

pital extensions, most of which have not been proceeded with owing to the shortage of labour and material.

This House has usually been somewhat insistent upon restricting the operation of the Act to one year. I hope that on this occasion members will unbend a little and agree that the Commission has done a fairly good job, is working very efficiently and is an institution that would be missed if it were allowed to go out of existence. Unquestionably, if the Lotteries Commission were a permanent organisation, there are many ways in which its expenses could be reduced, and charitable and other organisations would get the benefit of the savings which, as I have indicated, would amount in the aggregate to nearly £30,000. Members are aware of the personnel of the Commission; all the Commissioners are highly reputable citizens of the State. They have shown a spirit of fairness and equity in dealing with the money at their disposal, and country members in particular, I believe, will agree with me when I say that the Commission has served a very useful purpose in assisting country hospitals and other requirements. Therefore, I hope the House on this occasion will resolve that there is no necessity in future, as there has been in the past, to seek Parliamentary authority every year for the continuance of the Lotteries Commission. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.10 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 16th November, 1944.

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

QUESTIONS (2).

PRESTON SHOPPING DISTRICT.

As to Change in Half-Holiday.

Mr. HOLMAN asked the Minister for Works:

By what method was the recent change effected in the half-holiday (from Wednesday afternoon to Saturday afternoon) for shopping in the Preston shopping district, including Donnybrook?

The MINISTER replied:

The closing of shops in this district on Wednesday afternoons was legally effected following the receipt of a petition in February, 1928, which was signed by a majority of the local traders.

A petition favourable to the Saturday afternoon closing of shops in the district was received in August of this year and was signed by a majority of the local traders. As a result, a Proclamation was issued changing the shop half-holiday in the district from Wednesday to Saturday.

EDUCATION.

As to Busselton School Manual Training Accommodation.

Mr. WILLMOTT asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Has any tender been received for the alterations and additions to the Busselton

school manual training shed for a domestic science centre?

(2) Has any quote been obtained for removal and re-erection of one of the empty schools in the district as an alternative to the above?

(3) If so, is it higher or lower?

(4) If no quote has been obtained to question No. (2) will he have the district architect make this investigation?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) A tender has been received and accepted for alterations and additions to the Russelton school manual training shed.

(2) No.

(3) Answered by No. (2).

(4) Answered by No. (1).

BILL—LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (WAR TIME) ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Third Reading.

Order of the Day read for the third reading of the Bill.

Question put.

The House divided.

Mr. SPEAKER: I declare the question carried with the concurrence of an absolute majority of the whole number of members of the House.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—ELECTORAL (WAR TIME) ACT AMENDMENT.

Third Reading.

Order of the Day read for the third reading of the Bill.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have counted the House and satisfied myself that there is an absolute majority present, and there being no dissentient voice I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—TRADE DESCRIPTIONS AND FALSE ADVERTISEMENTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT [4.37] in moving the

second reading said: The Bill, although fairly lengthy, does not contain a great deal that is new to members. This Parliament a few years ago passed the Trade Descriptions and False Advertisements Act. The part of that Act dealing with trade descriptions incorporates to a large extent the main principle contained in this Bill. The section of the Act dealing with trade descriptions lays down that it is compulsory for a trade description to be applied to any class of goods set out in the schedule to the Act. The trade description to be applied must contain true information regarding the nature and quality of the goods. Additional information is required to be contained in the trade description applied to the particular goods in some instances. The additional information required might cover the name of the manufacturer, the place of manufacture, the size or number of the goods in any particular package, and other information of a somewhat similar character. The main object of these sections of the Act is not to restrict the sale of any of the classes of goods in question, but to ensure that persons desirous of purchasing any of those classes of goods shall be aware, before purchase, of just what is contained in the make-up of the goods. The trade description has to be so applied to the goods as to be clearly observable and understandable by the would-be purchaser.

I am especially anxious that members should fully understand there is nothing in the sections of the Act dealing with trade descriptions that is restrictive regarding the sale of any of the goods concerned. There is no restriction upon anyone regarding the sale of goods. The sections in reality provide a safeguard to the public by enabling it to know before purchase just what is contained in the goods. The Act was found to be necessary because of a growing practice in trade and commerce to represent to the people that certain classes of goods were other than what they actually were in make-up and quality. This applied very largely to clothing of different qualities which was represented to the public as being all wool or substantially wool; whereas, in fact, many of the goods contained no wool at all or very little wool. But other than allegedly woollen goods were included in the schedule to the Act, which also gave power by regulation to add

other goods to the schedule from time to time.

In our attempts effectively to operate this particular part of the Act, we found many difficulties in the way. Objections and difficulties were raised by manufacturers, and by wholesalers and retailers within the State, and many of those difficulties and objections were not without some justification. They were chiefly based on the fact that most of the goods covered by the Act were imported into Western Australia and not manufactured here. Quite a fair volume of the goods, especially some classes, were imported from other countries; so there were very real objections against putting the Act effectively into operation. Then the war came and the difficulties and objections were increased. Our main difficulty was largely due to the fact that legislation similar to our own was not operating in the other States; and, therefore, the manufacturers in those States were not compelled by law, and did not choose, to apply the necessary trade descriptions, or to make available to wholesalers and retailers in this State the necessary particulars regarding the make-up of the manufactured goods they were sending to Western Australia.

Before the war, the Agricultural Council of Australia, which is composed of the Minister for Agriculture from each State Government and from the Commonwealth Government, unanimously decided to recommend all the State Governments in Australia to bring down legislation for the purpose of ensuring that true and adequate trade descriptions were applied to any goods containing wool as a component part. That was in 1939, just before the war began. I have no doubt that action would have been taken by all the State Governments along those lines except for the outbreak of hostilities. So long as the war remained in an acute stage as far as its threat to Australia was concerned, no further action was possible. As the danger to Australia has receded from the point of view of probable invasion by enemy forces, this question has again become a very live one in the Commonwealth. The woolgrowing interests of Australia, in particular, have been active in the matter during the last year or so. They have made very strong and continual representations to the Commonwealth Government, and in-

directly to the State Governments, to have action taken for the purpose of passing legislation in every State to establish a uniform law in regard to trade descriptions to be applied to goods which contain wool, or which come within the classification of textile goods. That would mean that trade descriptions would have to be applied not merely to goods containing any quantity of wool, large or small, but also to textile goods which do not contain any wool at all.

As a result of these more recent representations, the Commonwealth Government decided strongly to recommend every State Government to enact the desired legislation. The Commonwealth Minister for Commerce and Agriculture, Mr. Scully, has been in frequent communication with the State Governments and, wherever opportunity has offered, has personally consulted on this matter with the Ministers concerned in the various States. As a result, the Commonwealth Government has received an assurance from each State Government that suitable legislation will be introduced as soon as each State Government is in a position to present it to Parliament. The Commonwealth Government went further in this matter. It instructed its Crown Law officers to draft a Bill in a form which it desired the State Governments to approve and to introduce into their respective Parliaments. In this State we gave very serious consideration to the advisability of introducing an entirely new Bill to deal with this question. Finally, as a result of advice given to us by our legal advisers, we decided to seek to amend our existing Trade Descriptions and False Advertisements Act; and so the Bill has been drafted and is now introduced accordingly. I think members on reflection will probably agree that it would be to some extent misleading and certainly confusing if we had on the statute-book two Acts dealing with the same principle, and, to a large extent, with the same matters. The Trade Descriptions and False Advertisements Act deals in certain of its sections with this very question. It sets out that accurate and adequate trade descriptions shall be applied to certain classes of goods which are mentioned in the schedule to the Act, which goods can be added to from time to time by way of regulation.

The Bill, therefore, aims to amend the existing Act. In order largely to meet the wishes of the Commonwealth Government to have special legislation passed, the measure has been drafted in such a way as to insert in our Act a special division dealing only with textile goods. The Act as at present drafted has no special division for any class of goods in respect of trade descriptions, but if the Bill be agreed to there will be that special division dealing entirely with textile products. If the Bill be agreed to the Act, as amended, will be re-arranged in regard to many of its sections, but the balance of the goods to which trade descriptions are to be applied will be dealt with in their section of the Act. I think, therefore, that we shall to a very large extent meet the wishes of the Commonwealth in that respect because it will be clear in our Act, if amended by the passing of the Bill, just how textile products are to be dealt with respecting trade descriptions, and everyone will be able at a glance at the new division in the Act to ascertain just how they are to be protected respecting trade descriptions to be applied to textile products.

Mr. Watts: Do the terms used in the textile division of the Act as it is to be amended follow those in the uniform law?

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: They do very largely follow the draft uniform law sent to the Government by the Commonwealth. I am not able to assure members that every State Parliament will enact the draft uniform Bill submitted by the Commonwealth. It is possible that in this matter each State Parliament and each State Government will have views that will not coincide exactly with those of the Commonwealth. Generally speaking, however, the principles embodied in the new division to be included in our Act do, in fact, follow those embodied in the draft uniform Bill submitted by the Commonwealth. I mentioned earlier that the Act itself does not in any way seek to restrict the sale of goods covered by this legislation, to impose quotas nor yet to prevent a person from buying any article that is for sale. What it does seek to do is to compel manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers clearly and truthfully to show to those who are buying goods just what the make-up of those goods really is. In other words, if a trade description is

to be applied to goods, that trade description has to set out what percentage of wool or other fibre there is in any particular article or fabric. It will mean that in future a person will be able to go into a shop and see at a glance what a particular fabric consists of, and he will be able to question the shopkeeper or shop assistant about the goods. That means that when a person buys a particular fabric or commodity on the basis of the trade description applied to it, the retailer and other business interests concerned will be liable to prosecution and heavy penalties if they are found guilty in that the goods bought were not, in fact, in accordance with the trade description applied to them immediately prior to sale.

The most important new definition to be included in the Act as the result of the passing of the Bill covers "textile products." The definition will cover all articles in which wool in some form is a component part, but the term will not include hats or linings, interlinings or trimmings forming part of a garment. Power will also be given to the Governor-in-Council to exclude any article from the definition of "textile products" by regulation. The attaching of a trade description and the name and address of the manufacturer to textile products will enable would-be purchasers, as I explained earlier, to know exactly the quantity of wool and other fibres in any particular article. If the amending Bill is passed it will be unlawful for any textile to be labelled as "wool" or "all wool" or "pure wool" unless the article in question contains at least 92 per cent. of natural wool.

Members will agree that there has been in modern times an unfortunate tendency in trade and commerce to indulge in what might be termed high pressure salesmanship. We know there has been a tendency to increase very greatly the advertising of goods. In addition, oftentimes the advertisements are exaggerated and misleading. This has been very expensive and has no doubt added considerably to the cost of living by increasing the prices at which goods so widely advertised have been sold. I am not quite sure why it is that high pressure advertising has become necessary in modern times, but I have an idea it might be due to the fact that, generally speaking, there is always available for sale a much greater

volume of goods than there is purchasing power enabling the public to obtain those goods. In other words, there is always a surplus production of goods available for sale beyond what the purchasing power of the public is capable of buying. It might be that in these modern times because the public is not able to buy all the goods available, competition has become intense and fierce almost beyond description, especially in connection with certain classes of goods. The result has been that advertising is indulged in to an extent almost undreamed of a few years ago. Because of that, I am sorry to think there is a very strong tendency on the part of some firms, not all, to mislead the public by grossly exaggerating the quality of goods offered to the public and by claiming for the goods all sorts of advantages which they in fact do not possess.

Mr. McLarty: That does not apply to goods only.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: It might apply to election speeches and policies, but electors are not compelled to buy an election speech or even listen to it; nor are they required to buy or to accept an election policy, but they are compelled to buy many classes of goods, especially essential goods. If those goods are advertised falsely, if they are represented as being what they are not, and if shopkeepers and shop assistants are allowed to say that a certain class of goods is of high quality when it is not, or if they are allowed to say that an article is all wool, or pure wool, or 90 per cent. wool when it contains only 20 per cent. of wool, the people are being deceived and exploited.

I am not sufficiently optimistic to believe that the passing of this Bill will overcome all the undesirable features to which I have referred, but I am suggesting that the passing of the measure will be another instalment of an attempt by Parliament to give to the public a further measure of protection. I am inclined to think that, after the war, competition will become increasingly intense and that, in the welter to sell goods to the public, there will be an increasing measure of misrepresentation and deceitful practices, and that advertising in the Press and over the radio will become even more exaggerated, with the result that the people will be handing out their hard-earned money in the belief, oftentimes, that they are getting a high-quality article when they are

getting one of no very high quality at all. This Bill, therefore, becomes the more necessary on that account.

The most that we can do at this stage is to try to give the public the greatest measure of protection possible. It might be said that we ought not to single out any special class of goods such as textiles. It might be claimed with some justification that we ought to make the Act all-embracing, so that all classes of goods capable of having trade descriptions applied to them should be similarly treated. As I mentioned earlier in my remarks, the Act gives power to the Government and the Parliament to add to the list from time to time. It might therefore be that the Act will become the foundation upon which will be built a system under which the public will receive the greatest possible amount of protection when purchasing goods in shops, and other places where goods are offered for sale and are sold.

I do not propose to speak at any great length on the value of the wool-growing industry to the Commonwealth generally and to Western Australia as one of the States of the Commonwealth, but the effort of the Commonwealth Government and the State Government to provide protection for the woollen industry by establishing a special division in the Act covering textile products will be found to be all the more justified when even a brief examination is made of the value of the industry to this country. The latest figures I have been able to obtain are for the year 1937. I am aware that they are not the latest figures, but they will serve to indicate to members just how important the industry is and therefore how justified the Government and Parliament are in taking any steps, no matter how small, which might be of use to ensure that the industry is protected and that it shall not suffer because of the operation of competition that is unfair and even dishonest. This is all the Bill aims at giving to the industry in the shape of protection in a small but indirect way.

In 1937 there were 114,000,000 sheep in Australia of which 8,700,000 were in Western Australia. The wool production in that year amounted to 1,010,000,000 lbs., of which Western Australia's share was 65,000,000 lbs. The value of that production for the Commonwealth was £52,600,000, of which £3,500,000 was Western Australia's

share. The consumption in Australia of locally processed wool in the same year was 71,579,000 lbs., which was approximately one-fourteenth, or 7 per cent., of the total quantity of wool produced during the year. Members will therefore realise that this Bill and similar Bills to be passed in other States will protect only about one-fourteenth of the total wool clip each year if the rate of export in future years is maintained at the 1937 level. Even though that be so, I consider that we are entitled to take what steps we can to give a measure of protection to that one-fourteenth part of the total production. Wool exports from Australia in 1937 were valued at £47,000,000, and £5,000,000 worth was retained in Australia.

The Bill is somewhat lengthy. Most of the clauses are of a machinery character or have been included to bring about necessary rearrangements of the existing Act. The only vital clauses in the Bill are those which propose to insert in the Act an entirely new and separate provision for textile products. When members study the Bill and compare it with the Act, I think they will have little difficulty in understanding the purpose of the measure, and I anticipate that when they are fully aware of the principles and the objects sought to be achieved, there will be unanimous approval of the Bill, not only in this House but also in the other Chamber. I move, with confidence—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Doney, debate adjourned.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

- 1, Health Act Amendment.
- 2, Perth Diocesan Trustees (Special Fund).

With amendments.

BILL—TRANSFER OF LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 14th November.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [5.12]: This is a Bill dealing with the procedure to be followed where a certificate of title under the Transfer of Land Act is lost or destroyed. It will enable the person who is the proprietor of the certificate of title to obtain a new certificate in place of the old one. The main object is to prevent an

amount of useless work now involved by the procedure under which the new certificate has to be a duplicate of the old one and therefore has to contain, not only the exact wording and form of the old certificate, but also the records of dealings which may have been on the old certificate, many of which are now of no interest at all. For example, the mortgages on the old certificate might have been paid off and discharged, and there is no need to carry them on to the new certificate.

I have referred the Bill to a number of legal practitioners, who have practices of some size under the Transfer of Land Act. I was advised this morning by a practitioner very experienced in conveyancing matters that the Bill is an excellent one, and he thought it would provide a simplification of machinery that is highly desirable. The Bill, in his opinion and in my opinion, contains sufficient safeguards to provide against any fraudulent dealings, and I think it will be more difficult for any fraud to arise under this measure than is the case under existing legislation. It seems to me that the Bill is a desirable one. I understand that it has been recommended by the Commissioner of Titles, who is a very careful and responsible officer in the discharge of his duties. I think we can accept his advice and incorporate the Bill in the existing Act. I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

MOTION—STATE-WIDE POST-WAR WORKS.

*As to Government Planes for Official
Inspections.*

Debate resumed from the 8th November on the following motion by Mr. North (as amended):—

This House realises that it cannot adequately handle the various problems which arise in the 1,000,000 square miles of our Western Australian territory unless the most modern transport facilities are utilised. It therefore advocates that the Government should acquire some well-found transport planes to enable Ministers, members of Parliament, and particularly engineers of the P.W.D., etc., to cover all parts

of the State including the Kimberleys, paying particular attention to the need for and possibilities of water conservation and the utilisation of the rivers of the north-west of this State and the development of tropical and semi-tropical agriculture.

MR. RODOREDA (Roebourne) [5.18]: One feels a little diffident about intruding into the debate on this motion after having listened last week to the extremely interesting and truly informative speech of the Minister for Lands. Nevertheless, I have an idea or two about the motion and about the development of the State generally that may or may not be of interest to members. The member for Claremont must be astonished at the trend this debate has taken.

The Premier: He is learning a bit, too!

Mr. North: He is growing in wisdom!

Mr. RODOREDA: Much of the debate is due to the manner in which the motion was amended by the Leader of the Opposition. Let us examine what the motion really asks for. After what I might term the preamble, it is stated—

It therefore advocates that the Government should acquire some well-found transport planes to enable Ministers, members of Parliament, and particularly engineers of the P.W.D., etc., to cover all parts of the State.

The gist of the motion is the provision of transport planes, but the motion is expressed in such a general form that I find it hard to agree that the Government should be asked to provide transport planes. What sort of transport planes? Should they be big enough to take all the members of this Assembly on a trip to investigate the North-West and other outback portions of the State? Or should they be big enough to carry two or three Ministers and camp equipment? I cannot see myself giving much support to this type of motion. I presume the inference is that the transport planes would be provided free of cost to members.

Mr. North: We already have a Ministerial coach.

Mr. RODOREDA: But the motion does not say whether the Government is to bear the cost, although I presume that that is the intention of the mover. Modern transport facilities are now available to members. There is a reasonably good service to the North-West and to other outback portions of the State; so that if members have a burning desire to get around the

State and see conditions for themselves, they have the opportunity to do so. Of course, I quite understand that no member could possibly afford to do so. Therefore, notwithstanding that the motion does not say that transport shall be provided free, I presume free transport is the whole basis of the motion. I am inclined to agree with the Minister for the North-West, who said that it would be of no benefit whatever to members to travel around the State in a plane in order to become acquainted with the country. My own experience of air transport is that one cannot form any idea of a country or the conditions obtaining in it by what one can observe from a plane. The only use a plane would be to members would be to transport them to a selected spot, whence they would have to use land transport.

There is only one way by which people can get acquainted with the outback portions of the State, particularly the North-West, and that is by a very leisurely overland trip, meeting the people, talking with them about their living conditions and disabilities, and observing those conditions themselves. Any other form of investigation into the outback areas is, in my opinion, utterly useless. It is my intention to move an amendment to the motion by striking out the words "Ministers, members of Parliament". My reason is that Cabinet Ministers need no urging to use modern forms of transport if they desire to travel, and they have it in their power to use such transport cost free. I would delete "members of Parliament" from the motion because, as I said, it would be of no benefit to members to travel to the North-West unless they went to a selected spot, from which they could pass through the country along the roads. I entirely agree with the proposal to provide modern forms of transport for our engineers and other civil servants who have investigations to make into the possibilities of our outback country.

We should provide the most modern form of transport for our technical advisers, particularly our engineers, in the North-West, where there are vast distances to be travelled, and where it is a source of worry and concern to those officers as to whether a half broken-down motorear, such as they use now, will get them to their destination. Such a conveyance is more worry to those

officers than the work they have to do. Members will understand that if an engineer is 300 or 400 miles inland in the middle of summer with a broken-down motorcar, he has a reasonably good chance of perishing. Again, their time is too valuable to be wasted pushing motorcars along bush roads. They should be able to travel from port to port and from place to place, wherever their investigations take them, by air. A leisurely trip overland with a party is a different proposition, but I doubt whether members of Parliament would wish or could be induced to go to many of the places where our engineers must of necessity go.

Mr. North: And perhaps more so in the future.

Mr. RODOREDA: Yes. In my opinion, it would be exceedingly difficult to induce a party of members of this House to go to the North in February or March in order to investigate a proposition that was in the wind some 500 miles from a port. I cannot see them doing it, and I do not think they would have any brains if they did.

Mr. Seward: Are those the only two months of the year to go there?

Mr. RODOREDA: What would they know about the living conditions in such country?

Mr. Seward: How could they know, unless they went there? Speak for yourself.

Mr. RODOREDA: Members could not be induced to go to those places. I am not talking about present conditions, but pre-war conditions. Members can use the railways to investigate every portion of the State. The railways penetrate to every dead-end in the State. How many members have used the railways for that purpose?

Mr. Seward interjected.

Mr. RODOREDA: Do not all speak at once! I ask, how many members use the railways for that purpose? I will not say none, but very few indeed. Members use the railways for the purpose of getting around their own electorates, certainly not for the purpose of investigating living conditions in the outback, say, at Wiluna. Even if transport planes were provided, members would be too busy in their own electorates to make the investigations suggested by the motion. They would find some excuse for not doing so. I remember that on one occasion the Minister for

Lands, who was then Minister for the North-West, tried very hard to get a party of members to go to the North at the time the new jetty at Point Samson was being opened. One member accepted his invitation. We can only judge what members' actions will be in the future by what members have done in the past, when facilities were available for them to investigate living conditions in at least some of the outback country.

The Minister for Works: Some of us went to Derby once.

Mr. RODOREDA: But I am giving an instance when members had the opportunity to go and only one availed himself of it, and the party was to have returned overland. The motion refers to the Kimberleys. Why should it be necessary specifically to mention the Kimberleys? After all, they are portion of the State. The motion also states—

To cover all parts of the State including the Kimberleys, paying particular attention to the need for and possibilities of water conservation and the utilisation of the rivers of the north-west of this State and the development of tropical and semi-tropical agriculture.

I shall refer only to the North-West, because I know something of that portion of the State. There can be no quibble about the necessity for its development, and it is merely a matter of investigation to find out how that can be done. That is why I want every facility possible made available to the engineers who, after all, have the main job to do in whatever development we foresee in the North-West. In spite of all that has been said to the contrary the North-West is not a land flowing with milk and honey. Excluding a portion of the Kimberleys it is an arid country. A large portion of it is desert and, as far as we can see, can never be utilised. The desert goes from the coast, between Port Hedland and Broome, to the South Australian border. It extends north to Christmas Creek, which is a tributary of the Fitzroy River, and south nearly to Wiluna. So, of the millions of square miles of country we have to develop, we can wipe out a large portion.

Mr. North: There is still plenty left.

Mr. RODOREDA: Yes, but what is left is a hard drought-stricken country, but fertile soil. With water provided, there is no estimating the possibilities of our asset in the North-West. We have in a large portion

of the country underground waters which could be tapped, and we also have artesian and sub-artesian waters. Much of the water can be got at depths of 20 to 80 feet in plentiful, although not unlimited, quantities. Between Shark Bay and the Ashburton River there is a sub-artesian belt on the coast giving a fairly plentiful supply of water by the sinking of bores up to 2,000 feet in depth. But this water, in my opinion, is hopeless for growing anything. It is merely stock water. It is highly mineralised as the best bore water is, and is steaming hot as it comes out of the pipes. I think it would kill any vegetation that it came in contact with.

Mr. North: Is the flow from the bores decreasing?

Mr. RODORED A: Not as far as has been ascertained although I doubt whether any detailed investigation has been made. I am only expressing a layman's opinion as to the qualities of the bore water. From my observations I would say that that area would not be of much use. The area north of the Ashburton River to a little north of Port Hedland has a supply of artesian water in almost unlimited quantities. Most of the stations in that area have from 30 to 70 windmills. That is sufficient proof that water does exist in fairly plentiful supplies. But the main source of water supply, as the Leader of the Opposition stated, is in the impounding of water by building dams across the big rivers in that country. The need for a detailed and prolonged investigation before committing ourselves to any capital cost is paramount. It is reasonably easy to investigate the rivers and find one or two spots where a dam can be thrown across, but there is much more in the problem than that.

The first requisite for a dam is an area behind it that will hold the impounded water. It is of no use to hold the water in a narrow gully; there must be a basin behind. Such places take finding. Then investigations have to be made into the salinity of the water, into the holding capacity of the ground and to see that the foundations are right. With the limited number of engineers available now and the limited transport facilities the position is hopeless. As I briefly indicated when speaking on the Address-in-reply there was at that time one Public Works Department engineer to do the whole of the North-West territory. He had to

travel overland from Shark Bay to Wyndham in a utility vehicle. I believe that there are now two, which is the number we had in pre-war days. In addition to carrying out their engineering investigations and looking after the maintenance and upkeep of the jetties, bridges, harbours and public buildings they also have to supervise the road building programme of the various road boards from Wyndham to Shark Bay. What an impossible job to ask any man to do!

I maintain that the Public Works Department engineers should be used for the purpose of investigating and examining the possibilities of every scheme that is put up rather than doing the routine work of supervising road building which is, after all, the concern of the Main Roads Department and has nothing to do with the Public Works Department engineers. I hope the Minister will do his utmost to get his men relieved of this tedious and irksome work, and have it put under the control of the man who is responsible for the building of our main roads. Unless we do something with this country in the way of developing it, it will go from bad to worse. In my opinion we will never develop it by stocking it with sheep alone. We have had 70 to 80 years' experience of sheep in this country and we now have about 2,500,000 sheep in the North-West. That is sufficient proof that under our present land laws and system of developing the country the position is absolutely hopeless. Imagine this vast area 1,500 miles long by 300 miles wide carrying 2,500,000 sheep after the toil, money and improvements that have been put in during the last 70 or 80 years!

Mr. North: Some say the sheep destroy the soil, too.

Mr. RODORED A: That is a danger. The Government has spent a lot of money in various ways but apparently without any set plan. I am a great believer in the plan first introduced into the world by, I believe, Russia. I refer to the Five Year Plan. By such a scheme we create a definite objective and all our energies can be directed towards its achievement. By that means we would get somewhere, whereas to go on in the lackadaisical way of doing a trifle here and a trifle elsewhere without any organised plan will get us nowhere. The Minister for Lands told us the other evening that the State spent a lot of money on the Canning stock route, and that Canning did a marvel-

lous job in getting the stock route through and in doing a further maintenance trip on it. But what benefit has that stock route been to anyone? I doubt whether any great numbers of stock have come down that route since it was first opened. It is nearly impossible to get cattle over it because, although Canning found water at every place where it was needed, there is no feed. The great bulk of the route runs through the desert. It is something we could well have done without. It has caused a terrific waste of money and is of no benefit at all.

Mr. Leslie: What do you class as desert? Is there any growth on it?

Mr. RODOREDA: As far as I know, and from what I have been told by men who have been there, there is no growth at all but just rolling sandhills. There is no feed on the Canning stock route. The Minister for the North-West, who is the member for Kimberley, knows of a few mobs of cattle that have been brought down, but no one will tackle the job if he can avoid it. To all intents and purposes that route is a white elephant. The member for Claremont mentioned the danger of erosion. In my opinion that is a potential source of danger. If we allow matters to go on as at present—and this is no chimera of the imagination—in 25 or 30 years' time the rivers there will be totally blinded. The member for Murray-Wellington, from his knowledge of the Fitzroy, knows that that is so. I have heard that opinion expressed by men who know what they are talking about, and who have seen these rivers get gradually choked. We have the spectacle in the Riverina district, in the Eastern States, of country being blown away because it is denuded of grass. The grass and nothing else holds the soil together and, if there is no grass growing in the soil, the whole country blows away.

We know of the experience that America has had in this regard, and we know of the experience of the Eastern States of Australia. We know that the desert is, year by year, creeping in on the Eastern States and taking control of once fertile land. Where, many years ago, people used to live and rear sheep and other stock in the outback country of New South Wales and Queensland, it is now an absolute desert. We have to face that position in the North-West. If we allow station-owners to eat out the country by overstocking in good seasons we find that, when

bad seasons come, the country is well overstocked and all the grass is eaten out with the result that the sheep perish and the winds come and away goes the country. That occurs with every drought. I was in the North-West last August when, normally, the roads are in good condition, and when there is no dust. I have never seen the Roebourne-Onslow-Carnarvon portion of the country look worse—even after the six-year drought—than it did then. The roads were six inches deep with dust, and the soil was blowing away.

There is only one way to deal with that country. We must get water on to it or else, instead of being a potential asset, it will be a liability to us. Whatever the cost may be, we must get water on to it. The cost, in my opinion, will be far too great for this State to bear. The Ord River, as members know, is now well in the course of being investigated from an irrigation point of view. A site has been picked out for a reservoir. Scientific officers of the Agricultural Department have investigated the soil possibilities and apparently something is going to be done. But whether that is a success or a failure it does not necessarily imply that the same experiment will produce the same result lower down in the North-West, because the conditions are totally different. One of the troubles the Agricultural Department of officers have in the Kimberleys is the lush growth. The grasses grow too fast. They want them to stool out instead of growing straight up. That is one of their difficulties with the experimental plot. The tropical hothouse conditions under which this vegetation grows have been responsible for that. All native grasses grow too high for the stock to feed upon them. These questions have to be investigated and some suitable fodder found for the stock. Lower down, whether we are going to irrigate for the purpose of keeping stock or for growing marketable crops, is again a subject for investigation.

Mr. McLarty: What sort of crops?

Mr. RODOREDA: That is a matter for investigation. Judging from the station gardens and what can be produced there under irrigation, I should say that practically anything can be grown there that can be produced in a temperate climate. I am now referring to the more southern parts of the North-West. The hon. mem-

ber knows that station gardens will produce for a few months of the year practically anything, but in the hot summer months neither vegetables nor any other marketable produce can be grown successfully. I want the Government to investigate the whole position and establish experimental farms in the area, so that it may be tried out. These things cannot be rushed. At least four or five years would have to be devoted to the conduct of experiments in selected spots in order to find out what the country is capable of doing under irrigation and by means of scientific control.

The whole of the North-West is a natural hothouse, and the growth of vegetation there is truly phenomenal. It is amazing and incredible to anyone who has witnessed what Nature can do. There may be stretches of country 50 or 60 miles in length looking dry and arid and useless, but after a thunderstorm a green carpet of grass two or three inches high can be seen a week later. That is what happens after every long dry period. The regenerating capacity of the country is astounding. No doubt something can be found that can be grown there successfully. I have no doubt that in selected spots where water is obtainable it is possible to carry three or four sheep to the acre on areas that could be subdivided into small holdings. That statement will probably be laughed to scorn by people who under present conditions are running one sheep to 40 acres. I have no hesitation in stating that this can be done because I have seen it done.

Mr. McLarty: What do you mean by small holdings?

Mr. RODOREDA: I envisage an area large enough to enable a man to obtain a decent living. I would not talk in terms of area, but in terms of the number of sheep that can be carried. In different classes of soil and different classes of country the areas required would vary one from the other. I envisage the North-West as carrying a population living on its own holdings and obtaining a reasonable income out of so doing. I have not in mind areas which people can take up to the extent of half a million or one million acres in the hope of making a fortune. Those days have gone by. We cannot develop the North-West in that way. We

have to put people on holdings that will carry 2,000 or 3,000 sheep, and from which they can obtain a good living if they do not want to indulge in all the trimmings. There is every possibility that that can be achieved. I now come to the De Grey River and the Oakover. Those rivers head on to the edge of the Tableland and come down through gorges and very hilly country. No doubt spots could be found there where the streams could be dammed and irrigation facilities provided for adjacent areas.

Then there are the Roebourne areas on the Fortescue River. That river runs north of the big Hamersley Range. It flows on the north side of the range which runs east and west, and is a tremendous river when in flood. The Director of Works, Mr. Dumas, recently conducted an investigation of Gregory Gorge, below Millstream on that river, and apparently an ideal site for a dam 1,000ft. above a considerable area of fertile land, which could readily be irrigated, was found. The Gregory Gorge was referred to the other night by the Minister for Lands. An investigation would require to be made there. At first sight it is definitely an ideal place for the impounding of water. Further down we have the Ashburton River which flows on the southern side of the Hamersley Range. No doubt spots could be selected on that river, and the country on either side is fertile and would be responsive to irrigation. With the necessary water facilities it should be capable of growing those things which are best suited to it.

The scientists would be able to discover what could best be grown there under the conditions appertaining to the district. I doubt whether irrigation would be very practicable lower down. We there reach more or less sandy spinifex country such as is found in areas fed by the Minilya River and the big Gascoyne River. I doubt whether there would be any place along the Gascoyne River, unless one went a good way back, that could be dammed and where the country would be suitable for cultivation. The Gascoyne River itself is mostly a sand bed. True, it supplies a vast amount of water for irrigation in connection with the banana industry outside Carnarvon, but people have to go down 20 or 30 feet in order to get the water. There are infinite possibilities for the country I have been dealing with, but anything in the nature of

a niggardly policy in the expenditure of money will not serve any good purpose there. The area is a vast one and has to be tackled on a vast scale by men with vision.

As soon as we realise, as a Parliament, that it is hopeless to go on as we have been with an area of country that is degenerating, where the population is decreasing, and the stock is becoming less and less and will continue to decrease so far as I can see, there will be a chance for these areas to come into their own. Some action will have to be taken by the Government to frame a solid programme of investigation, and engage engineers and technicians who will bring their minds to bear on dealing with the various problems as soon as possible. If that is not done soon, it will be too late to do anything. It is of no use to say these things cannot be done. We have the example of what the Italians did with Libya. I should say from what I have read that Libya was a far less inviting prospect than is the North-West. Apparently a marvellous success was made by the Italians of the colonisation in Libya, North Africa, although they had far less promising conditions to work under. The job can be done; it is only a matter of persuading ourselves and the Commonwealth Government as to how it can be done. From the point of view of the defence of Australia alone this work will have to be carried out.

If we leave undeveloped that country with its vast possibilities we shall not be allowed to keep it forever. That must be patent to all. Apart from the irrigation possibilities there is all the mineral wealth of those areas to be considered. The mineral aspect seems to be well under way now, at least so far as base metals are concerned. That particular industry appears to be on a good footing today. If we can get several likely little townships established in these districts, each containing 400 or 500 people, they alone will provide a market, even if a small one, for locally-grown commodities, vegetables, dairy products, etc. I know the Minister for Lands has definitely stated that there is no possibility of establishing the dairying industry in the North-West. He has a scientific and technical knowledge that I do not possess, but I would be unwilling to accept that dictum without further investigation. I know that

most of the station people keep their own cows. They have milk regularly and make their own butter. The cows are free from disease; in fact, stock seem to do well up there.

I cannot see why if a family can keep two cows in an area other people cannot keep 50. In the ports there are dairymen who supply the townships with milk, and they can only do so from their own cows. I cannot see why the Minister should be so insistent in stating that dairying cannot be introduced in the North-West. There is also the pig-raising industry. Pigs that are allowed to go wild in this country increase to a great extent, and hunts have to be organised to kill them because of the damage they do to station gardens and the country round about. The whole subject is one for intensive investigation. I find that I am in agreement with the motion so far as modern transport for our technical men is concerned, but I am not greatly interested in the transport of members of Parliament. I therefore move an amendment—

That after the word "enable" in line 7 the words "Ministers, members of Parliament and particularly" be struck out.

MR. SPEAKER: I draw the hon. member's attention to the fact that the motion has already been amended down to the last line. It is not permissible for any member to move to amend it in any other way than to add words to it.

Amendment ruled out.

MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall): I would not have addressed myself to this motion but for the remarks of the member for Roebourne, in which he referred to what has happened in the North-West as the result of a wrong agricultural policy. I am in sympathy with the motion, but why reference is made only to the Kimberleys and the far northern parts of the State I do not know. I appreciate that problems exist there that may not have received the attention they warranted.

MR. NORTH: The motion is not limited to those parts only.

MR. LESLIE: That is so, but that area is given specific mention. Certain problems up there may have failed to receive the attention that is warranted. Reference has been made to the fact that members of Parliament and possibly engineers and other experts have not themselves inspected the

North-West sufficiently and found out for themselves what its potentialities are, and the suggestion behind the motion is that some encouragement should be provided for them to do so. I submit that there are areas far closer than the Kimberleys or the North-West which are faced with exactly a similar set of problems to those which have been outlined by the member for Roebourne. Within 250 miles of Perth there is an area which is easily reached without the necessity for transportation by planes. I grant that the train service is not all that one could desire, but it is the best at present available, and certainly offers opportunities for members of this House and another place to investigate at first hand what is today actually the outer fringe of the intense development of this State; and an area that is likely to go back to the condition which the member for Roebourne outlined this afternoon.

My purpose in rising is to emphasise to Ministers and to members that unless some appreciation is gained of the fact that we have need to investigate the problems not only of the far North but also those of an area within 200 miles of Perth, that unless we realise that a highly intense investigation is necessary in order to reorganise our old ideas, there will be great liability to mistakes and a tragedy similar to that in the North-West. We may find that what is happening in New South Wales today may also happen well within 200 miles of Perth. Today I could take members to a distance of 150 miles from Perth and show them soil erosion and salt in soil due directly to what has been for several years a wrong policy. Unfortunately it appears that the wrong agricultural policy of the past is about to be intensified. Instead of investigating the problem from an entirely new angle—

Mr. North: The Never-never is on the march!

Mr. LESLIE: It is definitely coming to us, unless we alter our methods. The denudation of the country of its natural grasses and other natural growth is one of the biggest factors in soil erosion. This has occurred, and is occurring; and the overstocking of the country with sheep, without continuing agricultural methods and the cultivation of the soil, means that within a few years such country is going to be perfectly useless either for sheep or for any other pur-

pose whatsoever. Therefore we must make sure of the safety of the northern part of what we call our marginal areas, a country that seemingly is to be made to carry 10,000,000 sheep to replace those which the North formerly carried. We must make certain that the result to the country further south, an area relatively close to Perth, is not the same as the result to the North. I fear that will be the result, unless we alter our policy.

The member for Roebourne mentioned the soil in the North-West. I could take him into the marginal areas relatively close to Perth and show him soil which would grow anything one cares to put in it. Members will no doubt be surprised to learn that from an area north of Mukinbudin oranges took the prize at a Wembley Exhibition for oranges grown within the British Empire. Quality can be grown as well as quantity. Only one thing is required. We have the soil and the climate, but not the rainfall. With water we can turn that country into a highly productive area. First of all we must take steps definitely to stop the danger of erosion, the danger of the country being turned into a desert such as we are told the North-West is today. Then, I repeat, we can turn it into a highly productive country.

The Minister for Mines: Good oranges were grown on the Murchison 40 years ago.

Mr. LESLIE: But the country I speak of is further south than the Murchison. I do not want to see erosion in country which today is first-class. The danger is that its problems are not understood. When we first established the dairying industry in the South-West, we spent from £45 to £50 per acre on merely clearing the country. Had we spent one-fifth or one-tenth of that amount of money in providing water, the only thing lacking in the fertile soils of the wheatbelt, we would today have there a population half the size of that of Perth. Dowerin, which is not far away from the marginal portion, was at one time the biggest cream-loading siding in Western Australia; and that was achieved without intense cultivation or irrigation. From natural grasses and normal fodder crops the Dowerin people were able to produce not only huge quantities of cream, but quality cream. Therefore, instead of going so far north to find developmental avenues for the State and increase its production and its population, we can take advantage of that area which is within 200 miles of Perth.

I have heard it said by His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor that at one time Kelmscott was declared a marginal area. Then the margin went on to Cunderdin and Kellerberrin, and so it spread. Today the fringe of cultivation is on the wheatbelt. I do believe that the problems of that country are not being tackled in the right way. I see a very real danger in encouraging the Government and the people to seek even further afield for avenues of production and areas of settlement. We should first of all make certain that the country in between, which offers potentialities unequalled and unexcelled, is not neglected. At present it is being left to return to a state of nature, denuded of its natural growth and reduced to such a condition that it will not even produce what we plant artificially. Mention has been made by the member for Roebourne of what the Italians did in Libya. I remind the House that the Libyan desert was at one time, if one goes back far enough, a most fertile area and highly productive. Exactly the same thing happened to it as is about to happen in Australia today. The Libyan desert is an example of what we have to avoid. We must by all means avoid adhering rigidly to ideas that the soil will produce only what our fathers said it would.

No matter what the conditions may be, some farmer will persist in putting in his wheat on the 1st May; without regard to seasonal conditions. Many farmers have the idea that what was good for their fathers and grandfathers is good enough for them today. It is that attitude which causes our State to lack development; this failure to exploit the full advantages of modern science. I would like to see as many officers as possible of the Agricultural Department put into the marginal area for the purpose of examining the soil. Financial investigations should also be made as to the cost of bringing that country into a state of production by cultivation, in order to avoid risks of further erosion. That proposition would pay the Government handsomely by preventing the country I refer to from presenting the sort of picture that the member for Roebourne painted this afternoon regarding the North-West.

Therefore, while I support the motion, I do hope that if it is carried it will not be interpreted by the Government as an indication that we are in favour of overlooking the country which lies within easy access

of Perth, which can be reached from Perth by car in a few hours, but which, because it has been wrongly and sinfully named "marginal country," is believed by most people in the metropolitan area to be at the far out-back of Western Australia, whereas in fact it is far closer to the hub of the State than most of the developed and productive country in the Great Southern and South-Western districts. I make those references in the hope that the area in question will not be overlooked in any attempt to place facilities at the convenience of members, engineers and investigators for examination of the valuable resources of our State.

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

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

BILL—COAL MINE WORKERS (PENSIONS) ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS [7.30] in moving the second reading said: This Bill contains only three or four proposals, none of which is of a major character. The Act, which was passed last year, is now in force with the exception of the compulsory retirement provision. Members will recollect that the parent Act provides that retirement from the industry shall be compulsory on a mine worker reaching 60 years of age, but that that part of the Act has to be proclaimed. War conditions render it necessary to employ in the coal mines as many workers as are available, irrespective of whether they are under or over the age of 60 years. Consequently the proclamation referred to has not yet been made, nor is it likely to be during the war. One of the amendments in the Bill has a relationship to that point. Some of the men now working in the industry have passed the compulsory retirement age and, if war conditions did not exist, would automatically retire on pension. In the event of any such pensioner dying from any cause whatever, his widow or female dependants would thereupon become entitled to a pension under the Act.

These men who have attained the age of 60 years and are continuing to work in the industry receive no pension; and, as long as they do not retire, or are not retired on pension, their dependants have no right to any payment under the Act. A case has already occurred where a miner over 60 years of

age has died. His death was not due to any cause associated with his work, but because he was still working and not on pension, his female dependant—a widow—is not entitled to receive any pension under the Act. The result of all this is that the wives and other female dependants of men over 60 years of age now working in the industry are placed in a most unfair position. Miners are continuing to work in the industry while they are over 60 years of age so as to enable additional coal to be produced; and because of that, if they die while continuing in employment but not on pension, their widows or other female dependants are penalised, as the latter would receive no pension of any kind from the fund.

The amendment dealing with this point gives to the widow or other female dependant of such a worker the same pension as the widow or other female dependant would receive if the worker had, in fact, been compulsorily retired from the industry on pension on reaching the age of 60 years. The amendment is in every way fair and just; and I am sure every member will agree that it confers upon the female dependants of the miners over 60 years of age, while working in the industry, a right to which they are entitled.

Mr. Marshall: And to which they contribute.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. As the member for Murchison has mentioned, these miners contribute to the fund and thereby to some extent help to provide the pension which they or their female dependants later receive.

Mr. McDonald: Do they continue to contribute after attaining 60 years?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, as long as they are employed in the industry.

Hon. N. Keenan: If they arrive at the age when they are entitled to a pension and are continued in work, do they start a new scheme?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

Hon. N. Keenan: That is different from superannuation.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Another clause in the Bill aims at giving the tribunal power to deal with male or female pensioners where, after qualifying for a pension and receiving a pension, the male or female pensioner accepts employment and receives wages or salary. Members will recollect that the Act provides for certain

maximum rates of pension. It would be to some extent unfair to the fund—even though the male pensioners would have contributed to it—if those receiving pensions from the fund were also entitled to receive the full amount of pension, accept perhaps full employment, and receive the full rate of wages or salary in addition to the pension being drawn from the fund. The proposal in the Bill as regards male pensioners is that wages earned by single male pensioners above the average amount of £5 per week will be liable to a deduction in pension according to the amount by which the sum in excess of £5 a week exceeds the pension. In the case of married men, the amount allowable before the pension is reducible is £6 5s. per week on the average. Members will see that the amount of income allowable by way of wages or salary to a pensioner who subsequently accepts employment is liberal; and deductions from pensions will not occur until those respective amounts are earned and received by single pensioners in the one case and by married pensioners in the other. The second provision in this part of the Bill sets out that where a female dependant accepts employment, the pension will be liable to deduction when the average weekly earnings exceed £2 10s.

Mr. McDonald: Does this apply to a pensioner going into business on his or her own account?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. The income would be taken into consideration, irrespective of whether it was a form of wages from employment or income from some other source. The tribunal is also given power to review pension cases from time to time for the purpose of making adjustments wherever circumstances are considered to justify such adjustments. The power is also given to the tribunal to cancel any pension where the tribunal is satisfied that the pension was improperly obtained, or that it was obtained in contravention of the provisions of the Act. The Act itself specifies certain sources of income which are to be used as a basis for reducing the pension to be paid from this fund. For instance, income from old age pensions, and invalid pensions and from a number of other sources is to be regarded as income by the tribunal, and used as a basis for reducing the maximum amount of

pension payable under the Act from the fund.

Another source of income in the same category is any income received by way of war pension. Everybody who now realises that this is so is asking why someone did not think about it when the Bill was going through the House. Everybody is suggesting that those concerned with the Bill, when it was being prepared and being discussed by Parliament, must have been blind to this point. Otherwise it would never have been put into the Bill in the first place; or, after having appeared in the Bill and having been introduced into Parliament, it would have been challenged and deleted. In any event, it was in the Bill as introduced in this House, and it passed through both Houses and found its place in the Act.

Mr. McDonald: That is a tribute we paid to the Government!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The general feeling now is that it is unfair that income by way of war pension should be set off as a deduction against the amount of pension received under the Act.

Hon. N. Keenan: Was that not discussed in another place?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have no recollection of its being discussed in another place. However, the Bill aims to delete from the Act any reference to war pensions as being a source of income which shall be regarded as such for the purpose of reducing the amount of pension payable to mine workers under this Act.

Mr. McDonald: Will a deduction be made for invalid pensions?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. At the same time as this Bill aims to delete any reference to war pensions in regard to these points, it aims to include in the Act income received by pensioners, or would-be pensioners, from State superannuation or State benefit funds. In other words, if any State employee is retired by the State on superannuation under some State law and subsequently becomes entitled to a pension from the fund under this Act, the income he receives from any State superannuation fund or State benefit fund shall be considered by the tribunal in fixing the rate of pension to be paid out of the mine workers pensions fund. The Act lays down that there shall be one rate of contribution to the fund by mine workers. This

principle is acceptable in regard to all mine workers who receive the basic wage or over; but it operates very harshly against junior workers in the industry or infirm workers, who are not able to receive the full basic wage applicable to the industry.

Members will readily realise that in this industry, as in most others, there are junior workers, some of whom receive a very low weekly wage. The rate of contribution they are called upon to make regularly to the fund is, for them, a heavy sacrifice; and they have requested that an attempt be made to lighten the contributions they will be called upon to make. The provision in this Bill gives to any worker in the industry who receives less than the basic wage a choice as to whether he will pay the general rate of contribution or a lesser rate. It leaves with the worker concerned absolute choice as to what rate of contribution he will make. If he makes a lesser contribution than the general rate applicable to all mine workers receiving the basic wage or over, he will receive a correspondingly smaller benefit. The benefits to be received by him will be measured by the proportion of his contribution to the general rate. At a later stage, when he becomes older and receives the basic rate, or over, his contributions to the fund will be adjusted upwards and the tribunal will make the necessary arrangements for him to become entitled to receive correspondingly increased benefits in the event of his becoming entitled to receive a pension at any time.

Mr. McDonald: Would the department make up the arrears of the period during which he paid part?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Not necessarily. He would be entitled to make them up if he wished to qualify himself for complete maximum benefits, but if for any reason he did not wish to make up the difference between the lesser contribution and the general contribution then the benefits to which he would ultimately become entitled would be adjusted accordingly. The only other proposal of any consequence—indeed, I think the only one of any sort—in the Bill, is the one that seeks to date this amendment back to the 1st July of this year. The reason for that is mainly, as I mentioned earlier, that one case has already occurred which the Government and the tribunal are anxious to

have adjusted in accordance with the Act as it will exist when this Bill becomes law. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. McDonald, debate adjourned.

MOTION—OLD AGE AND INVALID PENSIONERS.

As to Earnings and Basic Wage Equivalent.

Debate resumed from the 8th November on the following motion by Mrs. Cardell-Oliver:—

That, as this House approves of a living wage for all citizens, and realises that, in many cases, the income of pensioners does not allow for a decent standard of living, it urges the Commonwealth Government to take steps to raise the rate of pensions to those who are aged and infirm, and to allow all those pensioners able to work to earn an income, including the pension, equivalent to the basic wage.

to which an amendment had been moved by Mr. Holman as follows:—

That the following words be added:—“the foregoing also to include the recipients of widows and invalid pensions.”

Amendment put and passed.

MR. TRIAT (Mt. Magnet) [7.54]: I cannot altogether congratulate the member for Subiaco on this motion, not that I do not favour the substance of it. Every man and woman in all the Houses of Parliaments of Australia favours the suggestion that the elderly or infirm people of the Commonwealth should receive something adequate. But to move this motion here tends to produce destructive ideas. It raises in the minds of the 335,681 recipients of the old-age and invalid pensions in Australia the belief that by one stroke of a wand the member for Subiaco will get them an increase in their pensions. I have heard this matter discussed by many people who are of the opinion, not knowing anything about politics, that because this motion is moved in a State House, the pensions will be increased. I think that is wrong. The hon. member has imbued these people with the idea that this House can guarantee them an increase if every member votes in favour of it. I am of opinion that the men and women in the legislative halls of Canberra are just as anxious as we are to provide extra money for the old and infirm people. I am not re-

ferring to one political party, but to all. On these grounds I cannot commend the hon. member for moving the motion here. She would have done better to have had it moved in the House where it could have achieved results. She could have got some member of her Party in Canberra to move that these pensions be increased and by that means she would have gained her objective.

Mr. Cross: She did not want to achieve that.

Mr. TRIAT: I do not know whether she did, but I am prepared to believe that she did. If I thought that she was playing with politics in connection with this motion I would castigate her severely, but I do not think so. The position of the aged and invalid people of the world has been given deep thought since the beginning of time. Before the dawn of civilisation the savages had one way of getting rid of them; they killed them! That was the only decent and humane way to treat them. It was a case of the survival of the fittest in those days. The natives of Australia have left their aged people at waterholes to die. That is the only way the savage can treat such people.

Member: They must have passed their ideas to Hitler.

Mr. TRIAT: I do not know about that, but that is the position. What do we do with an old animal? When it is too old to eat or sleep properly we destroy it humanely in a lethal chamber or by giving it chloroform, but we do not do that to our old people; we are too kind. We give them the magnificent sum of 27s. a week which allows them simply to exist. This is a dangerous motion coming from a House like this, but it would be an excellent one if moved in the Federal Chamber. The old-age pensioners, male or female, today receive 27s. per week. It is safe to assume that there is no accommodation available in Perth, or anywhere in Western Australia, under 7s. a week, so that these people are left the magnificent sum of 20s. a week to provide for all other necessities except a bed and a roof over their head. The amount of 2s. 10s. a day has to keep them in food, clothing, papers, amusements, haircuts, and the various other necessities, and if they have anything left over they can buy alcoholic beverage.

The Minister for Works: If they can get it.

Mr. TRIAT: That is the position in which we put our old-age and invalid people, and the member for Subiaco is creating in the minds of these people the belief that they will get something better than this miserable pittance, which barely provides an existence for them. The hon. member should have suggested some ways and means of raising the extra money to provide what she calls a living or decent wage for the old-age pensioner. We know that the Government provides accommodation for the old and invalid people. If a man likes to go to the Old Men's Home he can get accommodation there and a certain amount of food and clothing. It is strange, but when elderly people get old they like to live in the place where they grew old. Old men on the Goldfields have no wish to go to "Sunset" to spend their last years. They desire to remain in their camps where they have been accustomed to living on the Goldfields and to pass the balance of their time with their few friends. To bring them from there to "Sunset" is like putting them into prison. Much as I admire the spirit of the Government in building that home, it is not a place to which people will go voluntarily. Occasionally the old people go there of their own free will, but generally they like to remain in their own home. Where is the decency in separating an old married couple in the last days of their lives by putting one in "Sunset" and the other in the Old Women's Home at Guildford? It is not right to do that. The last few years of their lives should be lived together. As we get older we realise that there is considerable attraction in living with someone with whom we have lived all our lives, even though we may quarrel on occasions. There is a lot of comfort in living with a person with whom one has lived for 30 or 40 years.

The Minister for the North-West: You are young.

Mr. TRIAT: I may be in some ways, but I am old in others. That is the position as I see it. I regret that we cannot do something reasonable for the pensioners. Some years ago a scheme was put up in the United States of America that appealed to me to some extent. A gentleman there suggested that every pensioner should receive 40 dollars per month, but that it should be granted on the one condition that at the end of the month he had none of the 40 dollars left. Each and every one

had to spend the full amount; no accumulation was to be permitted. In this way the money granted as pensions would go back into circulation and thus create prosperity. Unfortunately, the proposer of the scheme had means of making money out of it, because he was going to charge a percentage on all the money. However, there was the idea of providing old people with sufficient money to live on. When a man reaches the age of 65 or a woman the age of 60, he or she is supposed to be able to live on one quarter of the amount of money which he or she was in receipt of the day before. I cannot imagine a man who has been receiving £5 a week until he was within a day of turning 65 and then, one day later, being entitled to only 27s. a week and able to live on it. There is something wrong in a system that permits of this happening. If anything, a man requires a little extra in the way of comfort after he passes the age of 65 than he needed before, and pensioners certainly cannot live on 27s. a week.

Let me now take the motion moved by the member for Subiaco. She begins by saying, "That, as this House approves of a living wage for all citizens." That is a very bald statement. What is a living wage? Has the hon. member ever given consideration to what constitutes a living wage? Probably she is fortunate in never in her life having had to consider what a living wage is. There are many men in this State who have had to struggle along on the basic wage year after year and maintain a wife and family. Why did not the hon. member state some figure as constituting a living wage, say £7, £8 or £9 a week, and advocate that that should be paid? Why did she not go further and be honest and sincere in the matter and prescribe a living wage that she considered reasonable and decent? So I say that the opening passage in her motion is just a bald statement. Let me go a little further. She says, "and realises that, in many cases, the income of pensioners does not allow for a decent standard of living." The hon. member is not unintelligent; in fact she has a lot of brains and ability. I am quite satisfied that anybody who can frame a phrase like that and mislead people must have brains. "In many cases the income of pensioners does not allow for a decent standard of living." Can the hon.

member tell me how anyone receiving 27s. a week can obtain a decent standard of living? Of course she cannot; neither can anybody else.

This motion is something that appeals to old age and invalid pensioners, not only in Western Australia but also throughout Australia, because many of them cannot enjoy a decent standard of living. The hon. member has a lot of ability because she has succeeded in fooling a lot of people, and for a long time, too. Other members have spoken to the motion and expressed their views, but when I came to investigate the matter closely, I realised that the motion meant absolutely nothing, and it is certainly misleading. Yet people outside, who probably do not associate with the member for Subiaco to any great extent, but do associate with us to a considerable extent, could be excused for thinking that we have let them down by not moving to get them a higher rate of pension.

The hon. member's motion continues, "urges the Commonwealth Government to take steps to raise the rate of pensions." Would she have pensions raised by 6d., 1s. or 1s. 6d. a week? Why was she not definite that the pension should be raised to the basic wage rate or even to £4 a week? Possibly the hon. member was too clever to do that because she realised what it would mean. Doubtless she referred to "The Year Book" of 1940—the latest one obtainable. For the information of members, I intend to quote from it. When one talks about raising pensions, one must face facts, and those facts can be found in "The Year Book." In 1940 the number of old age pensioners was 276,760 and the number of invalid pensioners 50,121, and the total number of pensioners 335,681. In that year a total of £17,147,009 was paid in pensions by the Commonwealth Government. In the aggregate that is certainly a large sum, but when it comes to the individual, it is nothing at all. If the member for Subiaco had been desirous of assisting the pensioners, she could have said they ought to receive £4 or £4 5s. a week. That would be equivalent to three times the amount of the pension at present being paid, and if we multiply by three the aggregate amount paid in pensions by the Commonwealth, we get the colossal total of £51,442,000.

The Minister for Mines: To be paid every year.

Mr. TRIAT: Yes, to be paid by the Commonwealth every year. Despite the huge proportions of that amount, £4 a week, in my opinion, is not enough for old age pensioners. Pensioners should receive the basic wage rate, whatever that might be. The hon. member, however, did not commit herself by stating any sum of money, and in consequence, I say this is only deceiving the pensioners. When one makes an offer to a person, one makes a substantial offer—something worth having. But in this motion, what have we? Nothing. The motion is just a bald statement, hard and subtle and lacking in substance. I regret that the hon. member failed to make some definite suggestion. Life is a funny thing.

Mr. Thorn: Have you just found it out?

Mr. TRIAT: No, but I have not always realised it. Some six or seven years ago I thought I was on the point of being able to do something to help people who could not help themselves. I was returned to Parliament, and what did I find? I found that we had no power to do anything. I found that we had no power to handle the biggest things of all because that meant money. Whenever we have needed money to do a big job, we have had to approach the Commonwealth Government through the Grants Commission.

The Minister for Justice: We do not control our fiscal policy.

Mr. TRIAT: No, and I sometimes wonder whether the Commonwealth Government controls it at present. Certainly members in this State do not control it. So I say life is a peculiar thing. This was realised by philosophers even before the birth of Christ. I suppose members have heard of the celebrated philosopher and mathematician, Omar Khayyam. Whether he had any association with politics I do not know, but he was certainly able to express life in a very few words, as he did when he wrote—

'Tis all a chequer board of nights and days,
Where Destiny with men for pieces plays,
Hither and thither moves and mates and slays,

And one by one back in the closet lays.

Now, that is philosophy. And that describes the state of affairs today. This world is a mere checkerboard for the powers that be, and the people are just pawns in the game. All the people are pieces for the play of

Emperors and Kings. I would quote the words of Omar slightly altered, thus—

'Tis all a chequer board of nights and days,
Where politicians use old-age people for
pieces in their plays.

Unless this motion asks for something concrete, something that we can give to the people, we are just playing with them. I sincerely hope and trust that the member for Subiaco will support me in my amendment when she replies to the debate. I move an amendment—

That the following words be added:—
“and pledges itself to support the Government to achieve the changes in banking policy requisite to enable such heavy increased payments to be made.”

Mr. Thorn: What has that got to do with the motion?

Mr. TRIAT: It is the substance of the motion. How is the money to be obtained otherwise? If this country of ours required a thousand million pounds, the amount would be subscribed. In some manner it would be obtained. But the hon. member knows that not long after the war the returned soldiers will be walking around looking for a job.

Mr. Thorn: I hope not.

Mr. TRIAT: That is also my hope. But let me quote from “The West Australian” of today to show the intentions of the people in power, or of people seeking to get into power, as to what they will do when the war is over. Here the member for Subiaco has an opportunity to show sincerity regarding her motion, because she is associated with the Party I now refer to—the Liberal Party, which is led by Mr. Menzies. If one has convictions, let him or her stand up in the Party and state them. I have never yet refrained from expressing my opinions within the Party. Moreover, I am here to voice my opinions. I hope the member for Subiaco will take a similar stand. Today’s “West Australian” publishes a message from Canberra headed “The Banking System,” from which I quote—

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Menzies) said today that it was never intended that wartime controls should become a permanent part of banking legislation in Australia. It was now an open secret that the Labour Government, flogged by its increasingly powerful left wing, contemplated bringing down legislation at an early date to deal drastically with the position of the Commonwealth Bank and to place rigid controls of an apparently permanent kind upon the general Australian banking system.

Further on, Mr. Menzies is reported as saying—

He was not challenging necessary wartime controls. In the earliest days of the war the Government of which he was leader introduced regulations which placed restrictions upon the Australian banks. These were designed to ensure that the maximum financial resources were available for the furthering of the war effort and were part of a developing economic policy to enlarge wartime resources and diminish civil production and consumption. It was never intended however that wartime controls should become a permanent part of banking legislation.

Mr. Menzies is a practical man. I suppose there are not in Australia many people with more brains than Mr. Menzies has. But unfortunately he does not see the people on the lower rungs of the social ladder. The moment the war is over, it will be a case of go-as-you-please and everybody doing as he likes. We of the Labour Party believe that the banking system should be conducted for the benefit of all the people. No one has expounded that policy better than the member for Murchison. Perhaps I have not the knowledge possessed by that hon. member, but I have followed him closely in his speeches, and I am a firm believer in what he advocates with respect to monetary reform. I quote further from “The West Australian”—

Mr. Menzies warned people against accepting any proposal to abolish the Commonwealth Bank Board or to reduce it to the status of an advisory body, thus opening the door to complete political control of the central bank. Those who so signally defeated the recent Powers Referendum should recall to their minds that by gaining control of the people’s money their present political masters would obtain a power to regiment and control their lives, which far exceeded the powers so definitely refused to them in August.

Mr. Menzies has at last come out into the open and told us his views plainly. Those who control the finances of a country control the people of that country.

Mr. Marshall: He does not mind international Jews controlling us!

Mr. TRIAT: I hope the member for Subiaco will tell Mr. Menzies, either verbally or by letter, that in our opinion there are 300,000 Australians who should be given pensions of not less than £1 per week.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth—on amendment): We have got a long way from the pensioners. I can see no difficulty about the motion. Any motion can be picked to

pieces, any Bill can be picked to pieces, with regard to verbal expressions. If we take the present motion and have a look at it, what does it say? That the House approves of a living wage for all citizens. Well, I suppose it does; and how unwise it would be in any motion like this to suggest what the living wage ought to be in a specific sum, because that distracts attention from the real principle and reduces our discussion to one which can never be solved, seeing that it varies from day to day or from year to year. What is a living wage? What is a living wage in this locality or State may be different from a living wage in another country or State. The broad principle that this House believes in the living wage is something that every member knows. Then the mover of the amendment says that in many cases the income received by pensioners does not amount to a living standard.

Mr. SPEAKER: The only matter before the House at present is the amendment moved by the member for Mr. Magnet.

Mr. McDONALD: This is a very simple motion designed to express an opinion on behalf of the House, that something should be done to improve the living standard of pensioners. That is all it amounts to; the details do not matter at all. Now it is sought to attach to the motion a controversial matter regarding banking policy. Some might think the object will be achieved in that way; others might think it will not. Banking, or control of currency, or control of the nation's credit, rests ultimately in the hands of the Commonwealth Parliament. It is a power given to that Parliament by the Constitution. The Commonwealth possesses it today. The Commonwealth has complete control today over the Commonwealth Bank and over all private banks, as well as over all expansion of credit. Whether the Commonwealth should enter into the field of private banking more than it is doing at present is, I say, a matter on which people differ. The way in which people differ, and genuinely differ, is simply this: What is the best for the great mass of the people? We may talk about big business and selfish people trying to control things to the detriment of the people as a whole by financial manipulation; but I say, in all sincerity, I think there is less of that in Australia than in perhaps any other country in the world.

Those who differ on banking policy differ on the stability of the value of the pound;

they differ on the possibility of inflation; they differ on the danger of political control, which may lead to expansion of credit and consequent inflation; and they may believe that in the present system, under which the control of currency is divided or rests upon the responsibility of a number of institutions and people, there is more stability than there is under political control. What I regret is that a motion, designed to assist people who peculiarly need our support and assistance, should be confused by a matter which is really quite irrelevant. The motion is to assert a principle, an objective, but the amendment is going to cloud and confuse the whole issue. I see no reason why this House should not express an opinion on behalf of an under-privileged class in the community to the Commonwealth Parliament so that the latter may take action to help that under-privileged class. We are quite entitled to make representations, as a Parliament, to the Commonwealth Parliament as to the action which it should take within its constitutional powers.

Here, by this very simple motion, we are expressing a hope that something more will be done for people who are so much in need of something more being done for them. The motion, which I feel sure the House will adopt, and which every member must feel deserves his support, is now to be sabotaged or confused by having attached to it a controversial matter relating to something which is quite different, namely, the technique or machinery of finance. I therefore hope the House will not agree to the amendment. We will not confuse the pensioners, who, on the whole, I think realise quite well—very well indeed—that pensions are a Commonwealth matter. I am an honorary member of the Pensioners' League and I meet the members not infrequently. They are intelligent people. I hardly think there is a pensioner who does not know that pensions are a Commonwealth and not a State matter, and who does not know that all we can do here is to express to the Commonwealth Parliament an objective which it should carry out. I am quite satisfied there is no confusion in the minds of the pensioners in this State or anywhere else, but I do regret that we should seek to confuse a very simple issue, which is our desire to improve the lot of pensioners, by attaching to the motion some-

thing which is not relevant and which is controversial.

Amendment put and passed.

MR. NEEDHAM (Perth): The motion originally tabled by the member for Subiaco has experienced many changes since the day she launched it. As originally laid on the Table of the House, it can hardly be recognised now because of the amendments which have been made. In the first place, the member for Subiaco set out to tell the Commonwealth Government that it should increase the pensions to the old aged and infirm, and to allow the pensioners who are physically fit to increase their weekly income by accepting employment. Then we had the amendment moved by the member for Forrest to include recipients of widows' and invalid pensions. Now we have the amendment moved by the member for Mt. Magnet. With all these things I agree. I agree with the original motion, and I certainly agree with the amendments that have been added to it. But no-one is better aware than is the member for Subiaco that, as a result of the discussions on the motion and the motion as amended, the pensions will not be increased by one penny a week. No-one knows better than does the member for Subiaco that this Parliament has no power at all to do anything in the way of increasing those pensions. On the contrary, the motion will raise false hopes in the breasts of many pensioners, notwithstanding the statement of the member for West Perth that all pensioners know that only the Commonwealth Parliament can vary these pensions. I could name many pensioners who would think if this motion is passed, that their pensions would automatically be increased. That is wrong. That kind of false hope should not be raised in the breasts of the pensioners.

It would be interesting to assure the member for Subiaco that it does not require a motion of this nature to impress upon the members of the Commonwealth Labour Government the necessity for increasing old age, widows' and invalid pensions. As a matter of fact, had it not been for the advent of a Labour Party in the Commonwealth Parliament, I am not so sure that we would be discussing the pension question here tonight. I had the honour of being a member of the Commonwealth Parliament when the invalid and old age pensions measure was intro-

duced. It is true that the Bill was brought down by an anti-Labour Government headed by the then Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Alfred Deakin. But it is also true that that Government was compelled to introduce that legislation in order to retain the support of the then Labour Party in the Commonwealth Parliament. At the same time the maternity allowance was introduced. That, then, was the genesis of the payment of invalid and old age pensions. Let me go a bit further. As time went on and other anti-Labour Governments came into power, it was because of the pressure of the Labour Party in opposition that an increase was granted in the pensions given to invalid and aged people.

I repeat that there was no necessity for a motion of this kind to be moved to impress the Commonwealth Government with the necessity of revising the present scale of pensions payments. About the time the member for Subiaco introduced the motion, I was in communication, through Mr. Burke, M.H.R., with Senator Fraser, Minister for Health and Social Services in the Commonwealth Parliament. I was desirous of finding out what was the intention of the Commonwealth Government in regard to an increase in pensions. I think that the extracts I propose to read from this letter will be relevant to the subject under discussion. The letter is addressed to me. It is from Senator Fraser and is dated the 22nd October, 1944. It reads as follows:—

Although no provision was made in the Budget for an increase in the rate of invalid and old age pensions, it is the intention of the Federal Government to give consideration to this matter at an early date. It will be appreciated, however, that it is not possible at the present juncture for me to furnish details of the Government's proposals in this regard.

Further on the letter states—

Regarding social service legislation generally, I desire to set out briefly what the Labour Party has done to improve the social conditions of the people of Australia. As a result of demands made by the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party, the Government of the day—

that was the Government headed by Mr. Menzies—

—was compelled to increase the pension rate from 20s. to 21s. per week. In addition, it was agreed that increases in the amount paid to pensioners were to be made by steps of 6d. per week according to the cost of living.

That was the first time the question of the effect of the cost of living on pensions was

considered. Before that, the pension was allowed to stand, irrespective of the cost of living. The letter continues—

Since Labour assumed office, it has on two occasions increased the rate so that today a pensioner receives 27s. per week and is permitted to receive 12s. 6d. from other sources or 25s. in the case of a married couple, both pensioners. As you know, the 27s. per week has now been stabilised by law and cannot be reduced without Parliamentary consent. In addition to the above, the present Government has passed social service legislation, such as widows' pensions, allowance to wives of invalid pensioners, increased the rate of maternity allowance, including a special allowance of £5 extra in respect of twins and £10 extra in respect of triplets, 25s. per week for the four weeks immediately before and the four weeks immediately after the child is born, and provided funeral benefits of £10 and the like which, today, cost the Government approximately £14,250,000 a year. From this you will observe that the Government has done a great deal to improve the social conditions of the people.

When the maternity allowance was first introduced, it was given to any mother without any means test. An anti-Labour Government afterwards altered that by introducing the means test, which the present Labour Government has abolished. My last extract from this letter is as follows:—

The position of the pensioner must be considered in the light of the Government's social service programme. Recently the Government passed the Pharmaceutical Benefits Act, which provides for free medicine for the people. Pensioners will benefit materially from this scheme as it will relieve any strain imposed on them financially in regard to health matters. This provision will cost an additional £2,000,000 per annum. In addition, the Government is now considering a general health scheme, which will ultimately be incorporated in a Bill to be presented to Parliament, which will provide for free hospitalisation, dental treatment and the like.

That is a statement from a responsible Minister of the present Commonwealth Government, indicating that the question of an increase in invalid and old-age pensions is at present under consideration. I have instanced the assistance given to pensioners as citizens of the country by the social services just referred to, and I contend that the facts I have submitted prove the bona fides of the Commonwealth Labour Government in that regard. The other portion of the motion moved by the member for Subiaco asks that an old-age pensioner, physically fit, should be allowed to supplement his pension by earning money up to a sum equivalent

to the basic wage. With that I agree. I would point out that Labour councils from the six States long ago pointed out to the Commonwealth Labour Government the necessity for allowing old-age pensioners who are physically fit to earn an amount up to the basic wage. I am not one of those who pretend that 27s. a week for a pensioner is sufficient; not by any means! But I have just emphasised the progressive steps that have been taken by the present Commonwealth Labour Government to increase that pension in recent times from £1 to £1 7s. and its determination to increase that amount further. That £1 7s. is stabilised by law and cannot be reduced without the approval of Parliament. I venture to say that the Government will not be inattentive to the requests sent to it to consider allowing fit old-age pensioners to earn up to the basic wage.

I suggest that the day is not far distant when the people of this Commonwealth will demand that invalid pensioners shall receive pensions equivalent to the basic wage if the condition of their health will not permit them to work. No one can say that 27s. a week is sufficient. If we are to get anywhere in the proposed new order then no-one should be in the position of receiving an income less than the basic wage. It has frequently been contended that it is only the people who have been thriftless during their lives who get the old-age pension, and that if they had been careful and saved and lived frugally they could have set aside something for the day when they became physically unfit to work, or were rendered incapable as a result of old age. But we all know that the great majority of the working people of this country are not troubled with trying to save for a rainy day: their trouble is to try to live and rear a family on the miserable pittance they get! They do not receive sufficient to do that, let alone put aside something for old age.

Today public thought is in the direction of seeing that no-one is struggling and that all should at least have somewhere to live in frugal comfort. I would refer briefly to another phase. Within recent years—again due to the Labour Government of this State—we have a superannuation scheme in operation. It is true that the minimum amount which an employee receives from that fund is not much—it is £2 per week—but it is a help. But there are many people

who had retired prior to that scheme coming into operation and who were compulsorily retired at the age of 65. Through no fault of their own they cannot get the benefit of the scheme. Many of those people are able to earn £2 or £3 a week, and should be allowed to do so without its in any way interfering with the pension they receive from the Commonwealth Government. The motion in its present form is fairly comprehensive. It deals with the aged, the infirm, the invalid and the widow. Only one section that should be included is not included, namely, the spinster. Possibly the Commonwealth Government will take that section into consideration also.

Mr. Fox: What about the bachelor?

Mr. NEEDHAM: He can fossick for himself. The spinster is completely left out. Why should a widow at 50 years of age be entitled to a pension whilst a spinster must be 60 before being so entitled? We know that there are many estimable women who, owing to the filial devotion to their parents, and to members of their family, have not been able to enter into the bonds of holy matrimony. They have to struggle to live. Some women are compelled to remain unmarried because of physical reasons. When we talk about pensions and trying to improve social services the spinster must not be forgotten. The member for West Perth was afraid that the amendment moved by the member for Mt. Magnet would confuse the issue. It will not confuse the issue; it is the best part of the motion. During the last two or three years we have heard more about social security than ever before. Day after day we are telling the people that when this titanic struggle is over social security is assured. I am lately beginning to lose faith in many of the promises made by the leaders of public thought and by the leaders of the Allied Nations. The first couple of years of this present cataclysm were the worst, and during that time the Atlantic Charter was brought into being. Almost every day for a while there were references to the Atlantic Charter. From the way things are shaping now I am again beginning to be afraid of lip-service.

Mr. Marshall: They discovered that the animals in the zoo had those four freedoms, so they gave them up!

Mr. NEEDHAM: If we are to get anywhere in the new order so frequently prom-

ised to us it is essential that the nation take charge of its credit. We cannot get on without it. All these promises will remain unfulfilled so long as the credit of the nation is in the hands of a few private people instead of in the hands of the people themselves. The amendment is the main portion of the motion. When the Commonwealth Government realises the necessity for implementing that plank of the Labour Party's platform, which deals with the taking over of the banking system of this country by the Government and the creation of national credit, we shall be doing something for the people.

MR. WATTS (Katanning): It seems to be a popular pastime this evening to take part in the debate on this motion. I had no intention of speaking on the motion until I heard the interesting but unedifying speech of my friend the member for Mt. Magnet. His remarks tended to lower the tone of the debate. Quite contrary to his usual practice, he spoke in a manner which I regard as highly undesirable because what he succeeded in doing was to throw aspersions on the character and mentality of the member for Subiaco in a way which I think all other members in this House would resent if they thought quietly over the matter for a few minutes. The member for Subiaco may have introduced in this House a motion whose phraseology would not pass a test that might be given by those who are best qualified to frame motions of this character. Yet I believe its meaning and intention are perfectly clear to all members, and that its contents are not of such a nature as to justify the strictures that have been passed on it. Were it an uncommon thing for members to move motions of this nature some exception might have been taken to it, but over the years members from both sides of the House have from time to time moved motions of a character, and on a par with the one before us, and on no previous occasion has any member sought to impugn the sincerity of the mover. I find that on the 30th October, 1940, for example, the member for Irwin-Moore moved a motion in this House as follows:—

That this House fully endorses the policy of the Federal Labour Party in that the allowance made to the children of soldier dependants be increased forthwith from one shilling per day to one shilling and sixpence per day.

To that motion the member for Perth, who has just resumed his seat, moved an amendment to add the following words:—

and an increase from five shillings a day to eight shillings a day on the pay of militia men; members of the A.I.F. to receive eight shillings a day (including one shilling a day deferred pay) and three shillings a day for wife.

Mr. Triat: In those motions, definite amounts were suggested.

Mr. WATTS: To my mind that makes not the slightest difference to the point of view I am expressing. If it is wrong to move in this House motions that might lead people to believe that they are going to receive substantial additions to their remuneration, it is wrong to state or not to state an amount. The principle is either right or wrong. In my view, members of this House are fully entitled at any time to bring forward any subject and debate it, so long as it is within the Standing Orders and the Constitution, whether it be in the form of advice to the Commonwealth Government, the Imperial Government or the Government of Western Australia. That right has been taken full advantage of in this House during past years, and it was taken advantage of by the member for Perth in the amendment he moved on the 30th October, 1940. The member for Perth, speaking in support of his amendment, said—

I presume that the chief objection to a suggestion of this kind, if it is endorsed by the House and forwarded to the Federal Government, will be the increased expenditure rendered necessary by its adoption, but I submit in all earnestness that the cost of implementing this request would be infinitesimal in comparison with the welter of expenditure now being incurred in the prosecution of the war. That expenditure is necessary because, to bring the war to a victorious conclusion, will be impossible without the expenditure of colossal sums of money.

Mr. Mann: And Curtin was not Prime Minister then.

Mr. WATTS: If those words were true on the 30th October, 1940, they are equally true, if not more so—provided that were possible—at the present time. The expenditure that would be entailed by giving effect to a motion of the character of that moved by the member for Subiaco would be infinitesimal as compared with the expenditure required for the prosecution of the war.

Mr. Triat: I would support a move to get £50,000,000 a year for pensioners.

Mr. WATTS: I am not opposing the motion or the amendment. I said nothing when the amendment was moved, but I say that the amendment was not moved with the intention of improving the motion. It was moved with the intention of evidencing dissatisfaction with the mentality of the member for Subiaco. I say the hon. member cannot escape from the implication that that was the underlying reason for moving the amendment. I have a very great regard for the hon. member and for his obvious ability, and I am more than surprised that I am obliged to take this point of view. However, that is by the way.

Now I will turn more particularly to the motion. In it the member for Subiaco in effect says she approves of a living wage for all citizens. Well, I have yet to find anybody in this House who will conflict with that point of view. There may be one exception and that is that where a citizen is able to work, he should do so for his living wage. That should be the only qualification made to the proposal by any member of the House. The amount of the wage should be determined, as it always is determined and always should be determined, by some tribunal responsible by statute to Parliament, but responsible in no other way and interfered with in no way by us. Such tribunals invariably consist of honourable men who are best able to judge the necessities and arrive at a determination of the phrase "a living wage." The motion continues—"In many cases, the income of pensioners does not allow for a decent standard of living." Some exception was taken by one or more members because no indication was given. Why was no indication given? Because the conditions and financial positions of old-age pensioners vary as much as most other things vary.

Take the position of a man and his wife who are on an old-age pension. The old gentleman, as many old gentlemen do, feels inclined to wear out rather than to rust out and tries to do something to help himself. He is entitled to do so to a limited extent, and at present he may earn 25s. a week, provided his wife is not earning also, and this amount, added to the £2 14s. of the combined pensions they receive, if on the maximum sum, would bring them to within a shilling of

£4 a week. Therefore there are variations in the classes of person either anxious or desirous of doing that sort of thing because of good health, although old age has come on, and those people who are unable to do anything of the sort are compelled to subsist entirely upon the £2 14s. a week or perhaps a lesser sum if they have some small amount of property, although it may be unremunerative.

We find a difference too in the circumstances of an old-age pensioner who perhaps is receiving, through the loss of some dear one, a pension from the Department of the Army or other of the armed services. They are in much the same position; they are not on the minimum pension. There are, therefore, many cases where the minimum pension does not apply, and where any tribunal, if one were appointed, to arrive at a conclusion of what the living wage should be, would find distinct variations between the amounts to be paid in some cases and the amounts to be paid in other cases, just as there are variations at present. The motion says, "in many cases, the income of the pensioners does not allow for a decent standard of living." Of course it does not. I doubt very much whether £3 19s. a week to which I have referred would, in the present state of prices, possibly admit of a decent standard of living for such people. Even if it did, the £2 14s. a week, in the case of a married couple, would be more difficult, and 27s. in the case of a single old-age pensioner, would be bordering on the impossible.

There are almost as many variations as there are pensioners, and it would be utterly ridiculous and beyond the power of the House, with the opportunity we have, to arrive at a conclusion as to what is or what is not a living wage. The only body to determine that is a properly constituted tribunal, the appointment of which, this motion, if given effect to, would not prevent. The motion also says "urges the Commonwealth Government to take steps to raise the rate of pensions to those who are aged and infirm, and to allow all those pensioners able to work to earn an income, including the pension, equivalent to the basic wage." I admit that the phraseology employed is not as good as it might be, but the intention is perfectly clear. I do not think the hon. member for

one moment had any more intention of falsely raising a hope in the 300,000 pensioners throughout Australia, five-sixths of whom will never hear of the motion, than the member for Perth had of raising the hopes of 300,000 members of the A.I.F. in 1940 when he moved the amendment to the motion of the member for Irwin-Moore to which I referred a few minutes ago. We have another amendment, one pledging the House to support the Government to achieve the changes in banking policy requisite to enable heavily increased payments to be made.

I noticed there was no necessity for any great change in banking policy when the member for Perth proposed an amendment—carrying with it an obligation that is, I venture to say, far greater than this motion will ever do—which was passed in October of 1940. There was no need then, it would appear, to reform the banking policy of the Commonwealth and its people. If there is need today, there was need then. I feel, unfortunately, not well qualified to judge as to what is the need in that regard. I have never at any time set myself up, nor do I now set myself up, as an authority on such a matter. I admit that my knowledge of this subject is extremely limited. I am prepared to leave the verdict to those who, by expert knowledge, are better able to judge than I am. But I do say that we have in this Chamber an hon. member, the member for Murchison, who has time and time again told us, as I have understood him, that there is no necessity whatever to change the banking policy as disclosed or suggested in my understanding of the amendment now added to this motion by the member for Mt. Magnet. That hon. member would have us believe—and he has submitted evidence which at least is well worthy of our consideration—that the power already lies within the confines of the Commonwealth Bank Act and the Commonwealth Constitution Act to do all that is requisite for this purpose, if anything is requisite at all. The hon. member has criticised in the strongest possible terms, because of their failure to take action, the Commonwealth Government of Australia and especially the Prime Minister.

Mr. SPEAKER: Of course, the hon. member is not in order in discussing what

the member for Murchison said on another occasion in this session.

Mr. WATTS: This session?

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes. Four days ago. He said it this session.

Mr. WATTS: May I refer to the hon. member's speech of two years ago?

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr. WATTS: If, Sir, you will give me a moment, I will find the paragraph that suits my purpose. On the 25th August, 1942, the member for Murchison said—

God help this country if it is going to depend on war loans, war savings certificates and bonds to develop a 100 per cent. war effort. But I believe that is what is really happening. The Government should be using the Commonwealth Bank to make the flow of money continue without cessation so that every man and machine possible could produce something every 24 hours of every day in the week. Such production is not possible, because the Government is dependent on paltry contributions from individual citizens instead of developing and utilising the Commonwealth Bank. There is no limit to the credit the Bank could make available, outside of the men and materials. Let me give members some idea of what is going on all the time. There is a tendency on the part of these people to blame the industrialists, just as is happening in England; to accuse them of not doing their best, when really no orders are forthcoming. Approximately six weeks ago I read in an Eastern States paper a letter written by Mr. Makin in reply to one of the engineering firms of New South Wales, which complained very bitterly that there was much machinery available that was not being used in the war effort. Mr. Makin wrote a letter—and it is there for everybody to see—telling the secretary of this firm that it was well known that only 40 per cent. of the capacity of Australia to produce war goods was being used after three years of war. The excuse given was that there were no orders from the various arms of our Defence Forces.

Further down on the same page, 300, the hon. member, referring to the Federal Treasurer, said—

Consider Mr. Chifley's statement that taxation is necessary to prevent inflation! He asserts that the purchasing power of the people has increased in proportion to the consumable goods produced, and that the prices of those consumable goods must therefore inevitably rise and bring about inflation. I put it to Mr. Chifley or to anybody else that he cannot have it two ways. It may be true that the purchasing power of the people has increased, and it may also be true that the consumable goods did not increase sufficiently to equate the increase in the purchasing power.

The Premier: All of which has nothing to do with this motion. The speech is about inflation and other things.

Mr. WATTS: We come further down in the interesting story of which I think I may read some more, since I must give chapter and verse. However, purely out of deference to my friend the Premier, I shall read no more of the speech of the member for Murchison. From time to time in past sessions this question has been made the subject of debate by various members of the House. It seems to me that we should follow up the motions we have carried from time to time, motions sponsored in some cases by the member for Murchison, calling for the activity to which I have referred; not to the activity which is implied in the amendment put on to this motion by the member for Mt. Magnet. Therefore, in order to make the position perfectly clear, I move an amendment—

That the following words be added:—
“by the issue of bank credit by the existing means at the disposal of the Commonwealth Bank if the Prime Minister is still of the opinion that he was, in regard to this matter, when Leader of the Opposition.”

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

BILL—MOTOR VEHICLE (THIRD PARTY INSURANCE) ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS [9.10]
in moving the second reading said: Last session Parliament passed an Act making it compulsory for owners of motor vehicles to take out insurance covering the legal liability of any person driving a motor vehicle in respect of the death of or injury to a third person in the use of the vehicle. During the progress of the measure through Parliament, an undertaking was given on behalf of the Government that the legislation would not be proclaimed until a fair and reasonable schedule of insurance premium rates had been recommended by a premiums committee which was provided for in the measure. The Premiums Committee was duly set up and finally made the necessary recommendations to the Government. The Government considered the recommendations were satisfactory; as a matter of fact, the opinion of the Government was that the rates recommended by the committee were better than could have been expected by most people. As a result, the recommen-

dations were adopted. The proclamation bringing the Act into force was issued and the legislation became effective as from the 1st July this year.

The period intervening between the issuing of the proclamation and the 1st July was not very great, but nevertheless the necessary organising work was completed to enable everything to operate smoothly from the 1st July. That was owing to the solid co-operation of all the local authorities, the Royal Automobile Club, and the approved insurers, numbering 66. Although the Act has been only operating since the 1st July of this year, it has been found in practice that some sections require alteration and that additions to the Act are needed. This Bill contains the proposals of the Government under those two headings. The first proposal is to include within the definition of the term "Motor Vehicle," trailers, semi-trailers and caravans. At present these vehicles—if we may so term them—do not come within the definition of "Motor Vehicles" in the Act. Consequently, the Premiums Committee is not entitled to recommend premium rates for them, and they cannot be compulsorily covered by third-party insurance. If the owner of a trailer, a semi-trailer or a caravan cares voluntarily to insure the vehicle and himself against third-party risk, well and good. If not, there is not the same protection to the public in respect of those vehicles as there is in respect of motor vehicles which do come within the definition of that term in the Act.

Hon. N. Keenan: Those particular vehicles only move when they are pulled.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is true that some motive power is required to draw them along the road. Quite a number of trailers, semi-trailers and caravans are in use. The fact that the vehicle drawing them is covered by third-party insurance does not mean that they are automatically covered by the same insurance. It is conceivable, therefore, that a person injured by a trailer, semi-trailer or caravan, would not be protected in the same way as he would be protected if the accident was caused by a motorcar, a motor truck, a motor bicycle or a motor vehicle which, in fact, come within the definition of the term in the Act. It is also conceivable—and it has occurred on more than one occasion—that a trailer, semi-trailer or caravan might become accidentally detached from the vehicle which draws it;

and, by becoming detached accidentally, it could easily cause injury or even death to a person or a number of persons.

As there is no policy under the Act, as now worded, to cover trailers, semi-trailers and caravans against third-party risk, it has been considered advisable to include in this Bill an amendment which will make it compulsory for owners and operators of trailers, semi-trailers and caravans, to cover those vehicles with a policy of third-party insurance. Section 4, Subsection (8), of the Act, requires a person when applying for a license or the renewal of a license of a motor vehicle to sign and forward a statement certifying that a policy of insurance under the Act is in force in relation to the motor vehicle in question. This requirement of the Act was found to be reasonably workable in the metropolitan area and in municipalities in the country; but it was found to be largely unworkable in many road board areas; and in some of the more remote road board districts it was found to be almost entirely unworkable.

For instance, in many country districts a person would send in his certificate of insurance, with a letter applying for a license, or for a renewal of the license, of his motor vehicle, and enclosing a cheque or money order to cover the license fee. But because the person had not sent a signed statement certifying that a policy of insurance under the Act was in force, the local governing authority concerned was not able legally to renew the license on the motor vehicle. Had the local authorities stuck rigidly to the Act, no renewal of license—or new license, if that had been necessary—could have been issued. Many of the people of whom I am speaking live as far as 100, 200, 300 or even 500 miles from their road board office centre. So it is quite easy for members to realise how much delay would have been caused and how much inconvenience—and probable loss—would have been inflicted on large numbers of motor vehicle owners in country districts if the local authorities had stuck rigidly to the legal requirements of the Act in connection with this particular matter.

Fortunately, those authorities used their commonsense and did not follow out the law to the letter—or even in the spirit, I suppose—but forwarded the necessary renewal of license or the necessary new

license without any delay. As a result, motor vehicle owners were able to carry on their operations without breaking the law and without running the risk of being prosecuted. The appropriate amendment in this Bill deletes from the Act the requirement I have been discussing. It will still be necessary for the certificate of insurance to be forwarded to the local governing authority when a renewal of license is being applied for, but that is all that will be required. This will simplify the procedure very greatly and will overcome a lot of legal restriction and difficulty which would otherwise exist, more particularly in the remote country districts.

Another amendment to the same subsection and section provides that documentary evidence of insurance other than the prescribed certificate of insurance may be accepted by a licensing authority. The necessity for this amendment arises from the fact that many owners of motor vehicles do not license their vehicles for a complete year. It is compulsory for them to take out a third party insurance policy for a complete year; but, under the Traffic Act, they are allowed to take out a motor license for three months or for six months, if they so desire. It is impossible for them to carry out the requirements of this subsection of the Act if they have to provide a certificate of insurance each time they apply for a renewal of license. So it is provided that all that will be required is documentary evidence other than the prescribed certificate; and, if that documentary evidence is acceptable to the licensing authority, no further action will be required to enable the renewal of the license to be completed.

Hon. N. Keenan: Will that apply generally? Will it apply to the metropolitan area?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. Another amendment will enable the policy of insurance to follow a vehicle outside of the State. At present, insurance policies issued under the Act cover a vehicle only when it is within Western Australia. The amendment will enable the policy to follow the vehicle even though it be taken by the owner to one of the other States. This is a provision which exists, I think in the Acts of all the other States. It is highly desirable that our Act should be brought into line in order that reciprocal

arrangements may operate between this State and other States.

If I remember rightly, there was a good deal of discussion last session when the Bill was going through each House on the exclusion of quite a number of people from the protective cover of the insurance policies to be issued under the Act. Guest passengers were excluded from cover, as were the relatives of the driver of any vehicle involved in a collision in connection with which one or other of the drivers concerned was proved to be negligent. Most members considered those exclusions were on the harsh side; that the exclusion from insurance cover of guest passengers and relatives narrowed the protective cover of the Act very considerably; and some members wondered whether, with those narrow limits of cover, the legislation was really worth while. In recent weeks, serious consideration has been given to those exclusions as provided for in the Act, and it was decided to include in the Bill a provision to remove them.

If this part of the Bill becomes law, guest passengers and relatives of drivers of any vehicle involved in a collision will be covered in the same way as anyone else. The amendment is one which is, to a large extent, self-explanatory and one which will commend itself to the sympathetic support of every member. I do not propose to say any more about it now except that similar provisions are contained in the legislation that operates in South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and also, I think, in Queensland.

Mr. Seward: Is that likely to affect current policies in regard to the premiums paid?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This proposal has the full support of the Royal Automobile Club, which is perhaps natural, and also of the Premiums Committee. I have had discussions as to the likely effect of this liberalisation of the Act upon insurance premium rates, and have been assured it is not likely those rates will be increased as a result of the Act being liberalised to this extent. I have been given to understand that the experience of almost every approved insurer has been that claims have not been heavy, mainly because of the fact that large numbers of vehicles do very little travelling upon the road

through wartime restrictions in the way of scarcity of petrol and the even greater scarcity of motor tyres and tubes.

Another proposal in the Bill will make it legally certain that an insured motor vehicle will continue to be covered during any negotiations for a change of ownership, and following any change of ownership. Under the Act as at present worded, there is considerable legal doubt as to whether a motor vehicle in connection with which a change of ownership occurs is all the time covered by the insurance policy held by the person negotiating to sell the vehicle. It is also proposed to provide a 15 days' extension from the 30th June each year for the renewal of insurance policies under the Act. Members will know that under the Traffic Act owners of motor vehicles are given 14 or 15 days' grace at the end of each licensing year to enable them to renew their licenses. The amendment in this Bill will apply the same principle to the renewal of insurance policies under the Act. Another provision deals with the position of a worker who uses his motor vehicle in the business of his employer. At the present time it is doubtful, legally, whether the employer is protected when one of his workers is using his own—that is, the worker's—car in connection with the business of the employer. The proposal in the Bill on that point aims to clear up legal doubts and to establish the definite and actual legal liability of the worker on the one side and the employer on the other in circumstances such as I have mentioned.

The Bill further provides that any alteration to the Act will automatically effect a similar alteration to insurance policies operating under the Act. Members will realise that it would entail a great deal of work on the part of the insurance companies and a great deal of inconvenience to the holders of insurance policies if, every time the Act was amended, all the policies had to be called in for the purpose of being amended by the insurance companies in accordance with the amendment to the law. The amendment in the Bill will simplify the matter completely, and will automatically amend the insurance policies in accordance with any amendment made from time to time to the Act. The Act lays it down that an insurance policy must be issued by the company and obtained annually by every owner

of a motor vehicle. Legally this means that each year the owner of a motor vehicle would have to apply for a new policy and the insurance office concerned would have to issue a new policy. The general practice in the insurance world, as members are well aware, is not to issue a new policy each year where premiums are payable annually, but to issue a renewal certificate on the original policy. To bring the provisions of the Act into line with the generally accepted insurance practice the Bill provides that any renewal of an insurance policy is to be regarded, in fact, as the issuance of a new policy for the purposes of the Act.

The Act contains another harsh provision which this Bill seeks to overcome. That provision lays down that any claim made under the Act must be made within a period of one month from the date of the accident. Members on reflection will realise that it could easily, in some cases, be very difficult and in other cases impossible for a claim to be lodged within one month of the date of the accident. It is quite conceivable, in the event of an accident, that a person might be incapable for at least a month or longer. He might be so incapable as to be unable to think about a claim or even to know that he had been involved in an accident. If such a person had no-one watching his interests then the period of time of one month allowed would pass by and no claim would be lodged, and the legal rights of that person would disappear. The Bill proposes to extend the period in which a claim may be made from one month to one year, and provision is further made for the period of one year to be extended in special circumstances. Those are the main proposals in the Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. N. Keenan, debate adjourned.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1944-45.

In Committee of Supply.

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

Vote—Public Works and Buildings, £201,730:

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (continued) [9.38]: When I ceased speaking last night I had completed the explanation of the normal activities of the department

in ordinary times. I also explained to members the changes in normal procedure in the department due to war conditions. I made it clear that the department, during the war years, had become an organisation to a large extent for the carrying out of work for the Defence Department, and particularly for the departments of the Army, the Air Force and the Navy. During the last year, particularly, many officers of the Public Works Department devoted a great deal of their time and ability to the development of proposals for post-war works. It might be considered by some members that work of this description is comparatively easy in a large undeveloped State like Western Australia. It might be thought that there are so many undertakings requiring to be carried out in all parts of the State, as soon as men and materials are available, as to make it the easiest job in the world to say that this shall be done, that shall be done and something else shall be done, and to develop quickly a programme of works sufficiently large to meet most of the requirements of the State and to absorb every man available for employment.

The problem, unfortunately, is not as easy as that. The Governments of Australia will be very severely restricted during the first two post-war years by the conditions which have been laid down in relation to the works upon which loan funds may be spent in that period. There was an idea abroad at one stage that State Governments would be able to develop proposals and place them before the Commonwealth Government for financial assistance, and by that means formulate what might be called a long-term policy of development. That was the idea I myself entertained for quite a long time, and that was the basis upon which plans were developed for some considerable period. However, the stage was reached when the Commonwealth intimated to the States that it was not prepared to grant in the first two post-war years financial assistance in connection with any proposals put up by State Governments. The argument advanced by the Commonwealth was that there would be such an accumulation of delayed, urgent and essential State works to be carried out after the war as to give each State Government a full programme in overtaking the arrears brought about by war conditions. Thus it was laid down that the works to be carried out in the first two post-war years would

be those that the States would have to finance entirely out of their own resources, including new borrowings. The same principle was to be applied by the Commonwealth to the requirements of local governing authorities.

It is true that in Western Australia, as in other States of the Commonwealth, there is a great accumulation of delayed work to be carried out as soon as conditions permit of that being done. Every member knows from his own experience just how much delayed work will have to be carried out in connection with the railways. The same remark applies with almost equal force to the provision of water supplies in Western Australia, and to many other urgent requirements. In these circumstances, whether the Government likes it or not, it has been placed in the position of having to plan its post-war work for the first two years after hostilities cease on the basis I have indicated. This necessitated changes in many plans we had been working upon in this State. That does not mean that some of the plans developed on the long-range basis will not still be capable of achievement in the years ahead. Members may have read in yesterday's issue of "The West Australian," a statement by the Commonwealth Minister for Post-war Reconstruction, Mr. Chifley, in which he stated the fact that the Commonwealth would be willing to assist financially long-range undertakings planned by State Governments for the development of their respective States; but he emphasised that such proposals would not be considered or accepted for implementation in the first two years immediately following the conclusion of the war.

Therefore the plans we have already developed in connection with long-range projects will still be of value and will be submitted in due course, with the strongest possible supporting case, when the opportunity offers. Of course, this will apply to the proposed Ord River irrigation scheme in the North-West and to a number of other proposals for the development of other parts of Western Australia. It would apply, for instance, to the reticulation side of the proposed comprehensive agricultural areas water scheme, which is calculated to provide a permanent and adequate water supply for about 12,000,000 acres of agricultural country. It would apply to the extension of the proposed South-West power scheme

after the first unit has been established, as well as to a dozen and one other undertakings that I could mention, some of which will readily occur to members.

I want as briefly as possible to give an indication of the programme of works which the Government has approved for putting into operation during the first two years immediately after the war ceases. This programme contains, as I have already indicated, a preponderance of works that would have been carried out during the war period had the necessary manpower and materials been available. Because they were not available, these works have had to be postponed from time to time and, in fact, they could not possibly be carried out until the war is over. Certainly that applies in a majority of instances because, as far as one can judge, the manpower position in this and other States of the Commonwealth seems unlikely to improve so long as Australia is at war with Japan. It is conceivable, in my opinion, that the manpower position could easily become worse, but I hope that unfortunate circumstance will not arise. The programme of works in connection with water supplies for the first two years immediately after the war is very comprehensive. It covers the greater portion of the State, including the North-West, the metropolitan area, the agricultural areas, the Goldfields and other parts of Western Australia as well.

I shall not go into details this evening by mentioning each proposed undertaking, but there are one or two very important water supply projects that will be carried out during the first two post-war years that are worthy of comment. The two proposals are, firstly, the raising of the wall at Mundaring Reservoir and secondly, the raising of the retaining wall at the Wellington Dam. The proposal at Mundaring is to raise the existing wall by 32 feet, to a total height of 132 feet, which will increase the holding capacity of the reservoir from 4,600,000,000 gallons to 15,000,000,000 gallons; in other words, the holding capacity will be increased about $3\frac{1}{2}$ times. Even if the Government were not contemplating the establishment of the agricultural areas water supply scheme, it would be necessary to raise the wall at the Mundaring Dam to some extent. The present draw on the dam is beyond its capacity in the present dry weather conditions, but even if

we had a good winter and the water had overflowed the weir this year, we would have been hard pressed to meet the full draw upon the reservoir from all directions.

In this regard it has to be remembered that the mining industry is operating at far below its normal capacity. Had the industry at this time been operating at full capacity, the Mundaring Reservoir, even though full at the end of the winter, would not have been able to meet all the requirements throughout the length of the conduit and the extensions from the main. But the proposal to raise the wall to the extent I have mentioned is concerned, firstly, with making safe and sure the provision of adequate supplies to those now served by the scheme, and secondly, with making available a larger quantity for the proposed agricultural areas scheme.

In connection with the Wellington dam, the proposal is to raise the existing wall by a further 60 feet, which will make it 135 feet high. This will permit of the present holding capacity of 7,500,000,000 gallons being increased to 38,000,000,000 gallons; in other words, the holding capacity will be increased about fivefold. Members will realise the magnitude of these two proposals. I suppose if they had been brought forward a few years ago when the State was enjoying good winter rains and good seasons, there might have been a suggestion here and there that they were extravagant, if not fantastic, and far ahead of the State's requirements and development. I am sure that our experience of recent years has been such as to prove to everybody the urgent necessity for impounding as much water as is humanly possible. The answer to many of our problems in the country is water, and it has become obvious in recent years that present supplies are totally inadequate.

We have seen our countryside reduced to very serious conditions—in extensive areas, to desperate conditions—because of sparse rainfall and the inability of existing schemes to provide adequate water for those who require it. So I think members will agree that every pound spent by the Government in the direction of increasing water supplies where supplies already exist, and in the provision of new supplies wherever they are needed, is justified to the last degree, and I am sure we will find later on when we submit proposals to the Commonwealth for a longer-range pro-

gramme that it will be sympathetic in the matter of making money available for the provision of water supplies in various parts of the State. The total amount estimated to be expended by the State in connection with water supplies during the two-year period I am discussing is £1,600,000. Members will realise that a fairly large percentage of the total amount of £13,500,000 that will be available to the State during those two years will be used in the direction of improving existing supplies and establishing new ones.

Mr. Withers: Do you think it will be possible to proceed with both projects at the one time?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. It is probable that the Government will declare the raising of the Mundaring wall to be No. 1 project, because it is essential that we should have impounded in that reservoir before the war ends sufficient water fully to supply the needs of the goldmining industry when it revives, as we believe it will revive very quickly after hostilities cease, but there would be nothing to prevent the raising of the wall at Wellington dam being carried on at the same time if sufficient men and material were forthcoming. I anticipate that soon after the war ends, sufficient men and material will be available for these purposes.

Mr. Leslie: What is the estimated cost of raising the wall at Mundaring?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have not the details here, but am prepared to supply them to any member who is sufficiently interested to need them. There is a number of important proposals in the Government's plans for drainage and irrigation. Members may be aware that the coming of the war brought to an end many important drainage and irrigation works which were then under way in various parts of the State, most of them, of course, in the South-West. The member for Murray-Wellington knows what happened in his area. As a result of having to close down on some partly completed important works down there, the district and the State have suffered a heavy economic loss, which would not have been incurred had it been possible to bring those works to completion under ordinary conditions. The amount provided in this schedule for expenditure in the two years immediately

after the war for drainage and irrigation is £600,000.

The number of delayed proposals in connection with the sewerage scheme in the metropolitan area is included in the schedules, the amount of money to be expended there being approximately £100,000. There is also an item in the schedule for provision of sewerage in country towns. Where any country town is able to put forward to the Government a proposal for the sewerage of the town, the Government will be prepared to consider making available to the local governing authority financial assistance in order that the town concerned might be given up-to-date and modern sewerage facilities. The extent to which the Government might assist such proposals would depend upon the nature of each proposal, as well as on the ability of the local governing authority to finance the proposal itself. The amount provided in the schedule under this heading is £100,000; that is for the establishment of sewerage schemes in country towns in the first two years immediately after the war. As members will readily realise, the programme under the heading of railways is a big one. I knew the member for Pingelly would be particularly interested in the matter. I think we all agree with him that a huge programme of rehabilitation will have to be carried out in connection with the railways, and I suppose there is not one phase of railway activity that has not fallen badly behind as the result of war conditions.

The number of sub-headings under this heading of railways in the schedule is very great, and the total amount of money set out in the schedule for expenditure in the two years immediately after the war on railway rehabilitation is £1,300,000. So it will be realised that the programme of railway rehabilitation during those two years will be very extensive. An amount of £200,000 is provided under the heading of harbours and rivers, and there is an additional amount under the same heading of £518,000 for country areas. Under the heading of main roads an amount of £1,600,000 is provided. This is approximately equal to the amount of money that will be available to the Main Roads Board in the two years immediately after the war from petrol tax receipts, plus the carry-over that will be available when the war

ends. The work of the Main Roads Board has been very greatly handicapped during the war, with the result that though our main roads have been kept in fairly good order nothing much has been possible beyond maintenance requirements. I consider that the way our main roads have stood up with very little maintenance during the war period—some of them carrying a great deal of military traffic much of it very heavy—is indeed a very striking testimonial to the main roads organisation in this State, as developed during the last 18 or 19 years. The policy of the Main Roads Department in the laying-down of the main roads has been a policy second to none in Australia, especially on the technical side.

In relation to electric power, large proposals are provided. I told members last night that the Government had already decided to establish a new large power house in the metropolitan area; and it is thought that during the two years immediately after the war an amount of £2,500,000 might have to be expended in connection with the establishment of that scheme. Related to that is the proposal to change over the electricity frequency cycle from 40 to 50, at an estimated expenditure of £760,000 to £800,000. Part of the expenditure of this kind is to be made available by the Commonwealth, which leaves the State in a position of having to find from its own financial resources roughly £360,000, making a total in that connection for the new metropolitan scheme and the change in cycle frequency of £2,860,000. The question of compensating those people who will have to effect the change in their motors to enable them to work on the 50 cycle frequency is one which the Government will consider and decide before the actual process of changing the cycle frequency is undertaken.

Repairs to Government buildings are estimated to cost during the two-year period I am discussing £200,000. New public buildings during that period are estimated to cost £1,500,000. That does not mean that £1,500,000 will be expended during those two years. It does mean that new public buildings will be commenced during those two years, and that their completion in due course will cost £1,500,000. In other words, it may take three or four or even five years to complete the whole

of the building programme, even though some of the buildings might be commenced in the first year after the war. In connection with delayed work in the North-West to jetties and similar public facilities, an amount of £116,000 is provided in the schedule. A number of local governing authorities have submitted programmes of works—not every local governing authority—and the total of estimated expenditure under their programmes is £782,000 in the two years immediately after the war. For the provision of necessary bulk wheat facilities £350,000 is set down in the schedule. For industrial development and the development of various industries an amount of £800,000 is set down.

Mr. Doney: Is that additional to the sums you have named as being required by local governing bodies?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is entirely separate from the amount contained in the schedule for local governing authorities. This is an item mainly in connection with industrial expansion within the State, and it is estimated that an amount approximating £700,000 or £800,000 will be required to provide for industrial expansion in the two years after the war. Members will realise that the figures I have given are not iron-bound or absolutely unchangeable. It is understandable that circumstances will alter from year to year, and that when the actual post-war period commences we may find that some substantial changes will need to be made in the schedule. The expenditure under certain headings might have to be reduced, and that under other headings might have to be substantially increased. It is not possible to lay down a programme in detail now, and say that it is to be the programme and that no alteration will be made to any part of it.

One factor which I can think of at the moment as being likely to affect this programme is employment. At present, no-one can say with certainty how many men will be seeking employment from the Government immediately or soon after the war. Some members might think that as soon as the war is over a large number of men will be seeking employment from the Government, but there is no certainty of that. If we look at the ordinary activities of the State today, we notice an acute shortage of manpower almost everywhere, no matter where one moves and no matter where one

looks. It applies to the primary industries, the mining industries, the secondary industries, to trade and commerce generally, to Government departments—in fact, to almost every activity within the community. I thought the Premier was about to say, "Not to mention the building industry." We know what the position is in that industry and the great leeway to be made up after the war. So, as I say, there is no guarantee that after the war 10,000 men will be seeking employment from the Government. The number might be 10,000, it might be 15,000 or only 5,000. No-one can be sure.

In my opinion, the absorptive capacity of the ordinary activities of the State will be so great immediately after the war, and for some time afterwards, that not so very many thousands of men will be seeking employment from the Government. Be that as it may, the programme of the Government in the immediate post-war years will be conditioned to a large extent by the number of men seeking employment from the Government. If the number is on the small side, the policy of the Government to carry out works will, to that extent, be limited; if the number is on the large side, the policy of the Government to carry out works with greater speed will be assisted, and consequently it might be possible to live up to this programme and carry it out, with alterations here and there, in the two-year period. As I mentioned earlier, there are many long-range projects which the Government has in mind. Some of these are already completely planned, some are largely planned and others are in the early stages of planning. These will be submitted to the Commonwealth Government for financial assistance.

The Commonwealth Government has already indicated in a general way that it is willing to assist the State Government to carry out these projects. For instance, I have not made any reference in this programme to forestry development after the war. It is understood that the Commonwealth will be willing to assist the States in connection with forestry development; in any event, it is not work for which the Commonwealth will provide money, except to make up war-created leeways during the first two years after the war. I have not dealt with the question of housing, because the Premier has already done so. It is an undertaking which comes under special

legislation and the funds for which will be raised by special means. To that extent, housing does not come within the schedule of post-war works which I have been briefly explaining to the Committee. This remark applies to a number of other matters; for instance, the question of rural reconstruction has been the subject of an exhaustive investigation by the Commonwealth Rural Reconstruction Committee, of which our Minister for Lands is chairman.

There is no doubt that the Commonwealth and the State Governments will work out a plan of rural reconstruction to be applied on reasonably uniform lines throughout Australia. Soldier settlement is a matter coming within the same category. I could mention other matters as well. The total estimated cost of the programme which I have been explaining to the Committee is £13,600,000. The programme is such as to enable full-time employment to be provided for a period of two years for 8,700 men. The Government does not anticipate being called upon to provide work for more than that number during the two years immediately after the war. If the Government has to do so, we shall have to concentrate upon those undertakings which will give a greater measure of employment for each pound expended, as against concentrating on those undertakings which will give a smaller amount of employment for each pound expended.

Mr. Leslie: That means road work.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Not necessarily. I would say there are many other works in the schedule which could be pushed ahead much more quickly if the provision of employment became the paramount consideration. We hope it will not be, because when the provision of employment becomes the determining factor, the economic return to the State is never as good by a long way as it is if the works are carried out mainly on the basis of their economic worth and of their benefit to the State, by increasing wealth production and bringing into existence new wealth production within the State. It is therefore the hope of the Government that the post-war works policy will be one which we shall be able to carry out on the best principles. Nevertheless, we realise, as an absolute obligation, the necessity to provide employment for those who will be or might be

seeking it, and if that becomes the overriding necessity we will have to face up to it and deal with it as it arises.

We have had a good deal of experience of this problem, as the Premier and other Ministers will remember who had anything to do with the unemployment problem during its more acute stage in this State from 1931 to, say, 1936. During those years the provision of employment was an absolute necessity, and works had to be put in hand willy nilly irrespective of their economic value, if any, to the State. We cannot possibly be in the same unfortunate position after the war as we were at the time of which I am speaking. The position was most unfortunate at that time, because unemployment developed quickly and no one had plans ready to put into operation useful work. In many instances, therefore, men were put to work on undertakings which were useless except from the point of view that they provided men with work and wages.

In connection with the provision of work after the war, we shall have an opportunity to prepare works proposals for a period of years. We have already prepared proposals in such a way that we have more than a sufficient number of good economical undertakings and more than a sufficient number of good work-providing undertakings which, although they will afford a great measure of employment, will at the same time be necessary and will assist, in some degree at any rate, the further development of wealth production in this State. This is a matter about which ever so much more could be said. I think, however, I have given members a sufficient insight into the proposals of the Government to indicate that there will be carried out in this State in the years immediately after the war, and in the years after that as well, a programme of works that will be well balanced and will serve the important and urgent requirements of all industries and all parts of the State. Emphasis has been given in the development of those plans to the need for decentralisation and I think that, as the plans begin to take practical shape in the establishment of works in different parts of Western Australia, we shall see developed a basis upon which it will be possible to build in the years of the future a balanced production economy in Western Australia, which will open opportunities for a greatly in-

creased population and also opportunities to establish for all our people a reasonable standard of existence and comfort.

MR. CROSS (Canning): Most of the Minister's remarks have been directed to post-war activities, but I want to draw attention to something the Minister can do now.

Mr. McLarty: It is very unusual for a Government supporter to follow a Minister.

Mr. CROSS: I shall not be very long.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must address the Chair.

Mr. CROSS: I want to draw attention to something which can be done now in the interests of public safety. I notice that under this division there is an item dealing with harbours and rivers. At present the Swan River at night-time is particularly dangerous. There is a number of beacons in the river which, however, are not lit up. Ferries go along the river every night and I do not know that there is any reason why those beacons should not be lit. A few weeks ago the Americans handed over the river again to the Harbour and Lights Department. One ferry company approached that department asking for permission to use the river and, when that was granted, the company started taking parties down the river at night-time, according to former practice. In addition, Government ferry boats also go down the river now, as well as private yachts, etc. A request was made for the beacons to be lit. The Navy Department was approached but stated that they could not be lit. When asked the reason, the department said that if the lights were lit it might be necessary to put them out at a moment's notice, and that could not be done. That, however, is not true.

Before the war, and before the Americans came on to the river, most of the beacons were lit by oil lamps, but the Americans have been busy and have installed electric lights; they laid cables under the water and connected the beacons. I want the Minister to give immediate attention to this matter. I took the trouble to inspect the beacons. The dolphin beacons, both inner and outer, are now connected with electric light. The Foam Spit beacon is also connected with electric light, as are the No. 21 post, and the Quarry Spit. The Americans at Crawley will not put the lights on. They have nine red lights on the

foreshore which are lit. There is no light at Point Walter, but the place is wired and there are globes on the beacon. The Mosman Park jetty is not lit, but the lights are there. Como is a blaze of lights, so it is no use saying that lights are not permissible.

All these places could be connected and the lights could be switched on and off as quickly as in the city. If the power house cut off the supply, the lights on the beacons would go out also. Como jetty and Mill Point jetty are rarely used. I have not seen the Mill Point jetty used for years but the lights have been on all the time. The Minister should give attention to this matter before there are serious accidents. There is no light at the Applecross jetty, because an Eastern States unit was stationed there with an anti-aircraft group, which cut the pole down; but the green light is still there on the beacon and the pole should be put back, because that jetty is used.

The Minister for Works: I doubt whether this is my business.

Mr. CROSS: This comes under the heading of harbours and rivers which are under the Minister's jurisdiction. There is an item on the Estimates under "Harbours and Rivers" which reads, "Maintenance work, as may be required, including maintenance of dredges and barges, mooring buoys, jetties, dock embankments and general maintenance of harbour and river works." Surely, if the Minister is responsible for mooring buoys, he should be responsible for beacons; and, if he is responsible for jetties, he should be responsible for warning lights. These lights should be put on, and there is no reason why they should not be. There is no danger of invasion at present; and, even if there were, the excuse that lights could not be extinguished is ridiculous, because the oil lamps have been removed and replaced by electricity.

The Premier: You should deal with this matter on the Harbours and Rivers Vote.

Mr. CROSS: I shall not be more than a minute now.

The Minister for Works: I think this comes under the department of the Minister for the North-West.

Mr. CROSS: There are a couple of dangerous jetties at Applecross and Como and there is one at Canning Bridge, too. Some of the decking is missing; and if anyone should go on to the jetties, particularly

those at Applecross or Canning Bridge, which are especially dangerous, there is a possibility of his being drowned. If that occurs perhaps some attention will be paid to this matter! I repeat that safety lights should be shown and they should be lit tomorrow night.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.30 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 21st November, 1944.

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

QUESTION—ABATTOIRS, ROBB'S JETTY.

As to Providing Additional Facilities.

Hon. G. B. WOOD asked the Chief Secretary:

(i) Is the Government aware that killing facilities at Robb's Jetty are not sufficient to cope with the supply of sheep and lambs, thereby causing a shortage of supply to the Services and United Kingdom?

(ii) As this is causing considerable loss to producers, both in prices obtained and the necessity of holding stock on farms, will the Government endeavour to arrange for an extra chain killing gang to cope with the position?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(i) No. Killing facilities at Robb's Jetty have not caused a shortage of supply of sheep and lambs to the Services and United Kingdom.