

Parliament, particularly the members of the "Hansard" staff—including the ladies—the Controller, Mr. Roberts, and the kitchen staff. This is the first occasion on which I have heard a Leader include the members of all staffs connected with Parliament in his thanks and good wishes. I do not recollect having heard thanks expressed to the kitchen staff before. After all, if we have good cooks and good meals, that keeps us good tempered and enables us to debate properly.

In all sincerity, Sir, I hope you will be with us again next session, although one naturally likes to see a member of his own Party returned. You have capably discharged your duties and I hope you will continue in your office. I have much pleasure in extending to you and to members best wishes for a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

THE PRESIDENT [10.40]: I wish to express my thanks to the Minister for Mines, Mr. Dimmitt and Mr. Gray for their kindly remarks in connection with the work of the session and my part in it. I also want to thank all members for the consideration they extended to me when I was in ill-health. The spirit of this House has always been one of which we can be proud. I have been particularly impressed this session by the way, in spite of the new conditions with which we were confronted, the spirit of tolerance, kindness and consideration was extended to one and all. That spirit is a tradition of this House which entitles it to the respect of the general public.

I want, to associate myself, too, with the expression of thanks to the officers of the House for the work they have done. They always have an especially difficult job towards the end of the session, but in Mr. Leake and Mr. Sparks we have two men who rise to the occasion and push the work through with celerity and efficiency. The "Hansard" staff has to be specially considered. I have not known for many years—I would say for 25 years—so heavy a session as far as Royal Commissions and Select Committees are concerned. It is a great tribute to the faithfulness and attention to duty of those officers that they have covered those inquiries so well and, at the same time, kept up with the work of the House.

This session has been characterised by another departure from the general practice. We have, I think, more new members here than we have had for many years. Unfortunately the hand of time has been laid on many of those who were associated with this House, and they are sadly missed. But we find the new men taking their responsibilities in the same conscientious manner, and I feel sure the House will benefit by their presence. I wish all members the very best for the New Year. I trust that a pleasant and happy time will be spent by all, and that our country will experience increased prosperity in 1948 and that we, ourselves, will be blessed by Providence with a return to the peaceful conditions that we have missed so much during recent years.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn to a date to be fixed.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 10.44 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 18th December, 1947.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 3 p.m., and read prayers.

TABLING OF PAPERS.*As to Right of Challenge.*

The Minister for Education and the Attorney General having presented papers and moved that they be laid upon the Table of the House,

Mr. MARSHALL: May I ask the Attorney General and the Minister for Education what the position will be with regard to papers dealing with bylaws and regulations that are laid on the Table of the House today, which is the last sitting day for this session? Do I understand that when the next session of Parliament commences the papers will not be available to members for perusal and, if necessary, challenge with a view to having them disallowed?

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: They will be available then.

Mr. MARSHALL: I want to have the assurance of Mr. Speaker that they will be available for us on the Table at the opening of next session. I desire to make it clear that in view of our experiences in the past, I intend to scrutinise amended bylaws and regulations as presented to Parliament.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The regulations and bylaws will be in force, but they can be challenged by the House next session.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I made some inquiries about this matter before I tabled the papers today. The situation is that the amended regulations were gazetted recently and they are capable of being challenged for 14 sitting days of the House. Naturally the House will not be sitting so that they will be incapable of being challenged until the House meets again in July or August—

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Or February.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Yes, or February. In the meantime, they will have the force of law. The same position will arise from time to time when other amendments to bylaws and regulations are framed and gazetted. The fact remains that they will be available for challenge next session.

Mr. Marshall: That is all right.

BILL—COMMONWEALTH POWERS ACT, 1945-1947, AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE).

Council's Message.

Message from the Council notifying that it insisted on its amendment now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Members will recollect that this measure relates to the continuance Bill concerning the Commonwealth Powers Act of 1945. This session Parliament passed two Bills amending that Act. The earlier Bill has been assented to by His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor and has received a number. The second Bill was passed but has not yet been assented to and is therefore not an Act. When the draftsman prepared the continuance Bill he made provision in Clause 1 dealing with the short Title, to include references to the two amending measures that had been previously passed. He was able to state the number of the first measure but left a blank for the second. I myself thought that it was the correct procedure, but the Legislative Council took up the attitude that in a continuance Bill they could have regard only to the Bill of this session that had become an Act, and could not have regard to the second measure that had not been assented to and therefore was not an Act. I have given the matter some attention since the Council's message was last before the Committee, and I consider there is ground for belief that the view of the Legislative Council is the proper one. In the circumstances I move—

That the amendment be no longer disagreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolution reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1947-48.*In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the previous day; Mr. Perkins in the Chair.

Vote—Railways, Tramways and Ferries,
£5,261,000:

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS

(Hon. H. S. Seward—Pingelly) [3.10]: In presenting the Estimates for the Railway Department it is necessary to point out that they have been drawn in ignorance of what the findings of the Royal Commission might be, and are presented subject to any recommendations the Royal Commission might make. Members have in their possession the annual report of the Commissioner of Railways for the year ended June last. They will find it informative and, with the report at their disposal, there is not a great deal of additional information that I can give. I should like to direct attention to two items in the comparative results that members might well consider, at page 2, dealing with the earnings and working expenses, because very many of our difficulties are bound up in those two items.

As will be seen, earnings have fallen from £4,417,907 in 1943 to £4,045,935 last year, a decline of £371,972. Expenses on the other hand have increased during the same period from £3,447,512 in 1943, to £4,425,801 last year, which is an increase of £20,000 short of £1,000,000. If we examine the same items per train mile, we find that earnings have dropped from 163.89d. in 1943 to 144.33d. last year, while working expenses have increased from 127.89d. in 1943 to 157.81d. This is a result that must afford food for the deepest thought in the immediate future because it cannot be allowed to continue. As all these matters are fully explained in the annual report, there is no need for me to recapitulate them.

Dealing with the current financial year, collections from the three concerns under my administration—railways, tramways and ferries—are estimated to reach £4,763,200. Expenditure, excluding interest, is expected to total £5,261,000, giving a deficiency on working expenses for the three undertakings as a whole of £497,800.

Dealing with the railways alone, the cash receipts and disbursements are estimated as follows:—

	£
Revenue	4,250,000
Expenditure	4,720,000
Deficiency	470,000
Interest	1,050,000
Estimated deficit on railways this year	1,520,000

These figures do not take cognisance of any wage increases since June last or the 40-hour week to operate in the new year. From those figures members will appreciate the position confronting the railways this year.

The actual revenue for 1946-47 was £3,979,404, and an increase of £270,596 is anticipated. Last year's revenue was adversely affected by an amount in the vicinity of £160,000 by the railway strike of November, 1946, and similar trouble is not anticipated this year. Coaching earnings are expected to show a small decline as compared with last year. Passenger business reached its peak during the years 1943-45 when heavy defence traffic and large concentrations of Service personnel in Western Australia inflated the passenger traffic beyond normal figures, while petrol rationing and restrictions on civil motoring also influenced public transport business. Petrol has been available in more liberal supplies and people have been using motor transport more than they were able to do during the war years.

With the cessation of hostilities and consequent demobilisation, closing down of munitions and other defence establishments, and the return of greater numbers of private vehicles to the road, a decline was noticed in 1945-46, with a steeper dip in 1946-47, due in some measure to the railway strike. Conversely, goods traffic is expected to increase. Certain railway refreshment services, including refreshment rooms, dining cars, bookstalls, etc., were taken over during the year. The current year will see a full 12 months of departmental operation of these services, and revenue will be increased accordingly. The receipts from these services should have an appreciable effect on the revenue this year.

Taking individual items of goods traffic, the demand for local coal is continually on the increase, and provided our mines can increase output to meet private orders, additional traffic should be available from this source. An additional £20,000 has, there-

fore, been allowed under this head. Seasonal prospects are excellent and it is expected that greater quantities of wool, hay and wheat will be available for haulage, and increased revenue of £180,000 has been estimated. The production of local timber is gradually returning to prewar standard, and additional earnings to the extent of £20,000 have been anticipated. An increase of approximately £57,000 has been budgeted for from fertiliser and classified traffic. Live-stock traffic is also on the increase.

The estimated expenditure of £4,720,000, compared with an actual expenditure last year of £4,314,899, shows an increase of £405,101. Over recent years expenditure has risen out of all proportion to revenue, through causes beyond the control of the management. So far as the estimated increase for the current year is concerned, the bulk of the rise is due to the regeneration programme. During the years 1943-46 an amount of £215,000 was set aside by the Treasury as a fund towards the cost of deferred maintenance accrued during the war years. In March, 1946, the Government approved of the inauguration of a deferred maintenance and regeneration programme involving an expenditure from revenue of £3,300,000 over a period of 10 years. The deferred maintenance fund was used as the source of funds for this programme until exhausted, and during 1946-47 a total expenditure of £281,787 was incurred, of which £170,639 was available in the deferred maintenance fund, and £111,148 was provided from Consolidated Revenue.

The estimate on this account for the current year is £437,000, so that £325,852 of the increase over last year is represented by this figure. The balance of the increase represents additional staff, rises in basic wage, added expenditure as a result of industrial awards, and higher working costs generally. The estimates, as I have already explained, do not include provision for basic wage increases since the 30th June, 1947, nor for enhanced expenditure as a result of the 40-hour week.

A summary of the principal branches shows the following:—The Traffic Branch spent £2,333,024 last year, and an increase of £66,976 is budgeted for. Increases in salaries and wages which occurred during 1946-47 have been allowed for; also in-

creased staff and materials to handle anticipated increased business and train mileage. Refreshment services are included in the Traffic Branch, and a full year's cost of operation has been allowed for, compared with a partial year only in 1946-47. Expenditure by the Mechanical Branch last year was £796,044, and £760,000 has been allowed, a reduction of £36,044. A reduction in this branch may appear somewhat incongruous in view of the heavy rolling-stock maintenance programme ahead, but expenditure on regeneration of rollingstock forms nearly 70 per cent. of the £437,000 provided under the item "belated repairs for expenditure on deferred maintenance and regeneration of rollingstock," and it is anticipated that this work will reduce the normal branch expenditure to some extent.

Estimated expenditure by the Civil Engineering Branch is £790,000, an increase of £25,642. Rises are allowed for in maintenance of permanent way, bridges, buildings, etc., and electrical and signalling, due largely to higher prices of materials, basic wage rises, and extra work to be carried out as compared with 1946-47. Expenditure in this branch is governed to a large extent by availability of manpower and materials, and the amount allowed is below what must be regarded as sufficient to maintain a normal maintenance standard, but is considered to be the maximum that can be spent under present day conditions and having regard to the deferred maintenance programme. An expenditure of £137,000 has been allotted to this branch in general charges under the heading of deferred maintenance. The main increase under the heading of "General Charges" is in connection with deferred maintenance and regeneration of rollingstock, reference to which has been made earlier.

Reference has frequently been made to the deferred maintenance and regeneration programmes in hand, and it may be of interest to members to know how the work is proceeding. The programme, which was initiated in 1946, envisages an expenditure of £3,776,000 over a period of 10 years, of which £3,300,000 will be provided from revenue funds and £476,000 from capital. Of the revenue expenditure, £600,000 represents expenditure necessary on deferred maintenance of track, buildings, etc., which

it is proposed to spend over a period of five years at the rate of approximately £120,000 per annum. Of the balance on revenue account, £75,000 will be spent on re-arrangement of buildings, replacement of machinery, etc., at the Midland Junction workshops and the balance on new rollingstock to replace worn out and obsolete stock.

We have an application for the purchase of some later machinery to take the place of the old machinery, which, as was pointed out by the Royal Commission, is out of date and worn out. The £476,000 from capital includes new buildings and machinery at the workshops, six new Diesel-electric trains on order from England and road buses to be operated as auxiliary to the railway service, to improve passenger facilities for certain country districts. I feel I ought to apologise to members for mentioning the six Diesel-electric trains, as these are mentioned in the last four reports of the Commissioner of Railways. Inquiries were recently made by the department to ascertain the prospects of their early delivery, and it was found that owing to the hold-up of work during the war period in England and the extremely bad winter last year when power was not always available, it was not possible to manufacture them. We cannot expect to receive these coaches until the middle of next year.

Mr. May: In effect, you are not doing any more than the previous Government did.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I lay no blame on the previous Government. I have stated the cause of the delay and am not suggesting in any way that the previous Government did not do everything it could to secure these coaches.

Mr. Reynolds: You are very generous and truthful.

The Minister for Lands: Some members are touchy.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: These coaches are required for the railways radiating from Kalgoorlie. They should have been there long ago.

Hon. E. Nulsen: You must make one available on the Esperance line.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, and also on the Wongan Hills line and the Geraldton line. We shall do all we can to get the coaches out as quickly as possible.

The progress to date in improvements to country passenger travel is worthy of special mention. On Monday, the 24th November, the "Australind" express, a train built under the regeneration programme, made its initial run from Perth to Bunbury and return. This express is a train consisting of entirely new saloon type cars, with inter-communication between cars. They are specially constructed for daytime use with buffet cars from which refreshments are conveyed to passengers by the attendants. The journey from Perth to Bunbury now occupies only 3 hours 15 minutes, which is 1 hour 13 minutes less than the previous best time for this trip. The only stop en route is at Brunswick Junction, where a connection is made with a departmental omnibus service operating from and to Collie. This road service also makes connections with other trains at Brunswick Junction. At Bunbury connections are made with an omnibus operating between Bunbury and Busselton and Caves House and train services to the other South-West areas. In the very near future, as soon as vehicles come from the body-builders, road services will be inaugurated between Bunbury and Flinders Bay, Nanup, Northcliffe and Boyup Brook in substitution for the existing trains.

Mr. Reynolds: The charges are rather high at present.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Many things are not right at present; but I assure the hon. member and other members that we shall do all we can to iron out the difficulties if they will bring their complaints to the department. There is always something not quite right with a new service. For instance, I have had many complaints about the luggage accommodation. There is very much smaller luggage accommodation on the bus services than there is on a train. To meet that difficulty, a road vehicle was put on to run after the passenger vehicle, in order to take the luggage. Then I had a complaint that the luggage vehicle did not arrive until an hour after the other vehicle and consequently the passengers had to wait for their luggage. I will do all I can to have this matter rectified and endeavour to arrange for the luggage vehicle to arrive at its destination at the same time as the passenger bus. Then we also had complaints as to the distance between bus stops and railway sta-

tions. A woman with children should not be expected to wait in the pouring rain at a bus stop and we shall have to make arrangements to overcome this difficulty. These are all minor defects which will be remedied in time.

Mr. May: I do not think there is any stop two miles from a railway station on the Perth-Bunbury line.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I can show the hon. member letters pointing out that what I say is correct. I think Yarloop is a case in point. However, that does not matter, because if a stop is only a couple of hundred yards away it would be very inconvenient for a woman with children, especially if it were raining. I point out that the service between Bunbury and Perth is temporary. I do not think it would be right for the Railway Department to run bus services between Perth and Bunbury, as these would run parallel with the railway. The difficulty is that the "Australind" does not stop between Armadale and Brunswick Junction. The matter was taken up by the people living between Armadale and Brunswick Junction and the Commissioner agreed to put on an early morning train from Bunbury to Perth, returning in the evening, in order to take those people from the country and back in the same day. The difficulty, however, is that the department has not the engines to run the trains. Rather than permit the people to put up with great inconveniences, these road buses have been put on until such time as we have engines available.

As I say, if members have complaints to make about the railway service, I hope they will make them to the department. If any section of our community has had reason to complain about the railway service it is the people in the South-West. I do not know how they endured the position for so many years. Therefore I am pleased that they are getting a better train service and I will do everything possible to see that it is extended and improved. As a matter of fact, if it is any consolation to my South-West friends, I can tell them that I had a very severe complaint from Kalgoorlie that the South-West got the "Australind" and Kalgoorlie did not. We on the Great Southern, on the other hand, had a complaint that Kalgoorlie got the AZ coaches, whereas we had to put up with

the AQ coaches. Therefore, Kalgoorlie has not much to complain about.

Mr. May: You can give Kalgoorlie the old South-West set-up.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We would not be so vindictive. What these new services will mean to country passengers can be best illustrated by the following comparisons of the old times on the fastest schedules and on the new—

Perth to Collie, old 6 hours 5 minutes; new 4 hours 10 minutes.

Perth to Flinders Bay, old 12 hours 35 minutes, new 7 hours 50 minutes.

Perth to Nannup, old 10 hours 26 minutes, new 6 hours 52 minutes.

Perth to Northcliffe, old 11 hours 30 minutes, new 8 hours 55 minutes.

Perth to Boyup Brook, old 9 hours 35 minutes, new 6 hours 50 minutes.

So there will be a considerable reduction in the time taken in travelling, and an improvement in convenience to the people. I am not going to say that there is not justification for complaints about the charges, but if we are to give, as we desire to give, a faster, more comfortable and up-to-date transport, it is only reasonable to expect that it cannot be provided at the old rate. There is also the Perth-Kojonup bus service which has proved an unqualified success, and other bus services operated are from Perth to Williams via Quindanning, and Northam-Spencer's Brook-Toodyay. Members will appreciate the awkward predicament in which the department would have been placed if the Government Railways Act Amendment Bill (No. 2) had not been passed and someone had taken out an injunction against these services. The new all-steel sleeping cars for the Westland Express are nearing completion and, when issued, will release the AZ sleeping cars for use on other services, such as Albany and Wiluna. On the Wiluna service, a lounge car is being equipped for the northern part of the journey; that is, from Wongan Hills onwards, and it is hoped to have it on traffic before the very hot weather sets in.

Renovation of existing dining-cars and an increase in their seating capacity has improved the catering service to the public, and new dining-cars are contemplated, all of which is a clear indication that planning to provide a better service to all portions of this far-flung system has been actively pursued for some time past. To the 30th June, 1947, expenditure on the respec-

tive programmes of work totalled £103,216 on deferred maintenance (Civil Engineering Branch), and £222,932 on regeneration of rollingstock (Mechanical Branch). Work carried out by the two branches on this account includes—

Civil Engineering Branch: Re-sleepering, re-railing, painting, overhaul and renewing of signalling and interlocking, telephones, etc., and work of a general nature, including repair work on buildings and platforms, bridges and culverts, water services, fencing, etc. Apart from painting, the work done is scarcely visible to the public eye, but it is proceeding steadily to the limit of manpower and material available.

I think I indicated recently that Cabinet had decided to re-sleeper and regenerate generally the Port Hedland railway which had reached a state demanding that a decision be made. That line will be put into proper condition within the next nine months.

Mechanical Branch: Completed works: Construction of two DD locomotives and purchase of five U-class locomotives from England (part of order only) balance of nine U-class debited to loan funds. Construction of five S-class locomotives, three issued and two nearing completion. Construction of four suburban passenger cars. Construction of 83 GE wagons (four-wheel, 10-ton) and purchase of five JJ bogie tank wagons from Commonwealth disposals.

In hand or projected: PR locomotives, material for 10 ordered and some on hand, but insufficient to commence a definite programme. In addition, 25 complete locomotives ordered from Great Britain. DD locomotives—20 sets of material ordered. A tentative order for 30 light-line locomotives placed in Great Britain.

That order was tentative because it was placed about May, before the Royal Commission had commenced operations, and there was a condition attached that the purchase should be subject to there being no recommendation against it by the Royal Commission. However, the Royal Commission has been consulted and there is no objection.

Class AYC and AYD country day cars: Six cars under construction and to be issued to traffic in near future.

Class GE wagons: Fifty under construction in workshops and 300 ordered from private contractor.

CXA sheep vans: 100 under construction.

RB bogie wagons: Fifty under construction, of which six debited to regeneration and balance to rollingstock replacement suspense account (stock sold to the Commonwealth during the war). Thirty-three of these wagons already issued to traffic.

VA and VB covered goods vans: Arrangements in hand for manufacture of underframes by private contract.

Re-organisation of the workshops is advancing steadily, but progress has been slower than planned, due to labour and material shortages, and particularly lack of professional staff.

Machinery orders have been placed almost to the full extent of the amount allocated, but deliveries to date have been negligible. However, benefit should be noticeable next year when the bulk of the orders are expected to be fulfilled.

There is one branch of railway activity that I cannot allow to pass unnoticed; I refer to the railway mill at Banksiadale. Members will find a reference to it in the Commissioner's annual report. In April last, however, the Conservator of Forests wrote as follows:—

Recovery and production figures achieved by the railway mill have been consistently good over a number of years, but the figures for March, 1947, represent an outstanding performance which it is considered can provide profitable food for thought by the industry generally.

For the six months to December, 1946, Banksiadale averaged nearly 1,100 loads monthly, with a recovery of 40.5 per cent., full volume, the best performance being in August, when production totalled 1,236 loads with a recovery of 43.2 per cent. For March, however, production has jumped to 1,455 loads, and recovery to 46 per cent. The recovery figure is remarkable when compared with an average figure for the industry of about 35 per cent., and particular attention is drawn to the fact that this is on full volume and not on hoppus measure.

Mr. Reynolds: You have a wonderful manager there and a great team of men.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: And a wonderful concession in royalties from the Forests Department.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Figures give a weekly production on a 44-hour basis per man under the mill roof of 3,400 super feet, compared with a present average for the industry of 1,850. Taking in all employees, production per man, from bush to railway truck, works out at 1,520 super feet per week compared with the industry figure of 820. I would like to quote from a Press cutting taken from "The West Australian" of the 29th November, 1947, and containing remarks by the Royal Commis-

sioners concerning this timber mill. It is as follows:—

“I must say,” said Mr. du Plessis, “it was a real pleasure to visit your mill and to see the interest displayed not only by yourself but by all concerned in running that mill efficiently. I have been to a number of mills, and I have not seen a more efficient organisation in the milling line than yours.”

Mr. Gibson: I would like to support that.

Mr. du Plessis: Your mill bears comparison with mills that I saw in Canada, and that is saying a lot.

I have pleasure in placing those congratulatory references before members.

Mr. Reynolds: He should have an increase in salary.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The estimated results of operations in the Tramway Department for 1947-48 are as follows:—

	£
Revenue	503,000
Expenditure	529,000
Balance (deficiency)	26,000
Interest	50,000
Loss (Treasury)	£76,000

Actual revenue for 1945-46 was £480,522 and expenditure £466,243. The railway strike in November, 1946, cut off supplies of coal to the Electricity Commission, and in consequence the Commission was unable to supply electric power for tramways, resulting in an almost complete cessation of services, the only vehicles operating being the motor omnibuses. This had the effect of reducing tramway earnings last year by approximately £22,000. The addition of this amount to last years' actual revenue gives the figure of £503,000 which it is estimated will be the cash receipts for the current year. Working costs have risen sharply over recent years, and a further rise is forecast this year. The 1947-48 figures contain provision for £40,000 for re-laying against an actual expenditure in 1946-47 of approximately £20,000. The whole of this expenditure is dependent on supply of the necessary materials, e.g., rails, fastenings, etc., but it is hoped that these will be forthcoming in sufficient quantity to enable the programme to be implemented as the re-laying of certain tracks is becoming a matter of urgency. Roadway repairs are estimated to cost £25,000 during the current

year, compared with approximately £15,000 spent on this account last year.

Members will have noticed the very bad state into which the roads where the tram-lines are have fallen recently. There will be greater activity this year to put these roads into a proper state of repair. Increases in wages of drivers, conductors, etc., are estimated following a recent Arbitration Court award, and basic wage increases will also have their effect. The purchase of additional omnibuses, some of which will be used to strengthen existing services at peak periods, will also involve employment of additional staff. Of late, requests have been frequent for improvements to tramway services, and extensions of omnibus services. The department has done its utmost to give the best possible service with the equipment available, but lack of sufficient vehicles has necessitated the deferment of requests for additional services. Since assuming office I have had many requests for new and improved services, some of which have been made over long periods. Anyone who moves about must realise the inadequacy of the present metropolitan transport arrangements, as I pointed out a few days ago when introducing an amending tramway Bill.

Special efforts are being made to provide these new and improved services. This week a bus services has been instituted on the Osborne Park run. Not only does this reduce very considerably the time taken for the journey to Osborne Park, but it also provides a connecting link between the Osborne Park area and North Perth without coming into the city. Trolley-buses will later replace the Oxford-street trams. A new service that it is hoped to start shortly is the Carrington-street one to serve the Mt. Lawley area. South Perth, east of Canning-highway, is another new service that it is hoped to start very soon. Another area set down to be served by buses is that at McCourt-street. There it is hoped to replace the trams with buses. I was disappointed to find that it was not possible to make a start on building the canteen at the East Perth carbarn. That is something which is badly required. However, a site has been chosen and the department asked to make all haste with the preparation of the plans, and it is hoped that work will be put in hand at the earliest possible date.

The Estimates for the ferries are—

	£
Revenue	10,240
Expenditure	12,000
Balance (deficiency)	1,800
Interest	425
Loss	£2,225

Last year revenue was £9,878, so that a slight improvement is forecast. Expenditure is estimated at £12,000 compared with an actual outgoing of £15,583 last year. The latter figure included an amount of £3,451 in connection with repairs to the S.S. Perth, being final payments in respect of heavy overhaul given to this vessel during 1945-46. There will be no similar debits during the current year, and excluding that amount, expenditure will be approximately equal to last year. I do not want to keep members longer than necessary. When the Premier introduced the Loan Estimates he indicated the amount of money that was to be made available for railway work. I have the full details here and can give them to members if they so desire. When dealing with the Railway Estimates I omitted to mention housing. An amount of £44,500 has been set aside for houses for railway staff. In addition it is hoped to build 36 two-cabin portable type dwellings for permanent way employees at a cost of £14,190.

Mr. Reynolds: Where are they going?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I will give the hon. member that information. The £44,500 is to provide 50 cottages of the five-roomed standard type. This is an ambitious programme, and every effort will be made to carry it out. Up to date, material has been collected for three houses at Kalgoorlie and three at Coolgardie. Of the 50 houses planned, the first 25 have been allotted as follows:—

Northam	5
Kalgoorlie	3
Narrogin	3
Collie	3
Wagin	3
*Eridgetown	2
*Eunbury	2
*Coolgardie	2
*Katanning	2

*No houses provided under any previous departmental building projects.

Mr. Reynolds: You have forgotten Brunswick Junction.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If the hon. member will be patient he will find I have not forgotten it. It is proposed to allot the second 25 as follows:—

Merradin 10, Geraldton 5, Brunswick Junction 5, Pinjarra 2, Wongan Hills 3.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Looking after Pinjarra again!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We have not got a line at Carnarvon.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: There is nothing for Carnarvon.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The 36 portable type cabins can be placed where required, and they have the advantage of being able to be transferred from one site to another when necessary. If members require any further information I will be only too pleased to let them have it.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [3.47]: I do not propose to spend very long on these Estimates because the whole of the State transport system has been discussed pretty fully on two measure which have met the fate they deserved.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: We helped, deliberately.

Mr. MARSHALL: I am not prepared to be over-critical at this juncture because we hope to receive very shortly a report on the railway system from two eminent men who have made a thorough investigation into it. There are, however, one or two observations I would like to make. The Minister has given an outline of what is expected, and has also told us of the financial situation which is both pathetic and tragic. When we know that the railways have to pay £1,100,000 in interest each year we can realise how difficult it is for them to make a profit. I do not think the Minister told us anything which was distinctly different from the policy laid down by the previous Government. For instance, provision for homes for the workers was well under way when I left office. Progress in that direction has been retarded to an extent by the union offering some objection to the rents to be paid and the design of the

house itself. The only thing the Minister did not mention was how he proposes to spend £15,000,000 in the next 10 years—which was part of the programme mentioned by the present Government when on the hustings. The other provision laid down was already under way when the Minister took office.

When the Labour Government went out of office most of the key railwaymen were still in the Forces, but the present Government has had their services long since. The programme of railway regeneration prepared by the previous Government entailed the spending of about £4,500,000 or £5,000,000 in 8 years, and I think it will be shown from the files that the Government was endeavouring to get the Commissioner of Railways to shorten that period in every way possible, in order to speed up the regeneration and modernisation of the system. However, that did not seem to be practicable, owing to the shortage of material, machinery and labour. The money was there, as it had been made available. At that time the Commissioner of Railways did not feel that the programme could be improved upon, owing to the shortages I have mentioned. I expected the Minister to give some information as to how it is proposed to spend £15,000,000 in the next 10 years, and on what it is to be spent. I suppose that statement was purely propaganda of a kind, in order to get one step ahead of the Government then in office.

I think nearly every member of the present Ministry knew the actual position before going onto the hustings. There was no secret about it, because I had said time and time again that we were held up only by lack of men and materials. I am not attacking the Minister on this point, as I realise he finds himself in the most invidious position of having all the key men back in the railways, while being still without the labour and material with which to give effect to the programme laid down. It is no use trying to mislead the people. Let us tell them the true position. Why talk about electrifying the transport system of the metropolitan area? I do not think I will live to see it done. I have doubts of the advisability of carrying out such a programme, in view of the cheap and speedy methods of transport now becoming available. Electrification might have been a good idea 30 years ago but, like steam, it is now challenged by more

up-to-date methods. A gentleman with some experience of electrification still claims that there is some value in the scheme for electrifying the transport of the metropolitan and suburban area, and I am willing to bow to his superior knowledge.

The Minister for Railways: The Royal Commissioners the other day said there was no value in it.

Mr. MARSHALL: If I were the responsible Minister I would investigate it thoroughly and examine all the alternatives that present themselves. He should gaze into the future. We do not want to find ourselves, in a few years' time, in the same position as we are today with our steam railways. With the ever-improving types of internal combustion engines that are challenging the older ideas of steam and electrification, I ask the Minister to be watchful. Sometimes our officers are wedded to particular modes of transport. They suffer from obsessions and can not be moved out of their ruts. Sir Harold Clapp is a case in point. He is a thoroughly competent railway man, and excels in that sphere of transport, but he can see good in no other system and has had experience of nothing else. He cannot divorce his mind from railway matters. I leave it to the better judgment of the Minister. If he is satisfied that this idea is the best, well and good, but I say the expenditure of £15,000,000 in the next 10 years is a practical impossibility, and I think the Minister realises it.

We should be honest with the people, as they dislike the politician or prospective politician who, when on the hustings, makes promises that he knows cannot be fulfilled. Such performances in the past have been largely responsible for public men such as members of this House falling into disrepute in the community. Often in the past promises have been made, when it was well known that effect could not be given to them. Such promises should not be made simply for the sake of political expediency. The whole of our road transport system—not including the tramways, though they are concerned in it—is in need of a close overhaul. There is too much overlapping and waste of vehicles, petrol, oil and labour, due mainly to the several controls. We have services overlapping at certain points, and running in all directions, instead of having a straightforward through service on all main routes. Now we have vehicles running into the city

from all directions and then idling their time away parked—a nuisance to privately-owned vehicles—in Riverside-drive and other thoroughfares. They are out of commission for the most part and are used only at peak periods. The congestion apparent in St. George's-terrace is due to the prevailing system. The buses and other big conveyances come from the west or from other directions into the city, unload, load up again, and thus we see people scrambling in and out of trolley-buses and omnibuses. The same applies at Barrack-street. Under a properly organised transport system, they should run into the city, unload and pass through, without all this congestion. By that means we would avoid the turning of the huge vehicles in the heart of the city where pedestrian and vehicular traffic is most dense. There are various anomalies associated with the system as a whole and it should be completely re-organised so that there would be available an up-to-date and speedy system of transport that would operate, so to speak, like an endless chain.

There is another matter I would like the Minister to explain. Why have the taxpayers been called upon to make heavy contributions for the subsidising of the haulage of superphosphate by road? This important concession to the farmers was inaugurated before I became a member of this Chamber. I do not take any exception to the cheap rate applying to the railing of super, but I understand the concession was granted on the basis that the super would be back-loading for the trucks that had been used for the conveyance of wheat to the seaboard. It was that aspect that made the low rate practicable; but the basis of the concession has been disturbed because in these times the farmers want the super brought to their doors when it suits them. To that I take no exception, but at the same time it is not fair to ask the taxpayers to continue to bear the financial obligation involved in the granting of this extended concession to the farmers. On top of that, this year a heavy subsidy is to be paid for road transport as well.

The Minister for Railways: That has not been stated yet.

Mr. MARSHALL: I would like the Minister to let me have his views on that point. All through my experience as Minis-

ter for Railways, I never heard the Commissioner of Railways once admit—I have the former Minister for Agriculture to confirm what I say, because he was present at the various interviews and conferences I had with the Commissioner—that he could not haul all the super, wheat, timber and other requisites that are peculiarly railway freight. He at no time said that the tractive power or his supply of rollingstock was inadequate to do the job.

The Minister for Railways: I do not know that he would admit it today.

Mr. MARSHALL: If the Minister looks at some of the files he will see there some sharp notes that passed between the Commissioner and myself on the subject. The Commissioner always said any difficulty experienced was due to the shortage of coal and floods. The Commonwealth Government—I took strong exception to the procedure at the time—had called upon the State railways to haul a colossal quantity of wheat to the port for shipment overseas to feed the hungry people to the north of Australia. I think we were called upon to haul 13,500 tons of wheat per week. The Commissioner of Railways contended that he could do it, and he always claimed that no matter what obligation was placed upon him with regard to excess haulage, he did not want any help or interference on the part of road transport. That he could not do it was evidenced by the fact that we had to call upon road transport to assist in the work.

The explanation advanced by the Commissioner for the failure of the railways to cope with the task, was in one instance the floods that had occurred, and on another occasion he said it was due to the shortage of coal. At all times there was some reason to be advanced, but never once did the Commissioner of Railways say that the railway system was incapable of hauling in full any commodity required. He fought bitterly against the introduction of road transport. When it was inaugurated, he claimed it was unfair as he could have done all that was required with the railways. Nowhere on the files will there be found any indication from the Commissioner of Railways that he was at his wits end to comply with all the demands made upon him. I want the Minister to understand

that if that was the position in 1945 and 1946 when I was Minister for Railways, the position regarding tractive power has improved materially. That is the reason I cannot understand why the Government has had to make use of road transport on this occasion. Previously it was felt necessary to adopt that course because wheat had to be rushed to the coast to be shipped overseas. That had to be done practically at the command of the Commonwealth Government.

I asked some questions about the situation and it will be apparent to the Minister that he now has the advantage of 14 new "U" class engines that the Labour Government did not have at its disposal. They were on order when we were in office, but they were not then in commission. Then again there were only eight A.S.G. engines in commission, whereas now there are 16. That type of engine has double the tractive power of the ordinary engine, which means in effect, an additional 16 engines available for haulage.

The Minister for Railways: There are 13 out and three in the sheds now.

Mr. MARSHALL: The Commissioner also has an extra five or six new engines that are being completed at Midland Junction. Thus there are between 30 and 35 brand new engines available for traffic, which will give the Commissioner of Railways far greater scope in the haulage of goods than he had 12 months ago.

I am puzzled to know why we have to call upon the taxpayers to subsidise road transport for the haulage of super. I realise the invidious position in which farmers' representatives might be placed if they took any action. I am given to understand that super, containing as it does a large percentage of alkaline, would rot the bags if it were stored too long and that it would probably be inconvenient for the farmers to take their super and hold it for some time. They should not take exception if they have to put up with a little inconvenience by taking the super at a time most suitable for the railways to haul it.

I am not one of those who have always been critical of the farmer or of the concessions and blessings conferred upon him by the general community. One of the first jobs I had was on a farm. At 10 years of

age I ran away from home and have paid the penalty for so doing. I started work on the farm at 3.30 a.m. getting the horses ready for the paddock and finished at 9 p.m. by giving them their last feed, and received 2s. 6d. a week for my services.

Mr. Styants: You were overpaid.

Mr. MARSHALL: Perhaps I was. I realise that a farmer has many tribulations and his lot in life is not as good as it should be having regard to the modern appliances that have been introduced to assist him. The farmer still works from daylight to dark with a tractor and 12-furrow mouldboard plough in the same way as when he had to use an ox and a single-furrow plough. That does not seem to be right. The farmer has a hard time, but he should realise that other sections of the community who are helping him are also having a fairly stiff time. I do not want the Minister to say it is inconvenient for the farmer to take his super earlier and stack it until sowing time. The farmer should appreciate that it must be a case of 50-50; he receives a concession of which we are not critical and he should not require the taxpayer to pay an excessive amount for the haulage of super so that he may not be inconvenienced in any way. While the taxpayers are prepared to help the farmer, as they have done for so many years, the farmer should be prepared to do his part.

I should like the Minister to check the figures of the running cost per mile of the trams, trolley-buses and omnibuses. I informed him that I had obtained certain New South Wales figures through the local transport board which indicated clearly that the trolley-bus was the most expensive of the three modes of transport, and that the officials of the Western Australian Railway Department were very sceptical and to a degree had challenged the accuracy of the figures. When I was Minister, I directed the Commissioner of Railways to obtain the figures from the Road Transport Commissioner of New South Wales and check them for himself. Although there was ample time, the Commissioner of Railways did not submit the figures to me and I left office without receiving them. Some time ago I asked the Minister to obtain those figures from the department in order that we might be able to get our transport authorities to

compare our mileage costs with those of New South Wales. Strange to say, the discrepancy between the figures I obtained and those supplied by the Commissioner of Railways through the Minister are out of all proportion. The figures the Minister sent me show that our trolley-buses cost 16.61d. per mile and those in New South Wales 26.94d. per mile, a difference of 10d. in favour of Western Australia.

Mr. Styants: Are the vehicles in the two States of the same type and the same seating capacity?

Mr. MARSHALL: New South Wales has both single and double-deckers so that our figures should be better because of the lighter weight of the buses. The figures I obtained show that the cost in New South Wales is 19.27d. per mile, but with interest and depreciation added, the figure is 22.95d. and 23.23d. for single and double-deckers respectively. Yet the other figures showed 26.94d. per mile. Our State-owned transport service costs compare favourably with those of New South Wales except for the tramway system. That is the only section where the cost per mile is slightly higher here than in New South Wales. I am very sceptical of the figures, believing as I do that interest and depreciation charges here were not included. Consequently I propose to take the matter up direct with the Commissioner for Road Transport in New South Wales with a view to ascertaining why different figures should have been supplied in response to inquiries from this State. When I obtain the information, I shall be pleased to hand it to the Minister.

The last point I wish to make is this: The Minister is in for a few headaches if there is any repetition during the coming vacation of the shortage of railway facilities for the people on the Murchison. For a long time we had three passenger trains but, as usual, when the Commissioner of Railways decided to cut down expenses, he always looked first to the Murchison line as a starting point. The Murchison people always get the backwash when it comes to economising, probably because we are a complacent lot of people and have not criticised or made complaints about the railways. As a consequence we suffer more acutely than do other sections of the community using the railways. I personally interviewed the department when the third train

was taken away from the Murchison and was given an assurance that, in no circumstances, would there be a shortage of coaches to accommodate Murchison passengers. Members must realise that this is the longest train journey, and the hottest, in the State. Passengers, including women and children, are in the coaches for two nights and 1½ days. It is really an endurance test, and takes much of the pleasure out of a holiday trip. Recently the member for Mt. Magnet and I received telegrams indicating that there was again an acute shortage of accommodation.

If we have a repetition of what has happened in the past, then I shall be very wrathful. There should not be another shortage in view of the constant undertakings given to us by the Commissioner. These are being as constantly broken and the people of the Murchison have now become irritated; in fact, they are saturated with disappointment and disgust. I have not travelled on the Murchison line for the past four or five months, but I shall be going to the Murchison again early in the new year. My experience on the last trip was nothing short of disgraceful. Neglect was apparent everywhere and it was not due to obsolescence. The carriages were unclean. I wrote to the Minister on the matter, but it is difficult to believe the state the coaches were in when we reached Wiluna. They were littered with beer bottles, cigar butts, cigarette butts, ashes, food refuse, paper and spilt beer.

The condition of the coaches was deplorable and almost beyond comprehension. They had not been swept from the time they left Perth, notwithstanding that labour was available at Mullewa and Yalgoo to do the work while we were having meals. The trains stop at each of those places for three-quarters of an hour, which gave ample time to clean the coaches. I wish to pay a compliment to a past stationmaster at Yalgoo. In the very busiest period of the Murchison he not only saw that his officers cleaned the carriages, but he had them sprayed with formalin. The result was that there was a sweet and satisfying smell when the passengers returned to the coaches. That officer has retired, I am sorry to say. He is the kind of officer who gives satisfaction. He was complimented, and so was the depart-

ment, for the consideration shown to passengers. I have had many promises from the Commissioner of Railways about the trains on the Murchison line, but I found it difficult to convince him that the coaches were ever dirty. We have had several arguments about the matter. The lavatories were neglected; I do not know whether they are still neglected, but to use them was most objectionable.

I take strong exception to neglect of that sort. It is not due to obsolescence of the engine at the front of the train. Another complaint was the way in which goods were stowed. There was positive neglect by the department in this respect. Surely the people who patronise the railways can expect that their property will be cared for and delivered to them in good condition. Yet we find the people helping the guard and the conductor to get their goods out of the van. I do not know at what time the trains would reach their ultimate destination if the people did not render this assistance to the railway men. People are charged a reasonable price and should not be expected to help in this way. Again there is a shortage of staff. One conductor has to make about 100 beds and therefore some passengers do not get a berth until midnight, notwithstanding that they paid 15s. for it. That is the treatment to which the Murchison people are subjected and I take exception to it. If there is a shortage of rollingstock on the Murchison during the coming vacation, I would rather be in my own place than in the Minister's when I return to Perth.

MR. FOX (South Fremantle) [4.27]: There is only one thing I desire to bring under the notice of the Minister and I suppose he knows all about it already. I refer to the queuing up of people to buy tickets for the Eastern States. We have read articles in the Press on this subject in which it is pointed out that people have had to sit up all night to secure a ticket. Fremantle residents have told me that they have gone to Perth and waited in the queue merely to find, on one occasion that only four berths were available. Many people in a bad state of health are unable to stand in a queue for such a length of time; and many men are working and unable to send someone in their place for a ticket. The only people who are advant-

aged are those living near the station and able to get there early.

I am informed that a short time ago a quota of tickets was issued to the Fremantle station. A lady told me she went there to obtain a ticket, but could not get it for a certain date. When she tried to get a ticket a week later she was told that none was available and that she would have to go to Perth and take her place in the queue. I have no objection to placing people on equal terms so far as securing tickets is concerned, but I think the Minister ought to be able to make arrangements by which people living in Fremantle or Midland Junction—12 miles is a fairly long distance to go for a ticket—can obtain tickets at those stations. Fremantle is the only station with which I am concerned; other members can speak for themselves. I hope the Minister will look into the matter with a view to ascertaining whether some such arrangement can be made, thus avoiding the necessity of people sitting up all night to obtain a ticket and very often finding that even then they cannot obtain one.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [4.30]: I had not intended to speak on these Estimates because the railways have been discussed very extensively during the session; but I have been provoked into doing so by the implication of the Minister, which was ably seconded by the member for Collie, that the train service to the Eastern Goldfields is particularly good, and by their endeavour to make a comparison between the train that should be provided for the Eastern Goldfields—a distance of 375 miles from Perth through a very hot climate in summertime and a particularly cold one in winter—and that which is provided from Perth to Bunbury, a distance of 116 miles, or from Perth to Collie, approximately 125 miles. It would require a good deal of imagination to make any comparison between the two. Even the climate between here and Bunbury and between here and Collie is quite reasonable. There is usually a balmy sea breeze once one gets past Pinjarra; whereas, when travelling to Kalgoorlie, one has to endure a particularly objectionable climate. I hope that the Minister is not going to fall into a state of complacency and think that the ordinary train to Kalgoorlie is everything that could or should be provided for long-distance passengers.

We must remember that the ordinary train serves a population of 25,000. That is five times the number of people congregated in any one town outside the metropolitan area. While I agree that the train to Kalgoorlie—if the AZ coaches are used, which is not always the case—is reasonable, as compared with the other services provided by the Railway Department, I would point out that people on the Goldfields complain that when they are allotted to an old 4-berth compartment they are charged the same rate for a sleeper as is charged for the AZ coupé type. I took this matter up many months ago and was assured that when an AZ was not available, and the AS, that is the 4-berth compartment, was to be used, the person concerned would be told when he went to the booking office, and it would be optional for him to book a sleeper in a 4-berth compartment and pay the price of 15s. which is charged for the sleeper in the coupe. But I find that has not been honoured to any great extent. I am told in Kalgoorlie that it was observed for a short time; but now, when people book a sleeper, the first intimation they have that it is in a 4-berth compartment is when they arrive at the station to begin their journey.

The position is aggravated in that there is a really first-class train running on that line in the Westland. A peculiar feature is that the Railway Department does not receive anywhere near the remuneration from passengers carried on the Westland as is received from passengers carried on the ordinary train to Kalgoorlie. The first-class fare, including meals and sleeper, received by the department from a passenger on the Westland is £3 5s. 8d. but from the passenger travelling on the local train the department receives £4 4s. 4d. for the same accommodation, a difference of approximately 33 per cent. The figures for the second-class passengers are £2 0s. 9d. and £2 12s. respectively. It is quite natural, therefore, that the people of the Goldfields complain when they do not receive at least the same standard of accommodation and comfort as the people on the interstate train, in view of the fact that they pay a higher fare. I know it is necessary to have a good interstate train, and I have no objection to that.

It is now proposed to run a train with all-steel coaches. When these coaches had been exhibited in Perth, showing the type of comfort provided for passengers, the compartment was taken to Kalgoorlie and put on exhibition there. I am of opinion that that was very bad policy, because the Kalgoorlie people are not going to be permitted to use it. Yet they will have to pay higher fares for second-class accommodation in 4-berth compartments than the interstate passenger will pay for first-class accommodation in the all-steel coaches. I think it was rather adding insult to injury to take the train there and put it on exhibition. Then there is the difference in the menus on the two trains.

Dealing with the matter of the menu generally, an atmosphere is being created that there has been a wonderful improvement since the Railway Department took over the dining cars. There are not many Eastern Goldfields people who would subscribe to that view. I travel up and down frequently and, while I agree there is a greater degree of cleanliness, and diners are provided with a serviette and a nice clean tablecloth, the quantity and quality of the food have not improved at all. For breakfast the amount of food actually supplied would not cost more than 9d., but the passenger pays 3s. for it. Housewives who have travelled on the train, and who are the shrewdest judges of the cost of food, place it at a lower figure than 9d. There is the orthodox type of cereal, and if one orders almost any type of dish, one is served with a hash of left-over vegetables from the night before. That is all right for those who like it; but I and many other passengers do not relish that kind of food, and it is left on the plate. If one orders bacon and eggs, one does not receive eggs at all, but an egg. Evidently the department has not progressed beyond the time when there was a shortage of almost every type of foodstuff.

The only other matter I want to deal with—and I hope the Minister will supply the information—is in connection with the standard type house that it is proposed to erect. Are these to be for the salaried staff only, or will some be made available to the wages staff? There is an impression amongst railway men that the present policy will be a continuation of what has been the practice ever since the Railway

Department has operated, namely, that a certain number of houses will be provided for the salaried staff and none, except in rare instances, for the wages staff. I hope the Minister will give an assurance that some of these homes will be made available to wages men. I know that at Merredin, where the department has an extensive building programme, wages men occupy many of these places. I am pleased to see that the department proposes to do something for the permanent-way men. The conditions under which some of them live are little short of deplorable.

While going to Geraldton this year I stopped at Pintharuka especially to have a look at the conditions under which a permanent-way man—a length runner—was living. He had been transferred from another district and the only accommodation he had consisted of two tents and some wheat sacks, which had been split down and used as a sort of verandah to give some shade. That man had a wife and four children, the youngest of which was about seven weeks old. He told me that the Railway Department was charging him 2s. a week rent for the two tents. I never saw such deplorable conditions. I was a member of the Select Committee which inquired into the housing of our timber workers, and I saw some squalid conditions amongst the mills. But I would say there was nothing approaching the squalor under which this man and his family lived.

The other men in the gang—they were living in sub-standard houses—told me there was no necessity for a man to have been transferred there at all; he could have run the length and been stationed at Morowa or somewhere else. The fact that no provision has been made so that the wages men may have their wives and children with them at the out-stations, has been a sore point with them because they have the most arduous conditions. On the other hand, the salaried men are looked after and they usually have only day shift and do no running shifts. Even when I was on the managing body of an industrial union I was not an extremist, but after seeing these conditions I would advise the men to give the managing body of their union authority to say to the Railway Department, "If it is necessary to have men at these out-stations you will have to provide decent accommodation for them,

and until such time as it is provided the men will not go to them." Such an attitude would receive the approbation and support of 90 per cent. of the people of this State.

MR. MAY (Collie) [4.47]: I do not propose to speak at any length because the report of the Royal Commission will probably change our outlook on many of the items affecting the railways. There are, however, one or two matters I wish to bring under the notice of the Minister, who, some time ago, was good enough to visit Collie for the particular purpose of seeing the hopeless position there in regard to the handling of traffic. The position has now reached saturation point and I am wondering what provision will be made to ease it. The output of coal is continually rising. Only last Monday I was talking to the railway workers there and they said it was a hopeless job to handle the traffic, both at Collie and along the line to Brunswick Junction. I hope that facilities will be afforded to handle the continually increasing output of coal. That brings me to the matter of the conversion of locomotives from coal to oil fuel.

If we are not going to make provision at Collie for the ever-increasing output of coal, then it will be necessary to convert some of the locomotives so that they can burn oil fuel. I understand it was recently decided that, in addition to those already on the road, an additional 24 locomotives should be converted. I do not know to what extent that is to be done, but if it is to any great extent it will in the near future have a disastrous effect on the production of our native fuel. I would like an assurance from the Minister that he has this matter well in hand. Once engines are converted to burn oil it is difficult to re-convert them to the use of coal fuel. I do not know that oil-burning engines are any more efficient than those burning coal, except that the oil fuel is easier to handle, but I understand that an oil fuelled locomotive is far more costly to run than one burning coal.

I come now to the matter of bus services—not so much that between Collie and Brunswick, but that running between Collie and Bunbury. I realise that there are details to be worked out in regard to the new scheme that the Minister has

brought into operation, and I am prepared to be tolerant in the matter of any necessary changes. Most people—I feel sure the Minister is one of them—object to paying for something they do not get. I know of several men working on the Stockton coal mine, who live at Picton Junction. Naturally they take every opportunity of going home at week-ends, and they travel by bus. They object strongly to having to pay the fare from Collie to Bunbury and return, when they travel only as far as Picton Junction. I would like the Minister to give attention to that matter.

I desire to pay a tribute to the drivers and crews of the new train, and all trains running in the South-West. As late as last Monday, when I returned to Perth from Collie, the train, which left Collie at 8.30 a.m., was delayed for about 30 minutes along the line. In spite of that, the driver brought his train into Perth on time to the minute. If those responsible for running the railways felt that the public took an interest in such things, I am sure they would respond and make the effort necessary to keep the trains running on time, as far as is possible in view of the deterioration of all the railway equipment. A fortnight and a week ago last Saturday I travelled home on the Australind train, and on each occasion the engine ran a hot box. Engines and carriages do get hot boxes under ordinary circumstances, but on these two occasions when the boxes were examined they were found to have been filled with sand. In the opinion of those who saw it—including my own—the train had been deliberately sabotaged.

That was not done by railway people but by those who object to that service being run. I do not know what action the Railway Department has taken in the matter, but I hope inquiries have been made and that there will be an effort made to find out who was responsible. Something should be done to prevent such a thing happening in the future. On the first of those occasions we lost $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours, and on the second occasion were delayed for nearly as long as that. It is shameful to think that such an occurrence has been allowed to take place. On the last occasion, when the railway officials discovered what was wrong, they took the packing from the axle box and put it into a tin, with the object of making sure it arrived

in Perth for investigation just as it was when taken from the engine.

When our men are working under difficulties and are doing their best in a service that has fallen into a bad state of disrepair, I think we, the travelling public, should do everything possible to help them. I hope that when the report of the Royal Commission is made known we will be able to give our railwaymen some relief from the great strain under which they have now been working for years. They have stood up to much unjust criticism and I hope that, as a result of the report of the Royal Commission, we will be able to do something for them and for the travelling public of the State.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS

(Hon. H. S. Seward—Pingelly—in reply) [4.58]: I thank members for the way in which they have received the Estimates, and I assure them that the matters mentioned will receive my attention. I will endeavour to obtain the answers. This is the first I have heard of the incident mentioned by the member for Collie, where sand was placed in the axle-boxes. I will inquire as to the result of any investigation made by the department into that incident. I am certain that every precaution will be taken to preserve the appliances of the railways from acts of that description in future. Such an action is unthinkable.

The Premier: It is criminal.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I assure the member for Collie that he is not more concerned about the coal handling position than is the Government. We realise that the expeditious handling of coal out of Collie and to its destination must be dealt with as a matter of urgency. It will receive the early attention of the Government. The conversion of engines from coal to oil burning is resorted to only as a last expedient. Some weeks ago it became apparent that the railways could not get the reserve of coal necessary to tide the system over the Christmas holidays, when the miners will be away from work. Had some further engines not been converted to oil burning, train services would have had to be curtailed. It is not the desire of the Government to use imported oil in pre-

ference to local coal. Provided we can get sufficient coal of a proper quality, only coal fuel will be used. The action taken was necessary to prevent the cancellation of trains.

I come now to the curtailment of train services during the summer, referred to by the member for Murchison. The pressing need for the transport of wheat to the coast is such that there is not the slightest doubt that some passenger train services will have to be curtailed, but the Goldfields train services will be the last to be interfered with. Should there be any necessity to curtail services, those affected will be the ones nearer to Perth where the people live in a more temperate region and where more than one train runs daily. There will undoubtedly have to be some curtailment of services to enable requirements in other directions to be met. While it is true that we have 25 or so more engines now than last year, unfortunately quite a number of the old engines are breaking down from day to day. While we have the new ones, we have the old ones breaking down in still greater numbers.

I can assure the Committee that I will take up the question of queuing up for Trans train bookings. As a matter of fact, I have already discussed it with the Commissioner of Railways, because I do not consider it right that people should have to sleep all night outside the ticket office window. A better system must be devised to enable the people to get their tickets in a proper manner. There is a difficulty, however, in that people book a berth on a train two or three weeks ahead and subsequently go to the shipping offices and the various airline companies. They take the first booking that is available, but never remember to notify the railways of their intentions. The result is that a berth is pencilled and then it is found at the last moment it is not to be taken by the person who booked it.

The Attorney General: They should pay for it at the time.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, I think so.

Mr. Styants: At any rate, they should pay a substantial deposit.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Possibly that would be preferable. With

regard to the other matters that have been mentioned, I will go into them and make the necessary inquiries.

Mr. May: In the country people have to pay before they get their ticket. Is that not the position in Perth?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The trouble is that periodically business people have to travel to the Eastern States, and then there are the requirements of the Tourist Bureau as well as business houses. Business people do not know just when they may have to travel and the practice at the Railway Department has been to reserve a number of berths for such contingencies, and those that are set aside are usually taken. As for Perth people themselves, I think that when they book a berth, they should pay for it. It might be a bit inconvenient, but in view of the pressure of passenger traffic between here and the Eastern States, they should be required to do that, or not get a berth at all. In the country, of course, people can go to the station master and he can transact whatever business is necessary.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—State Batteries, £80,698; Cave House, £16,807—agreed to.

This concluded the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

In Committee of Ways and Means.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER
(Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington)
[5.7]: I move—

That towards making good the supply granted to His Majesty for the services of the year ending the 30th June, 1948, a sum not exceeding £11,663,577 be granted from the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

STATE TRADING CONCERNS ESTIMATES, 1947-1948.

In Committee.

Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the State Trading Concerns for the year ending the 30th June, 1948, now considered, Mr. Perkins in the Chair.

Divisions—State Engineering Works, £219,232; State Quarries, £400; State Brick Works, £50,718; State Hotels, £107,987; State Shipping Service, £427,120; State Saw Mills, £646,000; Wyndham Freezing Works, £449,500; West Australian Meat Exports, £267,715—agreed to.

This concluded the Estimates of the State Trading Concerns for the year.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

BILL—APPROPRIATION.

Message.

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

First Reading.

In accordance with resolutions adopted in Committees of Supply and Ways and Means, leave given to introduce the Bill, which was read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington) [5.12] in moving the second reading said: This is the usual Bill introduced each year after the passing of the Annual Estimates. Supply has been granted during the session under two Supply Bills and this measure is to authorise the appropriation of all moneys passed and approved in the Estimates. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gascoyne) [5.14]: There were several matters to which I intended to refer in dealing with the Public Works Estimates last evening had the Chamber not thought of finishing the business of the session at that sitting. There is an important matter concerning main roads and local authorities which it is very necessary that I should deal with at an appropriate stage. This Bill gives me the scope I require whereas the Loan Bill may not. I refer to the serious position of local authorities in areas where there are thousands of miles of roads, very sparse populations and very few ratepayers. Such areas will be found in many Legislative Assembly districts, but particularly north of the 26th parallel.

Many years ago, prior to the institution of the Federal Aid Roads Agreement, those road boards passed through very desperate times in trying to fill in the holes after the rainy season, with very little plant of any consequence, endeavouring to live within their revenue, arranging with Governments to construct bridges, if Governments would agree, but always finding themselves seriously short of money. With the institution of the Federal Aid Roads Agreement, Western Australia attained a very satisfactory position, because on the arrangement of the 2/5ths area and 3/5ths population basis—the formula agreed to at the Adelaide Conference before the original legislation was passed—the empty spaces of this State gave to the more populated areas a tremendous advantage in obtaining moneys which could be spent where the population existed.

In the districts of the North, for which I particularly speak on this occasion, those people had, up to 1933, very little money paid to them in the form of grants direct from Governments, but from 1933 onwards a special arrangement was made that each road district north of the 26th parallel should receive an annual grant varying from £1,000 to £2,000, as well as additional grants for special work. This matter is within the knowledge of many members. There is in the Legislative Council, for example, a member who was chairman of the Ashburton Road Board for many years and who knows the full story of how, from 1933 onwards, Labour Governments made sure that the road boards of the North were not always impoverished.

In view of the termination of the Federal Aid Roads Agreement this year, arrangements were made last year, in conference, for a continuance of the agreement. I was present at the Federal Conference where the responsibility devolved upon me and the Director of Main Roads to put up a case for Western Australia to ensure, if possible, that the formula was not altered, but that we should get the benefit of our far-flung areas so that the return to this State would be somewhat commensurate with our responsibilities. We had all of the other States on our side and no variation was made in the formula. When the Premier recently had to approve of the new agreement, he had to accept it for a lesser term than formerly had obtained. I understand that no matter how strongly the case was presented for a

more lengthy term, the Commonwealth would not agree.

The Premier: It was not agreed to by the Prime Minister, who was quite determined about it.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: So we have emerged from the last conference, which decided on what basis the petrol tax collections were to be reimbursed to the State, with an agreement for a much less term than previously. Because of the case that was put up by me, and also by the officers in the Officers' Conference, we did emerge with a very satisfactory arrangement, inasmuch as a special trust fund was to be created, under the jurisdiction of the Minister for Works in each State, which would give to the States a fund from which grants could be made to local authorities for the purchase of heavy plant. I would wish that all country members of this House were sufficiently interested to follow closely what I am about to say, as it is vital to the development of the roads in our sparsely populated areas.

Only this year, following the completion of the new Federal Aid Roads Agreement, the Commonwealth Parliament passed an Act, No. 17 of 1947, which provides for the grant, out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Commonwealth, to establish a trust fund from which moneys may be applied as grants to local authorities—special grants for the purchase of plant. As I have said, the initiation of that principle came from Western Australia, so that local authorities which have not the resources, and whose annual collections are insufficient for the purpose, may be assisted to purchase plant through this fund. To members representing more compact districts, it will be interesting for me, I think, to cite one or two cases of local authorities in my district. These authorities have approaching 2,000 miles of road and an income of about £1,800.

Two road boards in my district have only 60 ratepayers, but they control an area half the size of Tasmania. Knowing that this Commonwealth legislation was likely to be passed, I was anxious to place before the present Minister for Works the case for the local authorities in all the outlying parts of Western Australia. I presented typical cases for two local authorities and claimed for them a grant to enable them to purchase plant appropriate to their needs, plant that could traverse many miles a day and that

would assist them to overcome the difficulties associated with 2,000 miles of road.

The Minister for Works: How much of that 2,000 miles of road is declared main roads?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: None at all.

The Minister for Works: Although not declared main roads, how much has been taken over, so far as maintenance is concerned, by the Main Roads Department?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: None at all.

The Minister for Works: Are you sure?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Yes. That applies whether we take the Ashburton Road Board, or the Upper Gascoyne Road Board, and whether we take the Nullagine area or West Kimberley. In those districts there are no gazetted main roads at all. In the main no responsibility whatever has been accepted by the Main Roads Department for roads in those districts.

The Minister for Works: What about the major developmental road from Carnarvon southwards?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am not speaking at all about the link between Carnarvon and Northampton. I am speaking for the road boards in my district and the two cases for which I applied for a grant to purchase plant. It is impossible for such boards to get along without special grants and I am hoping the Minister will continue to make himself acquainted with the conditions I have mentioned. The Minister appears to be interested, but I point out to him that the Carnarvon southward road has nothing whatever to do with the cases I am presenting now, or with the cases which I presented to him for special grants. The road from Carnarvon southwards is one for which I made myself responsible. There we have a direct link with a road that can be traversed in almost every season.

The Minister for Works: Is the 2,000 miles of road you mentioned in the Gascoyne-Minilya Road Board District?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: No.

The Minister for Works: There are 2,000 miles of road irrespective of that?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The major part of the link between Carnarvon and Northampton is not in the district of the Gascoyne-Minilya board. It ends 84 miles south of

Carnarvon and joins there with Shark Bay, and Shark Bay joins up with Northampton.

The Minister for Works: Then the 84 miles is not in the developmental part?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Not in the part for which I am making a claim for a grant. That is a road which I hope to see bituminised in my lifetime, as I was somewhat responsible for its creation. I do not want any side-tracking.

The Minister for Works: You need not worry about side-tracking. I share your view. I will not side-track.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I do not want any misunderstanding.

The Minister for Works: Neither do I.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It is an issue which has nothing whatever to do with the general case. The Commonwealth Act, No. 17 of 1947, after providing for the creation of a trust fund, provides by Subsection (5) of Section 6—

A sum payable to the States under the last preceding subsection shall be apportioned in accordance with Subsection (2) of this section and any such amount paid to a State shall be subject to the following conditions:—

This is the vital point—

That the amount shall be expended upon the construction, reconstruction, maintenance and repair of roads through sparsely populated areas, timber country and rural areas or if the State thinks fit, upon the purchase of road-making plant for use in areas where the purchase of such plant is beyond the resources of local authorities.

I presented two cases which were to be standard cases for the North-West. I asked for a grant for the purchase of plant for those two boards under this recent legislation. I wrote to the Minister about the middle of the year and he considered the matter. I was amazed to receive from him on the 5th November a letter, to which was attached a circular which had been signed by the Secretary of the Main Roads Department, to all local authorities. In the course of his letter, the Minister said—

In view of the varying requests by local authorities it was considered necessary to obtain an opinion from the Crown Law Department regarding the scope of the particular section of the Act referring to plant purchase, and as a result of this inquiry the Crown Solicitor has expressed the opinion that financial assistance could not be given to any local authority that had borrowing powers available which could be used for the purchase of plant.

I have never heard anything more ridiculous.

Mr. Hegney: Neither have I.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The Crown Law authorities, after having been asked by the Minister for advice on the limitation of his powers under that section, advised the Minister in these words—

There is no definition of "financial resources," but I think they must include the whole financial resources of the authority. In that case, if it is permissible according to generally accepted local government practice to purchase such plant from loan funds, then where a local authority has available for that purpose the power to raise the necessary loan moneys, such purchase would not be "beyond its financial resources."

I suggest to the legal authority who gave that ruling that his first objective might have been, if he understood the need and the problem, to advise the Minister how the Commonwealth law could be applied, not how it could not be applied. He could have advised the Minister how to use Commonwealth money and not how to avoid using it. I suggest that there is in the Commonwealth statute very wide authority vested in the local Minister in each State to say whether a local authority has the financial resources. And we can all answer that, can we not? Anyone who represents a country local authority can answer the question whether that authority has financial resources to enable it to purchase the plant required.

Mr. Rodoreda: They have been broke for years.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Yes. If it had not been for the grant to the North-West road boards, I know the position in which they would have been placed. Here we have an opportunity to use from a trust fund petrol tax money to enable these people to acquire plant which they cannot secure from their own resources, and we get a legal opinion which, I submit, should have been asked for in another way that would have brought the right answer.

The Minister for Works: What exactly do you mean by that? How would you ask the question in order to get the right answer? You pose a question and then wait for the reply.

Mr. Rodoreda: Be your age!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The member for Roebourne suggests that the Minister should be his age, and I think that is the answer. The Crown Law Department should have

been asked, "Does this section permit me to grant money to a road board if, in my view, their financial resources do not permit them to buy this plant?" That would have been the question to which the right answer would have been given. But now the Minister has advised me, in reply to my letter severely criticising the legal ruling, with which I do not wish to weary the House, that he is seeking the opinion of the Commonwealth Solicitor General on the matter. I am seriously concerned with the fact that if the Commonwealth Solicitor General adopts the attitude that our Crown Law Department has taken, then the trust fund specifically asked for and created at the request of this State for all States similarly circumstanced will not be worth tuppence; and these long distances of road—300 miles between towns, with stations radiating 200 miles and more from ports—are still going to languish. That is where we will have got unless we are prepared to interpret what that Act intended to convey. I submit to the House what I said in my letter to the Minister. I used these words—

I do not agree with the restricted interpretation given by the Crown Solicitor when he refers to the definition of "financial resources of local authorities." We have in this State, and particularly in the North-West, road districts tremendous in area, and some of them with up to 2,000 miles of road to look after, and an income the equivalent of about £1 per mile of road in their district. It is obvious, therefore, that, no matter what their total resources may be (a point which is referred to by the Crown Solicitor) any expenditure on heavy plant suited to their needs, which almost imperatively they must have, would be "beyond their financial resources."

Would it be that a person living in a home worth £1,000, with no cash at all and living meagrely on his total income—and that resembles the position of local authorities in outback parts of the State—would it be that such a person, because he may borrow £500 or £600 on his house, can be said to have the financial resources to buy a motorcar? Of course not! But that is the analysis of the position which this interpretation gives—the position of the road boards which so seriously need the heavy plant for the provision of which the Act was designed. I regret very much that it has been found necessary for the Minister to write, through the Commissioner of Main Roads, to the Commonwealth Solicitor General to see whether my interpretation or the restricted one is correct.

I submit that in the first place it was a matter for Ministerial decision here as to whether a local authority, even with its borrowing powers and with its people rated heavily for the benefits they receive, had no financial resources and was entitled to the grant. What does it matter whether they have borrowing powers? What would borrowing powers confer on them if they were exercised? They would confer another impost on the ratepayers. That is the extent of their financial resources. It would mean that an additional impost per annum must be paid by the people to repay interest and sinking fund on the loan. I hope there is to be a solution of this problem. I have taken no action in the Commonwealth sphere in this connection but I can promise the Premier and his Ministers that if, through the devious channels of legal advice we are getting on the matter, the fund is not to be properly applied to Western Australia, which cited the case, then, even though I am in Opposition in this Parliament, I will see that the Commonwealth authorities are contacted and, if possible, the Commonwealth law amended quickly. That can be the only attitude if we are to take advantage of the means of securing the heavy plant that might be available from the petrol tax funds.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. V. Doney—Williams-Narrogin) [5.38]: The Leader of the Opposition sees this matter in its very serious light. He is wise after the event. So are we all. He knows now exactly how the question should have been posed,

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You had better be careful. I will reply to you in Committee.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is all right. Of course it is! All is fair in debate, provided we do not depart from the truth as we understand it and see it. I say the hon. member knows now the right way to pose the question to the Solicitor General here. So do I.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You should have known before.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: After I got his reply, I could easily reconstruct the position, and say, "What a pity I did not ask the question along those lines and then I might have had a different answer." But of course, beforehand, we did not have

that knowledge. The Leader of the Opposition wants to have an entirely different interpretation of the words "beyond their financial resources" than has been given. He knows very well that the term "financial resources" implies, in addition to cash reserves, the ability to borrow. I do not say that the road boards should have borrowed right up to the hilt, but they should to a reasonable degree have tickled their loan account. If they have not done so I am entitled to say that they have not exhausted their financial resources.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is bunkum.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is not. It is the view that has always been taken. These are grants, and not mere loans. This is the first time the position has applied in this State, or for that matter in any State. Until the 1st of July last we had been operating under a 10-year agreement. From then we started on and are now in our first year of a three-year agreement, and £60,000 has been set aside for the purpose of assisting road boards to purchase plant—usually heavy plant—for road-making purposes. But no undertaking was given to assist them until the purchases became beyond their financial resources. I have already indicated that it is not my intention to interpret this at all harshly. The question ultimately became one of whether there should be plant pools, or each board should secure its own plant requirements.

The reason the question was posed is that it was found that so small was the quantity of suitable plant available that if each individual board waited for its particular requirements to be met, it would take three or possibly five years—so Mr. Young, the Commissioner, informs me—before it could be done. It was that which prompted the idea that it would be far better to divide the State into some 10 or 12 groups, and allow each group to be a plant-pool centre. Each such centre would get the big plant appropriate to the requirements of the nine or more boards in the group. It must be remembered that big plant can be used by an individual board for probably no more than one month in each year, following which, of course, it would be idle and unable to earn an income to service the debt on it, because the amount of money to be given to the indi-

vidual board is not the total purchase price which might be £5,000 or more. As a matter of fact many boards are asking for a larger amount than that. Each board would get only the proportion of the £60,000 to which it was entitled.

We have something like 137 boards in the State, but I daresay probably not more than 100 would be applicants. If that were so, and there was £60,000 available, each board would get—say—£600, and that would give them £1,800 in one year which is only sufficient to finance them for part of their requirements. The matter has its complexities. That is agreed upon by me and by the road boards, and, I hope, by the Leader of the Opposition. The decision to consider a plant-pool was not mine. The matter was referred to the road board conference which decided that a committee should consider the question of whether it would be wise and in the interests of the State for them to adopt the plant-pool basis, or whether each board should handle the matter individually. That particular committee is still acting. Admittedly it is taking a long time—much longer than I anticipated—but we cannot foresee these things. A reply from the Road Boards Association has not yet come to hand.

Meanwhile there arises the question of how exactly we are to interpret the words "beyond their financial resources." When that was referred to the Solicitor General—not by me, but I have to take responsibility for it—he sent in the particular determination which the Leader of the Opposition has made known to the House. That hon. gentleman said it does not suit him, and I might say that it does not suit me. I straightaway made known through the Press to whomever else might have been concerned my feelings with regard to the position. I said I did not agree with it. When we disagree with a thing like this, and also learn that the other States are having similar trouble the only thing is to refer the matter—which was done by letter and long distance telephone calls—to the Commonwealth Solicitor General. He was unable to interpret the position immediately. He decided that time was necessary, and it apparently still is, because I have not received a reply from him. There are a few items of information I could have given the Leader of the Opposition, had I known he was going to

bring this matter up, but not knowing that, the file containing the appropriate information has gone back to the department.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Here are all your letters to me, if they are of any use.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I stand by what I said in them. They contain nothing inappropriate to what I have told the House. The North-Eastern, Northern and other outer areas will, under the terms of the agreement, get a better deal than will the closely confined districts here.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is what the Act specifies.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is no thanks to you.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Even had this misunderstanding not occurred those boards would still not have had their plant by now, because only one in five could, at the moment, be supplied. It was to overcome the shortage that the idea of the plant pool was put forward, and it is regarded as the best way out of the difficulty. If there are any other points on which I can inform the Leader of the Opposition and other members, within the time allowed us, I will be happy to do so to the best of my ability.

MR. RODOREDA (Roebourne) [5.50]: The Minister has told us that it is easy to be wise after the event, but at election time we had the idea that those who now form Cabinet were to be wise before the event. To be wise before the event, and not afterwards, is the true test of any Government. The Minister has admitted frankly that he did not know what he was doing, and that he did the wrong thing in relation to this matter of interpretation. Did he not have enough backbone to decide the question, without worrying the Crown Law Department?

The Minister for Works: What is the Crown Law Department there for?

Mr. RODOREDA: If the Minister has not enough guts to decide these matters for himself, I suppose that is what the Crown Law Department is there for.

The Minister for Works: If the hon. member wants to raise the question of guts, I am willing to give him any trial in that direction that he chooses.

Mr. RODOREDA: There is nothing personal in what I am saying.

The Minister for Works: Then that is an entirely different thing, but I see no reason for regarding what the hon. member said in that light.

Mr. RODOREDA: I am referring to a Minister and a member of Cabinet, and not to the member for Williams-Narrogin.

Mr. Marshall: You are not going to have this brawl all on your own. We are all going to be in it.

Mr. RODOREDA: Why did not the Minister go on with the game and wait until the Crown Law Department or some other authority pulled him up? Here we have a fund that should be expended as rapidly as possible in the outback areas of the State. It is entirely owing to those areas that we get the consideration and the sum of money that comes to this State from the petrol tax.

The Minister for Works: There is no difference of opinion on that.

Mr. RODOREDA: The Leader of the Opposition brought this question up before the agreement was made, and he stressed the fact that owing to our huge area we should receive extra consideration. That was embodied in the agreement.

The Minister for Works: That is the intention of the agreement.

Mr. RODOREDA: Why does not the Minister put the agreement into effect as rapidly as possible, instead of wasting time?

The Minister for Works: Because the plant is not here.

Mr. RODOREDA: I will deal with that question in a moment. The trouble is that in this Government there are too many legal practitioners and they must put a legal interpretation on everything that happens. In this matter the Government could have taken a risk and waited until the Commonwealth took some action, which it would never have done. Now the Minister says in effect that he has asked the Commonwealth to prevent this money being spent.

The Minister for Works: There is not the slightest doubt that it will be spent.

Mr. RODOREDA: This matter worries me, as it is one of the most important factors in the development of the North-West, and

one of the most important that this Government has had to deal with. It is far more important than the measure dealing with tortfeasors, or the Railway Act Amendment Bill, or any of a number of other matters on which this House has spent so much time. The Minister could well have given consideration to the request from the North-West, and had he done so road boards in that area could have got their plant. It was ordered and was here and bespoken, until the firms that had it got tired of waiting for a decision and let the plant go.

The Minister for Works: I do not think the second part of that statement is correct, that the agents got tired of waiting.

Mr. RODOREDA: The boards got tired of waiting and advised the agents—

The Minister for Works: Do you think they would cancel any orders just because they had to wait?

Mr. RODOREDA: Yes, the orders were placed subject to sale. The boards placed the orders, anticipating the grant, and the machinery merchants accepted those orders. The Roebourne Road Board was advised that the plant would be held for one month and that if the option was not then taken on the plant would be sold elsewhere.

The Minister for Works: They did not consult us.

Mr. RODOREDA: The Minister for Works did not consult us in this matter.

The Minister for Works: You knew from the Press what was happening.

Mr. RODOREDA: I wish the Minister would speak up. We knew from the Press that this plan would be a Godsend to outback boards, and the road boards themselves thought so, in their early interpretation of it. As mentioned in the Press, it was to save the outback boards. I have here a letter from a road board in the North, dated the 28th of November. It reads—

The attitude of the Government towards assisting boards in the North in the matter of purchasing heavy roadmaking plant has been a profound disappointment to my board.

Quite frankly, we appear to be no further ahead than when my board made its first application in this direction in June.

Over five months have passed, and despite frequent letters from my board to the Minister for Works, we have not even received any intimation that even small assistance is likely to be forthcoming.

My board definitely considers that it is beyond the financial resources of this district to purchase and maintain a heavy roadmaking unit.

To be perfectly frank, I consider the interpretation made by the Crown Solicitor to be very convenient to the Government.

Financial resources of this board, in common with many others in the North, are such that it is only possible to maintain a light plant for use on purely maintenance work.

That is the impression of one board.

The Minister for Works: Does it say anything about having ordered its plant and the order having been cancelled?

Mr. RODOREDA: No, but they did order the plant, as is mentioned in other letters. I have read to the Minister the board's impressions. They do not like it.

The Minister for Works: I have admitted that I do not like it, either.

Mr. RODOREDA: What an admission—very convenient to the Government.

The Minister for Works: I do not agree with that.

Mr. RODOREDA: If the Minister would say what he meant, I could reply to him. Three or four of these boards in the North could have obtained a plant. If the Minister wants to wait until there is sufficient plant available for them all, before getting the grant, how much further ahead will we get? The plan is one of those idealistic things that will not work.

The Minister for Works: It was the decision of the Road Board Conference.

Mr. RODOREDA: The Minister knows that there is one period of the year in which most of the road work is done in this country. The road boards will all want the plant at the same time and there will be more arguments over it than anything else the Minister could devise.

The Minister for Works: I did not devise it.

Mr. RODOREDA: The heavy plant will be using great quantities of petrol in moving perhaps three or four hundred miles from one road board to another. For the Minister to say that each board would only take about one month to do all the work it wanted to do with this heavy plant, is ridiculous.

The Minister for Works: No, it is not. It is the view of the Commissioner for Main Roads.

Mr. RODOREDA: Like the Minister, he does not know what he is talking about.

The Minister for Works: Why not tell him that?

Mr. RODOREDA: I will tell him, and I am telling him here, in this Parliament. If that is the opinion of the Commissioner for Main Roads in regard to the North, he is as ignorant as is the Minister on the matter.

The Minister for Works: All right.

Mr. RODOREDA: The boards that come within my electorate could spend all the months of the year in which it is practicable to do such work with this heavy plant. Roads are the solution of the problems of the North, and until good roads are built we will not get much further ahead.

The Minister for Works: Could the boards up there or anywhere else finance the working of this type of heavy plant throughout the year?

Mr. RODOREDA: I said they could use the plant for a good part of the year, when it was practicable to work with that plant.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. RODOREDA: I regret having to reply to the interjections of the Minister, Mr. Speaker. The boards have sufficient resources to keep the heavy plant going for the months in the year in which it is practicable to work. No road work can be done in the North during about four or five months of the year, owing to the weather conditions and the rainy season. As the Minister might know, this heavy plant does not take many men to work it. The difficulty with the light plant is that the boards are depending mainly on manpower, and not on machinery. The longer this position obtains and the longer the boards are without plant, the longer will they fritter away their resources in works on which they must employ men with picks and shovels. Such works could be done in half the time and much more cheaply by means of the proper machinery. All the boards were jubilant at the thought of getting the plant they wanted, and they put their applications in straight away, but now they are disgusted. I hope action will be taken by someone with a view to getting a quick decision

in this matter from the Commonwealth authorities and, if that decision is adverse to our ideas, action will be taken to have this legislation amended.

MR. NEEDHAM (Perth) [6.0]: I would like to ask for some information from the Minister for Education. What is the amount appropriated in the Education Vote for manual training for the current financial year? Is there any appreciable increase as compared with recent years? If so, how much is the increase?

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
(Hon. A. F. Watts—Katanning) [6.1]: The hon. member was good enough to acquaint me with his desire for this information and I therefore have it available for him. The 1946-47 expenditure in connection with manual training, totalled £19,703, and was made up of salaries, £17,849, and contingencies, £1,854. The Estimates for this year include a total of £24,000, representing an increase of £4,297 over the figures quoted in respect of the year 1946-47. The amount on the Estimates for this year is made up of salaries, £19,000, and contingencies, £5,000. Therefore the increases represented are: Salaries, £1,151; contingencies, £3,146.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 4, Schedules A to D—agreed to.

Schedule E:

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: With reference to the provision of £1,598 19s. 11d. for general and by-elections, extra assistance in the preparation of electoral rolls, payments in connection with electoral canvassing, fees to returning and presiding officers and expenses in connection with elections, I would like to know from the Premier, whether this figure, which appears under the section dealing with the Minister for Justice, is in excess of the normal expenditure, or is it provided for something in particular?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The item is for the payment of temporary assistance

to deal with the preparation of electoral rolls and with people who failed to vote and to whom cards are sent requesting an explanation and in whose case additional inquiry has to be made. I believe it is the usual provision.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: This is the point I wish to be clear upon. There will be necessity for a very heavy canvass of rolls in order that a redistribution of seats may be made on a proper basis. I wish to know, in view of the Electoral Districts Bill having been passed, whether steps will be taken to ensure that boundaries that should remain unaffected are clearly shown. The rolls must be up to date. Is any preparation in train to bring the rolls up to date? If not, there must be a serious increase in expenditure under this heading.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There must be a substantial increase under this item. The Chief Electoral Officer has been in consultation with me and preparations are already in hand to provide immediately that the rolls shall be in the best possible condition. This work will proceed intensively in the next few weeks.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is the information I wanted.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I had not had time to interview the Treasurer, but I told the Chief Electoral Officer that he could proceed on the understanding that the money required would be provided.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That will not apply to the metropolitan area only.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No. In addition he will direct attention to those electorates in which there were no contests last March.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Good! That is what we wanted to know.

Schedule put and passed.

Schedules F., G., Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the Street Photographers Bill.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

LOAN ESTIMATES, 1947-48.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 2nd December; Mr. Perkins in the Chair.

Vote—Departmental, £183,370 (partly considered):

HON. J. T. TONKIN (North-East Fremantle) [7.30]: There are a couple of items in these Loan Estimates in which I am particularly interested. There is an amount set aside for the completion of the wheat shipping gallery and also for the commencement of the construction of the working house, track, shed and siding. I do not think the Government has any intention of spending this money for the purpose set out. Therefore I do not know why the amount has been included in the Estimates. We know very well that Co-operative Bulk-handling is very much against the construction of the working house in accordance with the previous Government's plans. We know, too, that the Assistant Minister for Agriculture is a very close friend of Mr. Braine, the most influential member of Co-operative Bulk-handling, and we also know that the member for Irwin-Moore, who has considerable influence with the Assistant Minister for Agriculture, is closely connected with Co-operative Bulk-handling and is against the spending of any money at Fremantle for the construction of the working house. So it appears to me that there is no likelihood whatever of this work being proceeded with.

When I was speaking on the Revenue Estimates of the Department of Agriculture, I made some reference to the shipping galleries which had been constructed by the Public Works Department and mentioned statements which had been made by the Assistant Minister for Agriculture and by the member for Irwin-Moore claiming great credit for what Co-operative Bulk-handling had done in the handling of wheat. Those statements sought to show that when the Fremantle Harbour Trust was

operating the galleries for the Government, the performance in the loading of wheat was very poor, but that immediately Co-operative Bulk-handling took charge there was a complete transformation and from then on there was a wonderful result. I endeavoured to show that the rate of loading was dependent upon the rate at which the wheat could be handled in the ship and I said that that fixed the rate very definitely; no matter how efficient the person might be who operated the galleries and the silo, it depended upon the way of loading in the ships as to how much wheat could be loaded per hour.

The member for Irwin-Moore, who believes that anyone who makes a statement contrary to what he himself believes tells lies—and he says as much—went to some length to make statements about me which I very much resented. I endeavoured to answer him previously but without success, and I therefore had to await my opportunity to do so now, because no member will say about me what the member for Irwin-Moore said and get away with it without hearing from me. If a man believes I am a liar and can prove it, I shall be perfectly satisfied to take it; but when he calls me a liar without justification and does not prove it then I am entitled to be annoyed. I am annoyed. So that the Committee may realise that I have every reason for being annoyed, I propose to quote what the member for Irwin-Moore said about me, in order to ascertain whether they would like it said about them and whether they would not be inclined to take the action I am now taking. The member for Irwin-Moore said—

I believe that the member for North-East Fremantle set out deliberately to misinform the people of Western Australia. It was an instance of propaganda of the most objectionable type. It was a distortion of facts. It sprang from a desire deliberately to misinform the people.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: A nice man!

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: What a terrible thing to say. You will get a reputation for saying anything.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: He concluded by saying—

I say that the statement made by the member for North-East Fremantle had no substance in fact and that the position is as I have presented it to the Committee.

We shall see if it was before I sit down! Had the member for Irwin-Moore called me an unmitigated liar when he started and left it at that, he could have saved all those words, because they mean the same thing. The hon. member offered to supply me with the figures which he was using and I believe did in fact send them along to me subsequently. I certainly received some figures in my letter box, but there was nothing to indicate from whence they came. Mr. Braine, with whom the member for Irwin-Moore confers regularly, and to whom he runs immediately a speech on bulk-handling is made in this House, also offered to make some figures available to me. Dear, oh, dear! Does the member for Irwin-Moore or Mr. Braine imagine that after the experience I have had in this House I would deal with a subject like this without first seeing the figures myself and getting them from the proper source? Do they imagine I am foolish enough to hold my head out to get it cracked because I would not go to the trouble to ascertain what the facts were before I spoke?

There was no need for me to go to Mr. Braine for the figures or to go to the member for Irwin-Moore, because I have seen the figures, and the figures do not show the picture which the member for Irwin-Moore reckons is the true position. The member for Irwin-Moore said that any improvement at Fremantle was due entirely to Co-operative Bulk-handling, Ltd. That is his statement. I propose to see whether it is true or not, because the member for Irwin-Moore told us that he presented the true picture. Members should know that wheat is loaded at Fremantle in bulk by a process which, first of all, takes the wheat in the silo from the silo on to the shipping galleries constructed by the Government, along the galleries and through a spout into the ship's hold. Under the charter party, which affects the handling of wheat, the stevedore on the vessel, with the men under him, is responsible not to whoever controls the gallery, not to whoever controls the silo, but to the master of the vessel. That is the important thing to remember. The stevedore and the men under him loading the wheat on the ship are not responsible to Co-operative Bulk-handling, but to the master of the vessel. The charter party says this—

The stevedore at the loading port or ports shall be appointed by the charterers at a cost not exceeding the current rates of first-class work. The cargo shall be stowed under the supervision and direction of the master.

Not the master of Co-operative Bulk-handling, but the master of the vessel! So the stevedore takes delivery of the wheat at the spout over the ship's hold and has to stow the wheat in the vessel under the direction of the master. Before Co-operative Bulk-handling took over, four vessels were loaded by the Fremantle Harbour Trust. That is, the Trust was in charge of the galleries and the stevedore took delivery of the wheat from those galleries under the terms of the charter party. It is to be expected that the very first vessel loaded would not put up a wonderful performance, because new machinery being used for the first time had to have the bearings run in and adjustments made, and the men had to become accustomed to the new methods. So it was to be expected that on the first ship nothing wonderful would be achieved. The figures I have received from the most authentic source—I repeat that: the most authentic source—show that on the first vessel, which was the "Rocky Mountains Park," the average amount of wheat loaded on the time worked was 277.962 tons per hour. But the figures Mr. Braine used, and which the member for Irwin-Moore used, were 234 tons only, or a difference of 43 tons per hour.

I repeat that the figures supplied to me come from a most authentic source. If they are wrong, I regret it; but I do not think they are. I choose to believe that the figures used by Mr. Braine and by the member for Irwin-Moore are the figures which are wrong. The other figures on this schedule are substantially in agreement with the figures which I have. That was not a very good performance—277 tons per hour on the time worked. There was a loss of three hours on the gallery in working that ship. That is, the gallery had to be stopped for adjustments, so three hours were lost in all, out of a total loading time of 53 hours. It took 53 hours 30 minutes to load the ship. Of those 53 hours, three were lost on the gallery, 17 hours 14 minutes were lost on the ship, and no time was lost on the silo. With the exception of the three hours lost on the first

ship, no time has been lost on the gallery since, whether it was operated by the Fremantle Harbour Trust or Co-operative Bulk-handling. That is the only ship on which there was any loss of time, through any fault of the gallery. But there has been a good deal of loss of time on the ships and, in the instance of the "Cressington Court," the fourth vessel loaded and the last loaded before Co-operative Bulk-handling took over, 15 minutes were lost on the silo operated by the Australian Wheat Board, no time was lost on the gallery, but there was 21 hours 12 minutes' delay on the ship.

The "Cressington Court" was a somewhat difficult ship to load because of its construction, the placement of the bins. I propose to take the second and third vessels loaded after the men became accustomed to the process, the bearings were run in and everybody concerned had a better idea of the job. The second vessel was the "Hope Crest." The total loading time was 36 hours. The actual time worked was 23 hours 19 minutes. Of the delay, 12 hours 41 minutes took place on the ship, and there was none on the galleries or on the silo. So any failure to do better was the responsibility of the stevedore and the men on the ship. There was no delay on the galleries, which were capable of taking wheat at 1,800 tons per hour, and no delay on the silo, which could deliver wheat at 600 tons per hour; but the delay was on the ship, and the rate of loading achieved on the time worked was 375.6 tons per hour. That was approximately 100 tons per hour better than was attained on the first ship.

The third ship was the "River Murray," and this was also whilst the Government was in charge of the galleries being operated by the Fremantle Harbour Trust. The rate of loading achieved was 367.98 tons per hour. The fourth ship was the "Cressington Court," which, as I have said, is a very difficult ship to load because of her construction. The performance fell very considerably and only 302 tons per hour was attained on the time actually worked. Then Co-operative Bulk-handling came along and it seemed as though good fortune was well on its side because, with one exception, the next ship which came along and was the first Co-operative Bulk-handling had to load, was the easiest ship of all the 14 that

have been loaded. It seemed as if Providence was out to give Co-operative Bulk-handling a marvellous start.

The next vessel was the "Riley." That was the first vessel loaded by Co-operative Bulk-handling and the rate of loading was 436 tons per hour; that is, from the "Cressington Court," on which the loading was 302 tons per hour, the rate jumped on the "Riley" to 436 tons; and lo and behold! Co-operative Bulk-handling is supposed to be solely responsible for the improvement. The "Riley" was a ship in which a considerable quantity of wheat would run freely, without being trimmed for a long time. Only 22 per cent. of the wheat received into the "Riley" had to be trimmed, whereas on the "River Murray" 36 per cent. had to be trimmed and 53 per cent. on the "Jalaganga," which was the third last ship loaded. It so happened that the "Riley" was the first ship which Co-operative Bulk-handling loaded, and she took this large quantity of free wheat because she did not have bins as the other ship had and the wheat was able to run freely for two-thirds of the time of loading.

There is only one other ship in this list in which a rate of loading was achieved like that, and that was a vessel called the "Harmattan." In this case the rate was 506 tons per hour—a very fine effort, but still not up to the maximum at which wheat could be delivered from the silo. Nevertheless it was a vast improvement on what obtained in the case of the first ship. So that members may know how this was achieved, I mention that this ship required to have only 16 per cent. of the wheat received, trimmed. She was the easiest vessel of the lot to load. So, the "Harmattan" was better than the "Riley." But other vessels have had to be loaded since the "Harmattan."

The "River Fitzroy" was the next, and the rate of loading was reduced from 506 tons to 388 tons per hour. That was only 10 tons per hour better than was obtained by the Government when loading the second ship. The reason was that 40 per cent. of the wheat had to be trimmed. So, the delay occurred on the ship, proving that, in connection with the rate of loading, the ship is the determining factor and not Co-operative Bulk-handling which controls the galleries. Then we had the "Cressington

Court" where a rate of loading of 403 tons per hour was achieved. The next was a bad one. After having got up to 500 odd tons per hour the rate of loading fell, on the "Jalaganga" to 368 tons on the time worked. That was a worse result than was obtained on the second ship loaded before Co-operative Bulk-handling took over the works.

If Co-operative Bulk-handling is solely responsible for the improvement it must be solely responsible for the retrogression. But I would not hold it responsible for either. The "Jalaganga" was a bad ship to load. She had bins between decks with the result that there was a lot of delay in stowing the wheat. Of the wheat loaded, 53 per cent. had to be trimmed. Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd. was in charge then. Why did it not maintain the improvement it had achieved with the "Riley?" It was because the rate of loading was determined by the stevedore and the men under him, and the rate at which they could take the wheat. Then there is the "Artemisia" where a worse result was obtained than in the case of the "Jalaganga." In this instance the rate of loading fell to 311 tons per hour. I will give the full figures here because she is the last ship on my list. The loading hours were 47; the actual time worked on the ship was 39 hours 14 minutes; time delayed was 16 hours 46 minutes.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Is this an official record?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes. These figures have not been gleaned from just anywhere; this is an official record. The delays due to the ship, were 16 hours 46 minutes, no delay on the gallery and no delay on the silo. The total amount of wheat shipped was 9,419 tons at an average on the total hours of 200 tons, or on the time actually worked, 311 tons. I will go back to the second and third ships loaded when the Government was in charge. On the "Hope Crest," the second ship loaded, a rate of loading of 375 tons per hour was obtained. That is 64 tons per hour better than what was obtained on the "Artemisia." On the "River Murray," the third ship loaded by the Government, the rate was 367.98 tons per hour as against 311 tons per hour on the "Artemisia."

Look at the falling off there! Yet the member for Irwin-Moore would have us believe that immediately Co-operative Bulk-handling took over there was a marked improvement which was maintained, due entirely to the company. He said that the company, for a very small expenditure, had introduced a device which enabled the wheat to be divided, and that that is what enabled the company to do such a wonderful job. I am creditably informed that this device was considered necessary by the engineer of the Public Works Department and the port supervisor of the Australian Wheat Board who had a discussion about it after loading the "Rocky Mountains Park"—the first vessel. I am advised reliably—and the Minister can check this by looking up his files—that the question of installing this dividing device was already in train before Co-operative Bulk-handling took over, and did the job, and forthwith claimed all the credit. Another improvement was introduced—a device known as the "elephant's trunk." I suppose Co-operative Bulk-handling also introduced this.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Elephants have had trunks for a long time.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It did nothing of the sort. One of the stevedores was responsible. The device has certainly assisted in the trimming of the wheat in the holds of the ship. So I repeat that the loading of this wheat and the controls of the loading are matters of fact, and not of imagination. The member for Irwin-Moore reckons that that is deliberately misinforming the people. Does one deliberately misinform people by giving the facts which one gets from the most authentic sources? Is that deliberately misleading the people? Is that setting out with a desire to misinform them? Does anyone who takes the trouble of going to the right place for information and, having obtained it, uses it in this Chamber, set out with a desire to misinform the people? A person who sets out with that desire does not look for the facts. He keeps as far from them as possible, and goes in for fairy stories. I got the facts, and that is why I am so resentful of what the member for Irwin-Moore has said. I gave members the facts I had obtained, though not in as much detail as I have given them tonight. I have discussed this matter with the stevedores, to see how far

they were responsible. They have told me that the wheat cannot be loaded any faster than they can take it and stow it.

The Chief Secretary: They cannot load the wheat any faster than they can get it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is where the Chief Secretary is wrong, because they can get the wheat at 600 tons per hour, but with the exception of the "Harmattan" they never approached anything like that. The stevedores and the men working under them are anxious to do the best and to get to the position where they can say to the galleries and the silo "Give us the wheat at your maximum capacity, because we can handle it." Until they can handle it, the rate of loading must be considerably less than it should be. It has these men worried when they fall back in their rate of loading owing to the difficult construction of ships, and they are concerned about it. They are concerned about the poor rate of loading on the "Artemisia" which was worse than that on the second ship loaded. It was due to the way the vessel was constructed—the number of bins she had, and where they were placed. Fifty Co-operative Bulk-handling Companies could not make any difference to that. It is therefore nonsense to say that the improvement achieved was due entirely to the efforts of Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd. The shipping galleries being capable of delivering wheat at 1,800 tons per hour, the achievement would be just as good if the Premier himself were in charge.

Mr. Marshall: I would not flatter him to that extent.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: When the stevedore finds that he cannot take the wheat at the rate at which it is coming out of the spout, he has to stop it, and so the plant is shut off. That is why all the hours of delay set down in this table occurred in the various ships. On the "Cressington Court," when first loaded, there was a delay of 21 hours 27 minutes; 21 hours 12 minutes on the ship, 15 minutes in the silo and none in the gallery. At the second time of loading there was 18 hours 20 minutes delay. All that delay was on the ship and none on the gallery or the silo, that ship being badly constructed for the taking of bulk wheat. Her rate of loading was 349 tons per hour on the actual time worked, which was much

less than the rate of loading on the second ship or the third. It can be plainly said that, due not to expertness on the part of Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd., but to the efforts of the stevedores and their men, some improvement was effected in the rate of loading wheat at Fremantle.

To clinch the argument I make this statement, which can be borne out by a perusal of the figures; four out of the 10 ships loaded by Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd., after that company took over, were at a rate of loading less than that of the second and third ships loaded when the galleries first came into operation. So 10 ships were loaded by the company, or under its control, and of those 10 ships four had a rate of loading less than that of the second and third ships loaded before the company took over. Where is the marked improvement for which Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd. was responsible? One ship more than half, and it so happened because the better ships to load came in that period! If the "Riley" or the "Harmattan" had come into the first four ships loaded, I would say that the whole four loaded by the Government would have had a better rate of loading than the ships loaded subsequently. It so happened that an easy ship like the "Riley," which could take so much free wheat, was the first to be loaded by the company, and so that fine result was obtained, but it fell right away when difficult ships had to be handled.

Although a rate of 436 tons per hour was achieved on the "Riley," the first ship loaded, only 311 tons per hour was achieved on the "Artemisia." So much for the marked improvement for which the company was solely responsible. Who is misinforming the people? Is it the member for North-East Fremantle, who quotes figures from the most reliable source—the official source—or is it the member for Irwin-Moore and Mr. Braine, who use other figures and do not quote the figures that are against them? I have quoted all the figures. Everyone knows that a good case can be made out if one discards all the evidence against one and quotes only that which is in one's favour. Anyone who does that in this Chamber misinforms the people, and that is what the member for Irwin-Moore does. When I give all the information I am supposed to be the one—in his view—who sets

out with a desire to misinform the people. I throw it back in his teeth, and tell him this; he is entitled to call me a liar at any time, if he can prove it, and in that case I will sit down and say nothing, but if he calls me a liar and cannot prove it, he will hear about it later on, and I promise him that at any time.

It has been his practice to sit over me in every speech I have made since he has been in this Chamber. He waits for me to speak and then says a lot of things that are not in accordance with fact. I have let it go, twice previously. He was a new member and I smiled, and told him "I can give it, and I can take it," but this was a bit over the fence. He cannot keep it up. This time, although he stood over me on the first speech, I had a comeback. It has taken me some time to get here, and I have had to be patient, but it has lost nothing in the keeping. I challenge the member for Irwin-Moore to build his own case on the figures. The figures I have quoted were supplied by the Australian Wheat Board, which is the wheat-handling authority for Australia. These figures have been taken from an official source. They were not obtained in any underhand method but in a proper fashion and used so that the people will not be misinformed but be properly informed. In conclusion, I say that the one who has misinformed the people on the handling of the wheat question has been the member for Irwin-Moore.

"MR. ACKLAND (Irwin-Moore) [8.11]: It was not my desire—

Mr. Hoar: Apologise!

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Are you going to withdraw?

Mr. ACKLAND: I am very sorry that I have to speak again on this matter.

Mr. Triat: So are we!

Mr. ACKLAND: I am not at all sorry for anything I have said, nor can I withdraw anything I previously stated. What I said was strictly in accordance with the facts. As to 14 ships mentioned by the member for North-East Fremantle, he picked out certain of them, but not all, as he has said. I maintain that the figures he quoted are not strictly accurate. The figures that I have given were not prepared for a speech in this Chamber.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Nor were mine.

Mr. ACKLAND: Every month I receive an agenda paper dealing with the whole of the month's operations, and when I spoke previously I took the figures regarding 13 ships that had been loaded since the construction of the galleries at Fremantle. I was called to order because I did not mention the 14th, which, it was suggested, would have been very detrimental to my case. I shall prove presently that it was not detrimental to my case. Certainly I did not mention the 14th ship, and the reason was that those figures were not at my disposal when I prepared mine. I got the particulars regarding that ship only last week. It was included in the agenda for that meeting. I have listened very attentively to nearly all the debates that have taken place in the House this session. I have been chided for hitting below the belt, not being fair, and with not pulling my punches.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: With a horseshoe in your glove.

Mr. ACKLAND: No, that charge was not levelled against me. Furthermore, I have listened attentively to the interjections and statements which have come from the Opposition side of the Chamber, and I notice that when anything approaching the same outspokenness has emanated from the Government side of the House, feelings immediately rise and some members seem hurt.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: What rot!

Mr. ACKLAND: There has been complaining and on one or two occasions there was nearly an uproar. I maintain I have said nothing worse than has been said on the other side, and I have only stated, and will continue to say, only those things that are in accordance with facts. In this instance I know that what I stated was correct.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: So you believe I am a liar?

Mr. ACKLAND: I was called a liar and a humbug when the member for North-East Fremantle tried to speak about this matter a few days ago. Though I am sorry that I have to deal with the subject again, I am very glad to be able to prove to the Chamber that those accusations cannot be truth-

fully applied to me. I will not deal with one of the subjects, but with four, and I shall traverse them as quickly as I can, because I appreciate that every other member is as anxious as I am that the session shall end. I shall first deal with the question of sites. I think it was the Leader of the Opposition who stated it was a lie when I said in this House that the Labour Government had refused sites to Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd. in the country districts throughout Western Australia. I shall read an extract from a letter dealing with that subject. It is dated the 3rd May, 1934, and was addressed to the then Premier, Hon. P. Collier. It reads—

My Dear Premier,

My directors have instructed me to confirm the requests placed before you at their interview today that your Government should lift the embargo against leasing of sites at railway sidings and ports for the purpose of erecting facilities for handling wheat.

In making this request, they desire to bring to your attention:—

(1) The company asks for no financial assistance or financial guarantee from your Government.

(2) The company asks for no expenditure by your Government or the Railway Department upon railway rollingstock.

(3) The company asks for no monopoly and makes no request for protection against competition.

(4) The company does not require that farmers should be forced to deliver wheat in bulk, but is ready to carry on its business while farmers have complete freedom to sell their wheat in bags if they so desire.

(5) The company is obliged to receive all wheat tendered to it if of shippable or millable quality, and on payment of the published charges to deliver such wheat to the person holding the scrip representing the wheat delivered. There is therefore complete freedom in trading.

(6) Charges incurred, or to be incurred, are stated upon the warehouse receipts and these are imposed against all wheat irrespective of the buyer or pool to whom the wheat is ultimately delivered. No rebates, secret or otherwise, are given.

So the letter goes on for ten clauses in all. I have read enough to show that the company had approached the Government of the day with a request to be granted sites so that it could carry on its business of handling wheat without any concessions whatever from anyone and in competition with the whole world. Next I shall quote an extract from the minutes of a meeting

of the directors on the 6th June, 1934. It reads—

Mr. Monger, chairman, and Mr. Thomson, joint secretary, reviewed the unsuccessful attempts that had been made to get in touch with the Government for the purpose of arranging for an extension of the bulk handling system throughout the State. It was pointed out that—

(1) Attempts had been made to interview the Premier since the middle of April.

(2) On the 3rd May, a letter was sent to the Premier and no reply has been received.

(3) An application for sites under date the 26th April—had been made to Railways and no reply received.

(4) On two occasions Mr. Willcock had been interviewed without result.

If I was not exactly called a liar straight-out, there was that suggestion when I said that sites had been refused us and it was indicated that that was not the case. Now I should like to deal briefly with the hospital silos. This is a point respecting which the Leader of the Opposition is far more interested and knows much more about than does the member for North-East Fremantle. It deals with an application made by the co-operative company to handle the silos at Fremantle when they were built by the Commonwealth Government. The hospital silo was built against the advice, not only of the company, but also of the Western Australian representatives on the Wheat Board. I should like to read an extract from a telegram from Co-operative Bulk-handling to the then Premier, Hon. F. J. S. Wise, at Canberra, dated the 7th February, 1944, as follows:—

Regarding hospital elevator at Fremantle, we have been informed by the Australian Wheat Board that, contrary to established practice, they propose to operate this unit exclusively themselves. Established practice would be for Co-operative Bulk Handling to operate under the direction of Australian Wheat Board. When the Australian Wheat Board were asked their reason for this proposed departure from the principle laid down, they informed us that our State Government insisted that either the Australian Wheat Board should exclusively operate the unit or it should be operated by Western Australian Government servants to the exclusion of Co-operative Bulk Handling.

On the 10th May, 1944, a letter was written by the general manager of the Australian Wheat Board, Melbourne, to the manager of Co-operative Bulk-handling, Perth, from which I extract the following:—

Another matter is the hospital bin. You were going to send me a wire as to whether Mr. Wise would withdraw the instruction I received through Canberra that if the board did not operate the silo itself, it must allow the State Government to do so. As time is going on and I am very dissatisfied with the lack of engineering supervision, I feel I must either recommend to my board to appoint an engineer whom we can control completely to look after the business or to hand the operation over to you so that the engineering ability of Mr. Stephenson will be brought in to play. I therefore propose to request the board at its meeting this week to hand the silos over to you and to ask the State Government to approve of that course. This, I hope, will bring the matter to a head, and if Mr. Wise will give his approval, I shall be very pleased.

Then I have an extract from a letter by the general manager of the Australian Wheat Board to the manager of Co-operative Bulk-handling, dated 12th May, 1944, as follows:—

I have put up to my board that your company should handle the wheat in the fumigating silo—

otherwise, the hospital silo—

and the board has approved and instructed me to write to Mr. Wise asking for the confirmation of the State Government to this course. I have asked Mr. Wise to let us have a reply urgently.

I could go on quoting other extracts all dealing with the same matter. I say once more that the past Government in this State has done all in its power to interfere with the reasonable working of the company. Under the Co-operative Bulk Handling Act, the company controls the wheat from the farmer's truck into the ship's hold. While the company has that responsibility—a responsibility thrown upon it—and must deliver the whole of the wheat received less one-half of one per cent., I say it was essential, and this Government realised it was essential, that the installation should be handed over to the company. Now I wish to pass to the next item and that is a statement made by the member for North-East Fremantle with reference to the maintenance of the facilities which were owned by the Australian Wheat Board or the Commonwealth Government. This is an extract—

The Australian Wheat Board, having previously found it necessary to take certain work from Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd., is not anxious that the company should be charged with the responsibility of maintaining any of its assets. The Minister knows it is a fact that Co-operative Bulk Handling did at one time have the maintenance of the

assets of the Australian Wheat Board, but the company made such a poor fist of it that the Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture, on the recommendation of the manager of the Australian Wheat Board in this State, took away from the company the maintenance of those installations. One can well imagine that the Commonwealth is not anxious to permit the company to get into the position in which it was previously. This makes a very sad story so far as this State is concerned.

I maintain that there is not any substance of truth in that statement.

Point of Order.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: On a point of order! The hon. member said there is not any substance of truth in the statement I made. That, in effect, is calling the person who made that statement a liar. As the statement is true in principle, although some of the details may not be quite right, and as the maintenance of certain works of the Australian Wheat Board was taken away from Co-operative Bulk-handling, Ltd. and is a fact, I object to the statement of the hon. member and ask that it be withdrawn.

The Chairman: The hon. member for North-East Fremantle objects to that statement and asks that it be withdrawn.

Mr. Ackland: Is it your desire, Mr. Chairman, that it should be withdrawn, and do you rule that it should be withdrawn?

The Chairman: Under our Standing Orders, if a member takes exception to a statement, and I think that interpretation can be placed upon the point raised by the member for North-East Fremantle, I ask the member for Irwin-Moore to withdraw.

Mr. Ackland: In that case I will withdraw the statement, but I wish I had known the Standing Orders better a few nights ago when I was far more definitely called a liar. I was under the impression that, if it was not said straight out, I could not object. However, I withdraw the statement if to do so it is in accordance with the Standing Orders.

The Chairman: The hon. member may proceed.

Committee Resumed.

Mr. ACKLAND: I shall proceed to read from the matter I have in front of me. Here is an extract from the minutes of a meeting of Co-operative Bulk-handling, Ltd., held on the 1st June, 1944, dealing with buying

and maintenance. I have already said that the company had nothing whatever to do with the silos at Fremantle until such time as the present Government took office. I think I have already said that we built several large bins to hold bulk wheat when there was a shortage of shipping during the war period. We built those bins at a price much below the estimate. We did that for the Government, and I think I am right in stating that those bins were built at approximately 1d. per bushel. Today the cost would be 10d. per bushel to hold that wheat in bags. I have already said that we saved the Commonwealth Government nearly double the money that it cost to erect those installations. Some of them have already been dismantled and sold, and the others will be sold in course of time. It was anticipated that the company should do the maintenance work on those bulk bins. The extract reads:—

Buying and Maintenance. A statement setting out the history of what has taken place, in which was included copies of correspondence to and from Sir Clive McPherson, Mr. Teasdale, Mr. Thomson and Mr. Fethers, also memos to the manager from Mr. Stephenson was considered. It was felt that the Australian Wheat Board was showing entire lack of appreciation of the efforts made by the company to help, and it was unanimously resolved, that in view of the alteration without consultation of a practice established at the commencement of the company's relations with the Australian Wheat Board and continued throughout, and in view of the dissatisfaction of the company's engineer with the treatment he has been receiving and the difficulties placed in his way in attempting to give effective maintenance, the Australian Wheat Board be informed that Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd., feels bound to relinquish all maintenance at and for machinery at ports, depots and terminals unless these difficulties can be satisfactorily removed. The board also desired it to be placed on record that it cannot see any difficulty whatever in supplying such details as will provide a method of the Australian Wheat Board's securing a satisfactory process of accountancy.

The following is an extract from a letter forwarded to the State Superintendent of the Australian Wheat Board by the manager of Co-operative Bulk-handling, dated the 3rd June, 1944:—

In reply I regret to have to inform you that at the last meeting of my board it was unanimously resolved that, in view of the alteration without consultation of a practice established at the commencement of the company's relations with the Australian Wheat Board, and continued throughout, and in view of the dissatisfaction of the company's engineer with the treatment he has been receiving and the

difficulties placed in his way in attempting to give effective maintenance, the Australian Wheat Board be informed that Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd., feels bound to relinquish all maintenance at and for machinery at ports, depots and terminals unless these difficulties can be satisfactorily removed.

My board also desires it to be placed on record that it cannot see any difficulty whatever in supplying such details as will provide a method of the Australian Wheat Board's securing a satisfactory process of accountability.

I must be careful again.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Be careful, as long as you stick to the truth.

Mr. ACKLAND: I will stick to the truth. The Australian Wheat Board never took away the maintenance from the local company. The company was not prepared to put up with the delays in obtaining materials that were necessary to do the maintenance work. Unless they could continue to do the work as cheaply as it had been done when the company was in control, it was not prepared to carry out the maintenance. The refusal was by the company and not, as has been stated so definitely, by the Australian Wheat Board. I do not consider it necessary for me to deal extensively with the loading programme. I followed very closely the figures that were given by the member for North-East Fremantle. They do vary somewhat from those which are the official figures of the company, which has the weighing of the wheat, which is responsible for the delivery of the wheat and which has to keep a record of the hours worked. I am speaking entirely of the method adopted by Co-operative Bulk-handling and its engineer, Mr. Allan Stephenson, who is a very clever engineer.

The stoppages that occurred in the early stages of loading the ships were not due so much to trimming as to the belts. I have already said that whereas one belt comes from the hospital silo, two belts, of a lesser capacity than the one from the hospital silo, are working in the gantry which belongs to the Western Australian Government. The trouble was caused because these two belts were not capable of dividing the flow of wheat. In a ship, wheat only has a certain angle of repose. Until the wheat reaches the height at which that angle cannot operate any longer, 1,000 or 2,000 tons can be put into the ship per

hour. That would be the responsibility of the people working in the gantry and not the ship. It is only as the ship gets full that it becomes necessary to push the wheat against the sides, because the angle of repose is only 28 to 30 degrees, not 45 degrees, as one would naturally expect. It is then necessary for the trimmers to come into operation, but up till then the flow of the wheat can be anything.

The limiting factor—the trimming—arose because there was no consultation between the Government, the State and the company. The Commonwealth has a gallery which carries wheat at 600 tons an hour maximum; the State's carrying capacity was 900 tons—450 tons on two conveyors—at a maximum. When it became necessary to trim the ship, the company owned two trimmers which they could use. These were in the emergency installation, which was only a converted bagged-wheat shed at Fremantle. Both trimmers have a capacity of 150 tons per hour. That meant that the wheat had to be slowed down to the capacity of the trimmers. We are building bigger ones which will be in conformity with the rest of the loading of the ship. At the present time, the maximum loading, when trimming, is 300 tons. The ship which was loaded last—the vessel which I would not quote when I presented my figures on the last occasion—is No. 10 loaded by the company. I have a plan of the ship which is available for inspection by members. Usually, there are five bunkers or holds in a ship for loading wheat. In this particular ship there were ten. The member for North-East Fremantle is correct when he said that the loading of the ship was done under the instructions of her captain. The company was told to load the fore-end of the ship first, so that the propeller could be forced out of the water in order to make an examination for some repairs. During that period the ship was loaded at a very slow rate.

Mr. Fox: That would not interfere with the rate of loading.

Mr. ACKLAND: It certainly did. One hold of a ship is never loaded at a time, but two. It is my intention to issue an invitation to all the members of this Chamber to inspect a ship the next time one is being loaded at Fremantle. They will then be

able to inspect the whole set-up and ascertain for themselves that what I have said is true. I will take them from the hospital silo to the Government silo and down the chute into the ship, if they so wish. They will see that there is no synchronisation of any of the three installations. I will show them how the engineers of the Western Australian Government have wasted considerable money and left undone some very necessary work. They put up an installation which was unnecessary for Fremantle. It has not even a small lift for taking supplies of materials up into the gantry, and members know how high it is.

A small travelling crane is badly needed, so that when the wheat has been trimmed in one hold, the trimmer can be drawn up along the top and dropped into the next hold. At present, it is necessary to use the ship's hoist. The trimmer only weighs a few cwt. It has to be taken out of one hold, put on the wharf, then on to a truck and then taken to the next hold. It then has to be hoisted up again and the whole thing has to be put into the next hold. What I have outlined could have been done cheaply at the time the installation was put in. At present there is no method whatever of taking up the things which are so necessary in the galleries. After the holidays, when the next ship is being loaded, I will arrange for any members who are sufficiently interested to inspect the operation. I will also arrange for the necessary transport.

I am extremely sorry I have taken up so much time on this matter. There is only one thing that has taken up more time, and that is the jolly old gas at Fremantle! I have no wish to get into disagreement with any member of this Chamber but I am very proud indeed of our method of handling wheat, which is the most wonderful in the world. It is unorthodox and has proved a great success. Unlike the position in New South Wales, where the installation cost ten times as much, there will not be one bushel that will not be handled for the farmers by the company in this State. There has not been any delay in the past. Our installation cost some £500,000 whereas that in New South Wales cost £5,000,000. It is anticipated that 25,000,000 bushels of New South Wales wheat will be put on the bare ground this year because there is nowhere else to

put it. They have borrowed a gang of our men to show them how to make emergency silos. We have done exactly the same for Victoria. The wheat of Australia could not have been handled without the ingenuity of this company during the war years. Recently we had a visit from the South Australian Public Works Committee which, after it had travelled through this country, went back to its Government and reported that our wheat handling was efficient, economic and elastic, and advocated that the South Australian Government should install something similar in that State.

MR. FOX (South Fremantle) [8.42]: I know it is a very late hour of the session at which to make speeches, and I would not have had anything to say except for the most ungenerous speech made by the member for Irwin-Moore a few weeks ago and repeated tonight. He stated repeatedly that the Labour Party had never done anything for the farmers. The member for Irwin-Moore may have a good knowledge of growing wheat—that is, of putting wheat in the ground, and taking it off, and transporting it to the coast to be loaded in ships—but evidently he knows very little of the early struggles of the farmers in their attempt to find a cheaper way of handling their harvest. Alternatively, his bias against the Labour Party is in line with that of the Tories in St. George's-terrace.

Mr. Reynolds: And it is most pronounced.

Mr. FOX: Help has been given to the farmers by the Labour Party, free from political motives. The Labour Party believes in affording that help irrespective of whether it is likely to do injury to its own people from the standpoint of a lesser amount of work offering. That is just the opposite to the point of view held by the Party which the member for Irwin-Moore represents. I have not been able to understand the frenzied support of these anti-social institutions by the farmers during the last few weeks. I have had some information from the farmers themselves. In 1930 and 1931, they were in a most parlous position. The banks had a stranglehold on them and they could not call their souls their own.

Mr. Leslie: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, may I inquire what part of the

Estimates the member for South Fremantle is discussing?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: He is discussing the Loan Estimates generally.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I remind members that the debate is on the first item of the General Loan Estimates, and the field is fairly wide. But I hope that members will not abuse the latitude I allow.

Mr. FOX: As I was saying, about 1930 or 1931 the farmers were in a very parlous plight. The banks had a stranglehold on them. I cannot understand the love that they have for the private banks at this particular time. It may be that they have achieved a better financial position and, as Shakespeare has said, when one gets on the first rung one looks to the top and scorns the base ways by which one ascended. At that time, three representatives of the wheat-growers came to the Fremantle wharf and invited the executive members of the Lumpers' Union to discuss ways and means of handling the harvest at a lesser cost.

Mr. Ackland: Who were they?

Mr. FOX: They were Mr. Boyle, Mr. Powell and Mr. Campbell. Mr. Boyle was one of the greatest fighters for the wheat-growers in this Parliament. Those men came to see us and asked us to suggest ways and means of cheapening handling at the port. We pointed out that there were seven or eight agents at that time, representing John Darling, Westralian Farmers, Bunge's, and several more whose names I have forgotten. All of them had their own staffs. Wheat used to come in 50 to 60 truckloads to one firm, which stacked it or sent it to the ship, whichever was required. Then another 80 or 90 trucks would arrive, and another firm would take charge; and so on. That was what was building up the cost against the farmers. On top of that, the stevedores were getting as much pay as the lumpers. The executive of the union at that time told the wheatgrowers that they were prepared to do all the handling of wheat at the port at the cost of the lumpers' wages. That was a generous offer.

Mr. Mann: What were their wages?

Mr. FOX: What does it matter? They had to pay, in addition to the wages, for the services of the various parasites that the wheatgrowers were carrying at that

time. Unfortunately, the wheatgrowers did not have any say in the disposal of their harvest, and nothing came of the suggestion. Those three delegates attended a meeting of 1,400 men, and those men pledged themselves to do all they could to assist the wheatgrowers in lessening the cost of handling wheat at the port. But they did not have any say in the handling of the wheat, and matters continued as they were.

Mr. Hoar: Who had the say in the wheat, the banks?

Mr. FOX: The banks and the merchants. When bagged-wheat is stacked in a shed for a considerable time, every bag gains about 4 or 5 lb. in weight. I do not know who got that rake-off. I suppose the farmer was paid on the weight at the siding. I have seen thousands of bags weighed in the sheds at Fremantle which have gone from 2 to 5 lbs. more than the weight shown on the bag. At that time we were prepared to help the farmers all we could. A Labour Government also brought in bulk-handling, and it was a brave action on its part. It meant about £30,000 less in lumpers' wages at Fremantle. The Government was prepared to allow that to help the farmers. We were perturbed at the introduction of bulk-handling and carried a resolution that we would not handle the wheat unless something was done for the men displaced. At the same time, we realised that machinery must take the place of arduous physical labour so as to make work easier for the men on the job.

The Party to which the member for Irwin-Moore belongs was in power in Federal politics for about 30 years, but it never did anything for the farmers. When Mr. Boyle was member for Avon in this Chamber he said that the farmers had been for years fighting for better conditions. Someone asked him whom they had been fighting, and he sat down because if he had answered truthfully he would have had to say, "The Country Party in the Commonwealth Parliament." I am not much concerned about the loading of bulk wheat because it is a purely mechanical matter. I do not think the Bulk-handling Company is entitled to any credit for the improvement in the machines. When the wheat reaches a certain height in the ship, the rate of loading has to be reduced to about 200 tons an hour.

When the hon. member was speaking the other night he said he did not see why all wheat should not be loaded at Fremantle just as the oil companies discharge the oil at that port. There is no analogy. All the oil companies do is to send a couple of engineers or fitters to screw the tap on, and the oil is pumped over to the oil stores. The wheat boats have to be properly fitted and the wheat trimmed, and shore men have to build up the structures necessary for the loading. Over the years the Harbour Trust, which is a State instrumentality, had acquired thousands of pounds worth of machinery in the way of cranes, gantreys etc., for the loading of bagged-wheat and it had to be scrapped when the Government handed the installation over to Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd. In the interests of industrial peace there should be only one authority on the Fremantle wharf—the Fremantle Harbour Trust. If the farmers had done the correct thing at the beginning they would have arranged for the railways to handle the wheat in the country and the Harbour Trust at the port.

The Chief Secretary: And the farmer pays.

Mr. FOX: The Chief Secretary knows as much about it as he does about law.

Mr. Marshall: That is nothing.

Mr. FOX: The Fremantle Harbour Trust should have done the stevedoring, but the Liberal Party would not like that. The members of the Liberal Party would not like to see their friends being done out of their rake-off. If that happened there would be a split in the Party.

The Premier: How you wish that was true.

Mr. FOX: The proper way is for the farmers to ship the wheat and the lumpers to do the stevedoring. Now that bulk-handling has come in, that argument may not be of as much value as it was when we had bagged-wheat because then we took, on occasions, as long as a month to load a ship. The member for Irwin-Moore should be a little more generous and realise that he will get more co-operation from the workers handling the harvest than from those opposed to us, because they are only concerned with what they can get out of the business for themselves. All the lumpers get is their wages. The hon. mem-

ber made a jibe at the Commonwealth Government for paying appearance money to the lumpers. Well, for years lumpers used to attend the pick-up, sometimes twice a day, without getting a job.

Mr. Ackland: It was not a jibe but a comparison.

Mr. FOX: There ought not to be any comparison, because the farmers get a subsidy on wheat from the Commonwealth Government—a Labour Government.

Mr. Ackland: We do not get a subsidy on wheat.

Mr. FOX: The farmers get a subsidy for carrying super and other commodities, and also from the Fremantle Harbour Trust because they pay no port charges.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [8.58]: The member for South Fremantle has said how the C.L.U. tried to do the farmers a good turn by loading their wheat in a proper manner, but they preferred to patronise the stevedores. I want to ask the Premier this question: What is the argument between the Government and Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd., regarding the £100,000 worth of property which has been handed over, but which rightly belongs to the people? If it has been handed over free of charge to the Government's political friends it is a politically dishonest action! The Minister told me the other night that agreement had not been reached. All I can say is that it is a rather funny way of doing business to hand over £100,000 worth of machinery to political friends without agreement. I hope, when the Premier replies, he will let members know what has happened and what is to be the charge, if any, to Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [9.1]: A few nights ago the member for Nedlands painted a very dismal picture of conditions in the mining industry. He left a most depressing atmosphere in this Chamber. I feel that he was given much more prominence in "The West Australian" than any Goldfields member has ever been given, and he may therefore have created the same feeling of depression among the people of the State. He gave members to understand that our larger mining companies were working on the barest possible margin of profit, and that

some of them were not even meeting working costs. He implied that, generally, unless some relief were given to the industry there was every possibility of a serious collapse. On the day on which the hon. member painted such a gloomy picture—or on the following day—I found in the mining column of "The West Australian" some news that heartened me considerably as to the prospects of the industry in this State. It was so good that I thought I would have it placed permanently on record in "Hansard." It reads as follows:—

New Shares—A Spectacular Response—

Melbourne, December 16.—There was a spectacular public response to the opening today of lists for shares in New Coolgardie Gold Mines, N.L. The company, which is sponsored by Western Mining Corporation, offered 320,000 10s. shares and within an hour applications over the counter exceeded the shares available. It was the biggest gold float since the war. There will be a large oversubscription and a ballot may be necessary to decide the allotments. The manager (Mr. L. Edwards) said yesterday that listing of the applications had already begun and it was hoped that share allotments would be notified before the end of the year.

Mr. Kelly: That is only a speculator's interest. The mine might not produce one ounce of gold.

Mr. STYANTS: It will be generally conceded that in 99 cases out of 100 those who invest money in the floating of mining ventures do it as a speculation. It could be regarded as one of the most risky possible speculations, and in many cases is regarded as a pure gamble. From time to time we hear of gambling in gold shares on the stock market. I wish to impress on members that those who so readily subscribed for the 320,000 10s. shares were probably not the average unsophisticated man in the street. They were hardheads, in most instances probably associated with goldmining propositions. They would know well enough what was the margin of profit in goldmining, and if it was as represented by the member for Nedlands, that even those companies that were well developed, at costs below those operating today, were in a parlous financial condition, I doubt whether they would subscribe so readily. In goldmining matters there are people known as "bulls" and "bears." When a company has some shares to sell it may set about, in devious and sometimes questionable ways, boosting the shares before the public. Some

rich development is reported and gold—not necessarily from the particular mine, though reputed to come from it—is exhibited in the window of some shop. The newspapers, perhaps all over the Commonwealth, are full of the rosy prospects of the proposition concerned, with the result that the shares rise sharply in value. Those holding the shares get rid of them, and then the real condition of the mine is revealed, and a slump takes place.

On the other hand, if some rich development is found, the opposite process takes place. Those who are not of considerable financial strength, realising that calls are likely to be made on the shares they hold, sell them at a deflated cost. Then the true position of the mine is revealed and again there is an inflation in the price of the shares, with consequent profit to those who bought them at a low figure. The passage I quoted from "The West Australian" reveals that those closely associated with goldmining are not pessimistic, and do not believe that the condition of the industry—that is the margin between working costs and the price received in Australia for the gold produced—is as critical as was outlined in this Chamber by the member for Nedlands. I believe the hon. member said what he did with the best intentions, and on information supplied to him by the Chamber of Mines in Kalgoortie.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth—[9.8]): I understand that the member for Fremantle inquired about the agreement. The draft agreement was inspected by me last week. It had been circulated among the parties, and I told the law officer dealing with it that the Government desired it to be completed as early as possible. I do not know the exact position at the moment, but I think it should be completed within the next two or three days. If there are any other details that the hon. member would like to know, I will answer them to the best of my ability.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—Railways and Tramways, £707,964; Electricity Supply, £2,113,961; Harbours and Rivers, £160,200; Water Supply and Sewerage, £1,141,138; Development of Goldfields and Mineral Resources, £185,200;

Development of Agriculture, etc., £152,300; Roads and Bridges, Public Buildings, etc., £767,450—agreed to.

Vote—Sundries, £268,150:

Item. Bulk-handling of Wheat, provision of facilities at Fremantle, £5,000.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: With regard to the Attorney General's answer to the question put to him, it seems a funny way of doing business to allow people to take over £100,000 worth of machinery and materials without any agreement, and then to fix the agreement later. What would have been said if the previous Government had handed over all the gear and everything on the wharves to the Fremantle Lumpers' Union and told that organisation that an agreement would be fixed up some day? Here, however, the Government has handed over an undertaking to its political friends and the agreement, which I suppose will be a favourable one with perhaps small interest charges, is to be fixed up and will be completed while Parliament is in recess. I thought the present Government would have been more businesslike than to conduct negotiations along those lines.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There is nothing very alarming about the matter because the Government is dealing with a corporation that is operating under an Act of Parliament and is of such standing that in 1935, under an Act of Parliament, it was entrusted with the responsibility of erecting installations costing many hundreds of thousands of pounds for the purpose of handling the greater part of the State's wheat harvest. As it will be responsible for handling almost the whole of a very large harvest that, fortunately, we are to reap this year, it was thought desirable that, as it was to take over the installation, it should not be in a position to say that it had assumed control so late in the day that it was unable to get the plant into proper working order for the purpose of handling the crop.

As the company is operating under an Act of Parliament with the responsibility of transporting the wheat from the sidings to ships' holds, and is a concern of undoubted financial standing and ability, and seeing that the company will commence on the basis that it will accept the agreement

that the Government considers will fully safeguard the interests of the State, the hon. member need have no fears. The company is in the position of being a tenant at will and if it is not prepared to sign the agreement, its tenancy can be terminated. The Government will see that the company is liable to pay a fair price for the use of the silo. I understand that the agreement will be signed at any time now and members can be fully assured that the interests of the State cannot possibly be prejudiced.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I hope I shall not detain the Committee for more than a few minutes. I rise to speak in direct refutation of statements made by the member for Irwin-Moore. The time to take exception to misleading and inaccurate statements is when they are made. The member for Irwin-Moore had to go back in his researches in connection with the refusal of some Government instrumentality with regard to the sites to 1934. He read extracts from letters sent to the Government of the day. That attitude and practice of the member for Irwin-Moore proved nothing except to disprove his own case, for the reason that it was not until the 25th January, 1935, that a Royal Commission was appointed in this State to inquire into the operations of bulk-handling in Western Australia. It was not until 1935 that a Bill was introduced and afterwards became an Act to control the operations of Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd. in Western Australia.

As the understudy of the then Minister for Lands, I know something of the origin and development of the bulk-handling legislation that is now in existence. Under the authority of the Act of 1935, it was necessary for Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd. to apply for sidings in different parts of the State, quite a different matter from the obligations prior to the statutory control in this State, and which, as referred to by the hon. member at the time, had nothing to do with the present situation at all. The only other point in connection with his statement with which I shall deal, had reference to my attitude towards the hospital silo. I make no apology, here or anywhere, respecting my attitude towards the ownership or control of what is known as the hospital silo. If we go back to the very beginning of that undertaking, we find it has a very sinister story. It is true that

work did commence on the site on which the silo stands before those engaged in the undertaking had any right or title to the land. It is true that the silo was finished after objections had continuously been made by the State Government.

It is true, also, that the policy of the Government to which I belonged was that there could be, in no circumstances, a division of labour on the waterfront and that no company, co-operative or otherwise, should have the statutory right to employ men in an area under the control of the Fremantle Harbour Trust. That is where the Government stood, with no apologies to anyone. It is quite wrong and untruthful to say that I, at any stage of my administrative responsibilities and background, had anything but a friendly attitude towards Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd. I had consultations with those in charge of the undertaking on very many matters in connection with the allocation of authorities for constructing bins at sidings.

In connection with the handing over to the company in person, after piloting the necessary legislation through Parliament, on matters which gave them the right to hand the company to farmer control, I still have personal letters from the company in appreciation of my attitude and actions. I make no apology at all on the point of its being a matter of Government policy, as it would be again, that there should not be divided control on the waterfront because that structure, with its sinister beginning, ultimately came under control of Co-operative Bulk-handling, Ltd.

If the member for Irwin-Moore is to remain in this Chamber as one to be respected and one whose word is to be accepted, he will have to bear in mind that no member can successfully handle a brief for any interest or entity all the time. He must be big enough to take a view that is State-wide; he must be big enough to see the other fellow's point of view, and if he ever gets administrative responsibility of the magnitude that State Government demands, he will find that the only way to succeed in assessing any position is to have his judgment shorn of all bias and prejudice so that he may see the facts clearly and not be swayed by a brief from any Party.

That is the only attitude for any public man to adopt, whether his position be high or lowly. It is just as well at this late hour to have clarified my attitude on a question of Government policy, not because it affects Co-operative Bulk-handling, which has done a great job in Western Australia, but because it should be the right of Government to control any interest, undertaking or responsibility within its own boundaries, especially on the waterfront.

Vote put and passed.

This concluded the Loan Estimates for the year.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

BILL—LOAN, £4,147,000.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 3rd December. Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Power to raise money for certain purposes:

The CHAIRMAN: Progress reported after Clause 1 had been agreed to.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 3 to 6, Schedules, Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

Sitting suspended from 9.26 to 10.30 p.m.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

1, Appropriation.

2, Loan, £4,147,000.

Without amendment.

COMPLIMENTARY REMARKS.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington) [10.30]: Mr. Speaker, we have reached the conclusion of the business for the session, and I would like to take this opportunity to express to you, to

the Chairman of Committees and the Deputy Chairmen of Committees our thanks for the capable manner in which you have conducted that business. I would also like to convey to you our best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. There are, I think, three of our members who have been absent from the House through illness, and I am sure the sincere wish of all of us is that they will be restored to good health early in the New Year. I also wish to express my thanks to the officers of the House, and when I say the officers I include the household staff, "Hansard" and the Press. We have undoubtedly been well served by all the officials in this House, and I am glad to have this opportunity to express thanks to them and appreciation of the splendid and efficient service they have rendered. I wish them all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

I want especially to thank my colleagues on the front bench for their very loyal co-operation since we took office, and their generous support to me on all occasions. I am pleased indeed to be able to say publicly that I much appreciate the services and co-operation they have given to me since I assumed this high office. I am much appreciative of the help and advice I have received from the Leader of the Opposition. I know that it is the duty of the Leader of the Opposition to criticise the Government when he thinks it should be criticised, and one can not take any exception to that. I think the Leader of the Opposition has done his job in that direction. But he has had a very long Ministerial experience spread over very important years, and has been very generous to me in regard to certain advice he has tendered, which I very much appreciate. With all sincerity I wish the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader and all members of the Opposition a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

To the supporters of the Government I want to express appreciation also for the support they have given to me and the Government during the past few months. I think they have been most attentive to their duties, and I wish them a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. I do not think I have omitted to mention anyone. Somebody has said, "The Independents." Of

course, to them, too, I convey the same good wishes and the same good feelings. Despite the fact that we have political differences, sometimes strong political differences, our House has been noted for many years for the good feeling and fellowship which exist between members, and I feel that in breaking up this session we will all go away with a kindly spirit towards one another from the personal aspect.

I cannot let this occasion pass without referring to the fact that Mr. Steere, the Clerk of the Assembly, is retiring after a service of 46 years. I notice that Mr. Steere first entered the service of Parliament in 1902. He came as a junior clerk and rose to the highest position in the House in his particular branch. During his time here, he has filled other posts, including that of Librarian, secretary of the House Committee and secretary of the Joint Printing Committee. Upon the creation of the local branch of the Empire Parliamentary Association in 1925 he was appointed secretary, and has held that office ever since. In doing that, I think he has established an Australian record. In the course of nearly 46 years' service, he has seen many changes in this House. In that time, 287 members have come and gone; and today, of the 80 members in both Houses of Parliament, there is but one who was in the Legislature when Mr. Steere first came here—that is the Hon. W. D. Johnson.

Mr. Steere has served under every Speaker since responsible government, and that in itself is a record. On behalf of all of us, I want to express to him for the service he has rendered and the courtesy he has always shown to us the greatest appreciation. It would be interesting if we could hear from him just what he thinks of Parliament. He has listened to very many speeches—plenty of them, no doubt, constructive. Others he may have a different opinion about! He has listened to them and it has always struck me that he was interested. There is no need for me to say anything more, but I know that every member supports me when I say that not only do we wish him a merry Christmas and a happy New Year but that we also hope he will be blessed with good health and happiness for the rest of his life.

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gascoyne) [10.37]: I join with the Premier in extending to you, Sir, the compliments of the season and the wish that you and your family will enjoy not only the festive season but the realisation of all your anticipations for 1948. To the Clerk of the Assembly and the Clerk Assistant, and to the Clerk of Records and his assistant, those on this side of the House join in extending sincere thanks for the assistance they have given to us not only when Parliament has sat but throughout the whole year. We are very fortunate indeed to have officers of their calibre and capacity who show, without any seeking, courtesy and assistance on all occasions, whether the problems of members are light or heavy. We are indeed indebted to them and extend to them every good wish for the festive season. To the "Hansard" staff and those who helped the "Hansard" staff, we are indeed very grateful. They have given to us the service for which "Hansard" has become noted. They have vied with the Chairman of Committees in a display of patience on all occasions.

Of the Chairman of Committees and his assistants I would like to make special mention. Those of us who have been here for a few years realise that the Chairman got off to a very good start. His work this session has been marked with patience and tolerance, and firmness, where necessary. We are indeed fortunate in our Chairman of Committees and those associated with him, who have rendered excellent service to the House. I will not comment on the business of the House and what it has achieved, but would say to the Premier and all associated with him that we sincerely wish them every happiness during the Christmas season and every prosperity that they might wish for themselves in 1948. I desire publicly to express and record my appreciation of the loyalty and kindness I have received from those who sit on this side of the House. No leader of any Party could have received more kindly, ready and generous assistance on all occasions than I have received from those associated with me. I extend to them and their families my best wishes for the festive season.

The Premier has mentioned the service rendered to the Parliament and to the community by Mr. Steere. Mr. Steere has been not only Clerk of Parliament but a personal

friend of all who have entered this Chamber in my time, and for many years before that. No matter what help was requested of him, he readily gave it. With the Premier, I hope that Mr. Steere may enjoy all those things that have been wished for him. The note touched on by the Premier is one to which all of us should give earnest consideration, at all times. This House has set a standard equal to that of any section of the Parliamentary institution in the British Empire. We have inherited it, and must guard it jealously. I hope nothing ever happens in this Chamber in our time to spoil the record and the example this Parliament has set in the past. To those associated with us and to all present I extend my wishes for a happy festive season and prosperous New Year.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

(Hon. A. F. Watts—Katanning) [10.45]: I join wholeheartedly in the remarks of the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in extending good wishes to all those they mentioned. Especially do I extend my good wishes to those whom I have the honour to lead in this House and who have in past years been of such great assistance to me. I extend every good wish to the Premier, a colleague with whom it has been a great pleasure to work. I was Leader of the Opposition in this House for approximately four and a half years, and during that time I had occasion to come more closely into contact with Mr. Steere than I have in recent months. No better wishes can be extended to any man than those I extend to him upon his impending retirement.

No greater example could be set by anyone following the profession chosen by Mr. Steere than that which he has set. He has been courteous, obliging and has extended to all the benefits of his knowledge, wisdom and experience. He will leave this House greatly regretted, but covered with years and honour. I believe there is every prospect that the Clerk Assistant will succeed to Mr. Steere's position, and if that be so I feel that he will be a worthy successor, as there have been indications on many occasions that the mantle of Elijah will not be very far away when Elisha takes his place.

MR. READ (Victoria Park) [10.47]: On behalf of the member for Maylands, who is unavoidably absent, and myself, I extend to all the season's greetings. When we were offering the season's greetings at this time last year we realised that we would have to face the electors in a general election, and that it was possible that some of us might be uttering our swan songs. On this occasion we have not that anxiety, and so the feeling is more festive. Of course, there were some casualties, and the five Independents were reduced to two in number, with consequently greater responsibility, which we have endeavoured to carry. To the several members who have been ill, I would extend the season's greetings and the hope that when we meet again they may be well and once more among us. To the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition, to one and all, I sincerely extend my wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

MR. SPEAKER: I have to thank the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Minister for Education and the member for Victoria Park for the very kind festive remarks tendered to me personally and to all those associated with me in the conduct of the House. I refer, of course, to the Chairman of Committees, the Deputy Chairmen of Committees, the "Hansard" reporters, the officials of the House and the Press. I would include particularly my appreciation of the return of Geoff Burgoyne to liven up our publicity with the people once more. I feel, in common with all those who have spoken, a deep sense of loss in the impending retirement of Mr. Steere. Coming to my present position as I did, it seemed

strange to me as I had not even been Chairman of Committees, but merely mayor of a town, the responsibilities attaching to which are quite different from those associated with the Speakership. In the circumstances, I needed a tremendous lot of assistance, not only from members, but from the Clerks and the other officers.

I again express my sincere appreciation of the generosity of members in overlooking my short-comings since I have been in the Chair. With regard to these functions at the end of a session, it has always seemed a little strange to me to wish each other the compliments of the season, because when that is done I always get a bit worried and have a feeling that I might liken to a hang-over. I do not refer to that experience on the part of a roué, because we have very pleasant recollections. I feel, however, that with the extending of the festive wishes and compliments of the season, the event is already over whereas it has not yet arrived. However, I trust that everyone will enjoy the approaching festive season and I hope that I have not omitted to say anything that I should have. I think I can do no better than to endorse all that has been said by the other speakers and I conclude with that remark.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn to a date to be fixed by Mr. Speaker.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 10.52 p.m.