

5. In these circumstances, the only alternative will be to seek some co-operative arrangement with the Commonwealth authorities. The member for York mentioned a moment ago that no protest had induced them to adopt any attitude of consideration.

Mr. Mann: Nor even commonsense.

The PREMIER: The Commonwealth Government has, in the last five years, expressed itself as particularly interested in this problem in a national sense. It has been discussed at meetings of the Agricultural Council and at Premiers' Conferences, and I am hoping, as I have no reason to doubt the Solicitor General's point of view, that we may achieve the assistance which the Commonwealth has refused to give us in the past despite strenuous protests, and that we may achieve it somehow by co-operation and instructions from one Commonwealth department to another.

I feel, without labouring this subject any further, that if we can arouse public sentiment upon this very vital problem so that no person can be expected deliberately to threaten the existence of his own property or neighbouring properties, we can at this stage in Western Australia do much to avoid the sad experiences of other parts of the world.

Mr. McDonald: Would it not be convenient to include in this Bill measures against the encroachment of salt in agricultural lands?

The PREMIER: I think salt is a very different problem. It is a menace in many areas, again because of the raising of the water table by the destruction of timber, but this is something that I think must be treated separately. In fact it is being treated separately, and it is being treated successfully by the research officers of the Department of Agriculture. Research has been undertaken in certain districts, and methods are being evolved which are showing great promise respecting the control of salt in many of our valuable lands.

Mr. Perkins: Where are those areas, in the South-West or in the eastern districts?

The PREMIER: In the eastern areas, and in the northern areas from Northampton to Mullewa where salt is very prevalent in places. I feel that unless the incidence of erosion is checked, we might have a repetition of the experiences of other countries. Although this Bill may be considered to be, in some respects, in advance of the needs of today, I think it will be found to include

all the requirements for controlling the menace, fairly and reasonably, by the farmers in co-operation with the Government, and that it will meet the necessities of today and tomorrow. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Watts, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 9.23 p.m.*

## Legislative Council.

*Tuesday, 11th September, 1945.*

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

### RESOLUTION—THE WAR.

*Message from the Prime Minister.*

The PRESIDENT: I have received the following letter, dated the 29th August, 1945:—

I desire to acknowledge the receipt of your telegram of the 24th August, conveying the terms of a resolution passed by the Legislative Council of Western Australia, expressing the thanks of the people of Western Australia to the fighting men of Australia and appreciation of the services of those men and women who assisted them in the various theatres of war.

I am forwarding copy of the resolution to appropriate Commonwealth Ministers.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN J. DEDMAN (for Prime Minister).

### QUESTIONS.

#### TRAM ACCIDENTS.

*As to Losses, Compensation, Etc.*

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS asked the Chief Secretary:

1, Regarding the tram accident which occurred in Beaufort-street on the 19th July, 1944, in which 12 people were injured—

(a) What was the nature of the respective injuries?

(b) What was the amount of compensation paid, individually, to those injured?

(c) What other expenses (medical, etc.) were paid?

(d) How long were the tram services held up owing to the suspension of the motorman concerned?

(e) What was the loss to the department in takings during the holdup?

(f) What was the loss in wages to employees?

2, What has been the total cost to the department of accidents for the years ended the 30th June, 1944 and 1945, respectively, owing to the negligence of—

(a) employees;

(b) the public;

(c) how many employees, if any, were penalised owing to such accidents?

(d) What was the nature of the penalties imposed?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

1, (a) and (b)—

Name of injured person.	Nature of Injuries.	Amount paid.
		£ s. d.
Tulp, H. H. ....	Injured left knee ....	10 5 9
Buhrer, J. C. ....	Injured left knee ....	*78 6 10
Perkins, Miss W. ....	Shock ....	8 2 6
Staple, W. T. ....	Injured face, ribs, and shock	19 4 0
Treloar, J. ....	Severe lacerations head and face	4 4 0
Dinsdale, C. ....	Injury to ears resulting in deafness	20 0 0
O'Donoghue, A. ....	Crushed leg necessitating amputation	1,050 0 0
Nelson, D. S. ....	Injured foot ....	7 5 6
Gillett, Mrs. D. S. ....	Multiple injuries and shock	39 18 7
Colreavy, L. ....	Multiple injuries, shock, and fractured ankle	187 7 0
Mills, J. ....	Fractured right leg, injured left ankle, lacerated left hand and shock	230 10 0
Reldy, H. T. ....	Injured foot resulting in amputation of toe, and shock	155 8 1
Durwood, J. ....	Broken left ankle, shock	150 0 0
Anderson, Mrs. V. ....	Broken right leg, broken left forearm, multiple injuries and shock	†
Thomas, K. W. ....	Extensive injuries both ankles and shock	†
Law, Miss P. ....	Injury to back and right forearm and shock	†
Richardson, Mr. Learmonth	Injured back and shock. Injury to right arm and ankle and shock	†
Total amount already paid in claims ....		£1,960 14 3

\* Partial payment only. † Not finalised but notification of intent to claim received and heavy claims anticipated.

(c) £295, including cost of repairs to tramcars.

(d) Four days.

(e) £6,700 (approximately).

(f) £1,958.

2, (a) 1944, £3,608; 1945, £4,405.

(b) Nil—where public negligence is proved, cost is, in practically all instances, recovered from the person or persons concerned.

(c) Information not available 1944; 1945, 15.

(d) 1944, not available; 1945, dismissed 2, fined and lost time whilst under suspension 3, warned and lost time 1, warned 8, lost seniority 1.

## POWER HOUSE FURNACES.

### *As to Adaptation for Oil Fuel.*

Hon. W. J. MANN asked the Chief Secretary:

1, Are the doors of the boiler furnaces at the East Perth Electric Power House so constructed as to make them adaptable to the consumption of oil fuel at very short notice?

2, Is it proposed to instal doors of a similar design at the proposed electric power house at Fremantle?

3, Is it correct that the Government is instituting inquiries with a view to the purchase of large supplies of liquid fuel?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

1, No.

2, All such matters will be thoroughly investigated prior to any decision by the Government.

3, No.

## BILL—MINES REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

## MOTION—RT. HON. WINSTON CHURCHILL.

### *Tribute to Leadership.*

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [4.43]: I move—

That this House desires to convey to the Right Honourable Winston Churchill its sincere appreciation of his leadership of the British Nation during its long struggle against aggression, and expresses to him its gratitude for the example which he has shown to every citizen of the British Empire, and, in fact, of the world, by his continued courage through adversity, by his dogged pertinacity through that struggle and his grim determination to maintain freedom as a prerogative of all indivi-

duals. This House requests the President to convey this message to the Right Honourable Winston Churchill, P.C., C.H., M.P.

It was a turning point in the history of our race when one afternoon whilst returning from golf, Winston Churchill readily consented to go to the Admiralty when the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, made him the offer. For it was he who, having viewed with alarm the mass of German military might and the continued growth of the German Navy and the appearance of one Dreadnought after another, defied his opponents and laid down two keels to every German one; it was he who gave the order moving the Grand Fleet from its Channel exercises to its battle stations in Scotland; and thus it was he who was responsible for having that fleet at sea when Germany launched aggression in 1914.

Cecil Rhodes firmly believed that when God wanted a task performed he called for an Englishman. Here was the man, whose very training in life had been ordered by no mere circumstance. Service to the nation had been a life-long task to Churchill who, at 20 years of age, received his commission in the 4th Hussars. He had served in Kipling's India and, though a war correspondent, was mentioned in dispatches. Then came the Sudan, under Kitchener, moving to end the Mahdi tyranny and avenge Gordon. This was followed by service in South Africa, first as a war correspondent and later, after his escape from captivity, in the Light Horse. Then, on his return to England, his election to the House of Commons followed a triumphal election campaign.

This man, born to be our leader during the Empire's darkest but greatest hour, has held almost every office, has known political defeat, has drunk the dregs of political demotion; but never for one moment has he allowed his love of England to fade. Nor has he hesitated to warn his countrymen of the fate that, he could see, lay ahead—not even when it was against his personal interest! In the days and years that followed the first world war he remained for long periods out of office, but, following his own advice, he had used the period "in the wilderness" as a testing time. Never once did he relax his vigil.

In his early life at Bangalore, the many hours he spent in reading laid the foundation of the work of this period during which he wrote his masterpiece, the vindication of his ancestor, Marlborough. Strangely, too, this study of military tactics was not to be wasted and was to give him that knowledge of English history so necessary in a leader of a nation. No mere coincidence was it that this great man was to know—as did Pitt—that England fought best when fighting alone. No mere coincidence was it that our great Leader should have been steeped in the tradition of England through his father, and have had a mother born of that great nation of English-speaking people—America—which came to our aid. That it did so was due in no small measure to the efforts of Mr. Churchill.

But it is paradoxical that he who knew we fought best alone, though he pleaded with our leaders of the day in the terms, "I pray God that when that day comes we may not find that through unwise policy we are left to make that stand alone," should be the one chosen, no doubt by the Higher Power, to lead the nation when it did stand alone. And now he has fulfilled his task. May he remain long among us to see the fruits of his leadership and the nation's victory; and may those who are now to lead us, be given the strength to win the peace to which we have been so ably, and so courageously led.

**HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH** (Metropolitan) [4.48]: As one who was privileged on many occasions to meet and to listen to Mr. Churchill, I have great pleasure in seconding this motion. There are only two things I wish to add to the remarks of Dr. Hislop. The first is this: I think there is a lesson, not only for us but for all democracies, in Mr. Churchill's leadership during the war. I left England only a few months before war was declared, and at that time meetings of the Conservative Party in the Epping Division, for which Mr. Churchill sat in the House of Commons, were being held almost weekly for the purpose of denouncing him, demanding his resignation and insisting that he should be expelled from the party.

At the same time, the Labour Party, with equal vehemence, was denouncing Sir Stafford Cripps and did, in fact, dismiss him

from the party. It is a fact worth keeping in mind that had an election been held six months before the war started, both these men, probably the two finest minds in British politics, would have been driven from office—unless they had been able to win seats as Independents, in opposition to their parties' wishes. We must bear that very firmly in mind as an indication of the dangers that may spring from party dominance, particularly if carried to extremes.

The other remark I wish to make is that I do not think sufficient credit has ever been given to Mr. Churchill for his performances before this war. I think it was towards the end of 1924 that Brigadier-General Morgan, who at that time occupied a very responsible position in the British Army of Occupation at Cologne, drew attention, in a number of articles written for the British Press, to the fact that already—this was 8½ years before Hitler came into power—the Germans were re-arming. He urged that the Army of Occupation should not be withdrawn from Cologne until that matter had been fully investigated. Unfortunately that step was not taken. But from that date onwards Winston Churchill, following the lead of another remarkable man, the late Lord Roberts, constantly urged England to prepare.

As Dr. Hislop has said, it was Winston Churchill's doings in the year or two that preceded World War 1 that led to the strengthening of the British Navy; it was his doings that the Navy was mobilised in time. More than one historian has declared that World War 1 was won for Britain before the first shot was fired, because Winston Churchill had mobilised the British Fleet. I think that of him it may well be said, to alter but slightly one of his own famous phrases—never before in the history of the world have so many people and so many nations owed so much to one man.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [4.48]: I feel sure the motion will receive the support of every member of this Chamber. I would like very briefly to endorse the remarks of Dr. Hislop and Sir Hal Colebatch. It is a remarkable fact in the history of the British Empire that whenever the nation has passed through a very serious crisis it always seemed to produce at the right moment the right man in order to unify the people of the Empire. It can be rightly said of the British nation

that in Mr. Winston Churchill we had possibly the only man at that time who was capable of galvanising the people of the Empire into one united force, which enabled victory to be achieved. We can say the same thing with regard to Australia in its recent history.

It was a very fine tribute to Mr. Winston Churchill that his successor as Prime Minister of England, Mr. Atlee, publicly paid a tribute to the wonderful work performed by his predecessor on behalf of the Empire. On more than one occasion since he has assumed the office of Prime Minister, Mr. Atlee has repeated that statement and paid further fine tributes indeed to Mr. Winston Churchill, giving to him the credit which was his due for the very magnificent effort he put forward on behalf of us all. We should be grateful that it has been possible for the Empire to have produced in its most critical hour a man such as Winston Churchill proved himself to be.

Question put and passed; the motion agreed to.

### **MOTION—TRANS. RAILWAY, KALGOORLIE-FREMANTLE SECTION.**

*To Inquire by Select Committee.*

**HON. A. THOMSON** (South-East) [4.55]: I move—

That a Select Committee of five members be appointed to inquire into and report upon—

(a) Whether conditions in the post-war period, including modern transport facilities by air, sea and road, will warrant the construction of a railway of the 4ft. 8½in. gauge from Kalgoorlie to the metropolitan area.

(b) If such construction is warranted, what route should this State recommend to the Commonwealth Government so as best to make use of the development value of the line and improve transport facilities and minimise traffic congestion.

On the 28th November, 1944, in this Chamber I moved a motion similarly worded to that which I now place before members. Unfortunately, it was one of the slaughtered innocents at the end of last session. I had hoped to secure the appointment of a Select Committee that could have been converted into an Honorary Royal Commission which could have submitted its report before Sir Harold Clapp had prepared his for presentation to the Commonwealth Government. Since his report has been submitted events have moved very fast, and it would appear

that Western Australia is to be stampeded into accepting Sir Harold's scheme without this Parliament being given an opportunity to consider whether it is in the interests of this State that a uniform railway gauge shall be regarded as so urgent or shall rank equally in priority with housing and water supplies, or whether it should be adopted at all.

In my opinion, in the interests of Western Australia and its future development the expenditure of any large sum of money should be closely examined by Parliament which alone should decide how public works should rank in priority, and Parliament should approve for adoption only such schemes as would ultimately provide the State with permanent employment and increased production. I am very pleased to see that in another place a motion has been submitted asking for the appointment of a joint public works committee to examine all public expenditure involving sums of more than £50,000. I hope very sincerely that the motion will be agreed to and that the Government will give due consideration to effectuating the proposal. In support of my point of view, may I refer to the South Fremantle power scheme. To me it seems almost incomprehensible that we should have had an advisory committee traversing the whole of the south-western portion of Western Australia, apparently anticipating the transmission of electric current as far as Albany, Narrogin, Katanning and other outlying districts.

It appears to me regarding the scheme that is envisaged and effect to which is apparently to be given, if we had a public works committee, as I have urged on so many occasions, an important undertaking such as this would not have been decided upon by the Government without Parliament and the standing public works committee having had an opportunity to go into the matter. It seems reasonable to say that if a power scheme could be inaugurated at Collic from which electricity could be transmitted to Albany and other portions of the South-West, there is no reason why there should also be established the scheme for South Fremantle, which has been outlined in conformity with what is apparently the policy of the Government. I cite that instance to back up the opinion I have so frequently expressed during the last 30 odd years I

have been a member of Parliament, namely, that Parliament really should control the finances.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Hear, hear!

Hon. A. THOMSON: On the 6th June, 1945, the following appeared in "The West Australian":—

On his return from the conference held in Canberra to discuss the uniform railway gauge proposals as outlined in Sir Harold Clapp's report, the Minister for Railways (Mr. E. Nulsen) said today that all States were in agreement that a uniform gauge was most desirable, especially from a defence angle, and that generally the scheme contained in the report offered no insuperable technical problems.

Mr. Nulsen was accompanied by the Commissioner for Railways (Mr. J. A. Ellis) the Chief Civil Engineer (Mr. S. Hood) and the Secretary for Railways (Mr. C. Reymond).

The people of Western Australia naturally expect that, when a Minister of the Crown takes three of his most responsible officers with him to such an important conference, on his return he will make a statement expressing his views as to whether he considers the extension of the uniform gauge would be beneficial or otherwise to the State or to the department over which he exercises control. Because of the conspiracy of silence on the part of the Government I wondered whether this State was committed to the Clapp scheme. It was only on the 22nd August, 1945, that the present Premier (Hon. F. J. S. Wise) indicated at the Premiers' Conference that the State Government had, in effect, committed Western Australia to the Clapp scheme.

Members of Parliament so far have had to rely entirely upon the Press for the information contained in Sir Harold Clapp's report. When we consider the tons of literature that flooded Australia on the occasion of the last Referendum—literature issued by the Commonwealth Government—and the Press propaganda now going on in connection with Sir Harold Clapp's visit to this State, one would think that such an important document as the report would have been handed to every member of Parliament for his considered judgment, more especially as it is understood that the Western Australian section of the scheme will cost approximately £9,000,000. All that the members of this Chamber have to go upon is the statement that appeared in "The West Australian" on the 15th June, 1945. The

headings of that statement were "Standard Gauge," "Fremantle-Kalgoorlie Railway," and the letterpress was as follows:—

The plan to build a standard gauge railway from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle has reached an advanced stage. Work on preparing working surveys will begin within the next few weeks, and constructional plans will be ready within 12 or 18 months. A completely new line will be built from Northam to Guildford via the Avon Valley and Toodyay and provide Toodyay with a main line connection to Perth.

The cost of the conversion and construction is £9,000,000, and it is part of the wider conception of complete standardisation of all railways in Western Australia to 4ft. 8½in. The cost of the complete scheme has not yet been estimated.

When the 4ft. 8½in. line has been completed the Merredin-Coolgardie section of the 3ft. 6in. gauge will be eliminated, though there is a probability of a third rail to maintain a servicing connection with the Esperance and Laverton lines. From Merredin to Northam, and from Coolgardie to Kalgoorlie the new line will run parallel with the existing line.

It seems that the State Government has handed over the control of Western Australia to the Commonwealth Government, so far as its future railway policy is concerned, without giving the representatives of the people an opportunity to discuss the scheme which ultimately means scrapping the whole of our railway system. I am not prepared to say that Sir Harold Clapp's report and scheme are the best for this State or that it is right for us to carry out the proposals.

Until this Parliament has had an opportunity to obtain expert advice by means of such a committee as I suggest, to collect evidence from experts on advanced methods of transport by sea, air and land, to enable this House and the taxpayers to come to a decision as to whether the elimination of the 3ft. 6in. gauge is warranted in the interests of Western Australia and of Australia, I am not prepared to agree to any of the proposals. It was only on the 22nd August, 1945, that we became officially aware of the intentions of the State Government regarding this most important subject. At the Premiers' Conference the present Premier was reported to have made the following statement:—

This was a matter involving huge expenditure and it was essential that the right decisions should be made. There appeared to be four matters causing concern which required determination before the proposals could proceed. The first was the question of agreement with the principle of standardisation of railway gauge, and it seemed from the discussion that

the conference was unanimous that this was desirable. So far as Western Australia was concerned, he supported the principle without qualification and in fact the Government had already approved of undertaking the survey, with its own staff, of portion of the proposed route between Kalgoorlie and Perth.

"The third question," said the Premier, "was that of the route recommended in the report. In this connection Western Australia was not greatly affected as there was no alternative but to follow the existing Kalgoorlie to Perth route for most of the way. The subject of routes, where it was in dispute, could be discussed by the parties affected. 'The real difficulty,' he said, 'was in connection with the fourth question—that of the allocation of costs as between the Commonwealth and the States. So far as Western Australia was concerned the adoption of the first section of the report involved merely a duplication of the existing Kalgoorlie to Perth line. Even full standardisation, ultimately intended, would mean very little new development to Western Australia and very little additional revenue to the railways. In fact, during the operation of the first section, the railways apart from the capital cost, would be faced with the added running cost of the duplicated line.'

Thus we find that the Premier of Western Australia, which means the Cabinet of Western Australia, has definitely pledged himself to the present proposal and has stated that there is no alternative. Cabinet has also agreed that ultimately this means the standardisation of all our railways. I take exception to that because our railways have rendered very excellent service. Whether the proposals are going to be of benefit to us by reason of the expenditure of a large amount of money even for portion of the route, is a question which should be carefully considered. I agree that we should know to what the State is committed so far as expenditure is concerned, and whether we are committing ourselves also to the ultimate scrapping of the present railway system.

According to the Press the State Government has already agreed to the survey which will cost £80,000, without consulting Parliament. It seems to me that Cabinet is somewhat inconsistent. The Premier has stated that we must know what we are committed to by way of expenditure, but at the same time he has agreed to the route being surveyed and to paying for the survey and has also stated that no alternative route is available. I hope this House will in no uncertain way indicate that it is for

Parliament to decide such an important issue and not Cabinet. The route is vitally important to the well-being of Western Australia.

I understand that at one stage a route was surveyed leaving Merredin, passing through Yorkrakine, linking up with the Goomalling-Northam line, and branching off to Toodyay. This route would, in fact, have taken the place of the Yarramony-eastward extension, which was passed many years ago, and represented one of the many broken promises to the early settlers of those districts. Even that would have been a departure from the early survey and warranted a full inquiry, as to why Sir Harold recommended the altered route. On the 28th August, 1945, the following appeared in the Press:—

New Rail Route.

Perth-Northam Section.

Sir Harold Clapp's Inspection.

The Commonwealth Director-General of Land Transport (Sir Harold Clapp) yesterday inspected portion of the proposed new route of the standard gauge railway between Perth and Northam via Toodyay. Sir Harold was accompanied by the Commissioner for Railways (Mr. J. A. Ellis), the Chief Civil Engineer (Mr. S. J. Hood), the assistant Chief Civil Engineer (Mr. W. A. McCullough), and Sir Harold's technical assistant (Mr. L. B. Curnow). When travelling along the Avon valley their car became badly bogged in an area where flood waters had recently subsided and the party was delayed for nearly two hours. Today Sir Harold will address a combined meeting of the Chambers of Commerce and Manufactures at the Lady Onslow Hall, Karrakatta Club. Tomorrow afternoon Sir Harold with the Commissioner and other W.A. railway officers will inspect the metropolitan section of the proposed new line.

We find that Sir Harold Clapp recommended a route to which there are indications that the Government has agreed. The present State Government has been in power so long that it has in fact become autocratic and contemptuous of the people's rights in this Parliament. I cannot do better than refer to a statement that appeared in the Press and was attributed to a member of another place, a supporter of the Government. He was seeking to bring about the abolition of this House and said it was not necessary, because Cabinet decided what should be done without consulting Parliament. That seems to be the position we have arrived at today, and it is time this House should intimate to the Gov-

ernment that it intends to preserve the rights and privileges of the people by insisting that Parliament shall closely scrutinise the expenditure of large sums of money and that schemes involving increased taxation shall not be started without a proper and close examination.

Transport is the life of trade. Our railways have helped to open up and develop our vacant lands; but unfortunately there has been a lack of properly co-ordinated planning in their construction. There is in existence the Transport Board, which was brought into being to prevent motor transport from competing with Government railways. Today, however, responsible railway officers realise that if they wish to retain the goodwill and confidence of the public they must provide motor road transport to shorten the tedious railway journeys that our system compels the public to make. This was amply demonstrated when, as a result of the persistent urging of Mr. Roche, the department very reluctantly established the Perth-Kojonup bus system, which has provided a popular and most convenient service for all the residents on the route, and which has proved to be a most profitable investment for the Railway Department.

Modern motor transport promises to lead to a revolution in the methods of travelling and shifting of freight. My motion also deals with air transport. Ten years ago only an expert could visualise the advance made in this method of travel and carriage of freight. Sir Harold Clapp visualises trains travelling at an average speed of 50 miles per hour; but we know that today planes are travelling at 350 miles an hour and that the A.N.A. lines are providing quick transport from Sydney to Perth. It is now possible to leave Sydney in the morning and breakfast the next day in Perth. In America, long before the war, airliners were providing sleeping accommodation and other comforts for the travelling public. They were carrying up to 70 passengers at a time, day and night. Their routes are charted and the planes have flying beams to follow. During the war great loads of human beings and freight were carried. It is also reported from Great Britain that air freights as low as 1s. per ton are visualised.

A statement has appeared in the Press that Dr. Evatt, Minister for External Affairs, reached London from Australia in 63 hours. Even members of the Government that advocates a unification of railway gauges are not altogether satisfied with railway transport. In "The West Australian" of the 21st July appeared the following:—

Canberra, July 20.—A proposal for the introduction of a system of fortnightly air transport between Canberra and the distant States for members of the Federal Parliament resident in those States is to be brought up for discussion at the next meeting of the Labour Caucus.

I do not propose to quote the whole of the extract but will confine my attention to the following:—

Members consider it very important to visit different parts of their electorates and to keep in touch with the electors. Many attach importance to home life and consider that members of Parliament are entitled to a fair share of it. This is one of the reasons behind the move for increased air travel facilities for members living at the longer distances from the seat of government. . . . The return flight from Canberra to Perth by air costs nearly £50. The journey by rail between Perth and Canberra takes about five days. The journey by air-liner takes about 14 hours.

So we find that members of the Commonwealth Government, which is so insistent on the vital need of unifying the railways of Australia, are dissatisfied with the trains and are seeking the privilege of travelling by air. Day after day, in looking through our newspapers, we find that men are going to the Eastern States as delegates to various conferences and that 90 per cent. of them travel by air. We find that advocates of unification of gauges deplore the train journeys that have to be made and seek the right to travel by air. We can realise that there are thousands of other people, besides members of Parliament, who feel exactly the same way and do not want to face long, wearisome train journeys.

The appointment of a Select Committee appears to be justified. It could collect evidence as to whether the future of air transport justifies Western Australia incurring additional financial responsibility for any of the cost of extending the 4ft. 8½in. gauge when the 3ft. 6in. gauge amply provides for all the transport needs of the people residing within the areas of the proposed route. Let us ask ourselves whether railways can compete against seaborne traffic.

I feel sure that every member must agree that they have not been able to do so in the past. Our average trainload is about 300 tons. Modern ships cater for refrigeration and large numbers of passengers. They easily carry 6,000 or more tons—certainly 20 times as much as any train carries. They can travel up to 30 miles an hour and with modern facilities can unload very quickly. The distance from Brisbane to Perth by boat is not a great deal longer than that by train.

What hope would the railways have of competing with modern ships in the transport of goods? Sir Harold Clapp pointed out that we will be able to transport perishable goods much more quickly by train in the future, but let members compare the time that would be taken by aeroplanes! It is quite possible that where a train would take five days to transport perishable products from one place to another, an aeroplane would require only one day in which to make the journey. A Select Committee could compare the possible freight and the passenger revenue from the two forms of transport and come to a decision as to whether Western Australia would be justified in expending £9,000,000 on an extension of the 4ft. 8½in. gauge.

Let us assume that we have to consider an extension of that gauge along the present route. The distance from Fremantle to Kalgoorlie is 392 miles. According to the last report of the Commissioner of Railways, the average cost is £6,095 per mile. This is approximately £2,389,240 on to the cost to the Railway Department. The interest annually costs about £100,000, and if we scrapped our 3ft. 6in. line we would still have to find that annual interest payment. In "The West Australian" of the 15th June appears the following:—

The method of financing the new line has not yet been decided, and this problem is one which it is hoped to decide at the Premiers' Conference. The main contention, from the Western Australian point of view, is that the conversion can be justified only by the needs of defence. From an operational point of view, it is estimated that the new line will result in additional charges of £310,000 per year. Sir Harold Clapp recommends in his report that such charges should be met by the Commonwealth for a period of years.

So we find that the £100,000 interest in connection with the 3ft. 6in. lines, which would be out-moded by the 4ft. 8½in. gauge, and the additional charges of £310,000 out-



lined by Sir Harold Clapp, make a total of £410,000 which must be earned by the railways. Can we visualise that revenue being obtained? According to the report in "The West Australian," it is proposed to eliminate the Merredin-Coolgardie section of the 3ft. 6in. gauge. One of the main arguments used for the extension of the 4ft. 8½in. gauge is that it would obviate the cost of transfer of goods and passengers at Kalgoorlie. Yet Sir Harold's report calmly proposes that all goods on our Goldfields markets away from the new route will have to bear the cost of transshipment of freights from our railways to the broad gauge. Or is it the intention to make a present of the whole of our Goldfields markets to the Eastern States by handicapping our local primary producers?

For the five years from 1939 to 1943 our accumulated railway deficit was £953,827 and I noticed in the Press a day or two ago that last month's deficit approached £500,000. So far the only alternative the railway officials have to offer against rising costs is to increase freights and fares which, if permitted, will mean that all who reside outside the metropolitan area will have to bear the additional burden. In view of the ever-increasing deficit on our railways, one wonders whether country residents and industries can stand added costs. As the figures I have quoted show, it is practically impossible for additional revenue to be gathered to meet the £410,000 which I have mentioned. Are we justified in making the position of our railways more difficult by cutting off the Goldfields from our established railway system and increasing the interest bill on a concern that has this deficit of over £1,000,000? In asking for the appointment of a Select Committee I want, in effect, an honorary works committee to do the job which the Commonwealth Government pays its members to do. The second-portion of my motion reads as follows:—

If such construction is warranted, what route should this State recommend to the Commonwealth Government so as best to make use of the development value of the line and improve transport facilities and minimise traffic congestion?

If, after making full inquiries, the Select Committee finds that such construction is warranted, what route should be recommended? I have already referred to the Merredin-Yorkrakine section, and in "The

West Australian" there appeared the following paragraph:—

The possibility of laying an entirely new line from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle following a route which would run through Corrigin, Brookton and Armadale has been discussed. This plan was rejected on the ground that the benefits it would confer would not justify the cost, in the first place, and, secondly, that it was inimical to the objective of standardising the whole of the railways of Western Australia.

[Resolved: That motions be continued.]

Hon. G. B. Wood: What would it cost to standardise all the railways?

Hon. A. THOMSON: I think it would cost about £77,000,000 in Western Australia alone, but that is a shot in the dark, as there is no definite information available. That is a matter into which the Select Committee could inquire closely. I have quoted the paragraph which set out that the plan was rejected on the ground that the benefits it would confer would not justify the cost. The people interested in that route, and the public generally, should know on what grounds it was rejected, and whether it was ever seriously considered as an alternative. I do not for one moment say that I have more knowledge than the engineers, but I do say that they are not infallible. Hon. P. Collier, when Premier, stated in the House on one occasion that Western Australia was dotted with blunders that had been made by engineers, and I am sure we could point out a number of them.

I will quote one case in which I was interested long before I became a member of Parliament. In 1912 I was chairman of the Katanning Road Board, and a member of the Great Southern Inter-District Conference, which had for its members all local governing bodies from Albany to beyond Wagin. Hon. W. D. Johnson was then Minister for Works and his engineers had drawn plans for extending the deep water jetty at Albany. When we found that no provision was made for the bulk handling of wheat or facilities for handling our export products, we protested strongly. I arranged, through the then member for the district Mr. A. E. Piesse, for the Minister to visit Katanning. Every local authority represented on the Great Southern association had its delegate present, and the hall at Katanning was crowded.

We pointed out that, as no provision had been made for bulk handling and export facilities, we considered the scheme should be altered to make provision for the reclamation of an area with the aid of a dredge and the construction of piers for economical handling. We urged that the £65,000 expended in this manner would be of greater value than in the provision of a timber jetty. The Minister said, almost sneeringly, that it was a piece of gross impertinence for a body of laymen to set up their opinion against that of an engineer. That jetty was built, and the dredged sand was taken out into King George's Sound where it was dumped, but it silted in and spoiled, to a great extent, the attractions of Middleton Beach. Years later, when the Bruce-Page Government—looking ahead in transport problems—appointed Sir George Buchanan to report on the harbours of Australia, he confirmed the view of the ignorant cockies by recommending a scheme similar to the one they had advocated.

As I have said, even Sir Harold Clapp is not infallible. It is now proved that he went entirely on information supplied to him by those interested in Western Australia, and accepted their recommendations as dealing with the only possible route. This is definitely proved by the report which I have already quoted, showing that he is now, for the first time—after having recommended a route—exploring, with engineers, and examining a route which he had already recommended as the only one. In 1926, Mr. Stileman, then Engineer-in-Chief of this State, submitted a report to the Government for a comprehensive railway scheme. In it he mentioned a line from Fremantle to Brookton and Corrigin, thence to Kondinin. He suggested that it go right through to Esperance, but I am dealing with this section only. He stated that the section I have mentioned, with a grade of one in 80, had no engineering difficulties, and as it represented about half the distance to Kalgoorlie, I feel that this House is justified in asking for the comparative costs, as against those applying to the route now recommended.

Again to quote "The West Australian," there is no basic argument in favour of unification of gauges in Western Australia, other than that of defence. I disagree entirely with the Premier, Hon. F. J. S. Wise, when he said, at the Premiers' Conference,

that there is no route alternative to the one that apparently the Government has decided upon. In the considered opinion of many people, this southern route has many advantages. From a State point of view it would develop an area that today is lacking transport facilities. It would increase production and would carry more and provide for a greater population, and would bring Collie coal and oil supplies much nearer. We know that many thousands of pounds have been spent by the Commonwealth Government in erecting refineries in which it was proposed to produce power alcohol from wheat. Unfortunately, in view of that large expenditure of money, we suffered a drought, and now, instead of a surplus of wheat, we are faced with a shortage.

By constructing the line along the route I have mentioned, we would certainly bring it closer to our coal, and the oil supplies would be closer and more readily available than they are at present. It would provide a new customer for the Government's comprehensive water scheme, on which it is proposed to spend £9,000,000. By the provision of a third rail on the Brookton-Fremantle section it would reduce all traffic below Brookton, on the Great Southern and branch lines, by 45 miles of rail freight and passenger rates. This annual saving would be of great advantage to our export trade, as well as to our country residents. Also, judging by Mr. Stileman's recommendation made in 1926, the cost of this route must be very much less than for work along the route recommended by Sir Harold Clapp.

From a purely defence point of view its strategic value would be far greater than that of the Clapp route, for, while it would link up with the seaboard at Fremantle; it would also offer for future defence the possibility of a link-up with Albany, by starting at about Kondinin and running southwards, crossing all the branch lines extending eastward from the Great Southern, all of which would act as feeders to the 4ft. 8½in. gauge. Albany, from its geographical position, must be considered as a defence base. This possible future extension could eliminate the Lake Grace-Hyden line, the present 3ft. 6in. gauge line, and give those areas more direct access to the seaboard. We have a route estimated to cost £9,000,000, and we have people in the Yorkrakine area, who are dissatisfied at being left out of the scheme

through the previously accepted route not being contemplated, and we have many who hold that the southern or Stileman route should be considered. I think a Select Committee such as I am asking for should be able to assist Parliament very materially in deciding which route should be recommended.

I should like members to consider where we are heading without first making sure of our ground. On the 31st August, 1945 the A.L.P. unanimously endorsed the proposal. That organisation might have more information than is in our possession, and we are justified in asking what the work is going to cost. Sir Harold Clapp, in a Press statement, said—

The work of standardisation has really begun in Western Australia, and as the first stage of actual construction is also likely to begin in the West, it is probable that to this State will belong the honour of really starting the job which is so vital to the future of the Commonwealth.

Sir Harold was further reported to have said—

The running of the standard gauge line to North Fremantle only would be adequate for shipping requirements, and even passenger convenience would be made satisfactory by the simple process of berthing the overseas passenger liners at North Quay. At the same time he emphasised that there was nothing final about the proposal. The running of the standard gauge line from Bassendean to North Fremantle did not preclude the construction of another line along the surveyed route through Victoria Park, South Perth and across the Canning River.

Though a survey is likely to be started, the only information we have is contained in the statements made by Sir Harold Clapp as reported in "The West Australian." I am pleased to learn that, in Sir Harold's opinion, it would be possible to deviate the route to the south side of the river. Even at this late hour, apparently, it is possible that a portion at any rate of Mr. Stileman's scheme will be adopted. However, the Press reports are all we have to guide us. I do not know whether Ministers have a copy of Sir Harold Clapp's report, but so far as I am aware, there is none in the House, and it is only fair that every member should have a copy of it.

Let me now show the bait that is being offered by Sir Harold on behalf of the Commonwealth Government. According to a report in "The West Australian" of the 15th June last—

The building of the Kalgoorlie-Fremantle standard gauge line also involves the construction of 23 locomotives, 40 passenger cars and vans and 250 goods and other freight waggons. The cost of these—£1,047,500—is included in the £9,000,000 estimate, and the major portion of the money would be spent within the State.

That is the bait.

It is anticipated that most of the locomotives and rolling stock would be constructed at Midland Junction. It is perhaps significant that Sir Harold Clapp, in his report, considers that this amount of £1,047,500 should be paid by the State and not charged to standardisation costs.

Sir Harold believes in standardisation. He holds out the bait that all these locomotives and rollingstock will be constructed at Midland Junction. I wish to emphasise that, whichever route is decided upon, these locomotives and rollingstock will be required, but we have no guarantee that they will be constructed in Western Australia.

Hon. H. Tuckey: On what authority did he make that statement?

Hon. A. THOMSON: I cannot say, but that is the bait held out. Sir Harold is not altogether consistent because, at a public dinner in Melbourne, he said—

Mass production, no doubt, is in the minds of engineers.

He was indicating how, by mass production, trains like the Spirit of Progress, of which he is so proud, would be made possible, but we in Western Australia have to realise that the whole of the State of Victoria could be put into the lower part of this State. Lines branch out from the Great Southern railway to serve outlying districts, and while the Spirit of Progress might be very satisfactory for a State like Victoria, with its large and concentrated population, we should be looking a long way ahead if we anticipated having trains of that sort all over Western Australia. Sir Harold, in my opinion, was inconsistent in that he held out the bait that if we provided £1,047,500 for the required rollingstock, the work would be done here. If we provided the money, doubtless it would be spent as we thought fit. But he goes on to say that the engineers have mass production in mind, and I doubt whether we in Western Australia would be able to produce locomotives and rollingstock as cheaply as they could be turned out in New South Wales where the steel and the coal are at hand. New South Wales would have a definite advantage in that respect.

In asking for the appointment of a Select Committee, I have no axe to grind. I have only one desire and that is to conserve the best interests of the State which has done so much for me. At the risk of being termed a miserable little Australian, I consider that charity should begin at home, and I do not wish the future taxpayers of this State to be burdened by having to bear interest charges on the construction of a line that cannot pay its way from the start. Every person in Western Australia is paying taxation for blunders of the past. Millions of money have been lost through rushing into schemes without proper consideration, which has meant a burden to the worker as well as to the alleged capitalist. If, on full inquiry, the evidence produced proves that the immediate construction of the railway is not necessary, or that an alternate route is worthy of consideration, I will feel that I have rendered a service to my country. If I am proved to have been wrong, I shall still have the knowledge that I was honest in my endeavour to serve the people I represent.

There are, I consider, projects of more vital importance to the development of this State than the immediate construction of a standard gauge line from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle. On the evidence that could be produced to a Select Committee, it might be shown that the alternate route is preferable. It was Mr. Stileman who first suggested that route, and, speaking as a layman, I consider that the southern route should be adopted and that the line could be constructed on that route at much less cost than the other while meeting the requirements of Perth and Fremantle, shortening the distance for Great Southern towns and providing transport facilities for areas that today lack them. If we could increase the productive capacity of part of the State by diverting the route of this line, it would be in our interests to do so.

I commend the motion to the careful consideration of members and trust that there will not be any undue delay in dealing with it. Events are moving fast. Seemingly the Government is prepared to hand over the administration of our railways to the Commonwealth Government, judging by the way it is endeavouring to stampede us into acquiescence of this work. Let me quote

again from "The West Australian" of the 7th September as follows:—

The Federal Cabinet today approved the resolutions of the recent Premiers' Conference on standardisation of railway gauges. The Cabinet also adopted the following recommendations by the Minister for Transport (Mr. Ward):—

(1) That a committee comprising the Ministers for Transport, Defence and Post-War Reconstruction and the State Transport Ministers consider what sections of the recommendations in Sir Harold Clapp's report should be accepted and what additions or modifications should be made, and consider and report on any matters relevant or incidental to the report.

(3) A committee comprising the Prime Minister and Messrs. Ward, Beasley and Dedman and State Treasurers should report on the division of financial commitments for standardisation and new line construction.

(4) Mr. Ward should be authorised to appoint a director general of standardisation, a director of mechanical engineering and a director of civil engineering, with staffs.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Chifley) said today that approval had been given to costs of preparatory work being borne initially by the Commonwealth, subject to adjustment when the basis of the allocation of costs was determined between Commonwealth and States.

To me it is plain that we in Western Australia are being stampeded into this project without having opportunity to give it due consideration, and this House should insist upon the appointment of a Select Committee so that expert evidence might be collected with a view to ascertaining whether the taking of this step would be in the best interests of this State.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

## BILL—SUPREME COURT ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Introduced by Hon. H. S. W. Parker and read a first time.

*House adjourned at 6.2 p.m.*