a by-products building at those abattoirs. In addition—and this will interest the member for Hannans—the sum of £15,000 is provided for the erection of chillers at Kalgoorlie.

The sum of £4,800 will be required this year to complete the veterinary laboratory at Hollywood; while £10,000 has been provided for the research stations at Avondale, Merredin and others. Members will note that provision is made for the State's obligation in respect of the Ord River district. In this matter, we are collaborating with the Commonwealth Government, which is sharing the expense with us. A very large sum—£358,000—is included for public buildings, the most important being—

	£
Perth Technical College additions	30,000
Leederville Technical School ..	25,000
Children's Receiving Home ..	100,000

Provision has also been made, so far as anything can be done at all, to commence work on new public offices. I hope that during this financial year something may be done to finalise the plans for these urgent requirements. It is the responsibility of the Government to make land available for future public buildings and I hope that at least a commencement will be made with these works. The sum of £442,000 has been set aside for hospital buildings. The Royal Perth Hospital will absorb most of the money, but provision has been made for the commencement of additions to the King Edward Memorial Hospital and the provision of nurses' quarters for that hospital. The sum of £225,000 has been set aside for the purpose of remodelling the Wooroloo Sanatorium and for additions to and the establishment of several country hospitals.

Members will realise, I am sure, that the availability of manpower will be the limiting factor in many of these projects. I dealt with that point earlier in my remarks. Nevertheless, we think it most desirable to proceed with the projected plans if it is at all possible to make a start on them. With regard to the remainder of the programme, the sum of £14,000 has been set aside for the Department of Native Affairs, and the sum of £5,000 for work to be done on the Bruce Rock and Corrigin State hotels. The sum of £52,000 is provided for the completion of the bulkhandling gallery at North Fremantle and the terminal at North Fremantle for the handling of wheat.

The sum of £55,000 is included for the purpose of machine tools and plant at Welshpool. The premises previously occupied there by the Commonwealth for a small arms and munition factory have been leased to the State, which in turn is letting areas for use by desirable secondary industries. One such industry has already been announced. It will be of great importance to the State. Another will shortly be announced by the Minister for Industrial Development. I have mentioned that it is more than doubtful whether the whole of the money provided for in these Estimates can be spent during the year; but I was anxious that any desirable and necessary work should not be excluded from the programme merely on account of the absence of the necessary financial provision. There is an obligation on the Government to provide in this programme for works that it is likely to commence or undertake, so that they can be proceeded with should the opportunity occur.

Members who have followed the anticipations of the Government as expressed at the recent Loan Council meeting and at the hearing of the Grants Commission, will agree that all of the works included in these Estimates are vital to the development of the State. If we are to lift this State from its present position of a primary producing State, we must accept the responsibility of sound planning for the expenditure of Government funds. Members who are interested in the water supply Bills now before Parliament will have noticed that there is no provision in these Estimates for the comprehensive water scheme. This scheme is now being investigated by Commonwealth

officers; but it can safely be said that if a start on it is possible, some expenditure provided for in this loan programme may be switched to this other desirable work. There will be no hindrance in the commencement and development of that scheme so far as the Commonwealth Government is concerned.

I have presented these Estimates as briefly as I could, because I realise that an analysis of figures can be a boring matter. I have endeavoured to explain that the Government has formulated its programme with faith in the future of this great State; but there can be no prosperity for the community unless there is sound planning to meet the ever-increasing demands not only of the people, but of expanding production. I think we are safe in planning for this State's economy to be as diversified as possible; but as I said earlier, this can only be achieved if the community generally is prepared to co-operate with the Government. It is not the responsibility of the Government alone. The Government must have the assistance of the community in seeing that the loan moneys are spent so as to produce the greatest direct, as well as indirect, benefits.

Progress reported.

BILL—COUNTRY AREAS WATER SUPPLY.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 24th October.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [7.57]: It has been stated that the work which is contemplated in the two measures now before Parliament, of which this measure is the first, is probably the costliest public work to date. I am inclined to question that statement for certain reasons, because I believe that in the light of modern engineering achievements, the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme which was inaugurated in the days of Sir John Forrest was at least as great in magnitude as the scheme now before Parliament. We must remember that what is an every-day achievement now was considered well-nigh impossible at that time. We must also bear in mind, too, that had the engineers of that day had to contend with the costs which are facing present-day engineers, the cost of the scheme

in Sir John Forrest's day would probably have been as great as that which is contemplated in the Minister's explanation of this measure.

The proposals contained in the Bill before us, and in the accompanying measure to authorise the scheme itself, cover very large areas of the State. Some parts in those areas are crying out for the scheme, including both the towns and the farm lands. In other parts the real demand for the scheme comes only from the towns. Parts of the State are excluded from the scheme—parts where farmers would welcome it. Other places, lesser in extent but still of importance, include farm lands and, for reasons which I hope to mention in a few minutes, the proprietors of farms there are opposed to the proposals, as they cannot see a return commensurate with the expenditure in which it will involve them.

If I were to view the proposal only from the aspect of the electorate I represent, I must say I could evince little enthusiasm for it, for two reasons. The first is that the towns in that area could be served by part of the scheme only, at a much reduced cost and the farm lands adjacent to the main Great Southern railway in that part of the State—and particularly to the western side of it—do not desire it, if I understand them aright, and cannot conceive of benefits equivalent to costs. The second reason is that places like Nyabing, Lake Grace, Pingrup and Ongerup, which have had terrific water problems, and where there have been great stock difficulties, if not stock losses, which would justify their inclusion in the proposal, find themselves not part and parcel of it. But because there are vast areas of the State which are both included in the scheme and desire it, and other areas where it will obviously be of practical value, I do not for one moment conceive it to be my duty to oppose the second reading of the measure. On the contrary, I propose to support it, in the hope that certain rectifications will be made in Committee.

I hope to adduce information, coupled with some facts and figures, which will convince the Government of the need at least to reconsider certain aspects of the proposals which were put before the House by the Minister for Works a few nights ago. First of all, there is the question of the rating

proposal in regard to the towns that are to be affected. Under the Goldfields Water Supply Act, which has been in operation for many years, there has been a maximum allowable rate on the annual value in townships of 2s. in the £. Under the Water Boards Act, which has governed a great number of town water schemes outside the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme, there has been a maximum allowed by law of 3s. in the £ on the annual value. It is proposed in this measure that in areas previously coming under the Goldfields Water Supply Act, the maximum allowable rate shall continue to be 2s.; and in areas which previously came under the Water Boards Act, the maximum allowable rate will be 3s. If that means anything at all, it means that the towns that could have been rated at 3s. under the Water Boards Act will probably and almost certainly be rated at 3s. under the new proposal.

In fact, in this comprehensive agricultural areas and goldfields water supply booklet which was issued some time ago by the Minister, the estimate is made up on a calculation of 3s. in the £ on the annual value. I submit that that is not a fair way in which to approach this problem. I could take, for example, the town of Katanning which I represent. I have from time to time in this House and elsewhere explained the difficulties of that centre in endeavouring to supply itself with water under its own local water board and without up to date any financial assistance of any magnitude from the Government. In that town, the local authority has succeeded in maintaining such water supply as it has been able to achieve at a maximum rate of approximately 2s in the £. Adjoining townships under Government management—in at least one case under Public Works Department management—have been rated at 3s. because that was the maximum rate allowed by the particular statute which governed their water destiny.

Under the Goldfields Water Supply Act, there were towns provided for a long period of years with a most efficient supply of water at a maximum rate of 2s.; and I say that if we are going to bring in this State-wide proposition, if it is not practicable—and I concede it is not—to increase the rate to 3s. to those areas which have

hitherto paid 2s., it is practicable and, in my opinion, desirable that there should be a maximum rate of 2s. overall, so that there will be some basis of equality upon which those various towns can work. It is of little use talking of decentralisation and industrial development if one succeeds in imposing upon one community a charge 50 per cent. greater for a commodity than one imposes upon another community similarly situated so far as the metropolitan area is concerned and equally desirous of indulging in industrial development. I submit that aspect to the Minister for his consideration. Some of the aspects to which I wish to refer, when viewed alongside the whole scheme, will not be regarded as major aspects; but they are of vital importance, in my opinion, to those whom they will more particularly affect.

The Premier: You would not like to lose the Bill because of it?

Mr. WATTS: I have already said I do not conceive it to be my duty to oppose the second reading; on the contrary! But I think that if there is to be any satisfaction derived by the Government and the people from this scheme, those aspects must be taken into consideration. But before I go on with them, I would like to say that in my opinion the introduction of the Bills at this time is somewhat premature. It is quite clear that we do not know exactly what assistance the Commonwealth Government is prepared to provide; more particularly, perhaps, we do not know what the inquiring Commonwealth committee will say. The Minister for Works has supported and assisted various applications for this committee to take evidence in various parts of the country, particularly in the southern districts, but no date has yet been fixed by the committee, which is acting for the Commonwealth, for these inquiries to be made and this evidence taken. It seems to me that if the committee were to recommend modifications in this scheme, no doubt they would be made; and the object of those in my area who wish to give evidence before the committee is to suggest those modifications and hope that the committee will see its way to support them in whole or in part. If it did so, I have no doubt whatever that the objections that have been raised would no longer be in existence.

I wish no misunderstanding on this matter to arise so far as I am concerned. There is no objection of which I know from the main line towns. They have all been faced with an intolerable position for a long period of years and they have come to the conclusion that local sources of supply—not so much owing to climatic conditions as on account of other conditions that exist—cannot be successful both as to quality and quantity; although I believe that if a great deal of expenditure, a very heavy expenditure, had been indulged in in the creation of artificial catchments and other engineering work of some magnitude, the position could have been substantially improved for very many years to come. But it is true, as the member for Williams-Narrogin said the other night, that suggestions were originally made on behalf of those towns for the laying of a pipeline from Mundaring, with the idea of filling up from time to time local reservoirs from that source in order that they might have water when their local catchments did not contribute sufficient for the purpose. It was ruled out of order at that time, mainly, I think, on the ground of expense.

If my memory serves me aright, there was a letter which reached the Katanning Road Board some eight or nine years ago from the Under Secretary for Public Works in which he announced that the pumping cost of such a scheme would be £24,000 per annum and the maximum revenue at the 3s. rate to be derived from the towns would be £18,000 per annum; and that in consequence, disregarding the insufficiency of the water in Mundaring at the time, the scheme was impracticable. Now it has been clearly demonstrated that it would have been possible substantially to increase the water supply from Mundaring and to cope with that problem with a comparatively small main on the lines suggested. But it did not take place apparently for the reasons I gave a moment ago. So that project was dropped and the attitude of the towns in question became one of having the problem solved—they did not mind how, so long as it was solved. After much inquiry and travail, the present proposal is put before us, which would appear, as I have no doubt the engineering side can be relied upon in this matter, in the course of years

satisfactorily to solve the difficulties of those areas.

I do not want the committee therefore to inquire, so far as I am concerned, into the matter of supplying the towns in question and any others that may be in a similar position; but I do think it would be reasonable for the Government to postpone a decision as to reticulation of all the farms in the Great Southern districts that are comprised in that map which hangs on the wall and a copy of which is in this booklet. I think it would be a wise course to postpone a decision on that question until the report of this committee is made known, partly because I think it would be a statesmanlike attitude in the circumstances, and partly because it would not compel me to cast a vote on all the stages of both these measures without the information which the committee's report would give, and which I think all members would like to have.

The Premier: Surely there is a parallel on that point in the electricity undertakings proposed?

Mr. WATTS: Yes, that may be so, and the Premier will recollect that I had a number of reservations on that question, which I think could be said to be based on the same point of view as I am now expressing, but there was this to be said in that case, that there had been a report from an expert committee, which was made available to all members, and members of the committee had taken the trouble to explain, in a number of cases, to local authorities, just what their proposals amounted to, and we were therefore, to a degree at least, better informed on that matter than we are on the point I am at present endeavouring to make. I feel it is my duty to assist the Government in arriving at a solution of the problem affecting the towns I have mentioned, without at the same time compelling certain holders of farm lands, where already a great deal of water has been conserved and considerable expense involved, to go further in expense and involvement under the terms of this measure, when they are very doubtful as to the return that they will achieve.

I have already said that in the towns the position has been pitiable for many years. I remember moving, in 1936, for a Select Committee to inquire into that aspect, and I then pointed out that for ten years out of 19 the Katanning scheme had been simi-

larly deficient and, though some £25,000 has since been spent on it, the supply is neither adequate nor satisfactory, and, to improve the position—as I mentioned—a great deal more bitumen catchment would doubtless be required, at a cost of about £400 per acre. It is apparent, so far as this scheme goes, that until the water reaches Holly siding, some ten miles south-west of Katanning, there will be no water from the scheme available to that township. The outlook, therefore, for the next six years, even in the face of this comprehensive water proposal, is fairly bleak unless something is done in the meantime to improve the situation that exists.

I find, both in the Minister's booklet and in the speech that he made last week, it is not expected that the main will approach the Holly siding, which is the highest point, apparently, from which reticulation is to take place, until the sixth year from the start of the scheme, and as far as I can see that means, taking into consideration the remarks of the Treasurer this evening, that it will be at least six years from now, if not more. As the Premier knows, I, as representative of that centre, have been endeavouring to impress upon the Government the fact that, notwithstanding the possibility of this comprehensive water scheme, immediate activity should take place at least in regard to some of the proposals recently put forward by engineers in relation to that matter, in order that the period of six years may not virtually obliterate the prospects of future development of that place by comparison with others that will be earlier and more effectively served.

At the moment, the negotiations may be said to be in a state of flux. I am hopeful that they will form into concrete shape before very long, and that some action will be taken in that regard, but once the main that is contemplated in these measures has been brought from the Wellington Weir to a point near Narrogin, the size of the southward main—it would appear to me—could be greatly reduced if the farm lands, or a substantial portion of them, were to find themselves excluded and not to be reticulated. I think pumping costs also could be substantially reduced by using existing reservoirs, with some improvements for holding supplies. Much smaller mains could be sent out to Tambellup and Gnowangerup, and it seems to me that the loss of revenue that

would come about by reason of certain farming areas being excluded would be compensated by the great saving in capital cost in the southern main itself and the exclusion of at least some of the reticulation, particularly on the western side of the line.

There is a distinct possibility that the revenue to be derived from that altered system would be as great, proportionately to the total cost—which would then be much reduced—as the revenue which is to be derived under the Minister's scheme would be to the total cost that he contemplates, but I am in the unfortunate position of having to say, "I think." There has been nobody to make an inquiry and to substantiate these beliefs of mine and of other people, and once again, for that reason, I say the introduction of these measures at this stage, in this wholesale way and without inquiry by the committee and its report being made available, leads one to the belief that the Bills are somewhat premature. Nobody, in this world of ours, would raise any objection to a proposal, before the committee commenced its inquiries, which limited itself to making preparations for the main to serve the townships, and there would have been ample time after the committee concluded its investigations, to decide whether we ought to include or exclude—partially include or partially exclude—the farm lands that are adjacent to the areas to be served.

I know that when the committee, of which Mr. Loder is chairman, does reach this State and commences its inquiry, the point of view that I am expressing is bound to be put before it. I say frankly that I do not propose personally to take any part in the discussion with Mr. Loder and his committee, but I know there are those who will certainly do so, after carefully preparing their case in the light not only of their own knowledge, which is very considerable, but in the light of the knowledge that their neighbours also possess, and of the experience of people in other portions of the State where conditions are somewhat similar. This point of view shows that the towns can be served without conflict with rural landholders and with no greater financial strain, notwithstanding the lesser income in prospect—as I mentioned a few moments ago.

The measure of opposition by certain farming interests, to which I have referred, is to a degree recognised in this Bill, because in one clause it is proposed that, where

the Minister is satisfied that a farmer has by his own action provided himself with a sufficient water supply, including a supply for domestic purposes, the Minister may reduce the rate below the 5d. per acre that is generally contemplated, to an amount not exceeding 3d. per acre. That is the proposal contained in the Bill, and it is therefore obvious that the Minister was aware that there were some areas in the State, likely to be served under this and the accompanying Bill, which had provided their own water supplies at very considerable cost, and whose particular circumstances had to be taken into account when the question of assessing water rates came before the Minister himself. That is the position that has been recognised in the Bill, particularly in regard to the western side of the Great Southern line in the northern part of the district that I represent.

In those areas settlement came long before any public water supplies. As a matter of fact, there are virtually no public water supplies there today, after something like 56 years of settlement. In the areas served by the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme the reverse was the position in the majority of instances. That scheme has been in existence for the best part of 50 years and, broadly speaking, instead of settlement preceding water supply, the water supply preceded settlement, so even where local conservation of water was practicable in those areas—which was by no means everywhere—the demand of the settlers was for piped water, because it was the easiest and most accessible. Let it be borne in mind that only one expense had to be faced, that of the rates payable under the scheme and some reticulation on the settlers' own land.

As was pointed out by the member for Williams-Narrogin, some 700,000 acres of the country served by the goldfields water supply have been for some time rated at 2d. and 3d. per acre, whereas only about 600,000 acres, the balance of the area now rated, is at a figure greater than 3d. So that something over seven-thirteenths of the total area has been rated at the figure or less than the figure in the particular clause to which I refer as a concessional rate for the districts that have been obliged by circumstances completely outside their control to spend large sums of money on their own water conservation. When one views the

position from that angle this concessional rate down to 3d. to persons who satisfy the Minister that they have their own water supplies for both farm and domestic purposes is not so great a concession, especially bearing in mind the fact that in a large percentage of the areas served by the goldfields water supply there has been a rate as low or lower in respect of areas which have not had to face or could not face the provision of water supplies of their own of any magnitude.

As I have said, in the part of the Katanning electorate to which I have referred—no doubt there are adjacent areas similarly placed, though I do not propose to deal with them—settlement was completed without any prospect of public supplies, and I propose in a few minutes to give one or two items that will evidence the method adopted and the expense involved in making that provision. In the west ward of the Katanning Road Board, there are, I understand, approximately 128,000 acres of occupied land. I venture to say that the £2,500 that would be derived from that area, supposing it were rated at 5d. per acre, which seems unlikely in view of the clause in the Bill, would not cover or anything like cover the additional cost involved in reticulating that 128,000 acres for the purposes of this scheme.

Quite possibly the committee, if it investigates this situation thoroughly, as I believe it might, will find that the interest, maintenance and amortisation costs involved in the reticulation of the 128,000 acres would be at least double the amount that could be expected from a 5d. rate and that that rate might, and probably would in this area even under this Bill, be considerably reduced for a long period of years. So it is worth while, I contend, that these aspects should be given some reconsideration. In consequence of the fact that settlement was completed without the prospect of a public water supply, very great water-conservation expense is obvious on individual farms. I am at liberty in this matter to quote the name of the owner of one of the farms I have in mind and that is the farm of Mr. E. S. R. Piesse. Many members will recall that gentleman's father who occupied the seat in this House as member for Katanning that I occupy at present.

Mr. Piesse's property, which was his father's before him, comprises 5,300 acres of land, upon which he never shears fewer than 3,000 sheep. That is an average of 600 sheep per 1,000 acres. The estimates in the Minister's booklet contemplate 300 sheep per thousand acres. His calculation of 200,000 gallons per thousand acres is made up on a basis of carrying capacity of 300 sheep per thousand acres, and this property and the majority of others similarly situated have a carrying capacity at present of 500 to 600 sheep per thousand acres of land. The water, therefore, that would be required per thousand acres of land would be precisely double that which I understand is contemplated under this scheme. On Mr. Piesse's property there are 19 tanks or dams totalling at least 25,000 cubic yards. The total water they contain is 4,175,000 gallons, which is equal to 800,000 gallons per thousand acres.

The Minister for Lands: You would not say that was typical of the average farm.

Mr. WATTS: No, because this is a 5,300-acre property. A great number of others are smaller in area and capacity, but in proportion would show the same result. When Mr. Loder's committee gets the opportunity, as I believe it will, it will be able to verify the facts in a great number of cases both small and large. This is equal to 800,000 gallons per thousand acres, but the Minister's proposal is 200,000 gallons per thousand acres, which is based on 300 sheep to 1,000 acres plus cattle and domestic requirements. This particular property, and indeed it is the average almost of the district, carries about 600 sheep per thousand acres. Therefore on the basis of the Minister's sheep-per-head-consumption, his annual requirement would be increased by 54,900 gallons, making a total of 255,000 gallons.

Mr. Piesse informs me that he has three years' supply in his tanks and dams and that he has had no water difficulty. His domestic requirements are met (a) by a 20,000 gallon catchment of rainwater and (b) by 500,000 gallons of water in a 3,000 yard tank reticulated to his house and garden. He assures me that he can grow anything he wants and he had a most beautiful garden on the place until he ceased residing there quite recently in order to live in the township. All this provision would have

cost not less than £1,500, upon which interest might be calculated at say 5 per cent. which would amount to £75 a year. Some of it and indeed on many places all of it, would have to be actually paid as interest. On top of this, when the scheme is taken to his boundary and no further, he has to pay 5d. per acre unless he comes under the reduction of 3d. which the clause contemplates. On the one hand he would pay £110 per annum and on the other hand approximately £70.

The question I ask myself, and I think members might also ask themselves, is: What advantage is he going to get for this payment from having the pipe line run through his boundary? Sheep have to go where there is both feed and water. It is of no use having water for them and no feed, and the large number of tanks and dams mentioned, notwithstanding the size of this property, means that there is one such available for the livestock in every paddock. One cannot be continually taking sheep from feed five miles down the road to water three miles up the road, and so it is necessary to bring sheep, feed and water within reasonable proximity one with the other. To provide facilities similar to these in his existing set-up by reticulation from the pipeline would need at least 10 miles of piping. I am not an engineer, but I have been advised that in a job of this magnitude a one-inch pipe might suffice but would be hardly likely to do so, because it would not take the water very far, and these runs would be a mile or more in each case from the main. It is expected that a 1½ inch main would serve the purpose.

But I shall be conservative and take a 1-inch main. Landed at Katanning in mile lots, that would cost £143 per mile. On top of that, there would be the cost of carting the pipes to the job and paying the labour to put them in, providing troughs from which the sheep would drink and other sundry fittings required. Obviously it would cost not less than £1,700 to £1,800 to do the job. This particular proprietor, for all I know—I have not inquired into any further aspects of his business—is in a position to expend that money. Let us assume that he is in a position to expend it without inconveniencing himself. What difference will it make to the value of his property? In the event of his disposing of it, as compared with his

present position, is he likely to be able to recoup himself the additional expense? I venture to say he certainly will not recoup all of it, but is certain to suffer a considerable loss on the transaction in the event of selling if these happenings take place.

Now I will deal with a property of 1,470 acres that is well known to me. In this case I have not sought permission to mention the name of the proprietor, so I shall not do so. The house on this property is one mile from the road and, so far as the proprietor can understand from the plan, that is where the water main would pass. The fact of having the house one mile from the road is nothing unusual, even on comparatively small properties. There has been a habit, good or bad though it might be, but very noticeable to those who drive in these districts, to keep the houses as far away from the road as possible. Some say it is to avoid the importunities of machinery agents and other such people; some say it is to get the best and most commanding view on the property. Be the explanation what it may, the fact remains that a large number of these houses are situated at a considerable distance from the road. This one is a mile away. On his 1,470 acres this man carries, dependent on conditions, 700 to 800 sheep. In 30 years he has not had less than 700, and he has done no water carting. If he has to take the water—supposing he uses this scheme—a mile to his homestead, and installs the other reticulation that will be necessary, it will cost him not less than £300 or £400; possibly more, depending on how much work he can do himself.

For the rate of approximately £30—again assessed on the maximum—he would, at the end of the five years proposed by the Bill be allowed approximately 250,000 gallons of water. On the Minister's own computation, that would not be sufficient for the 700 sheep and his domestic requirements, so he is immediately landed either with a charge for excess water or with the necessity to fall back on the conservation of water which he has himself made but which, if he used the scheme, he would, like the other fellow, be inclined perhaps not to maintain. For the least sum that he could possibly get away with on this question of reticulation, namely, £300, he could sink a dam of 3,000 cubic yards at a distance of

100 yards from his house and obtain 1,000,000 gallons of water because on past experience he has, he says, never failed to fill his dams and he has no reason to believe that he could not fill this one. He would therefore have, as the result of one expenditure of £300 and no annual rate, four times as much water as he would get from the rate.

The Minister's scheme has been based on an average farm of about 1,200 acres and 300 sheep to the 1,000 acres. Now, 1,200 acres in the area to which I have been referring—and I have referred to no other area—is in the great majority of cases not a living area. The average farm is at least 1,500 to 2,000 acres. To my knowledge the Rural Bank has been chary, under the Commonwealth Re-establishment Employment Act, in giving assistance to holders of properties that do not, in its opinion, constitute a living area. The bank's opinion is, I understand, that not less than 1,500 acres can be regarded as such in these districts. So, when we come to consider that there are a great number of these farms already under heavy financial obligations by way of mortgage, and that in recent years there has been no appreciation in value to allow increased advances to be made, the difficulty of obtaining finance for reticulation and its concomitants seems to be very obvious.

The position is easy to contemplate if when a person first took up land there was a public water supply available and he simply tapped it, but it is not so easy to contemplate if at the time he took up his land and for two, three or four decades afterwards there was no public water supply that he could tap and he involved himself in borrowing a considerable amount of money to provide something which he now considers to be satisfactory. But some farmers are in that position and now because, for the public good, it becomes necessary to put in a scheme of this nature they are told that they will have to do this work all over again, and a great deal of it at their own expense; and the asset that they created becomes virtually valueless. At the rate of 5d. per acre the annual rate on 1,500 acres would be £30. On a great many places that I have in mind that sum expended each year for three years, would provide 500,000

gallons of water and the need for further expenditure would then cease.

Quite different circumstances apply to the country 25 to 60 miles east of the Great Southern line but in the same latitude. There it has been for a long time a struggle against the impossibility of conserving sufficient water. The area to which the Minister for Railways accompanied me a few weeks ago might be taken to be the commencement of the part of my electorate that is in that position. But this scheme is not to go out there; it stops short eight or ten miles of the point where the hon. gentleman accompanied me. So it is obvious that notwithstanding the splendidly good intentions that lie behind the scheme—and I do not propose to deny or attempt to minimise them in any way—there are certain aspects of it, as applying to certain districts, which would have been well worthy of the closest inquiry before we were asked to subscribe to the measure in bulk. Those inquiries were not made before the introduction of these measures.

I do not think the carrying capacity of the area that I first dealt with in this discourse, which is, as I said, westward of Kattanning and to the northern end of the Kattanning electorate, can be increased to anything more than a negligible extent by the proposals in the Bill. Already I believe, taking into consideration the quality of the country and the feed it will grow, it has just about reached its maximum sheep-carrying capacity, and to talk of irrigation from a scheme of this nature, for the purposes of these properties, seems to be quite ridiculous. An inch of water for one acre takes 22,000 gallons, so that 10 inches for one acre would require 220,000 gallons which is, roughly, the allowance that could be expected from rates of £25 or £30 and which is, indeed, the Minister's calculation in his booklet of the sum payable on a 1,000 acre property with 300 sheep. Now, ten inches for one acre, which would require 220,000 gallons of water, would be sufficient for about four waterings over a period of three months and there would be one acre of green feed for a period of perhaps four months in exchange for the 220,000 gallons of water.

So, as far as making a substantial contribution to the increased carrying capacity

of the properties in a neighbourhood such as that is concerned, whatever it may do elsewhere, I think it can be shown that the result would be negligible, because if we used 1,000,000 gallons of water we would cover only five acres, and we cannot expect to do anything in the way of irrigation—even for a period—unless we have a certainty of at least 10 inches of water going over the country in the period for which the irrigation continues. As a scheme to serve a great part of the State, to support goldmining, to permit of stockraising where it was hitherto impossible and to provide for townships, I have no complaint of any kind to make against this measure, or the one that goes with it. I think, as I have said, that so far as the towns are concerned, they could be supplied—in the southern areas—by a scheme which would involve much less capital cost and which would not produce the opposition from certain people that this scheme has produced, because of the actual situation in which they find themselves, along the lines that I have been discussing.

As a scheme for compulsorily rating every farm coming into contact with the pipeline, irrespective of the actual needs of the farm, though for a period of five years some consideration is paid under the Bill to this aspect, it seems to me it requires modification. Above all it needs the closest inquiry on the spot, by men of practical experience. Therefore, as I have said, I cannot oppose the second reading. I must support it, looking at the State as a whole, but I propose to support an amendment to give effect to a proposal that in lieu of the proposition contained in the Bill—that where the Minister is satisfied that a farmer has conserved sufficient water for his stock and domestic purposes he may rebate a certain amount of the rate for a period—in an area such as that a poll be held; it may be a ward of the local authority or a prescribed district, but a poll shall be held and if the majority of the landholders so situated declare that they do not want the scheme, the Minister shall exclude that particular ward or area from his plan.

That means that they would have to show cause, in the first place, that they have the necessary reasonable supplies of water for their purposes, and having shown that cause they shall be entitled to have a poll

in the restricted area so prescribed at the time, as to whether they want the scheme or not. If the majority say they want it, all must be bound by the decision, and vice versa. It seems to me that by that means the difficulties, which are evident from what I have endeavoured to put plainly and fairly before the House, can be overcome, and the scheme in all its major aspects and in all those districts where it is vital, and in every district where it is reasonably necessary, will proceed, but where there is no justification for it on some section of farm lands it can, under specific conditions, be stopped.

The Minister, in the course of his remarks, made a great many observations as to the amenities, social conditions and so on that it would provide for the women in homes on the farm lands. At first sight one would be inclined to agree. I say definitely that in certain areas of the State—in large areas—where on farm lands there is virtually no water, that argument is of the strongest, and one would imagine that the womenfolk of any district, unless they were completely satisfied that the existing water supplies were quite sufficient for their normal purposes, would plump, without any reservation, for the ideas of the Minister and the ideas that I have just expressed, so in support of my contention regarding the particular area to which I have referred, situated where I have said, I would refer the Minister to a resolution of the Country Women's Association at Katanning, a newspaper report of which I have. It was not very satisfactory from the Minister's point of view, though I was hopeful that it might be. It reads, under the headings "A Comprehensive Water Scheme. Farmers Express Opposition."

During the meeting a letter was received from the Katanning Branch of the Country Women's Association expressing absolute opposition to the proposed scheme.

When I reached that stage in my investigations I began really to think there must be even more substance in the points of view that I have just expressed than I originally believed there was.

The Minister for Lands: That would depend largely on who explained the scheme, of course.

Mr. WATTS: We come back to where we were. Had some qualified person, after

due inquiry, an opportunity of explaining the scheme we might, as I said before, have done away with the opposition to it. If the state of affairs that the Minister has in mind exists, I can doubtless supply him with the reason for it; in fact I have just done so. I trust I have made my position in this matter plain. I have put up the point of view that I have expressed on behalf of these people because I believe they have a case. It has indeed been recognised and advanced to an extent by the provisions of the Bill itself. All I desire to do is to submit to the Government, and particularly to the Minister for Works and his colleague the Premier, the fact that a little further reconsideration of the matter is desirable and I do not think I am asking too much in suggesting that this amount of reconsideration be given to it in order that a successful compromise might be reached as between the original proposal and the point of view of those people. I do not think they are incapable of compromise; in fact, I am convinced they are not, but at the moment they are quite incapable of recognising what benefits they are going to get from this scheme commensurate with the expenditure involved, taking into consideration all that they have spent in the past. I think that is all I need to say on this Bill.

MR. PERKINS (York) [9.6]: I represent an area that has been partially reticulated from the Goldfields water scheme for many years and I know the very great benefits that have accrued to that area. There are other areas adjacent to the reticulated part that have been clamouring for an extension of that scheme to them. Generally speaking, those are areas of high productivity. So far as I can learn, in areas outside the electorate I represent, there is not so much opposition from farmers with a high productivity per acre as there is from farmers with a much lower productivity per acre. It must be fairly obvious to members that the water rate per acre will be much less of a burden in the areas where the productivity per acre is high as compared with other areas where it is much lower. Not only this, but in the areas of high productivity, which are generally the forest areas, it is much harder to obtain natural water supplies than it is in the light land areas. This is also a factor that accounts, as the Leader of the

Opposition pointed out, for the difference in the enthusiasm shown by the farmers in different areas towards this scheme.

So far as I am aware no inquiry has been made by the Government as to which areas desire the scheme and which do not. The surveys have been drawn, as indicated on the map displayed in the Chamber and in the booklet issued by the Minister for Works, by surveyors of the Public Works Department more from the point of view as to where the water may be reticulated, according to the levels of the country, the sites of the pressure tanks and the position of the pumping stations, etc., than from the point of view of the ultimate users of the water and the need that exists in particular areas. I am afraid that if the scheme were installed on the exact lines indicated in the plan before us, very considerable hardship will be occasioned to some people. The Leader of the Opposition has dealt with that aspect extensively and I do not propose to traverse the same ground, but in portions of my electorate where the rainfall is not nearly as heavy as it is in the areas further south, very considerable objections have been raised by farmers to their being rated under this scheme.

For instance, a farmer in the Quairading area is farming light land which has been only partially developed, and the survey runs right alongside his property. Probably the pipeline will be adjacent to the property, and, if he is rated, the annual amount will make the difference between profit and loss, and he intends to abandon that particular property and let it revert to the Crown. He considers that he has sufficient water supply to develop that light land, water being fairly easily obtained there. There does not seem to be any point in attempting to force such a water scheme on to that farmer. So many other farmers desire it, perhaps more urgently, and can make so much better use of the water. The last thing in the world I would desire would be to see the scheme abandoned but I believe that, without any danger to its general set-up, sufficient amendment could be made to the survey to meet the wishes of most of the people concerned. I have no doubt that the projected inquiry by the Commonwealth Government will bring out many such points of view.

I hope that if there is any considerable amount of opposition, the Government will not be inclined to lose heart over the whole scheme, but will inquire into the objections and try to amend the scheme in such a way as to meet the wishes of the great majority of the ultimate users of the water. I believe it would be quite possible to make such amendments and give a very good service. The Bill proposes to repeal the old Goldfields Water Supply Act and this measure will take its place. Under the Bill the maximum rate is to be reduced from 6d. to 5d., and the £5 holding-fee is to be cut out. This will be very gratifying to many users of water in the eastern areas who have been clamouring for this concession for quite a long time. I have been on deputations preferring this request, but up to date the Government has refused to grant it. I am afraid I cannot be so enthusiastic about the alteration providing that the whole of the property, irrespective of its area, will be rated if the pipeline touches any part of it.

The practice in the past has been to rate a property within $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles radius of the points at which the pipeline touches it. There has been good reason for this practice. Members who are familiar with the sheep-raising industry will know that $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles is about the maximum distance sheep can be expected to travel to water during the hottest part of the summer. If this provision is enforced it will mean that, although a pipeline may touch the nearest point of a property, it will be necessary for the owner, if it extends back more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to provide his own pipeline to carry the water further into it. This seems a very unfair provision, because, while one farmer will need only a small length of private pipeline and will receive his water at the per thousand gallon rate and the per acre rate set out in the Act, another farmer who has a large property will have to provide a portion of the pipeline himself and the water will ultimately cost him much more, because of the capital outlay required to carry the water further into his property. I hope the Minister will accept some amendment to the Bill in this particular. The only other point regarding the Bill I desire to raise is the per thousand gallon rate. The Minister, notwithstanding interjections, was unable to tell the House what the rate per thousand gallons under the new scheme would be.

The Premier: He would not take notice of interjections.

Mr. PERKINS: Whatever his reason, before we are asked to vote on the Bill he should give us an indication of what the rates per thousand gallons are likely to be, as those rates are as important to the water consumers as are the rates per acre. As people get accustomed to using reticulated water schemes, the tendency is for them to use larger quantities of water. I know the experience on the goldfields water scheme, so far as concerns the farming areas, is that the consumption per thousand acres has greatly increased over the years. Many more farmers are now paying excess water rates than those who paid such rates 15 years ago.

The Minister for Lands: Probably they are carrying more sheep.

Mr. PERKINS: Yes. Therefore the rate per thousand gallons is of material importance. Members will realise that on the higher rated areas the basic quantity per thousand gallons which farmers are allowed is equal to the number of four shillings in the total amount of rates paid. Obviously, if the rate per thousand gallons is 4s., they will receive a certain number of thousand gallons; but if the rate is 2s. 6d. per thousand gallons, the quantity received before excess water is charged for will be much greater. If my contention is correct that many more farmers are likely to be using excess water, this rate per thousand gallons assumes increased importance. I therefore hope the Minister will give the House some indication of what the rate will be. Much dissatisfaction has existed for many years in farming areas with the way in which excess water charges have been computed.

Speaking from memory, I think the rate in areas reticulated directly from the 30-inch main is 2s. 6d. per thousand gallons, but in areas served by extensions of the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme the rate is 4s. per thousand gallons. That provision seems to be very unfair to the settlers receiving supplies from the extensions of that scheme. Their contention is that the cost of the extensions, which admittedly has been higher than the cost of reticulating settlers directly from the main, has been provided for in the higher rate per acre. They pay

6d., less 1d. discount, at present; whereas the settlers along the 30-inch main pay only 3d. per acre. When they have used the quantity of water that is allowed them as a set-off against the total amount of rates paid, they are entitled to receive excess water at the same rate as the people who are situated alongside the 30-inch main. I know what the reply of the department will be, because I raised the matter in the House before. I have also discussed it with the department. The reply will be that, in constructing these extensions, some allowance has to be made for profit on excess water, but that does not seem to me to be a particularly sound argument.

In any case, whatever was allowed for in the original estimate must have been falsified in some degree in later years. Much more water is being sold now than was sold 15 years ago, while the excess water which is sold from these extensions does not in many instances run as far along pipelines as the excess water which is sold from taps connected with the goldfields water scheme further towards Kalgoorlie. Therefore, in my opinion, there is a case for putting all excess water on the one basis irrespective of whether it is sold from extensions of the Goldfields pipeline or from the 30-inch main itself. These are machinery matters which no doubt will be dealt with by regulations made under the Bill, but I think it will help producers, in considering the merits or demerits of the scheme, if the Minister will give us an indication of what is proposed to be done under such regulations. As I have indicated, so far as the district I represent is concerned, there is not much division of opinion upon the desirability of reticulating water throughout the area. In fact, in some parts there is a desperate need for water reticulation as speedily as possible.

In the eastern part of the area I represent the producers are rather concerned because the area is split between the northern and southern portions of this comprehensive water scheme. It would meet their wishes if the whole of that eastern portion were connected to the goldfields scheme. I understand there are some hydraulic difficulties in that connection; but if any major reorganisation of the southern portion of the scheme is necessary, I hope it will not jeopardise in any way the reticulation of the

forest areas situated in the more easterly portion of my electorate. The water service that is being provided in the reticulated area is bad, also in the westerly portion of my electorate. The mains there are in poor condition and considerable replacement of pipes is required. The fact that this can be done in conjunction with the comprehensive scheme is all to the good. So far as I am concerned, I hope there will be no undue delay in getting the scheme started so as to provide a water service for those who have inadequate supplies, and also to improve the service where existing pipelines are inadequate.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [9.24]: We have two Bills before the House and, as they are companion Bills, I propose, with your permission, Sir, to follow the example of other members and deal with the two Bills together. One Bill is an administration Bill, incorporating the Goldfields Water Supply Act and the Water Boards Act in a general measure which is also aimed to cover the proposed new comprehensive agricultural scheme which is the subject of the second Bill. The second Bill deals with the extension of our water supplies to cover an increased section of our agricultural districts and also possibly some additions to our goldfields areas. As far as the first Bill is concerned, there is not very much to say about that. It incorporates or re-enacts existing legislation and makes certain changes, all of which, on the whole, appear to be justifiable.

The matter referred to by the Leader of the Opposition in connection with differential rates for water supply in towns, based on the circumstances that they paid one rate under the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme and a different rate under the Water Boards Act, appears to be something on which the Bill goes astray on principle. It would be very much more satisfactory if this legislation faced the real facts now and based the charge upon some relevant circumstance rather than on some historical basis such as a differentiation adopted by different authorities in times past. It would be far better for the towns to pay on some rational basis—perhaps according to the distance of source of supply, or for any reason at all, so long as it is a rational reason and not merely an historical accident. It would be

much better to face the change now and base the rates on some reasonable explanation.

In particular the new Bill makes provision for rating zones on a much more flexible basis than existed in the past. When it comes to fixing the rates to be applied for water supplies, especially in rural areas or farming districts, zones can be made very readily, and a particular rate can be fixed in each particular zone which would be justified according to circumstances existing inside that zone. The only feeling I have is that in spite of this provision in the Bill, the intention of the Minister is not to make much use of it because in the comprehensive water supply scheme he is assuming that the whole of the 9,600,000 acres of farm lands involved will all be rated at the maximum rate of 5d. per acre, with the possible exception of a few farms which would, for five years, enjoy the reduced rate of 3d. per acre on account of their existing water supply. So far as the machinery Bill is concerned, there appears to be nothing to which exception can be taken. On the other hand, the Bill appears to incorporate certain amendments which experience has shown to be desirable, and I think the measure is entitled to the general support of the House.

I turn now to what is called the comprehensive goldfields and agricultural areas water supply scheme. The first thing I want to say is that I think everybody in the House is agreed on the principle that in this State we must make the fullest possible extension of water supplies to our country and goldfields areas. It is quite another matter to decide whether any particular scheme is sound or not, whether it is economically sound or whether it would give the maximum benefit to the people in the areas it is intended to serve. The Bill before us says it is to approve a scheme—this comprehensive agricultural areas and goldfields water supply scheme—and to authorise the construction of works in connection therewith, and to authorise the putting of the scheme into operation.

It is a rather remarkable Bill. In fact, the whole situation is rather remarkable; because when we look at this scheme as set out in the booklet or blue paper issued by the Government, we find that it consists of two parts: Section A and Section B. Sec-

tion A is entitled "Summary of a Request," and section B is entitled "Presentation of Data Relevant to the Request." The document is a request to the Commonwealth Government to afford financial aid for a scheme for agricultural areas and goldfields water supply, and it is to get financial aid from the Commonwealth for a scheme which the document says would be beyond the financial resources of the State. So here we have presented to us a Bill to confirm a scheme and authorise the execution of works and put into force a project which things the document says are beyond the financial resources of the State.

It seems to me rather ridiculous—or premature, as the Leader of the Opposition says—that we should be here passing legislation for a scheme we cannot put into force, that we say we cannot put into force for financial reasons unless the Commonwealth comes to our aid. So the whole thing is conditional; it depends on the Commonwealth coming to our assistance and on the amount it is prepared to give. The booklet goes on to say that if the scheme is to be put into force we need to get £5,000,000 from the Commonwealth Government, which it is suggested should be paid at the rate of £500,000 a year spread over ten years. The other £5,000,000 approximately is apparently within the financial resources of the State. So in effect we are passing legislation to confirm a request for financial aid, with supporting data showing reasons why we want assistance from the Commonwealth, and the House is asked to support a scheme or authorise the execution of a scheme which cannot be put into force unless the Commonwealth is prepared to find approximately half the money. All I can say is that I think the Minister has decided to hold the celebration six months too early, or a year too early.

Hon. N. Keenan: Nine months too early. That is the period of gestation.

Mr. McDONALD: I hope he will be able to celebrate the happy event in due course.

The Premier: It has to be conceived before it is born.

Mr. McDONALD: But the birthday does not arrive until due course of time and the Minister—well I will not carry the analogy any further. All I am saying is that he is holding the celebration before the time has arrived. Not that I do not hope he will be

entitled to hold the celebration and that the occasion will be worthy of it; because we are all agreed that water supply is an essential feature of the progress and development of our State. But we must make sure that water supply schemes are going to be soundly based, and this scheme cannot be said to have received so far the inquiry that so large a project demands. I am not mentioning this fact as in any way derogatory as far as the general principles are concerned, but we are told by the Minister with almost incredible simplicity for one who has lived so long, that the Commonwealth, through Mr. Loder, a gentleman of whom I have never previously heard, but no doubt very eminent, accompanied by a committee, the size of which we are not told, will arrive here some time this year, at a date not specified, to inquire into the scheme. This gentleman is going into the farming areas of the State to interview, the Minister says, district organisations and individual farmers to find out what they want and what their views are. Apparently we have not done that.

The most that has been done, the Minister says, is that he has had an inter-departmental committee of gentlemen of great eminence, in whom I have much confidence for their attainments and the conscientious discharge of their duties, but who after all are professional men. As far as I know none of them has ever sunk a dam, driven a plough or lived in the country and, in any case, they are not going to pay the 5d. rate; someone else is. This scheme will, I hope, in due course confer great benefits but above all it is a taxation scheme. As presented to this House it is one by which 12,000,000 acres, comprising nearly 10,000,000 acres of land to be brought into the scheme for the first time, are to be compulsorily subjected to a tax of, it is anticipated, 5d. per acre.

Whether the owners of this land like it or not and whether they take the water or not they will have to pay this rate—that is, apart from a temporary scheme of five years under which they will pay 3d. per acre because they already have all the water they need. But apart from that the proposed scheme will cause the farming areas of the State to pay £212,000 a year. The farmers will be compelled to pay that

sum even though they do not use a drop of the water. I think they were entitled to be consulted before the Bill came before Parliament and the Government might have not only for their sake but in order that Parliament and the Government might have had the benefit of their practical experience and the possible valuable suggestions which they, from hard experience, might have made and which the joint inter-departmental committee might not have occasion to realise.

I hope I am not doing the Minister an injustice. He may have made inquiries of farmers and district organisations but if he has done so he has not told us. All he has told us is that a Mr. Loder of Canberra, with his companions, is coming here some time towards the end of the year to see the farmers and the district organisations and also, I hope, the local authorities because I conceive they are not without some ability in giving advice on matters of this kind. That appears to be the democratic way and I hid my head in some shame when I heard the facts as outlined by the Minister and as contained in this document. The position apparently is that the Commonwealth is teaching us a lesson in democratic methods and that it, at all events, has had the good sense and courtesy to realise that before taxing the farming lands to the extent of £200,000 a year the people concerned, and their organisations, are entitled to be consulted. So my pride in the State was rather shattered when I found that the Commonwealth was apparently teaching us a lesson and taking a course that we should have taken.

What this Commonwealth committee has to say remains to be heard. It may, in its wisdom and after hearing what the people who will have to pay the rates have to say, propose profound modifications of the scheme. I think that Parliament should hear what that committee has to say. But rather more than that I think that we should not allow the Commonwealth committee to make our investigations for us; we should make them ourselves. Before this scheme reaches a stage where we are heavily committed the Government should appoint its own committee or commission of inquiry, consisting of members of this House, or any other people who are independent and responsible, to go into the areas concerned and find out

what the people, who will have or will not have to take the water but will in any case have to pay the 5d. an acre, have to say. In addition, such committee should find out the views of local authorities and district organisations. We would then be able to learn whether the opinion of our committee coincided with that of Mr. Loder and his associates acting on behalf of the Commonwealth Government.

All this does not mean that I am not in favour of a comprehensive agricultural areas and goldfields water supply scheme. I am all for it but I want to make sure that it will give the maximum benefits and do the minimum harm to the areas that it will affect. I am not by any means sure that the scheme, as now outlined in the blue book, gives the fullest consideration to all the factors involved. I am not at all certain that when the scheme has been independently examined by the Commonwealth committee, and the people on the spot have been heard, it might not be entirely proper to exclude entirely certain areas from it. Some of those areas have been referred to by the Leader of the Opposition tonight.

I am not by any means sure that the method of rating may not require to be varied and the rates divided into two parts, one a consumption rate to be charged to all people who are going to use the water, and the other a rate which might be called, for the sake of a name, a drought risk insurance rate by which a much smaller amount might be charged to all people who do not want to use the water, and do not propose to do so, but who will have some added security by reason of the fact that water supplies will have been brought, if not to their immediate boundaries, within a distance where cartage will be comparatively easy or because there will be areas covered by the supply, to which they can shift their stock in times of need. It may well be that we should exclude certain areas where they do not want the water, while at the same time charging them a small rate which would be their contribution to the protection and insurance that they would enjoy through the extension of the scheme to other areas perhaps not far distant from their own.

All these are matters that require investigation—I have no doubt they will be investigated by Mr. Loder and his commit-

tee—and which I feel should be investigated by our committee, as well as by Mr. Loder's Canberra committee. I think our committee may know somewhat more about the conditions in our State and the background of our experience in relation to water, than Mr. Loder's expert committee, drawn no doubt from the Eastern States. The information put before the House in the blue paper, to which I have referred, deals with the cost of the extensions, but does not deal with the cost of the existing service to the Goldfields and the eastern wheat areas served by the goldfields scheme. It does give one or two round figures concerning those areas, but no comprehensive figures—as far as my examination goes—to cover what will be the whole scheme, the northern area, the southern area, the Goldfields and the eastern wheat belt now covered by the goldfields water supply mains, so we cannot see from the blue paper exactly what the total commitments will be for the whole scheme, or exactly what is the total estimated revenue or expenditure for the scheme when completed, in accordance with this design.

We are told that for the northern and southern areas which are to be added to the existing installation, the estimated cost of the extensions is £9,330,000, and that the annual charge for those new areas, including sinking fund and interest, will be £550,000, while the annual revenue is estimated at £248,000. In other words, the new areas are going to show a deficit of £300,000 per year. I am not alarmed at that, as that would be paid by the general taxpayer and the advantage he would get would no doubt be through those indirect benefits that are sometimes rather nebulous, but which I think have a real existence and are a factor that we are entitled to state on the credit side. If the Commonwealth Government comes to light with £5,000,000 towards the cost of the new installations, the annual cost of the scheme will be reduced by approximately £180,000, in which case the annual deficit to be borne by the State will be approximately £120,000, instead of £300,000.

As the blue paper very correctly says, £300,000 as an annual deficit would be beyond the financial resources of our State, quite apart from the capital expenditure of nearly £10,000,000, but if the Common-

wealth comes to light with £5,000,000, both the capital expenditure and the annual deficit of £120,000, in round figures, seem to be within the compass of the financial prospects of Western Australia. I take it the £5,000,000, to which the blue paper refers, is to be an outright gift to the State. It does not say so, in so many words, but I presume and hope that it is meant to be a free gift by the Commonwealth to aid in financing a project that is important to the development of our State.

There are some other factors about which I would like further information, and I hope it will be obtained and presented to the House a little bit more forcibly and clearly than it has been presented so far. For example—this matter was touched on by the Leader of the Opposition—the assumption in this blue paper is that if we bring water to the agricultural districts our problems regarding stock are solved. I do not profess to be experienced in agricultural matters, but I have always thought that in a drought year the problem of feed is just as important as that of water. In times of drought farmers have told me that they might overcome the water problem, but could not overcome the feed problem. If, at great expense to the State and to the individual farmer, we carry water to the farms in anticipation of drought conditions, it may be that, for all the water, the farmer may be no better off than he was before, because, as the Leader of the Opposition said, the water cannot be used to grow the feed and if, due to drought conditions the feed is not there, the farmer's state is no better than it was before he had the water scheme.

I hope my comments in this respect are capable of being explained away. It seems that emphasis was placed on water being the security for the farmer, but sufficient reference was not made to feed as being equally necessary to his security in times of failure of normal water supplies through lack of rain. The next point, which is basic to any such scheme, is the assumption or the basis of the report that 1,000 acres is to be taken as a farm unit. I know that, although the term "farm unit" is used, it does not necessarily mean that the scheme assumes that the average farm will be of 1,000 acres, but at the same time it does appear to me—not only from

what the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, but from the tenor of the arguments for the scheme as set out in the booklet—that experience and evidence from the districts concerned may show that the premises regarding the size of the farm, the number of stock and the requirements of water, upon which the scheme has been based, have not been soundly ascertained. This again is something basic to the scheme on which we cannot be too sure that our facts are absolutely correct.

I do not wish to deal with the matter in greater detail than I have done because, to be quite candid, I do not consider the facts are before us. I think the House has been given a document in the shape of this blue paper which is admirable as far as it goes, drawn up as it is by departmental heads of high standing, but the foundations of the scheme to a large extent are missing, and the evidence which I believe should have been taken well before this, representing the views of the farmers and of district organisations, is missing. So I feel that I cannot usefully within the limits of my knowledge examine this plan when the necessary facts have been only partially presented. I am excusing the Minister because obviously he has desired to hold his celebrations as early as possible, and for the investigations made and the extent to which the scheme has proceeded, as shown by the report, I am willing to give him all the credit he deserves.

However, the fact remains that this scheme is still in a somewhat nebulous state, and the Bill recognises this by including authority for the Government to delete portions of the scheme, to vary it and generally to cut it down, it may be 50 per cent., 90 per cent. or 10 per cent., or make any variations that may seem desirable. The Government has necessarily reserved to itself the right to make these departures from the scheme and impose limitations on it apparently in the light of what may be determined by the Commonwealth committee and what may be ascertained in the course of subsequent inquiries and experience. We have not made all the inquiries that should have been made and, while I should be reluctant to see the Bill held up on such grounds, at the same time the Minister, I consider, has not treated the House quite fairly in submitting the Bill in its present form at this stage.

Had the Minister moved a motion in general terms authorising investigation into such a scheme with a view to implementation if Commonwealth aid were obtained and if further investigations showed it to be entirely practicable, I think the House would have been pleased to give such a motion the fullest possible support, but this legislation has been prepared rather before the Minister has built the groundwork of his plan and, while I do not intend to delay the opening steps in a plan that I believe is capable of great benefit to the farming areas and to the State and of which in principle I entirely approve, I look to the Government to make further inquiries and present the result of those inquiries, as well as of the investigations of the Commonwealth committee, to the House at the earliest possible opportunity. Then, if there is anything to be done in the way of modifying or varying the scheme, Parliament will have an opportunity of expressing its views and those of the public who are affected may, through Parliament, have an opportunity of being heard.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [10.0]: Am I correct in assuming, Mr. Speaker, that it is Order of the Day No. 4 that the House is now debating?

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, but I have been allowing members to debate both measures because they are so wrapped up in one another.

HON. N. KEENAN: When Order of the Day No. 5 is reached—Comprehensive Agricultural Areas and Goldfields Water Supply Bill—I hope the Premier will allow an adjournment of the debate. I have no opposition whatever to offer to the Bill now under discussion.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Guscoyne [10.1]): As I have this evening taken charge of these two Bills in the absence of my colleague, the Minister for Works, I will convey to him the sentiments expressed and the points raised in the course of the debate. This will give him ample opportunity as he desires, and as the House has a right to demand, to make a reply when closing the debate on the second measure associated with this proposal. Even though this Bill passes the

second reading stage tonight, I will not permit the other Bill to reach that stage because the Minister for Works desires to reply in detail to the debate this evening and to all the other aspects that have been mentioned.

My only comment on the debate is that the House may rest assured that all the facts necessary for the fullest consideration of this project and all the facts known to the Government will be disclosed before any attempt is made to proceed, and the points raised will not be passed over. I assure the House that the Minister for Works has given this matter many months of close attention, and it is the Government's view that the position is not as has been represented by the member for West Perth. In the plan as presented in the document referred to by him as the blue paper, it will be seen that the fullest co-operation of the Commonwealth has been sought, and on the basis as presented in the report, the plan has been developed and presented to Parliament. It was not idly conceived; nor has it been framed solely by departmental experts, but it has been based on the advice of many people. The unheard-of Mr. Loder, according to the member for West Perth, I may say is none other than the assistant to the Commonwealth Co-ordinator-General of Works.

Mr. McDonald: The Minister should have told us that.

The PREMIER: I think he did, and that the reference was unnoticed by the hon. member. Mr. Loder is a man of no mean stature and holds a very responsible position in the Commonwealth service. He has already visited this State and made preliminary inquiries. As to the thoroughness of the inquiry the Commonwealth committee will conduct, if there is anything likely to be overlooked, we can make reference to the debate in this House, and thus present the objections, real and imaginary. It would be very interesting to collate from "Hansard" the objections that have been raised and place them before the committee, so that all points of view, even conflicting points of view within parties, may have close scrutiny. So far as the Government is concerned, there is no desire on its part to have the position misunderstood or misrepresented in any degree

whatever before the House is in a position to take a vote on either measure.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—BOOKMAKERS.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 10th October.

MR. NEEDHAM (Perth) [10.6]: The Bill now before us is one of considerable importance and has aroused much public interest. It is not my intention to cast a silent vote on a matter of this nature. The question of gambling and the moral code is involved in this proposed legislation, that is, as far as certain criticism has gone. The Bill itself does not introduce any new subject. Gambling has been the subject of debate for many centuries; and, in considering the measure, as I have already stated, we are not dealing with a new subject. Eight years ago a similar Bill was before us and on that occasion Parliament, or this portion of it, in its wisdom, decided against it. That Bill had for its purpose the legalisation of betting. Another attempt is now being made to deal with a very vexed question and a very knotty problem. No matter from what angle the subject is viewed, it bristles with difficulties. If this Bill is not to be the law the situation which has existed for some years will remain, and it is not a very nice situation. In an endeavour to improve it, we are called upon either to adopt or reject this measure.

In 1938, the Minister for Agriculture—now the Premier—introduced a Bill similar to the one now before us; and in the course of his second reading speech he gave members a comprehensive review of gambling over a period of several centuries. On this occasion, the Minister for Mines, in his second reading speech, also took us very far afield. He was succeeded by the Leader of the Opposition and I congratulate him on his masterly analysis of the measure. I felt inclined at first blush to support the amendment which he moved and which had for its object the appointment of a Royal Commission. But on mature consideration I realised that even if the amendment were carried it would not get us very far along

the road towards a solution of the problem now facing Parliament. I do not think it necessary to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the prevalence of gambling, whether on or off the course. The object of the Royal Commission would have been to secure information to guide members in coming to a decision on the Bill. But there is, I think, already ample information available to help us make up our minds one way or the other, either to adopt this measure or reject it, either to legalise betting or allow it to go on in its present form and consider it to be an illegal practice.

The references made by the Leader of the Opposition, during the course of his masterly speech, to the legislation of other States of the Commonwealth and particularly his references to the opinions of members of the South Australian Parliament, in themselves were sufficient information to assist us to reach a decision on this point. Again, I do not know whether or not the matter would have gone any further than a Royal Commission, or whether the report of the Royal Commission would have been implemented by Parliament. Thus the status quo would have remained, the wrangling would have gone on and the rather curious method at present obtaining of dealing with men who bet off the course would have continued. Whatever might be the fate of the Bill, I hope that the present system of dealing with S.P. betting will not continue. If men are to be charged with a breach of the law, they should be charged outright with such breach, and not be charged in the Police Court for obstruction. Those are the reasons why, after due consideration, I decided not to support the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

Something must be done quickly in order to remedy a very undesirable state of affairs. This Parliament must make up its mind whether or not it will legalise betting or abolish it altogether. In other words, we must either legalise gambling or make some attempt to do away with it. It has been said by the Minister for Agriculture that there is no half-way house. So far as I am concerned, I cannot see any. Here is an opportunity to legalise betting. I think that could be done with advantage to the community. But I do not think we can abolish betting. We may pass a measure to make it illegal but that would not stop betting on

the races either on or off the course. I am under the impression that if that is done we will lose control of the situation altogether. It will go underground and the evil will grow rather than diminish. I cannot see why there should be such an organised attempt to prevent the legalisation of betting. There is now and there always has been a strong outcry against gambling. We are told that gambling is an evil. Not only that, but we are told that it is immoral.

My view is that gambling is not immoral. I need not repeat the old trite statement that life itself is a gamble; and if we are going to abolish gambling and betting, there are other places to which we can turn besides the racecourse, and there are other people to whom we can look besides those who bet off the racecourse. We can start with the Stock Exchange. We read in the papers about stocks and shares. There are more shocks and snares than there are stocks and shares. We can start with the Stock Exchange if we think gambling should be deemed illegal. We have heard many statements very condemnatory of betting in general and particularly codemnatory of betting off the course. That does not bother me very much. I am not a racing man. I do not suppose that in all my life I have made 10 bets. And I did not win. But I do not see any harm in other people, if they so desire, betting on the races, either gallops or trots.

I do not subscribe and cannot subscribe to the suggestion that it is a virtue to bet on the course and a vice to bet off the course. According to a certain school of thought, if a man bets on the racecourse he is a respectable citizen and can have entree into the proper social circle, but if he bets off the course he is looked upon as a social outcast, a moral and social leper. Wherein is the distinction? Why should it be a virtue to bet on the course and a vice to bet off the course? How can it be reasonably and logically argued that to bet on the course is moral and to make a bet off the course is immoral? I cannot see it. But if those who argue that betting is wrong are convinced that the passing of legislation of this kind is wrong, then I ask them to suggest the abolition of betting on the course as well as off the course. If the desire is to make betting off the course illegal, I think we should also make betting on the course illegal. I

cannot subscribe to the other school of thought.

All the criticism we have heard against this measure so far is somewhat similar to that which we heard against the drink traffic. Members know that not many years ago there was a very vigorous crusade against the consumption of intoxicating liquor and when the question of liquor law reform was raised there was considerable opposition. It was realised that over consumption of alcoholic liquor was harmful to the community and was a danger to every citizen and that it was necessary to do something about it. Something was done, but the drink traffic was not abolished. It was controlled and, as a consequence, I venture to say we have not had the evil results of over indulgence in intoxicating liquor since the reform laws became effective that we had before their introduction. I look upon the question of betting and gambling in the same way as I look upon the drink traffic. I realise that in some instances over indulgence in betting can be injurious to the person concerned. But it is the responsibility of the particular citizen to see that he or she does not indulge in this particular pastime or recreation or relaxation beyond his or her financial capacity.

I consider that if legislation of this kind becomes law it will be the means of regulating and controlling the gambling evil as it is called. We have had pointed out to us, by the Leader of the Opposition, the grave position that has arisen in South Australia. I am not doubting what has occurred there, but it is not beyond this Parliament, in framing this legislation in Committee, to provide against the occurrence in this State of those particular evils.

Again, the experience in the other States should be of assistance to us in dealing with this Bill. I have given the matter careful consideration and I cannot see why we should continue to have one law for one section of the community and another for some other section. If a man can afford to go to a racecourse and back his fancy, by all means let him do so; but if he is not in a position to go to a racecourse why should he be prevented by law from having his modest few pence on a horse for which he has a fancy? I cannot see what evil or what harm can be done by the passing of legislation of this nature, but I can see that, if an attempt is

made to abolish betting off the course, the last stage of this situation will be much worse than the first.

It is right that Parliament should deal with the question now in the hope that a different system might be brought about so that men and women who feel inclined to indulge in this pastime might do so without breaching the law. To my mind, it is a reflection on us to have things continue as they are at present. The time is now opportune to deal comprehensively with the whole position so as to allow people the opportunity to lay their bets and at the same time prevent the present unenviable situation. Every citizen should have the same right to indulge his particular fancy; and if it is right to bet on the course, then it should also be right to bet off the course. I support the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by Mr. Read, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.30 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 30th October, 1946.

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

QUESTION.

BUILDING TRADES.

As to Scheme for Training Boys.

Hon. A. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary:

1. Has the Government noted the statement in yesterday's issue of "The West Australian" under the headings of—"Boy Builders." "Training Tradesmen in Britain"?