

# Legislative Council

Wednesday, 15th October, 1952.

## CONTENTS.

	Page
Questions : Housing, as to White Gum Valley contracts .....	1335
Railway freights, as to suggested increase and exemption for farm requisites .....	1335
Superphosphate, (a) as to surcharge on haulage .....	1335
(b) as to authority for collecting surcharge .....	1336
Motions : Railways, as to discontinuance of Wiluna and Laverton lines .....	1336
State forests, to revoke dedication .....	1346
Bills : Mining Act Amendment, 1r. ....	1336
Sheepskins (Draft Allowance Prohibition), 1r. ....	1336
Marketing of Onions Act Amendment, 1r. ....	1336
Traffic Act Amendment, (No. 2). 1r. ....	1336
Land Act Amendment, 1r. ....	1336
Fremantle Electricity Undertaking Agreement, 1r. ....	1342
Supply (No. 2), £10,000,000, 2r., Com. report .....	1342
Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act Amendment (Continuance), 2r. ....	1347
Health Act Amendment (No. 1), 2r. ....	1349
Wheat Industry Stabilisation Act Amendment, 2r., Com. report .....	1350
Margarine Act Amendment (No. 1), 2r. ....	1352
Adjournment, special .....	1359

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

## QUESTIONS.

### HOUSING.

#### *As to White Gum Valley Contracts.*

Hon. G. FRASER asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) What is the contract price of the State Housing Commission homes being erected at White Gum Valley?

(2) When is it anticipated that the first of them will be ready for occupation?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The contract price ranges from £2,012 3s. to £2,188 10s. 6d. to which must be added rise and fall adjustments

(2) By the end of December next.

### RAILWAY FREIGHTS.

#### *As to Suggested Increase and Exemption for Farm Requisites.*

Hon. A. L. LOTON (for Hon. J. McI. Thomson) asked the Minister for Railways:

The Premier replying to a question asked on the 2nd October last regarding possible increased railway freights, stated

the matter was receiving consideration and that an announcement would be made later when he brought down the Budget.

As it is accepted principle of all commercial and business interests to immediately pass on any additional charges, plus an added percentage, and in view of the established fact that farmers are unable to pass on any increased costs having to accept world parity for their products, will the Government give favourable consideration to exempting all farmers' requisites and products from any such increase, thus giving a further incentive to increase production and assist in the ultimate reduction of living costs?

The MINISTER replied:

As farmers' requisites and products constitute the great bulk of railway haulage, exemption of these commodities from any future increase in rail freights necessitated by increased railway costs, would place an insupportable burden on the rest of the community, and therefore could not be justified.

### SUPERPHOSPHATE.

#### *(a) As to Surcharge on Haulage.*

Hon. A. L. LOTON asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) What authority enables the Railway Department to impose a surcharge on the carriage of superphosphate?

(2) What authority enables the distributors of superphosphate to impose a surcharge on the road transport of superphosphate when the price of superphosphate is fixed by the Prices Control Commissioner, and the haulage rate is an amount agreed upon by the road hauliers and the State Transport Board?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) In regard to superphosphate consignments the Railways Commission collects an equalisation payment on behalf of an equalisation fund at the Treasury.

(2) A similar equalisation payment is collected by distributors on behalf of the same fund in relation to road deliveries. The metal trades strike has placed the railways in the position that they will be able to transport no more than 125,000 tons of superphosphate during the 1952-53 season of a total production of over 400,000 tons. The remainder must therefore be road hauled at a cost very much higher than rail freights.

No producer can therefore be assured that he will be able to secure his requirements by rail. To spread the extra cost of road haulage over the whole of the farming areas, the Government has agreed to accept an equalisation scheme. The basis of this scheme is that a producer pays the same transport cost irrespective of whether his superphosphate is, in fact, delivered by rail or road.

As road transport costs are much higher than rail charges the average cost of delivery this season must necessarily be higher than railway freights. The amount by which the average exceeds rail freights is the equalisation payment referred to in the questions. This payment does not affect the price of the superphosphate itself. It represents a contribution towards the road haulier's charge, the balance of which is borne by the equalisation fund.

(b) *As to Authority for Collecting Surcharge.*

Hon. A. L. LOTON (without notice) asked the Minister for Railways:

Following his answer to my last question, will the Minister tell me what authority enables the collection of that surcharge?

The MINISTER replied:

The Government has approved a scheme that has been submitted to it and as its Treasury becomes responsible for the payment, that really is the position in which the Government is placed. The railways have agreed to make the collections on deliveries by rail.

**BILLS (5)—FIRST READING.**

1, Mining Act Amendment.

Introduced by Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham.

2, Sheepskins (Draft Allowance Prohibition).

3, Marketing of Onions Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Agriculture.

4, Traffic Act Amendment (No. 2).

Introduced by Hon. A. L. Loton.

5, Land Act Amendment.

Introduced by Hon. H. C. Strickland.

**MOTION—RAILWAYS.**

*As to Discontinuance of Wiluna and Laverton Lines.*

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East)

[4.45]: I move—

This House urges the Government to give the matter the gravest consideration, before agreeing to any proposal to pull up the existing railway lines between Meekatharra and Wiluna and between Leonora and Laverton.

My object in moving the motion is to have the opportunity of expressing the grave concern that the people I represent in those districts feel about the rumours of the proposed action of the Government to pull up these railway lines. That between Meekatharra and Wiluna is, I understand, 109 miles in length and that between Leonora and Laverton covers

a distance of 75 miles. It is well known that for many years the railway lines have served the people living in those districts and the State in general to great purpose.

It is unnecessary for me to recapitulate the history of the Meekatharra-Wiluna railway line and how it was constructed mainly for the purpose of developing the Wiluna gold mine and how for a number of years that mine functioned, employing hundreds of men which assisted in building up a large prosperous town that flourished for several years. However, after the ore body worked out, the centre declined to a very low ebb indeed. Nevertheless, during those years the history of other mining centres, such as Bendigo and Kalgoorlie, was repeated because the opening up of the Wiluna district brought pastoralists to the area. Thus, all the country between Meekatharra and Wiluna as well as that surrounding Wiluna has been taken up as pastoral leases and a great number of sheep are running on them.

Hon. L. Craig: Would not a road service serve them just as well?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I will come to that. At Lancefield, in the Laverton-Leonora district, one mine was working for a number of years and at least two were in operation at Laverton. At present there is still a State battery at Laverton which is the centre of a good prospecting district. I should say that that country has every possibility of again coming to life at any time. Not only is Laverton the centre of a district which has great mining possibilities, but there are also many pastoralists who hold leases in that area. I make a strong plea to the Government to abandon any thought of pulling up these railway lines.

One of the greatest tragedies that has faced Australia for many years is the problem of centralisation and it faces us now to an extent greater than ever before. We have in Western Australia over 600,000 people and the vast majority live in the cities. Every development that takes place seems to accentuate that unhappy trend. What a great thing it is for this State that the Anglo-Iranian Oil Coy. has decided to build a refinery here and that the Broken Hill Pty. proposes to commence steel works here as well! What a far better thing it would have been for Western Australia, however, if the oil refinery had been built at Geraldton, Carnarvon, Esperance or Albany and had the Broken Hill Pty. decided to start its operations somewhere other than in the congested metropolitan area!

The tragedy of it is that centred here we have beautiful roads, good schools to which children can be sent, fine homes for the aged and up-to-date hospitals. No

wonder the tendency nowadays is for people here and in other parts of Australia to congregate in the cities. I have stated repeatedly that the mining industry has done a great deal for this State and still possesses wonderful potentialities, so much so that it warrants nurturing in every way possible. Everybody knows that one or two mines functioned very successfully at Wiluna and let members think what they did during the tough days in Western Australia when unemployment tended to bring the State's economic position into chaos.

What a wonderful thing it would be now if another mine could be opened up in that district—and no one can tell me that all the gold has been won from that locality! Even though the railway lines I refer to in my motion are not paying at present, let them remain there for another 10 or 20 years. In the meantime there is every possibility that the price of gold will be increased, in which event history will assuredly repeat itself. The high prices ruling for primary products such as wheat and wool will not last for ever.

Many of the best economic brains in the world firmly believe that gold will rehabilitate itself and that soon a lot of money will be spent in the production of that metal. What a tragedy it would be if after the presidential election in America we were to wake up one morning to find there had been a substantial rise in the price of gold and that centres such as Wiluna and Laverton had been thrown more or less out of bounds simply because there were no railways extending to them.

Those I have expressed are just my own views. Now let me read a letter I have received from the secretary of the Leonora Road Board under date the 10th September. He says—

At a meeting of my board, held yesterday, a copy of "The Case for the Retention of the Railway to Wiluna" was received from the Wiluna Road Board. It is understood that you have already received a copy of this.

I am directed to ask you to be good enough to oppose any move to remove railway lines on any portion of the goldfields. The many reasons have already been stressed and are well known to you. The mineral wealth of these areas has not yet been thoroughly investigated, and the interests of the pastoral industry should also be protected. Whilst suggestions to remove railway lines are being made in this State, strong advocacy is coming forward to build new lines in the Northern Territory and other parts to encourage food production. No "all weather road" (if there is such a thing) can take the place of a railway.

That answers Mr. Craig's interjection. The letter continues—

The adoption of lighter rolling stock would save heavy maintenance charges on permanent ways, and railway transport is essential in the outback if the continual drift to the cities is to be halted. It is realised that measures of economy are urgently necessary, but transference of heavy loading from railways to roads would require huge expenditure to make the latter trafficable, and maintenance would be heavy, unless they were surfaced with bitumen. If these lines are to be removed because they "don't pay", it might be asked if the empty passenger trains in the metropolitan area, running parallel with Government bus services, show any profit.

I also have with me details of the case for the retention of the railway to Wiluna. Possibly during his contribution to the debate Mr. Hall will refer to this phase so I shall not go extensively into it, except to quote one paragraph only, which reads—

Present depleted stock numbers, owing to bad seasons, are approximately 85,000 sheep and 8,000 cattle, while normal figures on present development would be 120,000 sheep and 15,000 cattle.

I shall leave Mr. Hall to deal with the other relevant facts. I feel I have come to an end of the remarks I wish to make in submitting the motion.

I want to make it clear that my motive in submitting it is to give members an opportunity to express their views on the general advisability or otherwise of considering pulling up such railway lines as those mentioned, especially at this stage of the State's development and of the difficult times the mining industry has experienced, particularly in the district affected in this instance. I make that suggestion, too, in view of the ever-present possibility of goldmining making another great rise and so assisting in solving the problem of decentralisation, which is so necessary, and also adding the further production of food, quite apart from that of gold and other minerals, which is so vital to the State in particular and the world in general.

At this stage, I desire to pay this tribute to the Minister, that I am absolutely certain he is entirely sympathetic with the people and the industries in the districts affected. I am quite certain also that no one in this House knows more than he does about the merits and demerits of the case I am putting forward. But he is only one member of the Cabinet. Once members of the public get to hear of proposals such as this, coming on top of all their other troubles, a bad moral and psychological

effect is created. I am firmly convinced that the district of Wiluna has such potentialities that it will rise again. The long strip of 100 miles between Wiluna and Meekatharra has vast possibilities for the production of mineral and pastoral wealth.

I hope to see the day when the line will be carried beyond Wiluna to develop lead and copper deposits, of the discovery of which prospectors consider there are good prospects. The same applies to the Laverton district. I hope the motion will be carried. It is worded in such a way that all members can support it, and it was agreed to I am sure it would bring some comfort to those people who still pin their faith to the areas in question and who, I am sure all members will agree, are worthy of the utmost consideration and encouragement.

**HON. W. R. HALL (North-East) [5.3]:** I rise to support the motion because I am of opinion that it would be a crying shame if either the Wiluna-Meekatharra or the Malcolm-Laverton line were pulled up or discontinued. During the Address-in-reply debate, I spoke at some length on this subject, and I do not want to weary members by going through all the facts which I then submitted. I gave the House a full resume of what I thought of the proposed pulling up of the Meekatharra-Wiluna line, and also dealt with the letter outlining the case for the retention of that line.

However, I am not going to allow this occasion to pass without reiterating, for the benefit of those members who were not in the House at that time, some of the points I think should be considered by the Government in favour of its leaving the line where it is and continuing to provide that service to the people of the hinterland which they have had in the past. This is a burning question with the people who are serviced by these lines. There is no doubt they have a feeling of insecurity when they realise there is every possibility of the lines being removed and their being thus deprived of rail transport for commodities which they require in their everyday life, and of their having to resort to road transport.

I say without fear of contradiction that no road transport is equal to rail transport from the point of view of cost and regularity of service irrespective of the weather. The secretary of the Leonora Road Board, in his letter, referred to all-weather roads and doubted their existence. To my way of thinking, there is only one all-weather road and that is the one that is surfaced with bitumen. On any other kind of road, when there has been a fall of rain amounting to some inches, one is likely to get bogged, and there is no tell-

ing when one will be able to get out of it. Most members who represent farming districts know all about that, for I am sure that many a time they have been bogged when using motor transport.

The other day I spoke about the possibilities of the goldmining industry and the need for servicing that industry by railway transport. Members representing these districts have been inundated with requests from every local authority, from the Pastoralists' Association, from business people and from individuals that efforts be made to have the lines retained. Considerable concern has been experienced regarding the Leonora-Laverton line for a fairly long period. The Minister for Railways has paid one or two visits to the various towns that are serviced by these railways, and in each place propositions for the retention of the lines were submitted to him at meetings at the various local government offices. He has endeavoured to give the people a picture of what, in his opinion, will happen, or is likely to happen, but there has been no distinct statement as to whether the lines will be removed or not. It can readily be understood, therefore, that the local authorities and other people are still worrying about the insecurity of railway transport. I consider that in all fairness to those people, the Government should make some statement and not leave the matter in the air for such a long time, thus occasioning residents of the towns served by the railways considerable anxiety.

The discontinuance of the service is something which has been hanging over their heads and worrying them from week to week, and it is only natural that they should ask the representatives of the district to keep the matter before the Government. During the Address-in-reply, I mentioned the Horseshoe Lights mine, which is out of Meekatharra, and to which there was once a railway line. Many requests were made for that line to be retained, but it was eventually pulled up. Now there are 100 men working on the mine and I believe it will prove to be a very good one.

While the goldmining industry is perhaps on the down grade, we are hoping that it will recover. Wheat and wool are on top at present; but it appears to me that when one industry is up, the other is down, and it is to be hoped that in the not very distant future the price of gold will rise to such an extent that that industry will be on top once more. We have a feeling that we want to see the farming, pastoral, dairying, goldmining, and in fact, all industries in the same boat. We desire to see them going ahead, and we should do nothing, and take part in nothing that will be in the nature of a

retrograde step, making it impossible for any of those industries to continue and new ones to commence.

The pastoralists, some of whom I understand are 70 and 80 odd miles from Wiluna, are very perturbed by the fact that they have to transport their goods that distance by road to the Wiluna line. That involves considerable cost. If their goods have to be transported a further 700 miles by road to Perth, members can imagine what will be involved. A pastoralist named Lukin who, I think, took part in the drawing up of the case for the retention of the Wiluna line, has forwarded to me a communication in regard to costs of transport. He gives Wiluna freights in rates per ton and compares those prevailing in August with those in June. His figures are as follows:—

	June.			August.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Flour and produce .....	2	6	5	7	3	4
Sugar .....	9	16	9	13	18	9
Chaff .....	4	5	2	8	14	4
Butter .....	9	5	2	13	5	3
Potatoes and onions .....	6	17	8	11	3	3
Eggs .....	9	2	6	13	1	3
Milk .....	12	6	6	19	1	10
Biscuits .....	12	8	9	16	5	3
Tobacco .....	19	6	6	22	9	4

I think those figures related to the strike period when road transport had to be used, but they show the terrific variation in railway and road transport freights. Can anyone wonder at these people being perturbed about the position? Of course not! After all, they have to be fed; they have to exist irrespective of what occupations they follow. If we want to keep them in the hinterland and encourage others to go there, we have to look after them. They should not be penalised by having to pay high freights for the transport of essential commodities.

That will be a deciding factor in lots of cases. A man will not go to the hinterland to work if he has to pay exorbitant prices for essential commodities. I could speak for hours on this particular subject and could enlighten some members who have not travelled in parts of the North-East province. There are many parts of it that I have not seen but if these two lines are pulled up it will have a disastrous effect on the people who live in that vast outback area.

Reverting now to the goldmining situation, I emphasise that a good deal of that country has never been scratched and white men have not even travelled over various parts of it. Surely that in itself should have some influence on the Government in regard to its deliberations on this particular matter. Big Bell is a large mine and 450 men are

employed there. Many of these men have their wives and families with them; they have established houses in nicely laid-out streets. Many such mines are just about on the bread line so far as their production of gold is concerned and this one produces only about 3dwts. per ton. If these large mines, which are employers of labour, close down, what prospects are there for many of those employees to go elsewhere? There was a big mine at Agnew which was forced to close down and that could happen in other places, too, if these lines were taken up.

There is one good thing about outback people. They do not flock to the metropolitan area if they become unemployed when a large mine closes down. They generally shift from centre to centre and a check on the electoral roll will show that a large number of the men who were employed at Agnew have gone to such places as Big Bell, Mt. Ida, Gwalia, Laverton, and I suppose some have gone to the Horseshoe Lights mine. These people get the urge to stay in the outback and it is a good job for the State, and everybody in general, that they do. We must look after them; we have to see that they get the necessities of life and they should not be penalised.

From what I can see of it, the Government's only angle is that the railway lines are not paying and that a good deal of maintenance has to be carried out in order to keep them safe. Consequently, the Government considers that the lines are not warranted and should be pulled up. Probably the Government considers that as Wiluna has lost its biggest mine, that is one reason why the line should be closed down and the rails pulled up. That is not sufficient excuse. The lines under discussion are serving the interests of the State and if they are permitted to remain, I see no reason why those areas should not come into their own again and the railways once more pay their way.

The people of those areas claim that if the Government considers the lines are not paying, what about the railway service between Fremantle and Perth? Half the time the coaches are running backwards and forwards full of wind; all they contain is air, and plenty of it. Bus systems run parallel with the railway line and that, to my way of thinking, is definitely wrong.

Hon. G. Bennetts: That could be improved.

Hon. W. R. HALL: The people have an argument in that direction. They say, "How many of these Government concerns do pay? There are not too many of them." Some years ago I heard one member contend when the Government had made a profit, that it was wrong because Government utilities were estab-

lished for the convenience of the public and should not make a profit. On the other hand I have heard other members say, when the Government ran a utility at a loss, that it should be closed down or handed over to private enterprise. So we do not know where we are; one member says one thing and another urges something else. I venture to say that if these two lines are pulled up it will cause a storm in Western Australia. As members for the province concerned, we have a job to do in trying to impress upon the Government the necessity of leaving the railways where they are.

If the lines require a certain amount of maintenance in order to carry heavy rollingstock, perhaps lighter rollingstock could be used and so effect a saving in maintenance. I should imagine that the lighter rollingstock could cope with the requirements of those areas, at least for many years and until such time as some of these places come into their own once more. But for the life of me I cannot see why, because a length of 109 miles of line is not paying its way, it should be pulled up. I realise that perhaps private enterprise could not carry on like that and if a man started a business and one branch of it was not paying its way, he would probably have to dispense with that section of his undertaking.

But this is a different proposition altogether. These railways are State-owned; they are owned by the people, for the people, and to serve the people. Consequently the folk in those areas should have the opportunity to obtain the necessities of life as cheaply as possible. The freights on road and rail haulage are not to be compared. Other areas have been served by road transport and the haulage costs have been much greater than if the same goods had been hauled by rail. If the Government wants to do the right thing it would be wise to listen to the people, and the people's representatives. At the moment, in this State we have prospects of big industries commencing operations.

While I realise that they have to be served by our railways I think it only fair that the people in our outback areas should be permitted to have their goods transported at a cheap rate. Most of the folk have been living in those areas all their lives and some of them have never left the outback parts of the State. They should be given the consideration to which they are justly entitled and I sincerely hope that the Minister will inform his Government of the sentiments which have been expressed and which will be expressed in connection with this proposal. I support the motion and I sincerely hope that the railways will be permitted to continue to perform a useful service for the people in those areas.

**HON. G. BENNETTS** (South-East) [5.21]: I intend to support the members who have spoken to this motion because I am not a believer in pulling up railway lines. In the first place, the lines were established in order to open up the outback parts of the State and the only way to keep the people there is to leave the lines where they are. Many people have established themselves in these areas and where there are now a number of sheep and cattle stations. I understand that in the Wiluna district last season approximately £200,000 taxation was paid by people living in the area. I understand, too, that at present there are 85,000 sheep and at least 8,000 cattle in the district.

If we want to increase our population we must develop the outer areas and support the people who are producing our food. The soil in this country is rich and there is plenty of water. I think the Minister will agree with me that the water in Wiluna and surrounding districts is good for drinking purposes and there is a plentiful supply of it. When these railways were constructed the work was done at a reasonable figure but if they are pulled up, and later on rebuilt in an effort to open up this country further, the cost will be at least ten times the original figure.

During the metal trades strike there was approximately a 50 per cent. increase in freight charges to the Goldfields because road cartage had to be used. That is having a bad effect upon the goldmining industry because most of the commodities used in gold production had to be taken by road from Perth to Kalgoorlie. The Commonwealth Government has now found it necessary to build a railway in order to save the cattle in the outer portions of the Northern Territory. The loss in stock this year will amount, I think, to about £2,000,000 because there is no railway. If it has been found necessary for the Commonwealth to build this railway, then I do not see why the railways which are mentioned in the motion should not be allowed to remain. We know that the goldmining industry is having a lean time and that wool and wheat are on the up grade. But it will not always remain like that. In the past the goldmining industry has had to come to the assistance of the State and pull it out of trouble.

[Resolved: That motions be continued.]

**Hon. G. BENNETTS:** As I was saying, the goldmining industry will again come into its own. These places in the outback, like the Laverton district, have only been scratched over and there is plenty of room for expansion by way of prospecting and mining. We are finding a vast wealth of mineral resources in those districts today. These minerals are being discovered in the districts through which these railways run and it is now proposed to pull the lines up.

**Hon. E. M. Heenan:** They are finding shows at Coolgardie.

**HON. G. BENNETTS:** That is so, and they are finding them all over the North-West. I am greatly opposed to the pulling up of railways in the mining areas, especially where there are mineral resources and where food production can be carried out. The member for the district has spoken at length on the subject and I will not waste the time of the House, but will conclude by supporting the motion moved by Mr. Heenan.

**HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [5.33]:** I wish to associate myself with the members who have spoken in favour of the motion, because I have a fair knowledge of the outback of Western Australia, including the mining districts. I agree that no railway should be pulled up in this State until the time comes when we have at least very good bitumen roads to serve these centres. I believe that will be some time in eventuating and, in common with other members, I urge the Government not to interfere with any railways until that happy state exists where road transport can serve the district as the railways are doing today.

As members have mentioned, gold has come to the rescue of this State on many occasions and I have no doubt that it will do so again. It is only a matter of the world taking a sane view of the situation and allowing gold to be sold on the open market or the price to be increased to bring prosperity to the gold producing areas. Once a boom occurs in the gold-mining industry, everybody knows that the population in the particular centre concerned grows overnight. So, though these towns may need only a scanty number of trains at present, the service will have to be doubled if a boom is experienced in the goldmining industry.

It is also suggested that railway lines be pulled up in certain wheatgrowing districts. I believe those lines too should remain until such time as we have decent roads which would permit of road transport being built up in order to serve the districts concerned. At the present time we have not those facilities to give to the districts and the Government should not adopt the policy of pulling up railways. It would be an injustice to those people who have gone into the outback areas to do their bit towards the development of this country if we left them stranded without a railway and the mode of transport outlined by Mr. Hall. It has been proved that when the railways were not running, freights doubled and trebled in some cases; we would find that happening again if any of these railways were pulled up.

**HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (North) [5.36]:** I also wish to support the motion and believe that the railways should remain in these outlying areas. They will definitely be an asset at times when mining is flourishing again, and they serve a use-

ful purpose now for the pastoral industry in that area. I understand that in the Wiluna district there is every prospect of a fairly extensive irrigation scheme being implemented and, of course, if such an area should develop after the fashion of the agricultural area around Carnarvon a railway would prove of very definite benefit to the settlers.

If there is one thing that will encourage people to go to the outback and endeavour to grow something in those areas it is a reliable form of transport such as a railway. In the area I represent I know for certain that the people were very sorry when the line was taken away and the service discontinued; the reaction to that line being removed was by no means pleasant, and they had hoped that road transport would replace the service to which they had been accustomed. There is no doubt that the people who used that line were very sorry when it was removed and I am convinced that the people who will be affected by the removal of the railways which we are considering will also be similarly disappointed. For these reasons I support the motion.

**HON. L. C. DIVER (Central) [5.38]:** I would like to support the motion for the retention of these railways. It is, I think, a terrible thing that railways should be pulled up in a State the size of Western Australia which has a population of about 600,000. It is a State in its infancy and these railways, which we saw fit to build in the past, are now to be pulled up on the crest of a boom, when prices have sky-rocketed, when railway costs are at their height.

Because railway finance happens to be at its worst, certain authorities in desperation recommend that the only way to prevent this state of affairs from continuing and the only way to stop this creeping paralysis in the State's economy is to cut off the railways of this young State one by one. I warn those members from the wetter areas of Western Australia that if this attempt to do away with these railways meets with success, the paralysis will creep down further and areas which members may think are safe today may tomorrow find that there are recommendations for pulling up lines which may be serving them.

It is all very well for armchair critics to suggest that certain of our railways—the unprofitable ones as they are pleased to call them—should be abandoned; these people may think it very appropriate indeed to follow such a line of thought while they live in the city and have every amenity at their front door. It is a different matter altogether for the people in the outback. After jolting over rough roads for many miles these people look forward to going into their townships where they are able to meet a small element of modern civilisation.

If these townships are to be abandoned—as they will be if we take away these railways—then that small amenity these people enjoy will be taken from them. I have had as much to do with travel by road transport as has any country dweller; ever since my teens I have been associated with road transport. Every time I want to go to town it means covering a distance of 22 miles, or with the return trip an aggregate journey of 44 miles. If any member thinks that road transport can compete with railways he is very much mistaken.

I claim that if these railways are done away with it will mean a great blow to the mineral development that is taking place. These minerals have to be brought to the coast in order that we may compete with world markets. I am not optimistic enough to visualise the possibility of road transport being able to cope with the heavy haulage of these goods. That is one of the reasons why I support the motion. There is another matter that comes to my mind. It is an experience that was related to me with regard to the metal trades strike, and refers to the Bonnie Rock railway, which was one of the railways that was closed down, where for some time road transport was employed to take certain essential goods across.

As members are aware, that area has had a very light rainfall this year and yet road transport struck what were called bad patches of road; though the patches were not as bad as they can be in the country, not by any stretch of the imagination. In spite of that fact, two trucks were stuck for twelve hours. If these railways are pulled up and the responsibility thrown on the Main Roads department, I do not know from where the State will find sufficient finance to maintain the roads.

I hope members will support the motion so that the Government may know that it is ordinary, sane economics for these railways to remain. This is a young country, and while I admit that some lines are in the doldrums today, I feel that the people whom they serve should be given a chance, and these railways should be retained. If that is done, I feel sure that future generations will bless those who were instrumental in having the railways retained.

**HON. R. J. BOYLEN** (South-East) [5.45]: I support the motion. I consider it would be a retrograde step even to consider the pulling up of a railway anywhere in Western Australia. As Mr. Diver has pointed out, we have a population of 600,000 people, and I venture to say it would probably be less than half of that number had not the State been developed by the aid of railways, which permitted people to move out into the back country.

Referring to the Meekatharra-Wiluna railway, there is no gainsaying the fact that the goldmining industry may be re-established at Wiluna as it has been in the Coolgardie area and particularly at Bullfinch. At Bullfinch we have now one of the biggest goldmines in Western Australia. It is not yet in operation, but it will be in about four weeks time. What would have happened had that section of railway been pulled up years ago? It is very doubtful whether the mining company that has interested itself in Bullfinch would have established itself there at all.

To say that road transport could be used in lieu of the railway is all very well, but I consider that in the long run it would prove to be economically unsound because road transport in areas of that sort could not give the service that the railways do. Bearing in mind the type of treatment by which goldmining has been developed at Wiluna, there is every likelihood of the industry being re-established there and of the low grade ores being treated. If that happened, the State would then be faced with the problem of relaying the line or maintaining serviceable roads, which would be a much more costly item.

On motion by the Minister for Railways, debate adjourned.

#### **BILL—FREMANTLE ELECTRICITY UNDERTAKING AGREEMENT.**

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

#### **BILL—SUPPLY (No. 2), £10,000,000.**

*Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT** (Hon. C. H. Simpson-Midland) [5.49] in moving the second reading said: The first Supply Bill for the financial year, which was approved by the House on the 6th August, provided a sum of £13,000,000, of which £9,000,000 was allocated to Consolidated Revenue, £3,000,000 to General Loan Fund and £1,000,000 to Advance to Treasurer. The expenditure to the end of September exceeded the total, having amounted to £13,419,831, an amount of £9,018,205 having been spent out of Consolidated Revenue and £4,401,626 from General Loan Fund.

Revenue for the same period of three months totalled £7,529,444, or £1,448,761 less than expenditure from the revenue fund. When considering the revenue deficit of £1,448,761, it is noteworthy that for this period the railway revenue deficit was £1,118,444, a most telling indication of the effect of the metal trades strike on the finances of the State.

The Bill proposes a further advance of £10,000,000 of which £6,000,000 is for Consolidated Revenue and £4,000,000 for General Loan Fund, which it is hoped will finance the services of the State until



such time as the Estimates are passed by Parliament. The Loan Estimates will be submitted in another place by the Premier following his introduction of the Budget next week.

When the Supply Bill was presented to another place, a certain amount of rather trenchant criticism of the railways was indulged in, and I deem it my duty in fairness to the Commissioners to place before members the actual facts. I have had the matters mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition in another place referred to the Railways Commissioners, who confirm the replies given in that House yesterday. Their officers are still giving evidence before the Conciliation Commissioner regarding the standing down of men and the curtailment of working hours. I am sure that all aspects of the case will be given the fullest and fairest consideration before an award is pronounced.

I can assure members that the Railways Commission and Government have given all possible sympathetic consideration to the effect of the metal trades strike on the many unfortunate victims who were in no sense responsible, but recognition had also to be given to the economic impact of reduced earnings in those cases where men could not be gainfully employed. Consistent with financial prudence and the court's order, the guaranteed week will be restored as soon as it is reasonably possible to do so.

Before the termination of the strike, the Railways Commissioners were planning the restoration of locomotive power on lines which would ensure the maximum number of engines being returned to traffic in serviceable condition in the minimum time. Orders were placed with outside firms for the manufacture of spare parts, the supply of which was impossible during the strike at Midland Junction, so that there should be no delay when work was resumed. In addition, tradesmen were transferred at the termination of the strike from the workshops to locomotive depots in order to spread the work and make the maximum use of repair facilities available.

The Railways Commissioners have assured me that their most earnest endeavour has been to get the railways back to normal as quickly as possible and that any suggestion that engine restoration should be slowed down in order to make a case for additional revenue grants is strongly resented. I am glad that the Leader of the Opposition has discounted this fantastic and improper suggestion. As he has rightly surmised, it is the policy of the Railways Commission to turn out engines in good serviceable condition so that they do not have to be returned for further service in a short time. At the end of the strike, many locomotives were in a far worse condition than would be the case in normal circumstances.

The degree to which the metropolitan railway passenger service could be restored was very fully discussed by a Cabinet sub-committee with the Railways Commission. The availability of locomotives was the factor governing the restoration of services during the two peak hours of the day when patronage is heavy, but financial considerations, having regard to the great disparity between operating costs and earnings, had to influence the number of trains run in off-peak hours when patronage is relatively light. The restoration of Saturday afternoon and Sunday services also could not be justified in the light of penalty rates of 1½ and twice the normal rates. As the ratio of receipts and expenditure on the railways as a whole improves, consideration will be given to the re-introduction of additional services until the time when diesel rail cars, now in production, provide a better, more regular, cleaner and more economical service.

Referring to the remarks of another member of that House, regarding the Midland Junction Workshops, the matter has been referred to the Railways Commission, and I am advised that the location of the tool-cutting machine apparently refers to cutting tools, and it is correct to say that at one time cutting tools were made in all parts of the shop without reference to the management. However, during recent years this has been completely altered, inasmuch as all work carried out in the machine shop is now planned, and the tools necessary to carry out the work are planned and manufactured in the tool-room in economical quantities.

The tool-room was specifically built and equipped for this purpose and as an added advantage in permitting complete control and regulation issue of these most expensive items. Years ago ordinary cutting tools were made out of steels of much lower grade than at present, the manufacture of modern tools being highly skilled work that should be undertaken only in the tool-room. Similarly, modern tools have the benefit of enabling greater cutting speeds and output to be obtained. The statement that thousands of pounds worth of tool steel is being thrown on the scrap heap cannot be reconciled and is completely without foundation. All tool steel is rigidly controlled through the management and the foreman of the tool-room, as this material is too expensive to be left lying about the workshops.

With reference to machinery lying idle, it must be understood that, during the reorganisation that is taking place at the workshops, some of the new machines must, of necessity, require some considerable time to install and complete without electrical equipment. Difficulty has been experienced in keeping production going whilst new machines are being installed,

particularly as there is a shortage of electrical fitters, and also due to the fact that new machinery has been purchased for 440 volt 50 cycle operation while the change over from 40 to 50 cycles is still taking place.

A daily tally is taken of machines idle and the reasons for some of the items include operators absent without leave, sickness, and apprentices attending lessons at the Technical School. In addition, nine tradesmen from the machine shop are on temporary transfer to the running sheds for the purpose of speeding up the restoration of locomotives to traffic following upon the metal trades strike.

Although a number of machines have already been delivered and not yet installed, it is only due to the curtailment of loan money that the second phase of the programme for new machinery has been held up. However, there is no doubt that the whole of the machines which have been ordered or delivered are essential for complete balance to enable the workshops to carry out in future all the work in connection with construction and repair of locomotives.

The same member also made a statement regarding men being concerned about their employment and about work being let to private employers. This is only a passing phase. Orders were placed with outside firms expressly for the purpose of enabling the department to expedite repairs to locomotives. However, work is not now being sent out, but full concentration is being placed in the workshops.

The assertion of the hon. member regarding the new Australian desiring to show the foreman how a machine should work has been investigated, and the foremen of both the machine shop and the tool room cannot recollect any such happening. There are only three new Australians in the machine shop and one in the tool room. Both of the foremen are highly competent engineers and are able to work and demonstrate all new machines. If the hon. member wishes to take this matter further, he should supply the name of the new Australian concerned so that further inquiries may be made.

It may be mentioned that the hon. member has been invited on numerous occasions by both the Works Manager and the Chief Mechanical Engineer to visit the workshops and view the improvements up to date, but has not availed himself of this invitation. As Minister in control of the department and in fairness to the men upon whom these aspersions have been cast, I may be excused for having placed these matters before the House, but there was no opportunity previously of replying to them. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**HON. C. W. D. BARKER (North) [6.0]:** I should like to take this opportunity of adding my voice to that of the member for Pilbara, in another place, in regard to the chronic state of the State Shipping Service. The position at Wyndham is serious, and large stacks of drums which the oil companies urgently need for refilling are accumulating. I quite agree with the member for Pilbara that a full inquiry should be held into this service before any new scheme for financing it is introduced. Complaints are coming in from every town along the coast, asking for something to be done towards the provision of a better shipping service because the position in the future will be bad.

The production of all raw materials, both mineral wealth and primary products, such as wool, etc., is increasing, and something will have to be done to cope with the position in the future. I should also like to take this opportunity of drawing the Government's attention to the serious drought in the Kimberleys, and asking the Minister concerned, in view of the fact that the Commonwealth Government has already stated that it would be sympathetic towards any request for financial assistance for this purpose, to consider seriously making some application on behalf of the small property owners and drovers, in order to help them to save their plants and horses so that they will be able to carry out the mustering and branding when the drought is over.

There are large numbers of horses in the Kimberleys, and if they are lost through the drought it will be a serious matter, because we do not know where the next lot of horses will come from. Small property owners and drovers cannot possibly find the money required to pay for chaff and oats over such a long period. With the prevailing cost of shipping and feed it would be impossible for them to do so. The Government can show that it is interested in these people by helping them to carry the horses over until the drought is ended.

Motorcars and tractors have finished the horse altogether in every phase of agriculture, excepting on the cattle and sheep stations. After all, there is only the horse to muster cattle and to drove bullocks. This work cannot be done with tractors or trucks. If these people are not helped, we will find a chaotic position after the drought. I would now like to say to the Minister for Transport that he has not convinced me, or anyone else in the North, in connection with the Government's attitude towards the search for uranium in the Kimberleys. Neither has he dampened our ardour in any way. I still think the Government is being very dilatory in this manner.

I have learned many geological facts about the northern part of the State, from well-known geologists. As a matter of fact, one of them in a letter to me said that while it is true that the Northern Territory uranium has been found in pre-Cambrian rocks, he also said that there were large expanses of pre-Cambrian country in the Kimberleys, particularly in the northern parts.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Could you give the name of that geologist?

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: No, he does not wish me to do that, and I must respect his confidence. He goes on to add that the pre-Cambrian period of geological times represents over 1,000,000,000 years compared with the total age of all later geological divisions of time being of the order of 400,000,000 years.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Before your time.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: As a result, the pre-Cambrian represents a period during which rocks of all types—sediments such as limestones and sandstones, and rocks such as granites and basalts—accumulated. I agree that because one area has rocks of the pre-Cambrian age, such as there are in the Northern Territory, it does not necessarily follow that a second area of similar age, such as the Kimberleys, will contain the same types of rocks and minerals, but it does mean that there is quite a chance that it will.

In the Kimberleys we have found all the minerals that have been located in similar areas in the Northern Territory, such as tin, copper, lead, wolfram, etc. These minerals have been found in a huge belt of country running from Oobergooma—opposite Yampi Sound—to Hall's Creek on the border of the Northern Territory. The Minister said there is no infusion of granites into the limestones in the Kimberleys. I think the Minister must be misinformed because I have received several letters from the North backing me up in my statement, and saying that we have plenty of similar occurrences in the Kimberleys. I do not say there is uranium ore in the Kimberleys, but I say there is every chance of finding it there, and I think the Government should give some assistance to that end.

In the course of his speech, the Minister said that the pamphlet the Government issued made it quite easy to recognise uranium ore when it was seen, and that a geiger counter was not necessary. I have seen two samples of uranium ore lately, one taken from the new find at Rum Jungle and one from the find that has been discovered quite recently. I have read the pamphlet issued by the Government and it is very interesting and helpful, but I say that it in no way assists in recognising uranium ore because the specimen I saw from Rum Jungle was just

a piece of rock with pyrites shot through it, and the other, from the new find, was just like a piece of ordinary dirt, or dull ironstone shot through with quartz. I am sure the only way we will ever get anywhere in this matter is by the Government taking at least sufficient interest to provide one geiger counter in Derby. I support the Bill.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [6.9]: I wish to refer to the new aluminium mile plates that are being stamped out for the railways. These signs are to be placed at every mile-post throughout the State railway system. Some 375 of them will be put up between Kalgoorlie and Perth. They consist of a sheet of aluminium about 19in. x 6in., with the numbers stamped out on them. The present signs are painted on both sides of the board in black on a white background, and the drivers can see them quite well. I investigated the new aluminium signs myself and I consider them to be a waste of the taxpayers' money.

They are erected on a rail which protrudes about 3ft. above the ground. The rail is essential because at present wooden posts are used, and they are subject to being eaten out by white ants. I would defy any enginedriver or traveller to recognise what is written on the new signs while the train is travelling. I had a look at the one at the 374-mile peg, and the light goes through the plate where it is stamped out, and the mileage cannot be read at all. Except for the need to put a rail in the ground, the present signs are in good order. I understand the new plates have cost a huge sum of money—in the vicinity of many thousands of pounds.

To my mind, there is a chance of putting our suburban traffic on to a better footing than it has been. In order to get on a suburban train in Perth, especially when going to Fremantle, the traveller has to go to a booking office, which is just a little round hole in the wall, and then walk across to the train. I was thinking the procedure could be brightened up a little by having a counter placed where the cloakroom is for the issuing of tickets, and conditions made somewhat easier for people to get into the train. The use of diesel coaches could improve the position.

The Mayfair class, with two coaches, could run a half-hour service between Midland Junction and Fremantle, and that would get the traffic back, because the people are fed up with the bus services. They have to wait in queues, and when they get into the bus they have to stand all the way to their destination. I think that, with strict supervision, the service could be restored and could show a profit. When I was in the Commonwealth railways, I use to run a train of 560 tons, and included in that total would be at least

350 tons of water, 150 tons of coal, a coach, a brake-van, and one truck of goods.

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

**Hon. G. BENNETTS:** As I was about to say before the tea suspension, the diesel electric locomotives on the Commonwealth railways have resulted in a profit being shown as against the loss previously experienced. The only thing that perturbs me about the prospect of our going in for diesel locomotives is that they will use oil instead of our local coal but we must advance with the times, especially in view of what we can see taking place on the Commonwealth railways. Prior to the introduction of those diesel electric locomotives, there were six changes of crew between Kalgoorlie and Port Augusta and a number of fuelmen and fitters were employed. Today there are only two crew changes instead of six, in addition to which they have done away with all the fuelmen and the workshops between Kalgoorlie and Port Augusta.

Furthermore, there is the saving of haulage of 350 tons of water per train, together with anything up to 200 tons of coal. I was at Parkeston a couple of weeks ago and saw a diesel train arrive with a total weight of 750 tons. The only non-freight part of it was one coach and a brake-van, the rest all being payload. When our railways get their diesel electric locomotives, I hope they will be used on long-distance trips, such as to Kalgoorlie and Norseman—trips that involve long-distance haulage of coal. Oil could be landed at Esperance and used on those trips, thus showing a considerable saving of expense to the railway system. I do not agree with the Railway Department having increased freights and passenger charges to the extent that was recently announced. By increasing fares, the department will succeed only in preventing people from travelling by rail. The result will be, in the case of our railways, the same as that achieved by the higher charges imposed by the Postal Department, where there has been a considerable drop in mail, telegraph and telephone revenue.

**Hon. A. L. Loton:** Do you think there should be an increase in railway freights?

**Hon. G. BENNETTS:** Not to the extent to which they have been increased. The railways were laid down to develop the State and make it possible for people to live in the outback areas. If it were not for the decentralisation brought about in that way, it would be impossible for so many people to live in the cities. People can be encouraged to remain in the back country only by cheap freights and fares. Those living in the metropolitan area and enjoying all the amenities should be willing to pay something towards cheaper freights and fares for residents

of remote areas. Were it not for the people in those outback areas, Perth could not exist as it does today.

On the subject of the cancellation of suburban trains, I agree with a paragraph I read in the Press this evening. I feel that the country trains should be restored before the suburban service, because the people of the outback must be fed and the railways are their only means of receiving many classes of goods at anything like reasonable freight rates. During the recent strike, many of the freights to the Goldfields jumped by as much as 50 per cent. I do not believe that the committee recently formed by the Government should interfere with the administration of the railways.

One must take it for granted that the men in authority in the Railway Department have the necessary ability and that they do not view the position of the railway system for only a week ahead, but probably for the next 12 months or more. They must take an overall view—

**Hon. L. Craig:** Including fares.

**Hon. G. BENNETTS:** Including everything. They should be allowed to do their job in their own way and, if they cannot do it efficiently, they should be sacked, just as is done in the case of the ordinary worker. The Government should not interfere with the running of the railways unless it has real cause to do so. There are many points on which I could touch but for the time being I will conclude. I support the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

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

## MOTION—STATE FORESTS.

*To Revoke Dedication.*

Debate resumed from the previous day on the following motion by the Minister for Transport:—

That the proposal for the partial revocation of State Forests Nos. 4 and 42 laid on the Table of the Legislative Council by command of His Excellency the Governor on the 16th September, 1952, be carried out.

**HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (North)** [7.40]: While I realise that the State forests should not be encroached upon, I do not think these two excisions will be to the detriment of the State. One of them—131 acres—is for a dairy farm on the Bow River, at Irwin Inlet on the south coast. While on the subject of Bow River, I might say that it always seems strange to me that those who are responsible for naming rivers should have allowed two in

the State to be given the same name. There is a Bow River in the Kimberleys and another in the south.

The Minister for Agriculture: It is a very important name.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: It will be all right when Western Australia is divided into two States.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: That is so. I commend the action being taken to give this area to a farmer who will produce dairy products. The other area is of 146 acres and borders on the Collie townsite. It is to be excised for the purpose of housing coloured people. I understand that an enthusiastic doctor in that town has generously spent a good deal of his time in an endeavour to provide these people with better housing.

He has organised a voluntary working bee of tradesmen to assist in the erection of cottages over the week-ends, the natives providing the unskilled labour, and I understand that he has been successful in obtaining many donations of building material. That is a most commendable action, taken in a worthy cause, and one that will no doubt assist greatly in the uplifting of these people who are unfortunate enough to be living under conditions of housing that are anything but good. These people are descended from a nomadic race but, living within the bounds of civilisation, they should be provided with decent housing. It is a worthy effort on the part of the people of Collie to endeavour to provide these people with better living conditions. I support the motion.

HON. F. R. H. LAVERY (West) [7.43]: I have for many years held the view that whenever land is alienated along a waterway, access should be provided to that stream. I have in mind the Bow River—

The PRESIDENT: Is the hon. member aware that we are dealing with the partial revocation of State forests?

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: Yes, I am supporting the Assembly's resolution. I believe that whenever lands are being alienated, access should be provided to waterways. There are areas along the Swan River between Perth and Fremantle where one can go for two or three miles without being able to get down to the river because the land is owned and controlled by private citizens. I believe that in future when land is being alienated there should be at least a roadway between private property and any waterway.

Question put and passed and a message accordingly transmitted to the Assembly.

#### **BLL—RENTS AND TENANCIES EMERGENCY PROVISIONS ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE).**

##### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. E. M. DAVIES (West) [7.45]: This Bill has for its purpose the extension of the period of the principal Act to the 31st December next year. I support it, although, in my opinion, the existing Act, while affording a certain degree of protection to tenants in respect of the rents charged, is not as satisfactory as it might be. I say that because the housing position today is much more acute than it was some time ago, the reason being that under the relevant section of the Act people are evicted by the court after a certain period of notice is given by the owner.

While some members may agree that property owners should possess that right, the position will become worse if we continue with our migration policy which we are implementing at the moment. If this State decides that it will continue to encourage migration to our shores it will mean that some form of control will have to be exercised over tenancies and rents. What I am concerned about is that those people who have occupied houses subsequent to the 31st December, 1950, and who are not now regarded as protected tenants, find it difficult to obtain alternative accommodation after they have been evicted.

Many of those people were not able to occupy houses prior to the 31st December, 1950, because their families comprise two or three units and, by force of circumstances, had to obtain any accommodation that was available. Although they may have been tenants for some time, they do not enjoy any protection and when the owner of the property desires to use it for some other purpose, either for re-letting or for his own use, it is not necessary for him to obtain a court order or to give the requisite notice. As a result these people find themselves without any accommodation after receiving one week's notice to quit the premises and have difficulty in obtaining alternative accommodation.

In speaking to the Address-in-reply debate, I raised this question particularly in view of the fact that many young couples have been married since 1947 and although the building rate has been increased since that time, there are still 11,000 outstanding applications for homes, which gives an indication that the housing position today is not all that we would desire. Therefore, to provide at least some protection the Government has found it necessary to bring down this continuance Bill to extend the period of the existing Act to the 31st December, 1953. Notwithstanding the difficulties that this legislation presents, I venture to say that if it were to go overboard now there would be chaos throughout the State.

Hon. H. K. Watson: That is what you said 12 months ago.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: Yes, I know I did. I am saying it again tonight, and if the hon. member is satisfied that 64,000 migrants have entered this State since 1947 with no houses provided for them, someone must mention this fact in order that the problem may be overcome.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: They are all living somewhere.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: That interjection was very appropriate, especially when we make some inquiry as to where they are living because I venture to say that it is a disgrace that these people are living in such bad conditions in a State which has a high standard of living.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I would like some members to see the sort of accommodation some people are occupying.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: We have heard quite a lot in the past of owners being unable to gain repossession of their houses, but there is no reason why they should not be able to obtain occupancy of their properties in accordance with the existing legislation. All that an owner has to do is to give the tenant the necessary notice according to the provisions of the principal Act, and providing he has owned his house for a period of three years or more he can gain repossession of it in three months and the magistrate has no power to alter the order. If he has not owned the house for three years he has to give the tenant six months notice which means that he can obtain possession of the premises after being the owner for twelve months.

Quite a number of immigrants who can find no accommodation are purchasing houses already built, with the result that many tenants are being evicted without any hope of finding other places in which to reside. I know that many members will say that people who own houses are entitled to occupy them, but the main point is that with the influx of 64,000 migrants to the State since 1947 some accommodation must be provided for them. If we are to permit these people to evict the existing tenants, as a result of their purchasing the properties, it is necessary to provide some alternative accommodation for the evictees.

However, today we find that loan funds are not sufficient to enable the State Housing Commission to erect the same number of houses that it has constructed in the past and naturally they are not as plentiful as they might be. If this State is to continue with its migration policy, and I believe in the interests of the State that it should, then this legislation should not lapse, as some people say it should, until the housing position catches up with present requirements, otherwise our migration policy should be discontinued temporarily. The fact that many people are being evicted from their homes is causing some of the local authorities

great concern in trying to enforce the provisions of the Health Act because if they did so they would prevent many people from erecting the accommodation which they are forced to provide for themselves for the time being.

I know it has been said that in the past the people who came to the State in the early days were able to erect a shack or some rough shelter for the time being, but under the health laws of the State, which the local authorities are required to enforce, it is not possible for them to permit the construction of the type of structure that was put up in those days and so people are left without any accommodation whatsoever. I do not know that it would be wise to drift back to that state of affairs because we believe in a high standard of health being maintained in this State. Therefore, to take such a retrograde step would not be in the best interests of the State and the health of the people generally. I believe that this enactment must continue and it may be necessary at some time in the future to extend the provisions of the legislation still further. I therefore hope that the House will agree to extend the period of the existing Act for another twelve months.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [7.57]: I, too, hope that this legislation will continue for some time. As Mr. Davies has said, many local authorities are restricted in their desire to carry out to the letter the provisions of the Health Act and many of their own bylaws. I know that local authorities on the Goldfields have often issued notices to people to comply with the provisions of the Health Act but they have found that if they enforce them they would inflict great hardship on the recipients of the notices because they are unable to comply with the demands made upon them.

These notices are therefore held back month after month. At every meeting of the local authority the same items appear on the agenda. Correspondence is received from various persons asking for further concessions and the members of the board know that they cannot do other than accede to their requests. These people are not able to obtain building materials locally, and as a result of the metal trades strike they cannot obtain them from the metropolitan area to complete the accommodation that they are erecting.

I know of two cases of great hardship. In one instance a person provided the people concerned with accommodation. This person owns a caravan and he has let it to a couple who have one child. In doing so, he said to the wife, "When you take this caravan you will find that it is very small. I do not know how you will manage in it." The woman replied, "We have no home in which to live and we will have to make it do." This woman

is 20 years of age and her husband is 21 and she is expecting another child. She said to this person, "We will have to take the caravan or else find accommodation in a hotel which we cannot afford."

Last night, a relative of this individual who is a police sergeant, came to him, knowing that he had a couple of extra rooms, and asked if he could put up another woman with a small child because they had no place to go. This man took the woman in, but it is submitting his family to great inconvenience, because naturally they wish to have their home to themselves.

It is all very well for members to say that these people should have homes of their own. I quite agree that many of them should have made provision for themselves in that respect but unfortunately there are many who cannot do so. Let members consider the position of parents of large families in view of the high cost of living these days. It is extremely difficult for such people to procure homes for themselves. To erect dwellings that formerly cost £500 or £600 today involves an expenditure of £1,500.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: What is the reason for that?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The increased cost of living, and the basic wage has to rise as costs mount up.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: And the shorter working hours.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes, and the shorter working hours. I do not blame the shorter working hours for the position because I know in the mining industry, for instance, production increased under the shortened working week.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: And what about the housing position?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I know that is difficult, but in all these matters if there were only a fair share of labour available the position would be different.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Yes, "if."

Hon. G. BENNETTS: At the same time I am fully aware that huge profits are being made in connection with the building industry. I have done a fair amount of building, particularly in recent months for my own family. I realise the costs entailed and I know that some people must be making a lot of money out of the industry. I understand that the landed cost of imported pre-cut houses is between £1,300 and £1,400 without roofs and lining. I cannot understand where the cost comes in.

It is a crying shame that our own young Australian people who are bringing children into the world and doing their best to provide us with an Australian-born population, are harassed as they are as

regards housing accommodation. The present conditions are the cause of many divorces and the upsetting of home conditions generally. Some of the young folk are compelled to reside in hotels and they have not the money at their disposal to enable them to live properly. Some are forced to stay with relations and it is not good for the young people. In my opinion, the immigration policy should be relaxed, at least until Australians themselves have an opportunity to secure homes. I certainly trust the legislation will be continued for some time to come.

On motion by Hon. H. K. Watson, debate adjourned.

## BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

### *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE**  
(Hon. Sir Charles Latham—Central) [8.4] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this Bill is to obtain control over the sale, manufacture and use of a variety of toxic substances which are being sold for the purpose of destroying animal and vegetable pests. Since the war a number of highly poisonous substances of this nature have been introduced on the local market. Included in these is the group known as toxic organic phosphates, which are based on the formula of a German war gas. In addition, a number of other equally dangerous compounds are available.

Any person handling these substances should go to considerable trouble to protect himself and other people against the risk of poisoning. Inhalation of the vapour or splashing upon the skin may have fatal results unless adequate treatment is available without delay. In other parts of the world, deaths have occurred quite recently from the improper handling of dangerous insecticides and weed killers. It is for this reason that Parliament is asked to approve of the protective measures contained in the Bill. Similar legislation and control methods have been, and are being, introduced in the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

The purpose of the Bill is to safeguard the health of those persons who, by some means or another, are in contact with these pesticides, namely, the manufacturers, employees, purchasers and other persons who may unwittingly be exposed to the effects of the substances, such as on food, plants, trees, etc. An emergency advisory committee was appointed to consider this problem and its recommendations, which have been agreed to by the State Health Council, are contained in this Bill. The committee was composed of representatives of the Public Health Department and the Department of Agriculture, together with the Deputy Government Analyst and the Registrar of the Pharmaceutical Council.

As the object is to safeguard health, it is considered advisable to include this protective legislation in the Health Act. To achieve this end, the Bill proposes to insert in the principal Act a new division dealing with pesticides, and the term "pesticide" is fully defined in the Bill. The provisions of the principal Act with regard to samples taken by a health officer for analysis, will apply in full except that three unopened packages of the pesticide may be used, in lieu of dividing the sample taken into three parts. The object of this division is for the three portions to be sealed in the presence of the seller, one portion being retained by him, one by the health officer, and the other forwarded for analysis.

It is specified in the Bill that its contents do not affect in any way the provisions of the Pharmacy and Poisons Act of 1910. The Bill seeks the appointment by the Governor of an advisory committee, the members of which would be the Commissioner of Public Health, as chairman, the Government Analyst, the Registrar of the Pharmaceutical Council and the Director of Agriculture or his nominee. The committee will have power to co-opt one or more representatives of trade interests. Attendance fees will be paid any member of the committee who is not a public servant.

The committee will be required to recommend measures for the safe manufacture, marketing and use of pesticides, and it is proposed that regulations shall be made, based on these recommendations. It is anticipated that the safe use of some pesticides, particularly the organic phosphates, will be governed by a number of variable factors, such as the isolation of the premises from neighbours, the near presence of food establishments and whether the pesticides would be used in an open or enclosed space. It is for this reason that the Bill in new Section 241D (3) seeks to provide inspectors with some discretionary power in policing the use of pesticides. The composition of some of these pesticides is so complex that a provision has been included in the Bill, in proposed new Section 241E, that a charge against any person for committing a breach of the regulation shall be dismissed unless it can be shown he has been flagrantly careless in not ascertaining the composition of the pesticide.

It is probable that regulations will be promulgated requiring that all dangerous pesticides shall have directions attached for their safe use and details regarding antidotes in cases of poisoning. Another likely regulation would be that specifying a minimum period that should elapse following spraying before which a food crop could be marketed. It will be noted that Clauses 2 and 4 of the Bill refer to disinfectants as well as pesticides. Disinfectants are already included in the pro-

visions of the principal Act and the opportunity is taken in the Bill to include them in appropriate headings for the sake of clearer reference.

In conclusion, I might say that it is of interest to note that in England employees engaged in the manufacture of the later types of insecticides are now compelled to undergo frequent blood examinations in view of the cumulative effect of minute doses of these poisons. It is a fact that quite small doses of organic phosphates inhaled or absorbed through the skin can cause death in a very short time. Skilled medical attention is essential if an affected person is to have any hope of recovery. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. W. R. Hall, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—WHEAT INDUSTRY STABILISATION ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE**  
(Hon. Sir Charles Latham—Central)  
[8.10] in moving the second reading said: This is a very short Bill containing only two clauses. The object of presenting it is to carry out an obligation that we have to the Eastern States. The intention is to bring Western Australia into conformity with the Eastern States after deleting the provisions to pay freight on inter-State shipments of wheat, so that all growers will participate in the extra payment of 2s. per bushel on wheat sold as stockfeed in Western Australia for the pig, poultry, and dairying industries. The effect of that will be that this State will make the same contribution as the rest of Australia in that respect.

The amendment seeks to raise the home consumption price to be paid for stockfeed wheat by those engaged in the industries I have referred to by 2s. per bushel, making the amount they will pay 12s. as against the charge to all other industries of 16s. 1d. It is the intention of the Commonwealth Government at present to continue the subsidy of 4s. 1d. to the Australian wheatgrowers which means that they will receive 16s. 1d. per bushel for all stockfeed wheat.

The measure is similar to a Bill introduced last session and rejected by Parliament because members objected to the provision that was included to provide that growers should pay freight on wheat shipped to other States. That provision is not embodied in the Bill now before the House. It was agreed by all the States that a payment of 2s. a bushel above the cost of production should be made on the stockfeed wheat for the pig, poultry and dairy industries and as an incentive to wheatgrowers the Commonwealth agreed to pay the subsidy of 4s.



1d. per bushel. The subsidy is limited to 26,000,000 bushels and on sales in excess of that quantity the full payment of 16s. 1d. per bushel must be paid for wheat used for stockfeed.

Owing to drought conditions earlier this year it was found necessary to hand feed sheep in certain districts and the only legal way to overcome the difficulty was to have the grower's wheat returned and his certificate later adjusted. He would be paid by the Australian Wheat Board for the quantity delivered to the siding, less what he took back, and he would be charged handling costs. That was the way we overcame the emergency. I may remind the House that immediately the farmer's wheat is handed in at a siding, it becomes the property of the Australian Wheat Board and the farmer has no further control over it or interest in it, apart from money he will receive from the sale of his crop. While he loses control of the wheat, the board, on the other hand, has no power to sell the wheat back to the farmer except in the ordinary way of business. Therefore, the farmer would be charged 16s. 1d. per bushel for the wheat he required to feed his stock.

Hon. L. Craig: Why would he want to pay 16s. 1d. per bushel?

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** Because he required the wheat and did not know there would be a drought. The hon. member will remember that the rains were very late in the agricultural areas and that is the time when this transaction took place.

Hon. L. Craig: I see.

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** The Bill will legalise the sale of wheat for sheep feed at 16s. 1d. per bushel should it be required to assist drought-stricken farmers in future adverse seasons. The Commonwealth has decided on a subsidy as an incentive and this was also the idea of the additional 2s. The incentive was greatly needed. The total harvest in Western Australia last year was 40,000,000 bushels and the unofficial estimate for the coming season is between 30,000,000 and 33,000,000 bushels. The recent rains have improved the outlook considerably in some portions of the State.

It is proposed to proclaim the amended law as soon as possible, so that we will be able to carry out our obligation to make our contribution of 2s. a bushel for wheat for poultry and pig raisers as the Eastern States have done over the whole period that the board has had the wheat for sale. I do not think there is anything else I need to say. This is an undertaking that was given by all the States. It has been honoured by the other States and I am asking members to agree to this Bill, which has been passed by another place. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**HON. L. C. DIVER (Central) [8.17]:** While supporting the Bill, I would like to point out that the quantity of stock-feed wheat set out in the Bill is 26,000,000 bushels.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is for the whole of Australia.

**Hon. L. C. DIVER:** I realise that. At the inception of the scheme, there was a large minority of growers in Western Australia who did not agree with it. Those who expounded its virtues in justifying the amount of wheat that would be used for home consumption realised that it would be in the vicinity of 30,000,000 bushels, but said that this point was one upon which farmers could from time to time bargain with the Commonwealth Government and hoped they would get it to 15,000,000 bushels.

I would like the Minister for Agriculture, on any occasion when this matter comes up, to try to insist that the figure be pegged at 15,000,000 bushels, anything in excess of that to be at world parity. We have had the spectacle of men who have produced pork over the years getting wheat at concession rates. They have produced a huge amount of pork, at the expense of the wheatgrowers and put that pork on the world market, while the wheat used by them was debarred from the benefit of being placed on the world market. That is a point that I trust the Minister will bear in mind.

It has been the custom to speak of this measure as the Wheat Industry Stabilisation Act, but we all know that the whole business has become a burden on the wheat industry, and that that industry over the years has paid to the internal economy of Australia many millions of pounds, an amount far exceeding the benefits the industry has received from Australian Governments by way of bounties. For that reason, I think it is high time that the title was redrafted to convey that it provides a subsidy to the consumers within Australia, and not that it is a subsidy for wheatgrowers.

The Minister for Agriculture: It is a subsidy to the consumers, but it enables the growers to get that amount in addition.

**Hon. L. C. DIVER:** I follow that; but the man in the street imagines that the wheatgrowers are getting something to which they are not entitled and he thinks he is doing something for the wheat-grower, whereas the wheatgrower is conferring a benefit on him. With those few remarks, I give the Bill my blessing.

**HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [8.20]:** This amending measure has been required for some time. Mr. Diver said that the title of the measure should be altered. It never was stabilisation; actually it was equalisation. The terms of this Bill should have been included in the Act some years

ago when stabilisation was first introduced. Practically everything included in the measure was obtained through the efforts of the late Hon. G. B. Wood. We know how he fought in the Eastern States on this matter for quite a long time, and I think the wheatfarmers of this State owe him thanks for quite a lot that is contained in this measure.

I do not think I am wrong in saying that this will not apply for long, because the Act comes to an end during next year, and these provisions will apply only for this season. What will happen then is in the lap of the gods. 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.

### **BILL—MARGARINE ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).**

#### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**HON. C. H. HENNING** (South-West) (8.25): Like Mr. Craig, I represent a province that contains the bulk of those engaged in the dairying industry in this State. Unlike Mr. Craig, however, I oppose the Bill. A considerable amount of interest is being displayed in this question. I have been around the country quite a lot and have spoken to a great number of farmers and to their organisations, and I doubt whether there are less than 90 per cent. who are vitally interested in the measure and desire to see it defeated. Listening to the Minister introducing the Bill, I was reminded of a few lines I read quite recently that were attributed to the late Samuel Gompers, the American Labour leader. He said—

What the Government gives you the Government can take away, and once it starts taking it away it can take more than it gave you.

The Act this Bill seeks to amend gave reasonable protection to the dairying industry. This Bill seeks to take away that protection. When I say, "This Bill" I have in mind not only what is happening in this State but also what has happened in the other States.

This measure was introduced in 1940 by the then Minister for Lands, Mr. Wise. I think that all members should read the debate that took place on that occasion not only here, but in another place, because some most interesting remarks were made. I want to draw attention to certain comments that were offered, because I believe that the position regarding competition from margarine is the same today as it was then. Mr. Wise, in moving the second reading, said—

For many years leaders of the dairy industry have claimed that some protection is necessary and should be afforded the industry against the unrestricted manufacture and sale of margarine. It is asserted that to some extent margarine has been a competitor with the dairy industry on unequal terms, that the products from which margarine from other countries and some States of Australia is manufactured are cheaper than those used in the production of butter, and the consequence is that margarine can be offered for sale on a basis that is not fairly competitive with that on which butter is manufactured and offered for sale. Moreover, they claim that the materials of which margarine is manufactured largely consist of products from countries which have a coloured population and in which labour is therefore cheap.

It will be remembered that only a few days ago the Minister gave the names of the countries of origin of the products from which margarine is manufactured, and nobody can deny that they are lands in which labour is cheap.

The Minister for Agriculture: You would not say that they are countries not under Australian control?

**HON. C. H. HENNING:** I am saying that the labour is cheap. It is coloured labour.

The Minister for Agriculture: Would you say we have no right to use the New Guinea food supply?

**HON. C. H. HENNING:** I did not say that.

The Minister for Agriculture: You are suggesting it.

**HON. C. H. HENNING:** I said that the labour is cheap. Here is the crux of the whole thing. Mr. Wise went on to say—

The Agricultural Council, representative of all the States, being attended by Ministers from all the States, and the Department of Commerce, has long since been concerned in the endeavour to protect in a legitimate way the dairying interests of Australia.

I will speak a little more fully on that point later on.

**HON. L. CRAIG:** What year is that?

**HON. C. H. HENNING:** It is Vol. 106, No. 2, of the Parliamentary Debates for 1940. I will not quote any of the hon. member's remarks.

**HON. L. CRAIG:** That is 12 years ago.

**HON. G. BENNETTS:** There were more dairymen in those days.

**HON. C. H. HENNING:** The then Minister for Lands went on—

That quantity has been agreed upon by the Commonwealth and the States.

Mr. Doney then said—

It is quite disproportionate to our population.

Of course, the same thing applies today. Mr. Wise then went on—

No matter what views members might hold, the dairying industry has a very strong claim to the support of workers in any branch of employment.

I would now like to quote the remarks made by Mr. McLarty. He said—

It will be generally agreed that the competition of margarine with butter is not fair competition. If any hon. member can justify such competition, I will be glad to hear what he has to say.

In reading through the debate I was not able to find where any member was able to justify such competition. He goes on—

The cost of producing margarine is trifling compared with the cost of producing butter, and the profit is higher.

Further on he had this to say—

The Minister told us that table margarine consisted of vegetable oils derived almost entirely from products imported from countries employing black labour. How can dairymen compete against the manufacturers of margarine? If we continue to allow substitutes to take the place of our primary products, the whole economy of this country is bound to be seriously affected very soon.

He also had this to say—

Some people complain that the price of butter is too high. My reply is that the price of butter would be much higher if the dairy farmer had not the help of his family.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: What was the price of butter at that time?

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I think it was—

The Minister for Agriculture: It was 1s. 3d. a lb. and you know it.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: Are you sure of that?

The Minister for Agriculture: Yes, it was 1s. 3d. a lb.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I was not in Australia at that time.

The Minister for Agriculture: It was 1s. 3d. a lb. I was a member of the Assembly at that time.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I will take the Minister's word for it. All I am doing is quoting Mr. McLarty's remarks.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I think you will find it was 1s. 11d. a lb.

Hon. L. C. Diver: I think that is right.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: However, I do know that coconut oil, from which margarine is made, was 1½d. a lb. at that time, and I think members will find that that is a little cheaper than butter. Mr. McLarty went on—

My reply is that the price of butter would be much higher if the dairy-farmer had not the help of his family. Members know that dairy farmers work long hours and work seven days a week.

Then he went on—

But for the fact that the dairy-farmer is helped by his family butter in Australia would be much higher in price than it is today. I assure members that the average dairy farmer in this State is not making a fortune.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Did he support the measure?

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I would now like to quote some of Mr. Thorn's remarks. He said—

My only regret is that this is not a Bill to prohibit the manufacture of margarine which is competing with a product of the land. The butter industry is most important to this State and the Commonwealth in general.

Mr. Thorn went on to discuss the prospects of soldier settlement for those areas after the war. In this Chamber the then Chief Secretary, Mr. Kitson, said—

This Bill is expressly designed to protect an industry which is of the utmost importance to this and all the other States of the Commonwealth.

He again stated—

The Agricultural Council, representative bodies in all States and the Department of Commerce, have all endeavoured to put forth some concrete proposal for the protection of the dairying industry.

Mr. Gray said—

Margarine has its proper place in industry. I refer to cooking margarine. Biscuit and cake manufacturers could hardly continue operations during the summer months without the use of margarine.

There is no provision in this Bill for the control of any cooking margarine or of the sale of shortening for the use of biscuit or any other cooking. Mr. Gray also said—

I agree with those who say that the time has arrived when we should take a definite stand against the use of margarine for domestic purposes, and I certainly support the contention that men and women who have been fed on butter from childhood are physically better than those who were accustomed to margarine.

My principal objection to the Bill is that co-operation between the States and the Commonwealth has broken down. The Minister did not tell us anything of what had happened at the meeting of the Agricultural Council as regards the control, if any, of the sale of margarine throughout Australia. Had the States been able to agree, then I do not think there would have been any complaints from the dairying industry.

The Minister for Agriculture: How do you know they did not agree? You are only guessing.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I said that the Minister did not mention it.

The Minister for Agriculture: I had no justification for mentioning it.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I can hardly understand that, especially when one reads the remarks of the Victorian Minister for Agriculture; I will quote them later. Some people have said that there is little opposition from the dairying industry to the margarine Bill. I do not propose to read a fairly long extract I have here of a statement made by the late G. C. Howey. He made this statement a few days before he died and it appeared in the September issue of the "Victorian Dairy Farmer." He voiced the viewpoint of the Victorian Dairy Farmers' Association and the Dairy Farmers' Association of Australia. He said that the industry as a whole was definitely against an increase in quota.

I believe that any decision on margarine should be made on a State and Commonwealth basis. After all the marketing and costing of butter is on a Commonwealth basis and butter stocks are moved from State to State by a dairying organisation and without any cost to the consumers. Any additional consumption of margarine must have a detrimental effect on the home sales of butter. If it has a detrimental effect, then that loss is borne by the producers because of the system of costing. It is a fairly complicated system and I will mention it a little later on. Last night Mr. Roche interjected when the Minister was speaking and said, "Does the dairying industry approve of this Bill?" I was astounded at the Minister's answer. He said, "I do not care whether it does or not."

The Minister for Agriculture: I am perfectly candid about it, too, and I meant it.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I am astounded at such a remark from the Minister for Agriculture.

The Minister for Agriculture: The majority comes before the minority.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I do not think those remarks do the department any good. How different was that from the reply given by the Minister for Agriculture in Victoria when he said to the Dairy Farmers' Association—

The interests of the dairying industry will be safeguarded at all times.

He stated that when discussing the question of margarine and went on to say that the dairying organisations would be informed and consulted as new developments arose. I hope our Minister for Agriculture will take notice of that.

The Minister for Agriculture: Do you think I have done anything contrary to that?

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I am not saying whether the Minister has or has not.

The Minister for Agriculture: You are trying to mislead the House.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I said that the Minister's reply was different from that given by the Victorian Minister for Agriculture. The Minister said that this Bill was to increase the permissible quota of margarine to be manufactured in this State from 364 tons to 800 tons.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Not enough.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: That is a matter of opinion. He stated that the population of this State had increased by 20 per cent. from the time when the parent Act was passed. But the increased quota of margarine is not only 20 per cent., but another 100 per cent. as well.

The Minister for Agriculture: Now quote the reduction in the production of butter.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: Yes.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: We are not exporting now.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I will get on to that aspect in a few moments. The Minister must know the position in regard to butter; there is no shortage of butter in Australia. The shortage last year was a result of exporting in the flush period and having a bad ending to the season in the Eastern States of Australia.

The Minister for Agriculture: How much butter was exported from Australia last year?

Hon. C. H. HENNING: About 16,000 tons, I think.

The Minister for Agriculture: No.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I cannot remember the exact figures offhand.

The Minister for Agriculture: You are doing a lot of guessing.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: It was 11,536 tons.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: The total production last year was 130,000 tons of which the Australian consumption was 115,000 tons and that leaves 15,000 tons. I do not know whether that was all exported or some of it thrown down the drain. Perhaps the Minister could tell us that. The Minister also knows the overall position. Butter can be moved from State to State for the convenience of

marketing and storage. He must have heard on the wireless only a night or two ago that in Queensland they produced more butter during last month than they have produced for a corresponding period during the last ten years. I cannot see that there will possibly be a shortage of butter this year.

Hon. L. Craig: You can also move margarine from one State to another.

The Minister for Agriculture: He forgets that.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I have not forgotten it.

Hon. L. Craig: That is an important point.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: If we want more butter here that can be arranged by the local dairy products marketing board with the stabilisation committee of the Commonwealth. As regards butter, I think it is generally known that there is a consumer subsidy which is paid by the Commonwealth. That payment will be in the vicinity of £16,000,000 and will be paid on what is consumed locally plus 20 per cent. So all butter, over that extra 20 per cent., which is exported overseas will definitely be a charge on the producers because the export price today is a shilling a pound lower than the price that can be obtained locally.

When I say "obtained locally," I am not referring to the 4s. 2d. a lb. paid by the consumer but to the cost of production, which was approximately 5s. 2d., because there is a consumer subsidy of 1s. a lb. The present price, of course, for England f.o.b. is 39s. 6d. per cwt., whereas the home or Australian price for consumption, which includes subsidy, is 42s. I think that is right. Increased sales of margarine must reduce the local demand for butter and cause more export. I will not suggest for one moment that every pound of margarine sold on the market is going to cause an extra pound of butter to be exported overseas, but it is going to affect materially the amount exported, from the producers' return point of view.

The producer's return is made up in the first place from the Australian sales, then from the return received from the export sales, either to the United Kingdom or any other country, and then from the Commonwealth contribution, which is known as consumer subsidy. Because butter factories let it go out at 1s. a lb. less, the Commonwealth Government subsidy comes in, and the average of these returns is paid to the producer. How many industries produce below the cost of production? The cost of production survey as far as butter is concerned was 4s. 10½d. At present, the producer is getting 4s. 8½d., less cartage to the factory, which is approximately 1½d. If any industry is producing below the cost of production and has to sell to overseas markets well below cost of production, it

is definitely uneconomic, and therefore the export of butter above that 20 per cent. is uneconomic. How can we expect the farmer to produce if he is forced to sell an ever-increasing quantity overseas at an uneconomic figure? Only a year ago, I think members will recall, I congratulated the Government on the stand it had taken when the dispute was on between the other States as to whether butter should go up in price. Eventually, the stand taken by this State was adopted by all other States, with the exception for a time of New South Wales and Queensland, with the result that a uniform price was arrived at.

But let us consider the position in the other two States: those that opposed Western Australia last year. It will be remembered that New South Wales threatened dairy farmers with confiscation of their properties unless they produced and sold at the cost fixed by that Government. In December last year, as soon as the new price came into force, that State immediately raised the quantity from 1,248 tons to 2,500 tons of margarine. I do not know if the Agricultural Council was consulted. It will be remembered that Queensland—and Mr. Diver mentioned it the other day—is going to seize the produce on the farm.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Direct the production.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: In October, 1951, Queensland raised the quantity from 645 tons to 1,600 tons, and last month—and I presume I am right in this, Mr. Minister—it was raised again to 4,340 tons. So Queensland has increased its quantity to a figure more than that of the whole of the previous quota for Australia.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Is that margarine or butter?

Hon. C. H. HENNING: Those two States alone, without knowing what happens in Western Australia, have raised the quantity to 4,850. Working on the assumption that 10 cows will produce a ton of butter, they are displacing about 48,500 milking cows. To say that it will not affect the dairy industry is ridiculous. One member interjected last night and asked, "Is it in the interests of the public?" I consider that the interest of the public is best served by a virile rural industry and not by legislation that tends to lower the price paid below the cost of production.

I admit, and everyone admits, that butter cannot compete with margarine as regards price. But we must not forget that we are trying to produce butter under Australian labour conditions. The principle ingredient of margarine, other than a little salt and a little colouring oil, and 15 or 16 per cent. water, is coconut oil that comes from copra, produced under cheap labour conditions and rather primitive living conditions.

[The Deputy President took the Chair.]

The Minister for Agriculture: Naturally; you know that.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I know it, and I am not arguing about it. Those who support the Bill are supporting the importation of cheap material produced by cheap labour. What difference is there in principle if somebody suggested that instead of importing material produced by that labour we import the labour to Australia and reduce our cost of production of butter? I am certain there would be a howl from all sections of the community, and nothing is farther from my mind than to suggest it.

But I believe the general principle remains exactly the same. We can remember only recently when other goods from Japan, for example, came into the country, that all sections of the community protested. The Labour movement protested, the manufacturers protested, and of course I do not blame them for doing so. But why not enter a protest on this Bill—not when there is an opportunity to procure something cheaper? It is the same old thing, namely, all that is wanted is cheap living. Some say farmers have failed because they have not increased their production. They certainly have not increased their production in Western Australia, but they are up against a very big problem, and, that is a heavy type of country.

If farmers had been able to secure long-term loans and cheap money, they would have been able to keep up with the demands for butter in this State alone. If they had only been guaranteed the sum of money that has been guaranteed to secondary industry; if they could only have had the money the Government has guaranteed to Chamberlain Industries, they would have been able to have another 100,000 acres of land under cultivation now, and would not be putting men off, but putting them on, and thus creating further requirements for labour throughout the State.

What happened in America in the mid-thirties? High excise duty was placed on imported copra, and I hope the Commonwealth Government will do the same here. In America the use of cotton seed oil is encouraged, and extract of soya beans, all produced in the U.S.A. At

those two substances are used entirely for the production of margarine in that country; cotton seed to the extent of 193,000 tons and soya beans to the extent of 115,000 tons. No dairy farmer could have any logical objection to margarine competing with butter if the materials used in its manufacture were produced in Australia.

We know that coconuts will grow in the north, particularly in Queensland, and that soya beans will grow over a large area. Some mention has been made of processed milk, but we must not forget that processed milk is bought on the same basis as butterfat. If we kill the butter-

fat industry we are definitely going to affect the processed milk industry similarly. I would support legislation of this sort if it were brought in as it was first introduced, that is on a basis of mutual agreement between the States and the Commonwealth.

I believe that this legislation now has definitely broken down, and I think the only hope is for the States to endeavour through their agricultural councils to get together again and instead of one State competing against another for the greatest quantity of margarine—and I am not saying Western Australia is competing against the others—

The Minister for Agriculture: You are making the suggestion, which is worse.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: Well, I hope the Minister does so.

The Minister for Agriculture: I am not making the suggestion, you are.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I do hope it is done; it can be easily discussed at a further meeting. Although margarine imitates butter in colour and in setup, I do not look upon it as an imitation or a substitute. It is certainly synthetic, but I believe we must look on it as a butter manufactured or made by industry. The industrial product is cheaper yet practically identical chemically. Given only a fraction of the money that has been expended on the atom bomb scientists say they could provide more cheaply all the basic foods required other than meat.

The Minister for Agriculture: I am surprised to hear that statement from an ex-soldier.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I said that scientists say that. Let us consider another angle. We have been told that in America an ideal synthetic industrial milk has been manufactured. We have industrial butter; now they have industrial milk. Where are we going? Margarine and synthetic milk affect one branch of primary production only, but that branch, the dairying industry, is the first major industry that has been threatened by industrial food. We do not know which will be the next one, but this move is certain to continue on and on. One may not like synthetic foods very much. The time is not long since when a lot of people did not like Australian whisky, but I am told they have become accustomed to it.

The Minister for Agriculture: I do not know that there is any mention of whisky in this margarine Bill.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: The whole setup of the gentleman's agreement between the States and the Commonwealth has broken down. We do not know where the other States are heading. The Premier

stated in Bunbury a little while ago that the Government was providing for a thousand new dairy farms. How can we ask for money to develop dairy farms and improve pastures while, on the other hand, we are extending an invitation to manufacturers to produce more industrial butter? I sincerely hope and believe that anybody having the future of the dairying industry at heart will oppose the Bill. I trust that all members will be able to differentiate between the substance and the shadow.

**HON. C. W. D. BARKER (North)** [9.4]: As an hon. member said yesterday, if the Minister for Agriculture thinks I am going to support this Bill, I had better tell him now that I am. Not only do I support the measure, but I also commend the Government for having introduced it. I cannot for the life of me understand what the dairying industry has to fear from this measure. Quite obviously it cannot supply our butter needs, and therefore we must give permission for this vital substitute, margarine, to be manufactured in quantity sufficient to supply the demand.

I have some figures of the production of butter in the various States which I am sure will be of interest to every member as they show clearly that, in all the States, the production of butter is at a lower level now than it has been for many years. These figures were given in the Senate by the Minister representing the Minister for Commerce and Agriculture in reply to questions asked by Senator Cooke on the 9th October, 1952—

Butter ex factory produced by States in 1951-52:

	Tons.
New South Wales	23,440
Victoria	59,764
Queensland	27,847
South Australia	7,760
Western Australia	6,524
Tasmania	6,167
Total	131,502

Owing to seasonal and other factors, 1951-52 was a year of light production. The average annual Australian factory production over the previous five-year period was 157,000 tons. Butter exports by the States for the 1951-52 season were as follows:—

	Tons.
New South Wales	244
Victoria	7,922
Queensland	2,068
South Australia	505
Western Australia	73
Tasmania	724
Total	11,536

The average total of Australian exports in the previous five years was 73,000 tons. Those figures show clearly how the production of butter has declined. We cannot blame the dairying industry for not producing the butter because it has reached a stage where that simply does not pay. The Australian average cost of production in 1952-53 has been calculated by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics to be 4s. 1.29d. per lb. of commercial butter. The 4s. 2d. a pound that we pay for butter is not its true economic price because, on every pound of butter we produce for home consumption, there is a subsidy of approximately 10½d. per lb. while, for export butter, the subsidy is approximately 1s. per lb.

An amount of £16,800,000 has been provided in the Budget for the payment of subsidy on butter and cheese for the year 1952-53 and of this amount it is estimated that approximately £15,000,000 will be applied to butter. In addition, the Government is making available in the present financial year a grant of £250,000 to State Departments of Agriculture to be used to finance approved projects designed to secure improved efficiency in the dairying industry generally. The subsidy granted on sales within Australia is to enable the public to buy butter and cheese at less than the cost of production and so, in view of the shortage of butter and the high demand for margarine, we have to grant permits to produce more margarine.

The proposal in the Bill is to increase the quantity of margarine permitted to be manufactured from 364 tons to 800 tons a year. The Minister clearly stated that he need not necessarily issue permits for 800 tons, but that it was proposed to give monthly quotas to the two manufacturing firms in this State according to the demand. Thus at all times he would have full control of the situation, so why should we stipulate any particular quantity at all? A quantity of 500 tons may be sufficient to meet the demand in the coming season. On the other hand, the Minister told us that, in the coming season, there would be a greater shortage of butter than there was last year, so perhaps 800 tons or 1000 tons may not be enough.

As the Minister proposes to issue permits in monthly quotas according to the demand, why not leave the amount to be manufactured according to the demand as it arises month by month? If we stipulate a quantity of 800 tons and the demand proves to be greater, the Minister would have to come back to Parliament for amended legislation before he would be able to act. If, however, we leave it to the discretion of the Minister to issue permits in accordance with the demand, the whole problem will have been dealt with efficiently and at once.

There is no shortage of vegetable fats used in the manufacture of margarine, commonly known in the trade as Vegetol, which is mainly produced from cocoanut and ground nut oils grown in our New Guinea territory or in Australia, and I have it from authoritative sources that there is no danger of the raw materials being in short supply.

If we retain the quota of 800 tons set out in the Bill and a demand is created for 1,000 or 1,200 tons, there is no law to prevent importations from the Eastern States to make good the deficiency. If the matter were left to the discretion of the Minister, he would have full control of the situation and would be in a better position to protect the dairying industry when the butter manufacturers could supply the public demand for butter.

Possibly if a thorough investigation were made of the dairying industry, some methods could be found whereby butter could be produced much more cheaply than it is today. Super, which plays a vital part in the production of all primary products, is selling at high and even prohibitive prices, and perhaps an inquiry into the manufacturing costs, storage, transport, etc., of super would be the first step towards providing cheaper butter in greater quantity.

The fact remains that there is a shortage of butter and a greater demand for margarine, and therefore we should manufacture more margarine until butter supplies are sufficient to meet the demand and the price is within reach of everybody's purse. In meeting this demand, let us not tie ourselves to any set quota, but leave it to the discretion of the Minister to issue permits as the demand arises.

**HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [9.15]:** I intend to oppose the measure. I was, for 15 years, a dairy farmer relying on the industry for my living. I went through the ups and downs of the industry at a time when butterfat was 8d. a lb. It is all very well for Mr. Craig to rise in this House and support the measure.

**Hon. L. Craig:** I also was dairy farming when butterfat was 8d. a lb.; and in a much bigger way than you.

**Hon. N. E. BAXTER:** The hon. gentleman was not relying on the industry, as I was, for his living. He should be a champion of the dairy farmers of the South-West, but from his remarks last night it appears that he is championing the manufacturers of an article which is in competition with butter.

**Hon. L. Craig:** That is not a fair statement.

**Hon. N. E. BAXTER:** When the Minister introduced the measure he informed us that there could be no restriction on imports from the Eastern States. We realise that is so under the Constitution.

We did get some figures from the Minister and some that were Australia-wide from Mr. Barker, but the hon. member did not say what the Australia-wide consumption was.

**Hon. L. Craig:** He gave the export and total production figures.

**Hon. N. E. BAXTER:** He did not say what the consumption was, although the hon. gentleman infers he gave us all the figures. Here we are dealing with something that concerns Western Australia, and it is for this State that we want the figures. The estimated production of table butter in Western Australia for this year is 256,000 boxes, and the estimated consumption is 309,250 boxes. This will necessitate the importation of about 53,000 boxes. It is rather illuminating to look at the consumption and sales figures, and to compare August, 1951, with August, 1952.

Whereas in the former period the sales were 31,000 boxes, during August, 1952, they amounted to 25,000 boxes. This is an alarming drop of 6,000 boxes in one month. Taken over 12 months this would mean an annual total of 72,000 boxes, which would leave a surplus over and above the amount that it will be necessary to import. I do not understand where this great cry of a shortage is coming from. According to these figures, the people, because of the cost, are not buying as much butter as they used to, and now we are, by the Bill, going to give them a cheap substitute which will be in competition with the dairying industry. The Minister informed us not long ago that the Government was prepared to do something for the substandard dairy farmers. If it is going to spend money on those dairy farms, to increase butterfat production, it will, by the introduction of this measure, be wasting the money it will spend on the dairying industry. Mr. Craig when speaking on the Bill last night, also said that all milk, in his opinion, should go into the factories in wholemilk form. He said it was a huge waste of milk.

**Hon. L. Craig:** If the hon. member quotes me, he should quote me correctly. I did not say what he has said.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** I take it the hon. member has no wish to misquote Mr. Craig.

**Hon. N. E. BAXTER:** That is so.

**Hon. H. L. Roche:** What did he say?

**Hon. L. Craig:** Something very sensible.

**Hon. N. E. BAXTER:** It sounded very much like the words I have used. He said there was a great wastage of milk produced.

**Hon. L. Craig:** That is true.

**Hon. N. E. BAXTER:** From that I infer he meant that a lot of the separated milk that was fed to pigs and calves on dairy farms was wasted.



Hon. L. Craig: Was being uneconomically used. If the hon. member knew anything about pigs, he would know it too.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The hon. gentleman said he meant "uneconomically used," and I accept that, but I point out that there is no uneconomical use of milk products here for the simple reason that pigmeats have been in short supply for a long time and are still in short supply throughout the world. In regard to the milk that is fed to calves, we have to follow through the whole of the dairying industry. The wholemilk industry cannot maintain its production of young stock. It relies almost entirely on the butterfat industry to provide young stock for the market, and for replacement.

When Mr. Craig suggested that the present arrangement was uneconomical, I take it he meant that the milk should go through the wholemilk sources which would be good-bye to the poddy calves. But they are a source of replacement for the wholemilk industry. There is another angle to this, in that a big percentage of our beef comes from the South-West. If we are not going to rear poddies, it is good-bye to our beef production. This reacts upon those who are claiming a cheap food for the consumer. The consumer is not prepared to pay up to 5s. for butter, and the butterfat industry will die as a result. He is going to reduce, eventually the wholemilk supply, and the meat supply because of lack of replacements. Therefore, it is only natural to deduce that whereas he might save 10s. a week on butter, he will spend an extra £1 or 30s. on milk and meat.

That is a good argument against anything that would affect the cost of butter or butterfat. The answer to this problem is not to encourage the increase of synthetic food production in a State like Western Australia, but to develop further dairy farms. I suggested, in 1950, that dairy farms could be developed closer to the metropolitan area—particularly in the hills and other country within 40 miles of Perth. We have a large tract of country there which would help to supply the metropolitan area with milk, and so relieve some of the strain on the lower dairy areas, and assist in replacing our butterfat losses.

Much of the decrease in butter production is due to the fact that a lot of the milk that was separated into cream for butter, is now coming to the metropolitan area and then going to the country districts as milk supplies. I think the Minister for Agriculture knows that only too well. It is surprising that he should sponsor this measure, as earlier in the year, as far up as Beacon, I heard him appeal to the farmers to keep cows not only to produce butter for themselves, but a few pounds extra to take into the storekeeper.

Hon. L. Craig: It is funny that the two actual dairymen in the lower House supported the Bill.

The Minister for Agriculture: These fellows have received their instructions here; and the others had not.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I have no instructions from anyone.

The Minister for Agriculture: My word you have and have been well instructed too.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Have you any shares in—

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The Minister is just trying to make a mountain out of a molehill. I have never had any instructions from anybody. No one will instruct me as to what I shall do in this House. I will do what I think is fit and right. I will act under no instruction from the Minister or anyone else.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: What about your constituents?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I do not act under instructions from my constituents either. It is necessary that we should develop more dairy farms if we are to increase our butterfat production, and as suggested by Mr. Henning, we should endeavour to find ways and means of reducing the costs of dairy farmers. The Government would do a much better job by moving in that direction rather than introducing measures to provide something which will be in competition with this industry. I have no intention of supporting the Bill.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	....	....	13
Noes	....	....	10
Majority for	....	....	3

#### Ayes.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker	Hon. A. R. Jones
Hon. N. E. Baxter	Hon. A. L. Loton
Hon. R. J. Boylen	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. J. McI. Thomson
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. H. Hearn	Hon. J. Murray
Hon. C. H. Henning	(Teller.)

#### Noes.

Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. Sir Chas. Latham
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. F. R. H. Lavery
Hon. L. C. Diver	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. Sir Frank Gibson	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. E. M. Heenan	Hon. L. Craig
	(Teller.)

Motion thus passed.

Debate adjourned.

#### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

**THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT**  
(Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 3 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.33 p.m.