

of the movement and spreads the interest over a greater number of people. I hope that the existing broadly-based interests will continue in the future. There are so many aspects of national fitness work that it is necessary that all bodies operating in the country districts particularly should co-operate for the welfare of the movement. One aspect that many of the country committees were particularly interested in is the question of sales tax being charged on equipment purchased by them, even though the funds were being expended through the central body. I understand that at first it was anticipated that if the funds were expended through the central body, the Commonwealth Government would be able to waive the collection of sales tax. However, that was found impossible with the result that, apparently, local committees, but for the introduction of the Bill now before the House, would have been faced with the necessity to pay sales tax on all equipment installed in the various centres. I do not know whether the Minister made the point perfectly clear, but I understand that under the Bill it will be possible for the money so spent to be regarded as funds expended by a State instrumentality, and sales tax will consequently be waived by the Federal Treasurer.

The Minister for Education: That is so.

Mr. PERKINS: That is an essential point. Prior to the introduction of this legislation I had received a lot of correspondence from country centres on this question, and I am glad that the position is to be rectified. In the circumstances I shall not take up further time in discussing the Bill. I agree with its general principles and, so far as I am able to judge and in view of the discussions I have had with interested people, it provides the necessary flexibility to enable the work to be carried on satisfactorily. I trust the expansion of the movement will continue along the lines that have obtained in the past. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by Mr. Leslie, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 10.16 p.m.*

## Legislative Council.

*Wednesday, 12th September, 1945.*

	PAGE
Motion: North-West, as to action to restore economy	608
Bills: Adine Workers' Relief (War Service) Act Amendment, 1R. ....	023
Rights in Water and Irrigation Act Amendment, 1R. ....	623
Police Act Amendment, 1R. ....	623
Police Act Amendment Act, 1902, Amendment, 1R. ....	623

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

### MOTION—NORTH-WEST.

*As to Action to Restore Economy.*

HON. F. R. WELSH (North) [4.35]: I move—

That, in view of the serious position existing in the northern part of the State, this House considers that the Government should take immediate action to restore the economy of the North Province.

My object is to see whether something can be done to alleviate the situation in the North. In the old days, and for many years now, the North-West of this State has produced some millions of pounds worth of wealth, mainly through two major industries, the pastoral industry and the pearling industry. The latter is almost non-existent today. The town of Broome was practically built up and maintained by the pearling industry. The men engaged in that activity spent considerable sums of money in equipping boats, building homes, and putting the industry on a sound basis. As a result the State has benefited to a large extent from the revenue derived from those operations. Since the last war the price of shell has, at times, dropped considerably, so that the pearlers have had difficulty in making ends meet. The Commonwealth Government at one time came to their assistance by giving them finance so that they could take their boats to sea. But, of course, that was a first charge against the shell recovered. After that the Japanese sampans came along and poached in our waters so that the pearlers still had a wicked time.

When the war, which has just concluded, broke out, the Navy commandeered or destroyed practically every boat in the industry so that the pearlers were left without

any means of livelihood. Now that hostilities have ceased the Commonwealth Government should return all these boats or pay a fair price for them. I think it would be a fine gesture on the part of the State Government if it could induce the Commonwealth Government to give some assistance to the men who have spent practically a lifetime and nearly all they had in the industry, and have now had their livelihood taken from them because of the loss of their boats. These men have been hanging on indefinitely hoping for better times. The advent of the war cut the ground from under their feet. I would like to see this Government approach the Commonwealth Government with a view to the latter making money available so that these men could re-equip their boats. That should be done, particularly as during the war no shell-fishing has taken place so that the quantity of shell on most of the banks must have increased with the result that the pearl-ers might have a chance, if they could get out now, to regain some of the leeway they have lost.

The pastoral industry is one with which I am connected, and I would like to say a few words about it. I want to mention some of the factors contributing to the very bad state of that industry. Apart from seasonal disabilities, which no one can control, the menace of vermin has attained serious proportions. The kangaroos have appeared in their thousands. Last year I pointed out the difficulty we had in obtaining poison to deal with the dogs and kangaroos. It was almost impossible to get it. In addition the dogs have practically overrun many of the places, and it is difficult to know what to do about them. They have taken a heavy toll of sheep and stock. The Government has made a survey of this pest with a view to putting trappers on, and also with a view to poisoning. It is of no use only one or two being sent to do that work. Nothing but a systematic crusade against the dogs and foxes will do any good in keeping them down. They are distributed throughout the North; as a matter of fact, the trouble is on an Australia-wide basis. In "Country Life" the other day a Queensland pastoralist pointed out that dogs in the north of Queensland had taken toll of nearly 25 per cent. of his calves. There seems to be a

scourge of dogs throughout the whole continent, and in the pastoral areas up north the problem is very serious.

Hon. T. Moore: Are there foxes as well?

Hon. F. R. WELSH: Yes, quite a number, but they do not cause anything like the damage that the dogs do. One trouble is that we do not know exactly where the foxes are or where they come from. One trouble regarding the kangaroos is that in years gone by they had their natural enemies which forced them to rely for water on what they could find in the rock holes in the hills. Over a number of years the pastoralists have erected windmills and provided troughs on their runs with the result that, with the added water supplies, the kangaroos have multiplied in their thousands. In addition to that they have access to the water holes in the hills. Despite the fact that the poisoning of water in troughs has been carried out, the pest still increases. On one station between 9,000 and 10,000 kangaroos were poisoned by this means during one year.

Members will realise that it is only in the dry periods that poisoning by this means is effective. To attempt to poison the water in the hills would not be safe. As many of the pastoralists have provided troughs on their runs, that has enabled poisoning to be carried out more effectively. We often hear it said that overstocking has taken place in the pastoral areas up north. To my knowledge there has been no overstocking with sheep on any station. The overstocking that has taken place has been in respect of the kangaroos. Members will realise that if on a station there are 10,000 sheep and a similar number of kangaroos, overstocking would naturally have the effect of destroying the carrying capacity of the run. The small hill kangaroos, which are generally referred to as euros, have increased tremendously. It is impossible to hold a paddock for feed, because the moment the grass begins to grow the kangaroos come in and eat the country bare.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The kangaroos are worse than the rabbits.

Hon. F. R. WELSH: Most decidedly, and members should appreciate that up north there are as many kangaroos as there are rabbits down south. Owing to manpower difficulties there is a labour shortage throughout the pastoral areas, with the result that station owners cannot cope with the trouble. They cannot maintain the necessary improve-

ments, which have deteriorated. As Mr. Baxter mentioned the other evening, some stations have been abandoned. Those properties now provide open areas where dogs and other pests have a free run. There will be no-one on those stations to keep the dogs back from the stations lower down, and this is becoming an increasingly serious problem. If the Government could tackle the task of pest eradication on a systematic scale, something could be done, but it is certainly of little use doing anything in a spasmodic way. Most decidedly it is a big question for the Government to tackle, but I hope it will be dealt with. The present Premier, Hon. F. J. S. Wise, has always displayed a sympathetic understanding of the problems of the North and the North-West. If there is any possible chance of doing something for the pastoralists, I am sure he will do it.

The scheme of voluntary debt adjustment was instituted by the Premier when he was Minister for Lands and it has proved of distinct assistance to the pastoralists in the North, many of whom have taken advantage of it and in consequence have greatly benefited. Then again a lot of credit is due to the financial houses and stock firms that so readily fell in with the scheme and eased much of the pastoralists' indebtedness. The writing-down of indebtedness has assisted many to carry on. Another phase of the kangaroo problem is that the pest has largely reduced the carrying capacity of stations. Furthermore, the pastoral areas have had an exceedingly raw deal over the years due to the prolonged drought. On top of that, the occurrence of willy-willies caused considerable damage. At Port Hedland alone three willy-willies were experienced in four years and there great toll was taken of the flocks.

A disastrous willy-willy struck the Roebourne district this year and with an average of about ten inches of rain on the Tableland, did great damage throughout the district. Such a deluge caused enormous flooding, while the terrific wind carried away buildings. On one station it was reported that between 18,000 and 20,000 sheep had been drowned and out of 64 windmills only eight remained standing the next morning. It is hard to make people down south understand the seriousness of such occurrences. In the first place the pastoralists cannot buy materials with which to effect replacements. If they could make

such purchases, they could not ship the materials up north. The result is that repairs cannot be effected. When members consider the position of the station owner with half his sheep gone and nearly all his mills levelled to the ground, they will appreciate that it is difficult for people to realise the full implications when they know nothing about the industry. With all these things happening, one wonders how the pastoralists are able to carry on. Of course, the heavy rains have filled up all the rock holes in the hill country and had it not been for that, further large losses of stock would have been experienced pending the repairing of mills. I am mentioning these matters as indicating a few of the contributing factors which have involved pastoralists in their present serious situation.

Another problem is confronting them. I refer to the lower lambing percentages experienced in recent years. For some unaccountable reason there have been very few lambs reared up north, which precludes any possibility of building up the flocks as we did ordinarily in years gone by. The lambing hardly makes up for the losses due to natural causes. In that respect I think the Government should undertake research work. I do not know whether the poor lambing is accounted for by the non-fertility of the rams, but I do know it cannot be attributed to lack of care of the flocks. This experience applies not only in the North, but also lower down. In consequence, the difficulties associated with carrying on the pastoral industry are greater than formerly. Then again the lack of the customary larger increases in lambs has left us with a lot of old sheep. The increased mortality all round has severely militated against the building-up of flocks. We are getting very short of ewes in consequence of the low lambing percentages and the big losses in stock generally. Many of the best sheep, particularly ewes, were swept away in the floods that followed the willy-willies.

I do not know how some of the station owners will be able to carry on. Certainly it will be beyond the capabilities of many to make good. I understand that the Commonwealth Government set aside a grant for the assistance of drought-stricken farmers. If the Government could persuade the Commonwealth to grant relief

from such a fund to cover the losses by willy-willy, which are enormous, it would be a great help to the pastoralists, because it is beyond the financial ability of some of these people to make good their losses. I saw the damage done to houses and woolsheds; these were completely wrecked. The damage done to windmills and tanks is also very great, and if the Government could do as I suggest it would be a distinct incentive to the pastoralists to continue to carry on their stations. The steady rise in the cost of materials and labour is another factor operating against the pastoralists. Labour cannot be obtained at present, but even if it could be obtained the cost of it would be prohibitive. Therefore, as I say, some relief should be afforded to the pastoralists in the way I have suggested.

Freights are exceedingly heavy, and they have been increased by 35 per cent. for war loading. The war loading should now disappear, if it has not already done so. The Premier mentioned the other night that a local committee, comprising the heads of departments and a representative of the Pastoralists' Association, was now sitting to consider the disabilities under which the people in the North-West are labouring. Any recommendation that committee might make for relief should be acted upon immediately if the North-West is to regain some of its former economy. At one time the pastoralists never asked for help; they have had but little assistance over the years; but this present trouble has got beyond them. The time has arrived, as I said, for the State Government to ask the Commonwealth Government for assistance to rehabilitate the industry that has produced so much wealth both for the State and the Commonwealth. Many of the pastoralists have spent their whole lives in the North and cannot now afford to leave it.

The shipping problem is vital; I sometimes feel very hot about this matter. Unless we have a regular shipping service we are not going to get anywhere. Forty years ago we had a very good service; there were four oversea vessels and two interstate vessels trading up the coast. We had a regular fortnightly service and we knew to a day when the ships would arrive. The ports in the North are tidal ports and consequently we knew when the vessels would reach them. Not so today! When the

war broke out we had three State-owned boats. One was sunk by enemy action at Wyndham and the Navy commandeered another, leaving us with the "Koolinda." I can understand that the Army requirements should have come first; that is only right, but the vessels were under the control of the Commonwealth Shipping Board. The Army would come along and say that it required certain cargo space. It got the space, but the residents of the North were deprived of this means of securing the supplies which they so urgently needed. If what these people suffered during wartime in the way of short supplies could only be put on paper, it would astonish the people down south. In my opinion, no part of the Australian coast has had such a raw deal as the North-West coast had during the war. Even today I notice in the paper that the only vessel carrying passengers from the North is cutting out all ports from Broome to Fremantle. That does not give the ports lower down a chance at all. This never happened in the old days, when the State ships kept to a timetable.

The Government should insist on the "Kybra," which formerly plied along our coast, being returned to Western Australia. She belongs to the State Shipping Service and is excellently suited for our waters on account of her small draught. We have only two vessels—I might almost term them obsolete—which are not passenger ships. They are cargo ships. I know the "Chungking." I have not seen the "Van Spilbergen," but I understand she is not even a substitute for a vessel. As I have said, shipping is one of the main problems with which the North-West has to contend, as the residents have been left without even an adequate supply of perishable goods. At the beginning of this year potatoes were unobtainable at Port Hedland. Considerably over 100 cases were stored in one of the aerodromes, but these belonged to the Army. The potatoes were going bad and had to be picked over daily. Many were thrown away as they could not be used by the Army. Yet the residents could not get a potato!

Something better than that must be arranged in order to induce the people to remain in the North-West, let alone attract people to go there. Now hostilities have ceased I think much might be done to assist

settlement there. We must have another outlook for the North-West; it must be improved before we can attract settlement there. Relief from taxation is a vital matter. It should apply to all the northern areas. From the pastoralists' point of view, I should say that the period for averaging losses should be extended from five to 15 years in order to give them some chance to catch up. Many factors arise in connection with transport for the North-West. In the first place, we have not got a good road. The Army, with its convoys—of course these were certainly necessary—spoiled the roads, which have not been repaired either by the Army or by the Government. This road communication is vital to the residents, especially those living 100 to 200 miles away from various centres. They travel sometimes 150 miles from the various stations to the main road, only to find that it is impassable. One pastoralist remarked to me when I was in the North that the holes in the roads were not really holes, but air-pockets.

Main roads are vital to the people of the North-West. I was glad that Mr. W. Hegney pointed out in another place the necessity for the provision of an all-weather road from Meekatharra to Marble Bar. In the early stages of the war it was suggested and the road was formed, but before it was finished and the pastoralists could use it, the Army came on to it—and the position is now worse than it was before. The only good thing it has done is to straighten the road. That road should be surfaced, and if that were done it would provide transport to the back country and save hundreds of miles of travel for people through their having to go to some port in order to pick up goods. There is a fortnightly transport service between Meekatharra and Marble Bar, but during the winter season the road is practically impassable. There is every justification for asking for a Commonwealth grant so that the roads may be repaired. Not one of the road boards is in a position to do the work itself, because all the local authorities have been deprived of so much of their revenue during the war years. No road board could undertake to maintain its thoroughfares out of the revenue derived from motor vehicles and from rates. The Government should see that something is done through

the Commonwealth, but I do not think it is a responsibility of the State authorities. The Army authorities ruined the roads during the war and, in my view, have not put back one penny-piece into them. It is the only part of Australia in which the controlling authorities of the Army have done so little to improve the condition of the roads.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Do you know whether the road boards have made representations to have their roads put into a state of repair?

Hon. F. R. WELSH: I think so, but no repair work has yet been done. The Army authorities have agreed to send a man out to inspect the roads and estimate the damage done to them, but I fail to see how it will be possible to estimate what damage has been done to that which in some cases no longer exists. I have not seen anything in the southern part of the State to approach the condition of the roads in the North. I wish now to refer to shipping facilities on the coast from Derby downwards. There is no reason why the shipping facilities at Derby should not be kept in order. I refer now to the jetty accommodation, cattle races, etc. Derby is the natural port for the shipping of all cattle from the Kimberleys, not Broome, which has been used for that purpose during the war. It would save the growers from 30s. to £2 in the condition of every beast if the cattle could be shipped from Derby. All the facilities there should be put in order. When I was in Derby in February last, the Public Works Department was doing up the cattle-races which had been white-ant-eaten. That work will take some time to complete.

To facilitate the shipping of cattle from the Kimberleys, the Derby jetty races should be put into working condition. At present, the cattle are taken to Broome by road, a long weary journey. It follows that the beasts must lose condition on the trip. The jetty facilities at Derby should be put in order without loss of time. That is the natural port from which cattle should be shipped. A launch or lighter should be stationed at Broome and Port Hedland, two tidal ports, for the convenience of passengers and the handling of cargo. I was in Port Hedland on one occasion when the ship's launch broke down. The passengers

were out in it all night and taken aboard the next morning. They were kept on the ship while she went to Derby, and were later returned to Port Hedland. They could not be put ashore because of the tide being against the ship. That state of affairs should not be allowed to continue. The cost of a launch or lighter would be made up by the saving of time lost by the steamer while waiting for a high tide. It would also permit of passengers going ashore when the ship arrived.

The tides at Broome and Port Hedland prevent a ship from going in except at nearly spring tide. Very often cargo has to be over-carried. If the vessel misses the tide, the cargo is over-carried and is not returned until the next trip back. That is not fair to the people of the district concerned. At Roebourne recently a pastoralist wanted a quantity of cement to enable him to repair his tanks and troughs which had been damaged by the willy-willy, to which I have referred. The cement was cut out of three ships owing to Army requirements, but I understand it is going up on the next boat. The Army control over cement has now ceased, but the disability to which I have referred was a serious thing to the pastoralist in question. Many such cases have arisen. I admit that Roebourne is not a tidal port, but Port Hedland and Broome are affected by the tides, and ships can only get in there when the tide suits them. It would be quite easy to station a launch at those ports and take passengers off at neap tide.

When I was last at Broome, we went out to the vessel in a naval launch and had to climb up the side on a rope ladder. It was nearly too much for me, but a lady in front of me got up very well. It is not fair to expect people to climb up a rope ladder when a launch and a proper gangway should be provided for them. People in the South have little idea what those in the North have suffered during the last few years. Women and children up there have experienced untold disabilities and inconveniences that would not be tolerated for five minutes in any other part of the State. No-one knows what the women in the North have put up with during the war. The circumstances of that time may have rendered these privations more or less unavoidable, but the people concerned should not have been deprived of the necessities of life, as

they were. Now that the war is over I should like to see a drastic change made in respect to transport on the coast. I feel sure the Premier himself realises the position. We must hang on to what we possess although the population in the North is dwindling every day. There is a lot that is well worth hanging on to; such as the cattle industry, the pastoral industry, the mining industry and the developments on the Hamersley Ranges. All these things have to be considered.

We certainly have a good plane service in the North. There are five planes a week to Port Hedland and two to the Kimberleys, providing an excellent air service. Residents in the North come to Perth, either for business or health reasons only. They are often precluded from returning on the plane because of some serviceman or other person who has a higher priority than they have. I know of one lady who was put off three planes. On the last occasion, she gave up her room at an hotel, as she believed she was catching the north-bound plane, but when she presented herself, she found that a miner had taken her seat. She then found she had lost her room and had much trouble in securing other accommodation.

Hon. G. W. Miles: On one occasion Beeby was allowed to go on a plane and a station-owner's wife had to give up her seat.

Hon. F. R. WELSH: Residents in the North only come to Perth because they are obliged to, and when they do they meet with all these difficulties. When they come to Perth, they naturally desire to return at a certain time in order to resume their duties. I know of one lady who came down with three children. She, too, was put off three planes. On the last occasion, she was put off because a serviceman had higher priority. She went up by train to Meekatharra, and from that centre she had to travel 600 miles by car to the station. There was nothing clever about that. Neither the Army nor the Navy personnel bothered to use their own service planes until recently, and in that way leave more space on the other planes. They did not seem to think about the North-West. If they wanted to do a thing they did it. Quite a lot will have to be done to bring the transport facilities of the North even up to the pre-war standard. I do not know that we shall ever get the vessels back to which Mr. Cornish referred.

Some oversea boats must be induced to trade with Western Australia if only to bring to the State tropical fruits. We must do something to induce people to stay in the North. At present they have little or no inducement, and are leaving as fast as they can. The North-West has great possibilities. I was there in the early days and found it a country well worth living in. Today we should put forth every effort to induce people to settle there and present residents to remain there. We went through hard times in the old days, but I do not think we suffered to the extent that people suffered during the last war. Vessels that were taking our wool away used to come to our coast from England and by that means we received a lot of useful material, to say nothing of the ordinary necessities of life. As things are today the people in the North are deprived of many of the necessities of life.

The State Shipping Service has done a good job but it has been under the control of the Shipping Board and has been hampered to the extent of half its activities. The Shipping Board only allowed us to have what it did not want, despite the fact that civilians were without the ordinary necessities. I am sure a lot of good will come out of the present inquiry and the recommendations that are likely to be made. A member of the Pastoralists' Association is serving on the committee. I feel sure that the present Government will do all it can to implement the recommendations that are put forward. Something must be done to get people to go to the North. Because of the fact that so many of the residents have been nearly all their lives up there, they are entitled to every possible assistance. I have referred to the disabilities suffered by the pastoral industry, but many other disabilities could also be mentioned. I commend the motion to the House, and hope that some relief will be given to that part of the State so that it may regain at least some of its former prosperity.

**HON. J. G. HISLOP** (Metropolitan) [5.13]: I make no apology for supporting this motion. My electorate is a small one, in the centre of the metropolis, but my interest is State-wide. I cannot carry out my task of caring for my electorate without watching events which, whilst they happen hundreds of miles away, may affect it. I

support the motion because of the fact that I have nothing personal to gain. I have no financial interest in the North. Again, I was privileged to be present at the meeting of the people's representatives of the North-West at Whim Creek. Let me assure the House that this was not a meeting devoid of significance; nor was it a meeting organised by any particular section. It was a meeting of men determined to alter their conditions of living, but desirous of carrying out their intention within the bounds of law. There was no organiser, but by mutual conversations, by letter, by messages over the air, through the medium of pedal sets, gradually grew the desire to meet in a body to discuss the hardships of life and to seek a way out.

There was no-one appointed chairman until the meeting opened, and a graceful compliment was paid to Mr. Harry Green, for 27 years chairman of the Marble Bar Road Board, when Mr. L. Gordon of "Millstream" proposed that Mr. Green take the chair unopposed. Mr. Green has been 55 years in the North-West, but he was not the father of the party, such honour going to Mr. Harry Coppin, of Eginbah station, who has lived in the area for 66 years. This meeting must go down in the annals of the North. They came, 66 of them, from near and far, and by various types of conveyances. There were men from Onslow in the south and Port Hedland and Walla in the north; and from the east they came from north, south and east of Marble Bar. A chartered plane brought men from Nullagine, Marble Bar and Bamboo Springs. Probably the most distant area represented was Warroagine, almost on the desert border, closely followed by Mr. Alex Spring from Roy Hill, whose two stations "Roy Hill" and "Maribana," extend over a distance equal to that between Perth and Busselton. From north to south the distance between was about 400 miles, and nearly as much from east to west.

What type of men were these? They were men representing every vocation in the North-West; pastoralists sitting alongside men with business interests and mixing with those mining in the hinterland, as well as the chosen representatives of the workers, and one woman. I would have liked to have seen every member of this House present at that meeting, joining in conversation with those who had travelled over a hundred miles or more of flood-smoothed roads, men who

brought their swags and dosed by the sides of their cars or around camp fires, cooking their food because accommodation in the hotel was insufficient for more than a small number. Men who do this are determined men and we must recognise them as such. No man who is not fully imbued with the justice of his case will act so. This was a meeting at which men talked with men, at which men spoke with fire and conviction, and with a determination born of adversity; a meeting at which men said what they thought and refused to have their motions amended for the sake of niceties.

When one man, after having included the words "inefficient service" in his motion, was asked to substitute the word "unsatisfactory" for "inefficient," he refused, adding that he desired to amend it to read "crassly inefficient." And the meeting passed the motion in that amended form. These men were intent on one thing—the restoration of the North-West, a land in which they have the greatest hope, but from which Nature's vagaries and man-made difficulties are foreing them. Here, if ever there was one, was a people's parliament. We must not forget that it has been from meetings of determined men, of this character, that great reforms have arisen. I feel I was privileged to be present at the awakening of the North. I wish I could depict to you, Mr. President, the intensity of that scene. Seventy people sitting round on forms, on fence rails or on upturned boxes, in a small space alongside the hotel in the open air, never relaxing for one moment, scarcely one leaving his seat until darkness falling put an end, until next day, to their deliberations.

Far into the night the problems were thrashed out again. Men who lived hundreds of miles apart, but who knew each other as brothers though they seldom met, told one another of their problems, of their floods, droughts and willy-willies, and of their hope or despondency for the future. Here, in a small plain surrounded by low hills, halfway between Roebourne and Port Hedland stood the Whim Creek Hotel, a prefabricated building sent out in its component parts from England. Its sturdy construction of H iron had stood for 50 years, the storms and floods of that time leaving it in its original condition, whilst all around it—except for Tobias' store—the buildings had gone with the wind. To the east stood the

silent burnt-out wreck of the mine, whilst to the west little remained of the railway to Balla. It is a long time since Mrs. Withnell trod that path, or since the voices of 300 men were heard in a well-organised township.

Dawn brought activity once more, as one by one they wandered to the open-air bathroom. Over cups of coffee made on camp fires, or alongside the fire in the kitchen, over cups of tea, the unofficial meeting was continued; and shortly after 8 a.m. the meeting was called together again. Here was the setting; here was the tradition, and most felt a significance as Mr. Taplin moved the first motion, that, as there were no representatives on the Gaseoyne or the Kimberleys present, the deliberations and decisions of this meeting should be confined to the area between the 18th and 24th parallel south. At the conclusion of the meeting it was decided to send the minutes of the meeting to the organisations of citizens not included in this area, but who lived north of the 26th parallel south. One of the first matters discussed was a suggestion that during the meeting sight should not be lost of the fact that the major part of the production of the North-West would be consumed overseas. It was not long, however, before it became evident that all present were convinced of the need for immediate relief from taxation.

Many instances were given of undue hardship imposed by heavy taxation, and it was generally agreed that the period of relief should not be less than 20 years. Workmen could not be expected to stand the trying heat of the summer, or the isolation from their families, to earn little more—if any—than they could earn in areas of less hardship and more amenities; nor could anyone with capital be expected to invest it in the North-West and take the risk of cyclones, droughts, floods or pestilence from blow-flies, or of the ravages of dingoes, unless given reasonable opportunities for profit. Many times during the meeting, when some particular disability was under discussion, it was stated that without taxation such difficulties would not arise or would settle themselves.

The request for roads was general and well supported. A motion was agreed to, asking that from the ports to inland areas arterial bitumen sealed roads be built with



all-weather feeder roads, and that when these are built transport over them be subsidised. Figures were supplied, showing that in the Wittenoom Gorge a bag of wheat for fowls cost £2 5s., and a stone of potatoes 5s. For every £9,000 paid out for stores, £3,000 represented the cost of transport. Then it was agreed that all freight to and from North-West ports should be subsidised or reduced. The Shipping Service came in for prolonged criticism. The absence of lights on the coast made movements of ships uncertain, as the necessity for gaining the tides made their movements variable. Some of the criticism appeared to fit the Shipping Control Board, but documents were submitted to the chairman, and remarks made about fresh vegetables sailing up and down the coast and eventually reaching the consumer in the form of pulp.

Concerning some matters, such as the surest methods of destroying vermin, there was difference of opinion; but it was unanimous that the present shipping service is unsatisfactory. It was agreed that the monopoly of the State Shipping Service should be broken, and that British merchant shipping should be allowed to trade to North-West ports, irrespective of the Navigation Act. The general opinion was that competition in shipping is essential. The "Koolinda" appeared to meet the needs of the trade, but the "Chungking" was said to go backwards if the wind was unfavourable; and the derricks in the "Van Spilbergen" are so low that merchandise cannot be landed by them on the wharves, hand labour having to assist. Emphasis was laid on the fact that, during the time of greatest stress, the people had no service and that even now the "Koolinda" was taken off as a rule in the hottest part of the year, and that without her the ports of Roebourne and Port Hedland were badly served. Enthusiasm greeted the motion that the State Shipping Service be asked to advise the people of the North without fail of any lengthy period during which they will be without shipping service, particularly during the summer months; but this was amended to read that the State Shipping Service make adequate arrangements for shipping to the North-West ports before taking the "Koolinda" off the coast.

That freights, landing charges and transport costs must be reduced was emphasised by speakers, especially those representing the mining areas. Such reductions would allow companies to give amenities to their employees and permit of the building of reasonable quarters. In addition to these high charges, the addition to weekly pay or district allowances and excess rates for working away from home were an added burden on the industry. Out of every £25,000 paid in wages, £6,000 was to cover these allowances and excess rates. Adequate water supplies were asked for. Most of the stations have water at the homesteads, as these are built on sites where water is available; but the ports have deplorable water supplies.

During the meeting, a wire was received by Mr. Taplin advising him that Port Hedland had no drinking water, and asking what they should do. It was pointed out that pearling was concentrated in Broome because of the inadequate water supplies in the other ports. In most of the ports private supplies from tanks constitute the main source of drinking water. Mr. Noel Butcher reminded the meeting that water supply was essential back in the ranges. He stated that the Blue Spec mine could employ 300 men, were its water supply doubled, but if the water were not supplied, then the mine could not be used as a rehabilitation point for such a number of men. Asked later why a share issue could not be arranged to raise the funds for supplying this water, he said restrictions and taxation made it impossible. Astonishment was expressed by the meeting at the fact that the cost of water in Port Hedland was 3s. 6d. per 100 gallons, as gardens, cool shade, or even vegetable-growing are impossible at that figure.

The cost of workers' homes was next on the list. It was said that if a worker's home cost £900 in Perth, it would mean an expenditure of £1,800 in the North, and would then not provide any of the necessary amenities for the climate. It was made clear that not everyone could leave the area during the very trying summer months, and that therefore amenities were essential if white women were to live there—and if they did not, then the cost would continue to be added in living-away-from-home rates and district allowances: a poor way of populating the area. The one

woman at the meeting stressed that if white women were to live in the North-West such amenities as refrigerators, fans, electrical appliances and air conditioning should be put into the houses without cost. It was suggested that the provisions of the Workers' Homes Act should apply to the North.

That the present standards of education in the North were far from satisfactory was generally agreed, and called forth prolonged comments. Firstly, it was asked that the Government be approached to meet the cost of sending all children over ten years of age to the South for education, and to subsidise their living costs whilst away from home. The consensus of opinion was that it was wise to send children out of the North for certain years of their lives, and for their education during that period, particularly in the case of girls. One speaker added a little humour to the discussion by saying that it was essential that children returned north during their holidays, so that they would recognise the North as their home. "If they live for long in the South, they end up by telling their old man what a fool he has been to stay so long in the North." It was equally understandable that some desired that a boarding-school be established in the North, so that parents could visit their children. Eventually this motion met with approval.

That the Government be asked to establish boarding-schools in areas with outlying districts where there are children, so that children up to the age of ten, or if necessary over ten, can be taught, thus lessening the present burden placed on overworked mothers.

Tribute was paid to the excellence of the correspondence course of education, but it was emphasised that in a climate such as that, where domestic assistance is difficult to obtain, such work added to the already heavy tasks with which mothers are faced. An indication of the trend of thought was gained when one speaker said that one of the organisations he was representing asked that because of the isolation and the need for home-made entertainment and amusement and for the raising of the cultural standard, music be added to the curriculum in the North.

[Resolved: That motions be continued.]

At this stage, the meeting resolved to form itself into a committee with a name. The regional committees recently formed

in the other States were described, and eventually it was agreed that they should be termed a North-West Development Committee and that five should be the number of the executive or working body. Mr. Les. Gordon and Mr. Robert Middleditch were elected to represent the pastoral industry; Mr. Noel Butcher, the mining industry. Mr. Jack Evans, the workers; and Mr. L. Taplin, the business interests. Although the committee was to find its own secretary, it is more than likely that Mr. Alec. Wyndham, who acted as secretary at the meeting, will be asked to fill this post.

The medical services were freely discussed. General opinion indicated that a doctor should be stationed again, as soon as practicable, in all settled areas, that the Flying Doctor Service should be purely an emergency service, and that the flying doctor and the pedal set should be stationed together. At present, the doctor and the pedal set are separated, and this was generally disapproved. The Flying Doctor Service, excellent though it is, is in urgent need of expansion if it is to cater for the medical needs of the North-West. As one speaker aptly put it, when describing the work of the flying doctor, "Dr. Dicks was set an impossible task, and very nearly carried it out."

Concern was expressed at the suggestion that, if a base hospital were built, it would be inland. The inland, with its mineral resources, was likely to move its centre, was isolated, and the cost of transport of essentials to it was excessive, whereas the coastal towns were more stable and in more ways than one more suitable for hospital treatment of the sick. To a disinterested listener, it must have soon become evident that the presence of a reliable doctor and a satisfactory medical service gave a sense of security, even in isolation. The presence of a doctor is essential in towns where there are women and children—90 children reside in Port Hedland today—but the care of the men in dangerous occupations must not be forgotten.

It was with interest that I learned of the respect which every resident had for Mr. Bardwell, or "Bardie," as he was affectionately referred to, he being the man who sat voluntarily at the central pedal set listening for calls. Everyone was stirred when Mr. Smith, the storekeeper of Wittenoom Gorge, handed to the chairman

an envelope containing £25 subscribed by the workmen. An appeal was made for more subscribers to the Flying Doctor Fund, and those present were made aware of the details of the scheme. The condition of the hospitals and the treatment of the hospital staffs were freely discussed, it being generally considered that the remuneration of the nursing staff was insufficient and that conditions left room for considerable improvement.

Air travel and transport came next under examination. Opinion seemed to be that the present arrangements were more in the interests of the companies than of the districts they served. It was stated that any one company could not use another company's landing grounds, some believing that it could not be done at all, others that it could be done once a month, whilst others pointed out that because the plane they chartered was able to land at Whim Creek, permission to land on the ground of a competing firm is apparently obtainable under extraordinary circumstances. No one was clear in mind as to whether the fault lay with the Department of Civil Aviation or with the companies. There was no doubt about the existing dissatisfaction, no matter what the details of the restrictions might be.

After the meeting had agreed to impose a levy on all present to meet the running expenses of the organisation, the chairman declared it closed, and so, just before lunch on the second day, the first meeting of the North-West Citizens' Development Association terminated. When the second meeting will be held is a matter of conjecture and depends, in my opinion, to a large extent on what action this Parliament takes, and what is even more important, how soon it takes it. As if to remind me of the distances over which these men had travelled, when the meeting was breaking up, a man on my right referred to the amount which had been collected by the levy, saying, "It wouldn't meet my fare to a meeting."

After lunch, the pastoralists met as a separate body, and they, too, showed their concern at the drift from prosperity. Taxation again was emphasised as being too heavy a burden ever to allow of any recovery from the disasters that overtake them. But one of the main worries discussed for hours was the presence, in growing numbers, of vermin. The ravages of dingoes, foxes,

kangaroos and euro kangaroos were discussed. The numbers killed on the various stations were staggering, so much so, that I as a listener, wondered whether it was sheep or kangaroos that the pastoralists were attempting to breed. The value of poisoning of dingoes as against trapping was freely discussed, leaving the impression that neither was the only solution and that perhaps both were needed. The abuse and failure of the bounty system came under review, and the general idea was that the bounty system failed because, when the flush of the killing was over, the amount of the bounty proved unattractive. This was the point at which the bounty should be raised.

And now it was all over. The trek homewards began. All through the meeting the sky had been overcast, except for fleeting half-hours of cloudless blue, and infrequent drops of rain had been falling. Many an eye had been upturned wondering whether the bounteous rain would fall, whilst others realised that should it fall, they might well be marooned for days: but by next day Whim Creek had resumed its peaceful existence. What is the answer to all of this? Is there any? Whilst all agree that the pastoral industry is the main one of the North-West, it is obvious that methods that will restore this industry alone will never populate the country. And, what is more, we must, at this stage, adopt methods of a visionary nature. I have read the recommendations of the Royal Commission of 1940, and whilst at that time they may have sufficed, they are inadequate now. It has been said that, except for those which proved impossible for the State to adopt after the Commonwealth took control of taxation, all of the committee's recommendations have been implemented. Then it is clear that they have proved inadequate in the face of war and the onslaughts of the elements.

Early in the meeting at Whim Creek, the following set of motions was moved, the first only being dealt with by the meeting. The following is the exact form of the motions:—

1. That, having in mind the disabilities under which the people of the North-West of Western Australia labour, the lack of amenities, particularly for the womenfolk, the considered opinion that the State Government of Western Australia, under existing circumstances, will be unable to finance the post-war reconstruction of this portion of the continent, and, viewing, as it does, with alarm the deteriorating effects of high taxation, this

meeting requests the Federal Government to give relief from taxation over a period of 20 years to all people living above the 26th parallel in Western Australia, and to appoint a commission comprising representatives elected by these people and of the Federal Government, such commission to be virtually the governing body of the above-defined portion of the State of Western Australia during the aforementioned period of years and to be financed by and responsible for the carrying out of its duties and functions to the Federal Government of Australia.

2. That this meeting elects three members to be its executive to consult with the Prime Minister regarding the holding of a plebiscite and to bring details of the proposed commission, should such be agreed to, to this meeting for further discussion prior to submission through such plebiscite to the people for ratification.

3. That this meeting requests the Prime Minister to defray the expenses of the executive in proceeding to Canberra to lay before him the resolutions and decisions of this meeting.

4. That this meeting empowers the executive to acquaint the Prime Minister with the urgent need of an adequate shipping service to the North-West ports.

5. That this meeting empowers the executive to request the Prime Minister to institute immediately separate inquiries into—

- (a) Educational facilities,
- (b) Medical services,
- (c) Mineral resources,
- (d) Conservation of water,
- (e) Eradication of vermin,

in the area of Western Australia north of the 26th parallel.

6. That this meeting requests that these inquiries be held immediately, because it realises that delay may produce conditions which may prove irreparable and plans will be necessary for the commission, on establishment, to implement as it considers essential and practicable.

7. That this meeting requests that, wherever possible, a representative of the residents be appointed on each inquiry.

8. That this meeting desires to assure the Prime Minister, through its executive, that its decisions have been reached, not with the desire of individual advancement, but because it considers that steps must be taken to arrest the drift of population and the decline of prosperity, with the ultimate goal that this portion of the continent shall take its rightful place in the Commonwealth of Australia.

From my own observations, I am convinced that, had this motion been placed before the meeting towards the end of its deliberations rather than at the outset, its fate might have been very different. It was presented at a moment at which all present were desirous of ensuring that the matter

of pressing need was attended to, namely, the relief from the burden of taxation. A voice described it as secession, and I note that a contributor to the Press also described it as such, but a moment's reflection will show that it is not. The request for a different form of government, temporary in time and nearer to the people who shall elect its representatives and be responsible to the Commonwealth, can never, surely, be regarded as secession. Rather is it a move to bring the people of our distant parts more nearly to the form of government that we in the more populous areas enjoy.

Let us dissect the needs of these people and then endeavour to plan a comprehensive policy, and we must, I think, inevitably come back to the ideas contained in this motion. The reason for the request for relief from taxation is to permit of recovery by those who have been overwhelmed by the greatest sequence of disasters that has ever befallen such a community and one that is unlikely to be repeated in a thousand years. Firstly, there was the world-wide depression. During those years, Nature was generous to the North-West; good seasons followed in sequence. It was possible to send sheep to the southern markets, but the price was low. I have seen the figures of one station for a batch of 2,030 lambs sent away. After freight and all charges had been paid, the owner received .7d. per head for them. Today, when stocks are low and the sheep are not there to be sent, prices are around 35s. per head in the markets. Then followed the worst drought in the history of the North-West, and before recovery from that was complete, five years of war have added to their difficulties. Further, this year stock losses have been heavy following cyclones.

Wool prices are certainly stabilised at satisfactory rates, but of what use is that to the man who has no wool? Unfortunately the costs per bale are rising steadily. From general information from many, it appears that today shearing costs absorb 18 to 20 per cent. of the wool return. These events, combined with the vagaries of the elements, make life, and certainly investment in the North-West, uncertain. This has been apparent to Governments who have been faced with heavy jetty expenditure following "blows." The men who live in these parts

must have been in Kipling's mind when he wrote—

If you can meet with triumph and disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the  
same. . . .

How many of us could accept with any degree of equanimity the loss of our homesteads and half our assets overnight, and then start off again to build them up and defy Nature? These men are worth saving; they are among the real men of our race. I know of men who at 8 p.m. owned 30,000 sheep, but at 8 o'clock next morning 16,000 of them lay dead in the flood as the result of the ferocity of the wind. And the ruins of the homestead had to be seen to be believed. I met one man who was excited because he had found his losses to be, not £19,000 as he had expected, but £16,000! I wonder how many of us could take this! I have seen the manner in which the wind lifted the roof off the wall, pulling 2-ft. long steel stays through the stone-work and throwing these large stones out of the wall. One homestead of solid construction was completely demolished; and had the manager been in the building, he must have been killed. Over a distance of about 300 miles, only five per cent. of windmills were undamaged! How many of us have watched our ceilings lifting and falling? I spoke to the matron of the Roebourne Hospital, who described how she had seen this phenomenon, wondering at what moment her hospital would be unroofed!

It would be possible—it has been done—to recover financially from such devastation were it not for taxation. It is a land where good seasons compensate for bad; but if the taxation takes all the profit of the good seasons, then recovery is impossible. The present arrangement whereby income tax returns take the previous four years into consideration is proving unjust in face of the continued period of adversity. Five years, as suggested by the Royal Commission, is not enough now, and only two alternatives appear—(1) that 10 years be the period of averaging; or (2) that relief from income tax be given over the next 20 years. I am not in favour of granting complete relief from taxation without the safeguard that at least some of the wealth derived from the North is re-invested in the North to ensure its permanent growth and prosperity. In the past, large fortunes were

made in the north and invested in the South. I am assured that this is not likely to happen in more than a few cases, even if every year of the next ten a good season is experienced. That is why for one reason, I favour a local commission which will have first-hand knowledge of the circumstances and could, if necessary, lay down conditions under which the tax is remitted, or could control the investment of profit outside the North-West.

During the difficult periods of war, we could not buy a house except under certain conditions or by equal contribution to a war loan. Similar restrictions could be possible during the rehabilitation of the North, but care would have to be exercised to see that controls, by their rigidity, did not deter investors. The relief from taxation will not only affect the pastoral industry but will also increase the interest in the examination of the mineral resources. The fishing industry, too, would receive a fillip, and the pearling industry would be encouraged to return to its former affluence. There is no doubt, from information I have received—and I must here honestly admit that I have no personal knowledge of the Kimberleys—that the relief from taxation is not as urgent in the cattle industry, but that such relief would allow of expansion of the country in many directions.

At the meeting, an assurance was given that, in August, Sir David Rivett and other members of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research were to visit the State, and it was inferred that one of the reasons for their visit was to study some of the very problems under discussion. Members of the Council did visit this State, but I have every reason to believe that their investigations consisted entirely of conversations with Government officers and that not one of the visitors went north of Perth. Certainly they did not enter the North-West of Western Australia. Investigations into the problems of that part of the State cannot be carried out in Perth. If any value is to accrue, the men making the inquiries must go into the North-West, see the problems for themselves, live amongst the men working there, watch the results of their efforts, and preferably live there. The committee suggested by the Premier, no matter how its membership is com-

prised, will prove ineffective if its headquarters are to be in Perth. It must, to be of value, move up to Port Hedland or Roebourne.

There are problems in numbers and of great magnitude awaiting solution. It is astonishing that I am able to say truthfully that, despite the various branches and activities of the C.S.I.R., there is no branch in this whole State, one-third of the Commonwealth. Here is something we can ask for. We, as a State, contribute to the work of this Council; and our Constitution lays it down quite clearly that there shall be no distinction between States. The North-West has problems in plenty for this Council. Let me outline one or two, briefly. What is the cause of the low rate of lambing? Is it due to a soil deficiency? Is it that the breeding of sheep for wool for over 50 years has deprived the soil of its potash? Again, what effect would be derived from the damming-up of rivers to provide irrigation? Is it possible, economically, to build weirs across the Sherlock, the Fortescue, the Ashburton or the Gascoyne, to say nothing of the far northern rivers? Could markets be found for the products of irrigation? Still another problem: Are shooting and trapping of kangaroos the only methods of exterminating this pest? Must they be killed one by one, or can, by inquiries into their breeding habits, some more simple means be found? What food do they live on? Has the introduction of wells with loose water around increased their rate of growth? If so, can this be controlled? Is the low lambing rate the result of the eating of the young grasses by the kangaroo? Can the banana-growers be guaranteed security against pests?

With the knowledge we already possess that diseases in our South have been due to deficiencies, it is extraordinary that we have been prepared to go on for so long without a branch of a Council that is subscribed to by all Australians. Surely we will not allow this position to continue much longer! Action is urgent; delay cannot be brooked. It must be remembered that there must, of necessity, be others living in the North-West who are partly dependent on pastoral prosperity, but to whom we must give relief and the possibility of obtaining amenities. If women are to live there, and if families are to be

reared, then we can no longer expect that pioneering conditions should continue, accompanied by high taxation. We, as a State Parliament, cannot grant this relief from taxation so long as uniform taxation exists; and as it must be shared by the people of Australia, it seems obvious that the Federal Parliament will desire some control.

Can we, as a mere handful of people, stand the expense of the many other concessions that must be made? It is not only wrong, but it is unjust, to chide a Government with a fixed purse for not making further freight and other shipping allowances. Since its inception, the State Shipping Service has lost £1,345,000, and last year the loss was £56,000. Criticism would surely have been levelled against the Government had it decided to make reductions and lose £2,000 a week instead of £1,000. Even at this enormous cost, the service is unsatisfactory and the criticism voluminous. The time has come for some plan of a more lasting nature than that recommended by the Commission, which suggested a 25 per cent. rebate on shipping and rail freights for a period less than two years. Any plan made now must last well into the future. Even debt adjustment Acts are insufficient. It is not the man deep in debt whom we should help; rather should we propound a scheme to prevent the need for such Acts.

The cost of the educational requirements must be considerable, but we must not allow a lower standard of education for these children simply because we cannot afford to supply the necessary finance. Today, there is no school at Onslow; and the people request that boarding schools be built or subsidised and that children over the age of 10 years be sent to Perth. If these children are to be sent home again to the North for holidays, the cost at present air-passage rates, would be very considerable. If a child lived at Derby, air travel might well cost £100 a year. Add the cost of living away from home and that of education, and the sum might well be £200 per head. Post-war, with shipping, this would be less, but the time spent in travelling would render the scheme of negative value.

And what of the medical services? It is clear that the present system must be expanded, and that the expansion must be along lines of the Flying Doctor Service. There must be a service in the Kimberleys

giving both routine and emergency service; another should be stationed at Broome; and where there is now one in the North-West there must be two, and in addition, doctors stationed at other points, with a base hospital somewhere in the area. The cost must be large; and we must not lose sight of the fact that the present Flying Doctor Service is paid for by subscriptions from some—not all—living in the North-West, by some enthusiasts and some philanthropists, with subsidies from State and Federal Governments. Can we meet the cost of an adequate service? But there are other difficulties. Onslow, for reasons of war, is at present without a doctor; and during a discussion, it was suggested that the present service could be switched over so that the doctor could take charge of Port Hedland, Roebourne and Onslow. Those living in Onslow said this would not help at present because of the absence of pedal sets and telephone facilities. It is strange that we can speak by telephone to the Eastern States, but not to the North-West towns. Again, lack of population makes the project doubtful financially.

And this brings us further to the question of general communications. If taxation is to be reduced or abolished for a period of years in the North, then some scheme must be found whereby arterial roads can be financed. It would appear that again Commonwealth finance must be called upon under the existing circumstances, because the cost of building arterial roads through this vast country is more than we, as a State, can afford. This is a country of colossal distances, and sparse population. Between Onslow and Roebourne, approximately 250 miles, there would not be more than seven or eight stations adjoining the main road, and the distance from the coast into the mining areas is about 300 miles. When one goes further north, there are large distances which are uninhabited—for example, the area of desert south of Broome. When, in addition to this expanse, a request is made that freight and transport over these roads be subsidised, it makes the position even more difficult. This request is reasonable enough when viewed with the figures already given, that one-third of the cost of all stores in the inland mining districts is for transportation.

There are problems equally great still to be solved. The abandonment of stations is something which cannot be looked upon with any equanimity; because, whilst there may be the personal equation which fails in some instances, it must not be forgotten that the lying idle of vast areas provides breeding space for vermin, thereby throwing an increased strain upon the adjoining stations. The provision of labour is also a serious problem, in that it is not very likely, with the call for labour which there will be in the South in the post-war years, that anyone will desire to work in the North-West unless given some increased financial incentive to recoup him for the absence of amenities. Can these increased wages be paid? The duties of the white women on some of the stations are too onerous for them to be continued for long, especially through the trying summer. From personal inquiries, I learn it is almost impossible to obtain the services of a house-cook, and the only possible chance of attracting anyone to such a post is by offering an exorbitant salary. On top of this, the station owner is called upon to pay a certain proportion of the fare; and even if the salary is raised, it is only a certain type, mostly the adventurous, who will seek work in these parts, and at the same time pay the fare with the knowledge that it will be six months before it is returned. If this is so, what are we to do for our white women folk? It will not be possible for them to rear families and attend to their duties as well; which, in itself, exposes the weakness of the present situation.

Admittedly there is, in some areas, half-caste labour, but it is untrained and unreliable. Would it not be possible to exercise some further control over the training of half-castes for the jobs which they could do; females as domestic help and males as stockmen? If we are not prepared to do this, what is the alternative? Is it the frequently made suggestion that we should revert to indentured Chinese labour? Members are aware of the general trend of opinion in Australia against the importation of coloured labour. There are those who believe that we were saved from invasion in the North-West by the absence of any coloured race which could act as Quislings in an invasion. But a totally empty North will leave itself open to invasion in the future, without effort. This

emphasises the seriousness of the labour position. There are many firmly convinced that the amount required to restore the North is more than we, as a Parliament, can finance. In addition to the losses we have sustained in the State Shipping Service and the amount spent in port and harbour construction and maintenance; the loss on the Marble Bar-Hedland railway and the million that has been spent in rebates of rent and debt adjustments, the losses continue, because there has been no long-term policy. With our limited finance it has been impossible for us to frame such a policy.

I am convinced that a Government situated here cannot govern the North, and my whole idea in bringing forward this suggestion is to try to impress upon this House that we must get down to the principle that the closer to the people, the better the Government. From my observations on more than one visit, I am impressed with the lack of a central point in the North-West. The opinion is held that were we to develop one sound harbour where ships could enter and be less dependent upon tides, we would solve a number of problems. Almost everything that is required in the North has to be brought from Fremantle or Perth. There is no central store for the Public Works Department and no base for any of the other services necessary for a community of people. It has been stated that there are Constitutional difficulties in the suggestions I am making. Some declare that under the Commonwealth Constitution, the Commonwealth Government cannot discriminate in taxation and that in order to give relief from taxation it will be necessary to restore the right of taxation to the State Parliament. I cannot, however, subscribe to this view, since the Commonwealth Government has found it possible to zone Australia and to give reductions in income tax assessments to those living in certain zones. If it be possible to make reductions of a small nature, it must be possible to make reductions of a large nature. Another way out is to declare the area a territory. Whether it be that the State or the Commonwealth holds the purse, I still consider that the government of the North would be more easily conducted—and I might be pardoned if I say more wisely conducted—were it by a commission of members resident in and knowing that district and able to conduct

its affairs with a knowledge of the present and future needs of the North. Finally, I repeat, even were our power of taxation restored, the project of restoring the North would be beyond our finances. The task is one for Australia!

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

#### BILLS (4)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Mine Workers' Relief (War Service) Act Amendment.
- 2, Rights in Water and Irrigation Act Amendment.  
Received from the Assembly.
- 3, Police Act Amendment.
- 4, Police Act Amendment Act, 1902, Amendment.  
Introduced by the Chief Secretary.

*House adjourned at 6.9 p.m.*

### Legislative Assembly.

*Wednesday, 12th September, 1945.*

	PAGE
Questions: Pardelup prisoners, as to experience of honour system	623
Railways, as to warning signals at Welshpool crossing	624
Broadcasting, as to A.B.C. news session	624
State Hotels, as to Bruce Rock, Kwoylin, etc.	624
Fremantle Harbour Trust, as to waiving of regulation charges	624
Leave of absence	625
Bills: Medical Act Amendment, 1A.	625
Mine Workers' Relief (War Service) Act Amendment, 3A.	625
Rights in Water and Irrigation Act Amendment, 3A.	625
Builders' Registration Act Amendment, 2A.	633
Motions: Colliery coal, as to full use, etc., by Government utilities	625
Public Works Standing Committee, as to legislation for appointing	630
Soldier Settlement, as to proposed legislation	635
Industrial development, use of munition factories, to inquire by Select Committee	650
Papers: Claim by Mrs. J. P. Jorgensen, as to loss of cats	628

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

#### QUESTIONS.

##### PARDELUP PRISONERS.

*As to Experience of Honour System.*

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister representing the Chief Secretary: In view of the fact that the prisoner, Whelan, who re-