

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 17th October, 1956.

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

QUESTIONS.

ELECTORAL.

(a) Endorsement on Claim Cards.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Justice:

Will he have steps taken to have indicated on the back of the "Acknowledgment of Receipt of Electoral Claim" card that

the recipient of such card is entitled to vote, even in the event of his or her name not appearing on the electoral roll concerned?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Minister for Justice) replied:

No, for the reason that the card is issued by the registrar only as an acknowledgment of the receipt of the claim. There are provisions in the Act for an elector to record a vote if his name has been omitted from the roll but these provisions are too lengthy to be printed on an acknowledgment card.

(b) Notice of Objection to Enrolment.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Justice:

If an objection is made to an elector's name remaining on an electoral roll, will he take steps to ensure that the Electoral Department sends a notice of that intention by registered post, to that elector, together with a statutory declaration form which may be filled in by the elector to be returned to the department if he considers his name should not be removed from the roll?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Minister for Justice) replied:

No, as it is considered that the notice sent by ordinary post is adequate and there is provision on the form for an appeal by the elector against the objection.

WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT.

Field Superintendents and Select Committee Sittings.

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Were official instructions issued to Field Superintendents White and Davis of the War Service Land Settlement Department for them to be present when the recently-appointed select committee (which visited the Great Southern areas during the period 11th-15th October, 1956) held meetings to receive evidence, or conducted inspections of properties?

(2) If the reply to (1) is "Yes"—

(a) who issued such instructions?

(b) what does the War Service Land Settlement Department expect to gain from the attendance of the officers?

(3) If the reply to No. (1) is "No," does the department consider it advisable either from the point of view of the select committee, the Land Settlement Board, or the officers concerned, that they be present?

(4) If the reply to No. (3) is "No," will they and other officers be instructed not to attend?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes, following on initial advice from the select committee that hearings would be in public and the board's officers could attend.

(2) (a) The deputy chairman, after discussion with the chairman of the board.

(b) It was considered—in view of the initial advice from the select committee in No. (1)—that:—

(a) the presence of officers might be of assistance to the select committee in their inquiries;

(b) a knowledge of complaints would assist the board in its conduct of the settlement scheme.

(3) Answered by No. (1).

(4) Answered by Nos. (1) and (2).

EDUCATION.

(a) *Tuart Hill High School Tender.*

Mr. CROMMELIN asked the Minister for Works:

Further to my questions on the 11th October, regarding tenders for the Tuart Hill high school building—

(1) Will he indicate the reasons why the contractor ceased work on the Tuart Hill high school?

(2) Was the contractor fined for the breaking of the contract?

(3) If the answer is in the affirmative, what was the amount of the fine?

(4) Was the contractor paid for the work he had completed?

(5) If the answer is in the affirmative, what was the amount of the payment?

(6) Who assessed the value of the work done and the basis of settlement?

(7) Was the second lowest or any other tenderer given an opportunity to carry out the contract, and if so, which one?

(8) What is the estimated cost of building the school under the Government day-labour scheme?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The contractor discovered that he had made a serious omission in compiling his tender and, on his application, the contract was cancelled.

(2) Yes.

(3) £500.

(4) Yes.

(5) £5,732 2s. 6d.

(6) The departmental quantity surveyor, reviewed by the principal architect.

(7) No.

(8) £120,000.

(b) *Mukinbudin School Sanitary Arrangements.*

Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Is he aware that the existing sanitary service will close at Mukinbudin on 25th October?

(2) What sanitary arrangements will be made for the Mukinbudin school after the cessation of the existing service?

(3) When was the notice of the department first drawn to the fact that the sanitary service at Mukinbudin would be discontinued?

(4) Could a septic sewerage system have been installed at the Mukinbudin school during the period that has elapsed since the department was first informed of the discontinuance of the sanitary service?

(5) Is it proposed to provide a septic sewerage installation at the Mukinbudin school in the immediate future?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Minister for Education) replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The road board has agreed to continue the present sanitary service until approximately the 15th November and will review the position when something definite is known about the septic installations.

(3) The 1st May, 1955.

(4) Only if funds were available.

(5) Yes. It is expected that tenders will be called within three weeks.

HOSPITALS.

(a) *South Perth Building, Costs, etc.*

Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Health:

(1) What was the capital cost of the South Perth Community Centre Hospital—

(a) buildings;

(b) furnishings and equipment?

(2) How was the finance provided?

(3) What has been the daily in-patient bed average since the hospital was opened?

(4) What staff was employed at the hospital on the 30th September?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Minister for Health) replied:

(1) The capital cost of the South Perth Community Centre Hospital was:—

	£
(a) Building	106,000
(b) Equipment and furniture	12,000
	<hr/> 118,000

(subject to finalisation)

(2) Finance was provided by:—

	£
Lotteries Commission	45,000
State Government	45,000
Amount raised by citizens of South Perth	22,000
	<hr/> 112,000

(3) Daily in-patient average (April-August) 19.5.

(4) Staff employed, 31.

(b) Increase in Maternity Fees.

Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Is it a fact that hospital fees for maternity cases which the Government promised would not be increased until the 1st March, 1957, will now rise as and from the 1st November next?

(2) If so, what amount of additional revenue is estimated will be received by hospitals for the remainder of the current financial year as a result of this increase?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Minister for Health) replied:

(1) Hospital fees for maternity cases will rise from the 1st November, 1956, but patients admitted between the 1st November, 1956, and the 28th February, 1957, who covered themselves for additional units of hospital benefit prior to the 1st July, 1956, will be granted a rebate by the hospital to the extent of organisation benefit in respect of additional units, which would have been payable upon the completion of the 10 months waiting period.

(2) £25,000.

TRAFFIC.

(a) Issue and Renewal of Licences.

Mr. HEAL asked the Minister for Transport:

Due to the crowding and waiting period of people renewing their car licences at the James-st. traffic branch, will he consider—

(1) Providing additional accommodation for the issuing or renewal of licences and transfers?

(2) Establishing new offices in the main suburban areas for the above purposes?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The need for additional accommodation is recognised but has been somewhat difficult to solve. Additional space will be made available in the near future when the offices in the traffic building at present being used by the Shops and Factories Department become vacant, on the transfer of that department to another building.

(2) New traffic buildings have recently been acquired at Midland Junction and new premises are also being erected at Victoria Park. These measures will relieve in great part the congestion which occurs at the central traffic building.

It is not intended to provide offices in other suburban areas at the present time.

(b) Accidents Due to Drivers' Neglect.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Are many traffic accidents attributable to failure of drivers to give way to traffic on the right?

(2) How many such accidents were listed in the past year?

(3) How many of such accidents were fatal?

(4) What other causes are listed as giving a higher accident rate?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) 1,529 or 18.9 per cent. of all causes.

(3) 11.

(4) Inattentive driving. 2,131 accidents or 26.2 per cent. of all causes.

HEALTH.

*Poliomyelitis Immunisation,
Scarborough, etc.*

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Health:

In view of the approaching summer and the anticipated large influx of visitors, will he give consideration to having the Salk vaccine immunisation carried out before the Christmas recess in the Scarborough, Double View and Innaloo areas?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Minister for Health) replied:

According to the programme already prepared, all school children in the Scarborough, Double View and Innaloo areas will have been immunised with Salk vaccine before the Christmas recess.

RAILWAYS.

*(a) Working Expenses and Revenue,
Branch Lines.*

Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

What were the working expenses of, and the revenues received from, each of the following railway lines for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1956—

Busselton—Flinders Bay;
Elleker—Nornalup;
Pinjarra—Narrogin;
Brookton—Corrigin;
Lake Grace—Newdegate;
Lake Grace—Hyden;
Burakin—Bonnie Rock;
Kondinin—Merredin;
Wyalkatchem—Merredin;
Wyalkatchem—Southern Cross?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

The information required is in course of compilation but will not be completed before approximately one month.

(b) Radium-st. Passenger Siding.

Mr. JAMIESON asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

(1) Has the Railways Commission given consideration to providing a passenger siding, of the Oats-st. type, in the vicinity of Radium-st., between Welshpool and Queen's Park stations?

(2) If so, what decision was reached?

(3) If not, will consideration be given to this matter?

(4) Have any other sites been selected for future suburban stopping places?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The matter will be further considered when additional railcars are available.

(3) Answered by No. (2).

(4) Requests for additional stopping places have been received but no sites have been selected.

NATIVE WELFARE.

Ministerial Investigation of Cruelty Charges.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Native Welfare:

(1) Further to my questions on the 8th, 21st and 29th August, is the report dealing with inferences of cruelty arising from my questions on the 1955 Native Welfare Department's report, completed?

(2) If so, when will it be presented to Parliament?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Information enabling a factual report to be made to Cabinet was received on the 16th October. The details will be supplied to Cabinet this week for consideration.

(2) As much of the information is private or semi-confidential, this will depend on Cabinet's decision as to whether an early report should be presented to Parliament or otherwise.

TICK FEVER IN CATTLE.

Mortality on North-West Ships, etc.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister representing the Minister for the North-West:

(1) What has been the incidence of cattle deaths on State and other ships coming from North-West ports since he answered my question on the 21st August, regarding the "Dorrigo," and "Koolinda?"

(2) What is the result of the State Shipping Service inquiries regarding a vaccine for the treatment of cattle to overcome tick (red water fever)?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE replied:

(1) No losses as a result of red water fever have occurred on State vessels since the 21st August.

A total of 143 deaths occurred on the "Gorgon" this month.

(2) Information obtained by the State Shipping Service indicates that the use of vaccine on board ship is not practicable because of the necessity to segregate cattle for treatment and observation.

FIREWOOD.

Kalgoorlie Licences Issued.

Mr. EVANS asked the Minister for Forests:

(1) What number of private firewood licences, issued by Kalgoorlie office, is held by individuals in Kalgoorlie?

(2) What number of such licences were issued in July, August and September?

(3) What number of firewood vendors' licences were issued in Kalgoorlie this year?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) From the 1st January, 1956—Kalgoorlie 1,432; Boulder 397.

(2) July—Kalgoorlie 236; Boulder 53. August—Kalgoorlie 176; Boulder 44. September—Kalgoorlie 152; Boulder 41.

(3) 446.

WATER SUPPLIES.

(a) Serpentine Dam Construction.

Mr. GAFFY asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) What progress has been made so far with the construction of the Serpentine Dam?

(2) Will there be sufficient loan moneys available this financial year to enable the work to proceed to schedule?

(3) When does he anticipate that this dam will be completed?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The Serpentine pipe head dam is almost completed.

(2) Yes.

(3) The pipe head dam will be completed at the end of this summer.

The pipeline is scheduled for completion to the Forrestfield junction with the main to Lake Thompson Reservoir, Kwinana and Fremantle, in November, 1957, and to the Victoria Park junction with the Cannings mains in November, 1958.

(b) Mt. Barker and Cranbrook Schemes.

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is progress being made on the Mt. Barker water scheme regarded as satisfactory?

(2) Can he state when the scheme will be completed and ready for use?

(3) Will he give similar information regarding Cranbrook supply?

(4) What will be the capacity of the last-mentioned scheme?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Not later than the 30th June, 1957.

(3) Not later than the 30th June, 1957.

(4) 7.6 million gallons.

OCEAN BEACHES.*Toilet and Washing Facilities.*

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Health:

Further to my question asked on the 3rd October re toilet and washing facilities at the ocean beaches—

(1) When was the last survey made?

(2) Was it considered such facilities then existing conformed to public health standards?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Minister for Health) replied:

(1) Surveys of beach facilities are made by metropolitan authorities at intervals of one to three weeks or more frequently as the occasion demands.

(2) The condition of these facilities varies from day to day according to the use or misuse they receive from the public. It would be impossible to say that all beach conveniences complied with the Health Act at any given time but, generally speaking, local authorities try to maintain them at the required standard.

POTATOES.*(a) Resales to Eastern States.*

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Agriculture:

Is it a fact that the W.A. Potato Marketing Board recently sold potatoes to private traders who in turn sold the potatoes in the Eastern States?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes, 180 tons of No. 2 grade only. Apart from a limited demand for ships stores, there was no other market for that grade, which indicates how keen the Potato Marketing Board is to give service to the potato growers.

(b) Position Regarding Issue of Licences.

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Agriculture:

In view of the proximity of the next potato digging and then planting periods, what is the position of potato growers who sold potatoes privately, in relation to—

(a) Their present agreement with the W.A. Potato Marketing Board;

(b) The licence they now hold, or are about to be issued with to plant in the next planting period?

The MINISTER replied:

(a) With regard to the crop about to be harvested, their potatoes will be accepted on the same basis as those of other growers.

(b) The worst offenders will have their licences cancelled and others will be reduced in proportion to the percentages of their crop that was sold outside the board in contravention of the conditions of their licence.

(c) Sales other than to Board.

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is it the intention of the W.A. Potato Marketing Board to prosecute any potato grower who has, or will in future, sell potatoes to persons other than the board?

(2) If so, who are the growers concerned at present?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The board's policy has always been to prosecute for offences under the Marketing of Potatoes Act and the board will continue to do so.

(2) Names are not for publication at present.

(d) Delicensing of Growers.

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is the W.A. Potato Marketing Board going to delicense any potato growers for their action in selling potatoes to Eastern States interests?

(2) If so,—

(a) who are the growers concerned;

(b) what was the yearly tonnage produced by such growers over the last five years?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) (a) Growers names are not for publication at present.

(b) Cancelled licences have produced 2,699 tons in the past five years.

(e) Marketing Act Petition, Further Action.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (without notice) asked Mr. I. W. Manning:

In order that the member for Harvey cannot hide behind the petition which he tabled yesterday with respect to potatoes, will he inform the House if he intends to move any motion in connection with it?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You cannot ask a question!

The SPEAKER: The Minister can ask a question.

Mr. Bovell: Tell him to put it on the notice paper!

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. I. W. MANNING replied:

Whether I move a motion or not on this subject—I do not know what the Minister meant by his reference to my hiding behind the petition—will depend upon events which take place in the next couple of weeks in the potato industry.

The Minister for Transport: Why did you put the thing on the Table of the House?

The Minister for Agriculture: Ridiculous!

BETTING.*Off-course Bookmakers' Turnovers.*

Mr. CORNELL (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

Referring to the question asked by me yesterday, of the five bookmakers who each had a turnover in excess of £300,000 will he further particularise these into the following categories:—

From	£300,001 to	£350,000
"	£350,001 to	£400,000
"	£400,001 to	£450,000
"	£450,001 to	£500,000
"	£500,001 to	£550,000
"	£550,001 to	£600,000
"	£600,001 to	£650,000
"	£650,001 to	£700,000
"	£700,001 to	£750,000?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied:

I desire to express my appreciation to the hon. member for making particulars of his question available to me. The reply is as follows:—

No. There is only one bookmaker in each of the categories shown by the hon. member and, if the information is given, it would break down the confidential requirements of the Act.

TOWN PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE.*Termination of Services of Members.*

Hon. D. BRAND (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Has he officially advised members of the Town Planning Advisory Committee that their services are now no longer required?

(2) As in the minutes of the meeting held on the 3rd November, 1955, he is quoted as saying—

The chairman did not think it would be necessary to have a further meeting of the advisory committee at this stage.

and further—

As this would probably be the last meeting of the advisory committee for some time.

and finally—

The chairman hoped that circumstances would be such as to enable them to continue in some form without a great deal of delay, does he not agree that there was justification for members believing that the committee was still in existence?

The MINISTER replied:

I regret the hon. member did not see fit to give me a copy of the questions he intended to ask.

Hon. D. Brand: They are simple enough.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER: It would have been easier if I had a copy in front of me; it would not have cost him much to do that. I think I am entitled to repeat that the terms I used at the last meeting of the advisory committee were such as to indicate that it appeared as though that would be the last meeting of the advisory committee under my chairmanship. I do not know whether the Minister for Town Planning intends to call that same committee together again, or a similar committee comprised of some of the members who were on the original committee, or whether he intends not to call a committee at all. So far as I was concerned, that was the last meeting of that committee.

BANKING INDUSTRY SELECT COMMITTEE.*Extension of Time.*

On motion by Mr. Johnson, the time for bringing up the report of the select committee was extended for two weeks.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

1. Health Act Amendment.

Without amendment.

2. Corneal and Tissue Grafting.

With amendments.

MOTION—CARE OF WARBURTON RANGE NATIVES.*To Inquire by Select Committee.*

Debate resumed from the 26th September on the following motion by Mr. Grayden:—

That a select committee be appointed to inquire into all matters appertaining to the health and general welfare

of, and future plans for, the aborigines in the Laverton-Warburton Range area.

THE MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE (Hon. J. J. Brady—Guildford-Midland) [4.55]: In connection with the proposal moved by the member for South Perth, I want to say at the outset that the Government has no objection to the appointment of this committee. We feel ultimately that the committee will come to the same conclusion as the department which has been trying to arrange for the Warburton Range natives to be moved into the Cosmo Newbery area. At this stage I think I should cover some of the points raised by the member for South Perth in order to have on record the viewpoint of the department and its policy with regard to the native people in that area.

The policy of non-interference where bush natives are concerned has not been departed from by the Department of Native Welfare in this State. Since the 3rd May, 1954, a Government school has been maintained by the Education Department at the Warburton Range mission for the purpose of educating the children left in the care of the missionaries by the bush natives of that area. It is clear to all concerned with the matter that the primitive, nomadic parents of these children, having no knowledge whatever of the purpose and value of education, are not in any position to make decisions with respect to their secular and spiritual education.

It is for this reason that the decision was made many years ago to leave these two important welfare decisions in the hands of the appropriate authorities, namely, the Native Welfare Department and the missions, respectively. Power to make decisions on their behalf is vested by Parliament in the Commissioner of Native Welfare. It is obvious to those responsible for the care and welfare, as well as the education and training, of these native children, that some provision must be made for their post-primary school progress, development and training.

If this were not so, then the actions of the parents in placing their children in the care of missionaries and of the missionaries in keeping them in the mission during the formative years of their lives, and of the Government in giving them a State school education, must be regarded as being detrimental to the children's future, because they have been deprived of the opportunity to learn from their tribal elders the knowledge which is so vital if at some future time in their lives they are forced to forage for a living.

The Government has spent a considerable amount in trying to maintain a State school education for those children out at the Warburton Range mission, and it would seem in the near future that

some considerable trouble will be experienced by the department in order to maintain teachers at such an isolated place. It is 400 miles from Cosmo Newbery. With the increase in children at the mission, the department could quite easily require three school teachers to go to the Warburton Range mission and it is realised both by the department and the Education Department that a great deal of difficulty will be experienced in trying to arrange for the education of the children in that area.

The decision to transfer the school children was made after consultation with the superintendent of native education, Mr. Thornbury, who has frequently expressed his concern, from an educational viewpoint, as to the future of the Warburton school children, and with the State and Federal councils of the United Aborigines Mission, who are the controlling bodies of the Warburton Range, Cosmo Newbery and Mt. Margaret missions. The district officer of native welfare for the district, Mr. B. A. McLarty, journeyed to Cosmo Newbery for the specific purpose of discussing the matter with the superintendents of Warburton Range, Mr. Green, and of Cosmo Newbery, Mr. Lupton, both of whom, in the interests of the children concerned, concurred in the proposed transfer.

Whether either of them subsequently changed his mind is not known to the department, but within recent weeks the Commissioner of Native Welfare was informed by Mr. Wade, who founded the Warburton Range mission many years ago, and by Mr. Lupton of the Cosmo Newbery mission, that all missionaries in the district were now in agreement with the proposal. Mr. Wade, when asked if the native parents had any objections, replied, "Not that I know of." He added that children were still being brought into the mission from the Rawlinson Range area and showed the commissioner photographs of them. He said he thought it a good thing that the older children were being sent to school at Cosmo Newbery and added, with respect to the younger children being brought in to the mission, that the missionaries would still have plenty to do at the Warburtons.

In recent years there has been a gradual but increasing migration of natives in the direction of the Eastern Goldfields and the most experienced missionary in the district, Mr. R. S. Schenk, informed the commissioner recently that many of the natives now resident in and around Mt. Margaret mission near Leonora were formerly from the Warburton Range. Those now resident at the Warburton Range migrated there from the Rawlinson Range. So it seems apparent that there is a definite migrational movement in a south-westerly direction from the Rawlinson Range.

Reference was made by the member for South Perth to the Declaration of Human Rights, and to certain of the rights that the people at the Warburton Range mission had in regard to themselves and their children as set out in Article 26. It is also advisable that we should read another article from the Declaration of Human Rights. This article says—

Everyone has a right to education Elementary education should be compulsory. Technical and professional education should be made generally available, and higher education should be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

I think the member for South Perth will agree with me that it is going to be most difficult to give natives, living 400 miles the other side of Cosmo Newbery, any semblance of technical or professional training. If these people are to be assimilated into the community, as we all desire, then we should give them the fullest possible education. That was the desire of the department when arranging a transfer from the Warburton Range mission to Cosmo Newbery.

The separation of children and parents mentioned by the member for South Perth is not enforced by the department and so far the only objection to the transfer of the children is that raised by the hon. member. The Department of Native Welfare has received no notice of objection by the native parents through the missionaries or from the missionaries themselves and its officers must therefore believe in their concurrence. In point of fact, however, most children in missions in Western Australia are separated from their parents—many by distances greater than that which separates the Warburton and Cosmo Newbery missions.

I recall that when I was in Wyndham some two months ago I met children there who had been educated in Geraldton, approximately 600 miles away. I believe that at the moment there are native children in Perth—some who are apprenticed and some who are in homes—whose parents are in the North. This indicates that in some cases there are distances of up to 1,000 miles separating children from their parents, and the parents are not advocating that they should be returned to them. The parents at Wyndham were not asking that their children should be returned or that they should be sent to North-West ports because they were separated from them.

In fact, it is rather pleasing to know that many of these parents are now looking forward to sending their children to the missions. Furthermore, I have spoken to native parents with young children—children who are little more than babies in arms—and they have said they are looking forward to seeing their children sent to the mission.

I remember that when I, with Mr. Middleton, was in Wiluna in May last, I met a native woman who was living in accommodation little better than a mia mia on the reserve, and she asked me to take a parcel to her son at the Tardun mission which was the best part of 500 miles from where she was located. She was not unduly concerned about the welfare of the children or about the fact that they were separated. She seemed to be quite pleased that her child was in the Tardun mission and had the possibility of receiving a sound education. I understand that the children there do get a pretty good education.

The member for South Perth made a great point about the separating of the parents from their children, but I would say that the difficulties that he mentioned are more apparent than real. I think the native people appreciate the value of a good education, and they are prepared, like the white people, to see their children separated from them for long periods. I recall that one missionary allowed the children to go home for their holidays at Christmas time, but to his amazement they were back within a few days, the parents wanting to leave them at the mission again because they felt they were better off there than they were with them, the parents, in other parts of the State.

If the department is to adopt the policy of not separating the children from the parents, from the point of view of giving them a good sound education it would seem that we should, in fact, return the children to their parents on the various stations scattered throughout the North-West and the central and southern districts, but, I do not think that even the member for South Perth desires that. Probably after the select committee has inquired into the aspects referred to by him, any doubts that he may have in regard to this move being in the best interests of the children, will be allayed.

The report of the alleged shooting of a native at the Giles weather station was referred to the Commissioner of Police, and has been thoroughly investigated by the native patrol officer, Mr. McDougall, who has spent years in the area and speaks the natives' dialect. The Commissioner of Native Welfare spoke by telephone with field superintendent Nossiter last week, and Mr. Nossiter informed him that there was not a tittle of evidence to support the charge. No report has been received by the department from missionaries in the area or from any other source; it knows nothing more than what has been written in the "Daily News".

I also referred this matter to the Commissioner of Police, and he has no knowledge of it, or information from any source in regard to the alleged shooting, and he is most anxious to follow the matter up. I have agreed that in the event of my

visiting the Warburton Range mission in the near future, I shall be only too pleased to have one of his officers accompany me with a view to making a closer investigation. Experience in the past in similar circumstances has been that missionaries are the first to report the facts from evidence obtained from the natives, and to press for public action. It seems strange that no report has been received by either the Department of Native Welfare or the Police Department from the missionaries in regard to this particular matter.

The decision of the Department of Native Welfare to raise no objection to the establishment of the Giles meteorological station was made on the understanding and guarantee of the representatives of the Commonwealth Government who visited Perth to discuss the project, that there would be no interference with natives or their way of living. The conditions were written into the permit authorising them to enter upon the reserve. The department is not in receipt of any information to cause it to believe that the conditions of the permit have not been observed. The same remarks apply in respect of the permit issued to the company which is prospecting for nickel near the South Australian-Western Australian border.

As the Minister for Native Welfare, I have invariably to approve of those permits when people wish to enter a reserve, just as I had to approve of the permit for the member for South Perth to go through the particular native reserve at the time he visited Alice Springs some months ago. Invariably, accompanying these permits, the department sets out in full, for the benefit of the people obtaining the permits, the conditions with which they must comply. The conditions that are set out are pretty thorough. The department sets out these conditions in an effort to guide the people with the permits with regard to what they shall do in the best interests of the natives.

The member for South Perth seems to be under some misapprehension in regard to the patrol officers appointed by the Commonwealth Department in that he says that only one such officer was stationed at the Giles meteorological station. There is, in fact, a second officer who has the greater experience of the two and whose responsibility it is to keep the natives clear of the danger area. There is ample evidence that the natives themselves realise the danger and are, of their own accord, keeping clear of it. The member for South Perth supports this evidence by his statement that natives at Cosmo Newbery, which is 500 miles from Maralinga, "are extremely concerned lest this atomic bomb be dropped near them." Mr. McDougall has been giving this matter his undivided attention for the past twelve months or more, and his reports confirming this fact are on file at the office of the Department of Native Welfare.

Reverting to the proposed transfer of the children to Cosmo Newbery, the member for South Perth can be assured that the department does not believe for one moment that when these children are educated they will be able to find work in the Laverton area, but it does believe that the children will have a better opportunity further south at Kalgoorlie and Esperance or, if necessary, Perth, to further their education and training, as has already been pointed out.

It is a fact that when the Warburton Range mission was founded some 20 years ago by Mr. Wade, the site was not approved by the department, mainly because the State at that time could not afford the high cost of maintenance due to the mission's remote position. This was quite material at that particular juncture. Some 20 years ago, apparently the Department of Native Welfare was not able to help the mission because of the expense involved. In the meantime, in 1950, Mr. Middleton paid a visit to the area and agreed to assist the mission with food-stuffs and education, and also to provide medical and other assistance. In actual fact, since 1950 more than £20,000 has been provided to assist the mission. The department has also provided half the cost of a diesel truck which the mission uses to go backwards and forwards over the 400 miles between Cosmo Newbery and the Warburton Range missions. It would seem that in the near future the truck will have to be replaced because it is now almost worn out.

It is not within the province of the department to instruct the mission whether or not it will carry on its spiritual welfare work, and the department makes no attempt to do so. As I interpret the position at the moment, even if the native children were brought in for a better education to Cosmo Newbery, it would seem that the Warburton Range mission would still carry on to look after the indigent natives, to evangelise those natives who come into the area, and generally to carry on the welfare work.

During the course of his speech, the member for South Perth spoke of the amount of work being done by the Commonwealth Government for the natives in the Northern Territory. If members look at the figures they will find that the number of natives in the Northern Territory is only about half that in the State of Western Australia and, despite that fact, more than £1,000,000 is made available by the Federal Government to be spent on them, whereas the State Government is able to provide less than £500,000 with which to look after 20,000 natives. It is evident that the Commonwealth Government could do much more for the natives in the Northern Territory with the funds available to it and so it was hardly a fair comparison which the member for South Perth drew.

We are mindful of the fact that much more could be done both for the natives in our missions and the 90 per cent. which are not in the missions. As Minister I am concerned with the fact that 60 per cent. of the money spent on natives in this State is spent on those in the missions and they comprise less than 10 per cent. of the total. We are now approaching a stage where we hope to do a great deal more on the reserves and in the surrounding areas than has been done in the past, to help the natives there.

Mr. Bovell: Does the Commonwealth Government contribute any finance to native welfare in Western Australia?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: Not as far as I know. Unfortunately, under the Commonwealth Constitution, the welfare of natives is the responsibility of the States and they are made to face up to that responsibility. I am not unmindful of the fact that the placing of the atomic research station at Maralinga may have caused a great deal of disorganisation among the natives in this State and I think it should be the responsibility of the select committee, if appointed, to see to what extent that has occurred and whether anything can be done to assist the natives.

Hon. D. Brand: Does not the department know already whether there has been any dislocation in that regard?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: It is following the matter up closely through its patrol officers who are in that area at present and, in addition, the department is in close contact with the Federal Minister for the Interior in regard to activities at Maralinga. I know the Minister personally and I wrote, sending him a full report of the address to this House by the member for South Perth, including the statements he made. The Federal Minister was good enough to reply rather fully. I mention that to point out that he also knows what might be the difficulties in this area and I understand, from his letter, that the people in charge of the Maralinga research station have gone to a great deal of pains in the last twelve months to see that the natives were protected.

Mr. Roberts: Approximately how many natives would be affected?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: It is hard to say but I would estimate that there may be 700 or 800 natives in that area and there may be 300 or 400 coming and going from the mission. They often leave their children at the mission and then go walkabout or follow other tribal pursuits in the ranges. At the Forrest River mission at Wyndham last July, I went to one colony where the natives were getting about in their natural state with a minimum of clothing or none at all and they were undoubtedly preparing to go walkabout or indulge in

hunting at that time. The natives in the Warburton Range area, as far as I can ascertain, do the same thing.

The Commissioner of Native Welfare has advised me that very often the natives seen along the Transcontinental railway line in civilian clothes leave that area after selling curios or mementos to train passengers and revert to their natural state on hunting trips or on walkabout. It is not the policy of the Government to provide financial assistance to missions or other people to establish industries for natives. To depart from that policy and establish precedent would result in similar requests from missions and others all over the State. The Government is already spending more than half its total Native Welfare Vote on missions and mission natives.

In the course of his speech, the member for South Perth referred to atrocities and some of his statements were a little confusing because, on the one hand, he demanded that the Commissioner of Native Welfare should stamp out certain undesirable practices among the natives—it would be impossible to do that in an area so remote as the Rawlinson Range—and, on the other hand, he opposed any action to bring those natives within the confines of civilisation where they could be placed under some restraint and instructed in a civilised way of life. The Minister and the Commissioner of Native Welfare have power only to give instructions calculated to minimise or stamp out certain practices. I do not think that the member for South Perth believes that the instructions given to natives in Central Australia would be observed merely on the say-so of the Commissioner of Native Welfare.

It is incorrect for the hon. member to say that the native woman who allegedly killed a baby recently was merely cautioned. In fact, she was committed for trial by the magistrate but eventually a nolle prosequi was filed by the Crown Law Department owing to certain legal factors. The hon. member says that the atrocities to which he refers could easily be prevented, but members who know how remote are the areas referred to and how difficult it is to carry out patrols there, will realise that it is almost impossible to suppress these alleged atrocities. I have for many years heard of alleged practices carried out by natives in certain areas to reduce their tribal strength in order to preserve themselves from starvation.

Apparently they feel that if they do not indulge in these practices, their numbers will increase and as they pass through a particular area it will be so denuded of flora and fauna that there will be no food for them in future years when they return that way. It would be difficult for the department or the missions to suppress the practices referred to. I know that the missionaries advise the natives in regard to more desirable ways not to

reduce their numbers but by means of self-discipline to achieve the same result. I think the member for South Perth will agree that it would be extremely difficult for the department to suppress the practices referred to.

As I have said, the Commonwealth Minister for Supply, Mr. Howard Beale, wrote to me in reference to this matter and I think I should put on record what he said. His letter is as follows:—

I have now had an opportunity of reading the speech made by Mr. W. Grayden, M.L.A., in the Legislative Assembly on 15th August, and appreciate your courtesy in forwarding this with your letter of 21st August.

At the outset let me say that I share your anxiety that nothing should be done to jeopardise the welfare and precarious living of the native. This has always been in the forefront of our minds in planning operations both in respect of the rocket range at Woomera and of the atomic weapons proving ground at Maralinga.

We have tried not only to protect the natives from any hazard associated with the operation of these ranges, but also to disturb their normal mode of living as little as possible, and to impose no unnecessary restriction on their movements.

My department has worked in close co-operation with the Departments of Native Welfare both in South and Western Australia, and the helpful attitude of both States has been appreciated.

You might like to have a brief outline of the measures which have been put into operation for looking after native welfare in the area nearer to Maralinga, and this I have set out below—

1. Two or three mobile ground patrols operate between Tarcoola and Ernabella to keep a check on the location and movement of all natives in this area.
2. There are also scientific teams operating east towards Mabel Creek and up to 120 miles to the north west of our base on the Emu claypan. These teams, while not specifically for native patrol, are briefed to report any indication that natives are in this area.
3. These patrols are in daily contact with each other, with Native Affairs Officer Macaulay at the meteorological station in the Rawlinsons, and with the Maralinga and Woomera ranges.

4. While there is not the slightest danger to the health of natives in and around the station properties in central South Australia arising from the tests at Maralinga, not only do these supplement the data obtained from the main continental sampling system, but they provide specific confirmation that no significant radioactive material has fallen on the nearby inhabited areas.

5. Before any major test is conducted at Maralinga, extensive low level aerial reconnaissance over a wide sector centred on Maralinga and extending out about 200 miles from the firing area is made with meticulous care. This will detect the presence of any natives not previously accounted for. In the event of any natives being discovered in locations which might give rise to public anxiety, the tests would be held up until the natives were clear of these areas.

6. The only area in which the radioactive contamination following a test might reach a level prejudicial to health is in the near vicinity of the firing sites, and this area will be constantly supervised by the Range authorities.

Although radioactive material will fall outside this area, it will be of such low intensity as not to be a health hazard. Further, it will decay rapidly with time and could not possibly be a danger to any natives who might subsequently move into the area.

7. As part of the scientific plan to assess the effectiveness of the nuclear devices tested at Maralinga, extensive aerial and ground surveys of the radioactive "fallout" are made with highly sensitive measuring instruments to distances of more than a hundred miles from the firing sites. These measurements provide additional confirmation that the scientific predictions were realised and that no harmful radioactive material was deposited on areas used by human beings or livestock.

The initiation and direction of the above measures is the direct responsibility of the Atomic Weapons Tests Safety Committee, which consists of eminent Australian scientists and which is present in person at each of the major trials at Maralinga.

I trust the foregoing information will not only inform you of the extreme care with which we are planning all these operations, but will enable you to reply to any uninformed criticism that these highly important and essential British Commonwealth defence operations are prejudicing native life and welfare in Australia.

Yours sincerely,
(signed) Howard Beale.

I am sure members will derive a great deal of satisfaction from hearing the contents of that letter read, particularly the member for South Perth, because I know that he is keenly interested in the welfare of natives. No doubt members will also have noticed from Press reports that a number of these atomic tests were postponed. It could well have been that members of the aerial reconnaissance or those living on outlying stations might have reported the presence of natives in certain areas and there could have been a desire to remove them.

Whilst speaking on that aspect, as will be seen from the Commonwealth Minister's letter, there were also a number of research officers spread over a very wide area and it is hardly likely that the department in charge of the atomic tests would carry on with the work at the Maralinga testing station if it were likely to endanger the health of its staff. So, generally speaking, I think members can be assured that everything within reason has been done and I feel that after members of the select committee have visited the Warburton Range mission and Cosmo Newbery, and have obtained an overall picture of the position, they will report favourably on the proposal to bring the children of the mission to Cosmo Newbery for their education.

If the select committee brings to light other matters which will assist in the welfare of natives in that area, I am sure the Government will appreciate the knowledge gained as will other members of this House. As I said before, the Government has no objection to the appointment of a select committee.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [5.35]: The House should be indebted to the member for South Perth for bringing this matter forward because it has been interesting to hear both his speech and that of the Minister for Native Welfare. Most of us go about attending to our work-a-day affairs without realising that in the outback of Australia there are many natives who should receive the consideration of this Parliament. I must admit that I am somewhat ignorant of the conditions of natives who live in far distant places and far removed from our western civilisation.

I am very pleased that the Minister has agreed to the appointment of this select committee because I am sure it will result in members having an opportunity to

enlighten themselves at first hand on the conditions of natives in outback areas. We have a great responsibility to care for these native Australians. Whether they should be incorporated in our society and taught our way of life, or allowed to continue in their existing native state is a question that has yet to be decided.

For my part, I feel that members should have a knowledge of the conditions of natives living in the outback and I am certain that the activities of this select committee will give members an opportunity to find out, at first hand, the information which we do not now possess. I am sure the report of the select committee will convey to members the impressions that it gains during the course of its inquiry. My parliamentary colleagues approve of the motion by the member for South Perth, and I heartily give it my support.

MR. O'BRIEN (Murchison) [5.38]: I have listened very carefully to the speeches made on this motion and I am grateful to the Minister for Native Welfare for explaining to the House the whole set-up concerning the natives in this particular area and throughout the State generally. Some time ago I mentioned that I visited, with the Minister for Native Welfare, a number of missions in the Murchison electorate. As this proposed select committee will inquire into the activities of the Warburton Range mission which is situated in the Murchison district, I feel that I should have something to say on the motion.

In the eastern goldfields there are the Mt. Margaret and the Cosmo Newbery missions. Further east lies the Warburton Range mission. I have the greatest confidence in the officers of the Native Welfare Department. From time to time I have interviewed them on minor matters. I have also visited the various missions in my district and I have found the people stationed on them to be very co-operative in every way. I feel sure that the Labour Government of which I am proud to be a supporter—

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What have you got to be proud of?

MR. O'BRIEN: I am very proud indeed to be a supporter of this Government. As I say, I feel sure it will do everything to see that the natives are protected in every way possible.

Hon. D. Brand: So did we.

MR. O'BRIEN: I have no objection to any inquiry being made; indeed I would foster such inquiry but I would like the members of the select committee which it is proposed to appoint to go the full distance and not merely stop half way. I wish them luck. They should inquire into the matter thoroughly and ensure

that the natives in that area are properly protected. It is possible, although I have no—

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Qualifications?

Mr. O'BRIEN: I have the qualifications. The word I was thinking of was "wish." I have no wish to be on the select committee, but I shall not be very far away as an observer. I support the motion.

MR. GRAYDEN (South Perth—in reply) [5.42]: I am very pleased that the Minister for Native Welfare is prepared to support this motion for a select committee to inquire into conditions and future plans for the natives of the Laverton-Warburton Range area. I listened with interest to the views he presented, the notes for which were apparently prepared by the Department of Native Welfare, because the Minister has indicated that he has not yet had an opportunity to go to the mission and see at first hand the conditions that exist there. He has made no secret for some time that he would take the first opportunity that presented itself to go out to the mission, but as yet that opportunity has not occurred.

Accordingly, I think the case that he has put up is one that was prepared by the Commissioner of Native Welfare. The statements made by the Minister were unfortunately disturbingly full of inaccuracies and a complete contradiction of the action taken by the Native Welfare Department over the past few weeks. I would like to deal very briefly with some of the points raised by the Minister. Firstly, he said that the proposal to move children from the Warburton mission to Cosmo Newbery had the approval of all the missionaries in the field and the mission council.

The Minister for Native Welfare: I do not think I said missionaries in the field. I said two leading missionaries, namely, Mr. Loveton and Mr. Green.

Mr. GRAYDEN: We have known for a long time that the plan of the Department of Native Welfare has had the approval of the mission council but I want to say at once that no one has the right to forcibly separate children from their parents. The missionaries who have been in the field there for very many years are completely opposed to the new plan, and some of the statements that a certain officer from the Department of Native Welfare made to the missionaries will indicate the true feeling of that department on this point. Without mentioning the name of the officer concerned I would like to quote some of the statements he made. He went to the missionaries and said—

Of course, I know you can throw a spanner in the works if you desire to do so.

That was fairly early in the piece. He was telling them that they were not to say anything, and that if they did, they could stop the whole plan. He also stated—

This thing is going through—we do not want any opposition from you—even if Mr. Middleton has to use his powers to do it.

In addition he said—

We do not want you to do any welfare work at all.

That is, at the mission. He continued—

If you do, you will be counteracting the work of Cosmo Newbery.

Then he said—

If you do not agree we will not issue you with permits.

He was referring to permits required to go out to the reserves. The missionaries replied to the effect—

All our work has been for nothing. You are cracking the whip.

To this the officer in question replied—

That is what you are here for, is it not?

Those are the statements that I took down verbatim as they were repeated to me, and they would indicate the attitude the Department of Native Welfare has displayed in its dealings with the missionaries on the Warburton Range. The Minister also said that there has been no interference with the natives' way of life on the Warburton reserve. He mentioned that for some time the Department of Education had operated a school at the mission. I would like to point out to the Minister, however, that it is the intention of the Department of Native Welfare to close down that school. I am quite certain that, if necessary, the missionaries themselves would supply the teachers required, even if the Department of Education could not do so. But as I said, it is the intention of the department to close down that school.

I have mentioned previously that there are several blatant instances of interference with the natives. For instance, we have allocated huge areas of the Warburton reserve—in one case, to a mining company. We are also due to cede another area to the Commonwealth Government which is possibly the best portion of the Warburton reserve as far as the natives are concerned. Once that area is given to the Commonwealth and the natives are denied the opportunity of going into it, that proposition will render the whole of the northern part of the Warburton reserve useless from the point of view of the natives.

In the past we have had a couple of Royal Commissions appointed in Western Australia, and there have also been other inquiries conducted into the conditions of natives in this State. In every case the

findings of those inquiries have stressed that native reserves should be inviolable. They pointed out that in no circumstances should sections of the reserves be ceded or granted to mining companies, or other ventures of that kind. Yet here we find this huge portion of the Warburton reserve having been virtually cut to pieces recently. So the statement that there has been no interference with the natives' way of life on the reserve is not supported by facts.

In his speech, the Minister also went on to say that there was no enforced separation of children intended; that they could go quite voluntarily to the Cosmo Newbery mission. That too is not in accordance with the facts. I can recall having asked a question in this House, and the manner in which that question was answered certainly implied that there was going to be enforced separation. The missionaries have the impression that it is going to be enforced because they ask these questions. We are to move these children to Cosmo Newbery, but will the police be sent in to assist us? Are the missionaries expected to do it, or are the officers from the Department of Native Welfare coming out to actually catch these children?

They point out that the children would have to be run down and caught then manacled or placed in a vehicle with barred windows, to be taken 400 miles away and kept in barred dormitories. In the light of many years' experience, missionaries realise they cannot keep the children at the mission school in the Warburton Range. The parents of those children have repeatedly taken them away, and they have stayed away for intervals of a year or more in other parts of the reserves and thus stopped their children from having to attend school.

Mr. O'Brien: I would like the hon. member to inspect Karalundi.

Mr. GRAYDEN: These children will not even stay at the Warburton mission school. The missionaries say that the children will have to be caught forcibly and kept in the circumstances I have described if they are to be taken to Cosmo Newbery. If that were not the policy, if the children were not to be forced to attend Cosmo Newbery and allowed to go there voluntarily, it would put the Department of Native Welfare in an invidious position, because what is going to happen to the children who do not elect to go to Cosmo Newbery?

Are they to remain without any education, and without any assistance from the missionaries, because the missionaries have been told not to do welfare work? Are those children going to be neglected altogether? Yet that must follow if this plan is to go through! If all the facilities of this mission are shifted to Cosmo Newbery, many children of school age will be left behind.

Mr. O'Brien: If Cosmo Newbery had all the facilities, the natives would all want to go there, the same as at Karalundi.

Mr. GRAYDEN: If the member for Murchison were to become a member of the select committee and accompanied it, he would realise that what he says will not eventuate. For instance, the Department of Native Welfare does not intend to support the adult natives. Imagine what would happen if there was an influx of 700 or 800 natives at Cosmo Newbery. They would not be welcome in the surrounding stations and they would get no assistance from the Department of Native Welfare. These people are bush natives and are used to eking out their survival on the Warburton reserves. They know where the water holes are located and where food supplies are found. If they are taken from the reserves and away from their tribal country into country they do not know, they could not possibly eke out an existence.

There is no question of the adult natives going to Cosmo Newbery. Once the natives are taken out of their tribal reserves, their customs, folk lore and the beliefs which sustain them will be broken down. If that is done, they become dispirited and degraded and they will live the life of animals as we see them living around the mining towns at present. They will be unable to adopt the new culture which is to be thrust upon them, and they will be separated from their beliefs, customs, and legends which are associated with their tribal country.

The Minister also touched upon the shooting of a native at the Giles weather station. I understand the matter is to be further inquired into, therefore I shall not deal with it at length. I would like to say this: The only reason why the missionaries did not report it when it occurred was that they would have to do so over the air and the Giles weather people were only 250 miles away and would have been listening in. The missionaries did attempt to get in touch with the police constable at Laverton. For some reason, possibly because it was Saturday, they were not able to do so and they asked me to report the matter to the police when I returned.

In respect of the natives keeping clear of the danger area surrounding the Maralinga testing ground, the information which the Commonwealth has given us on this point is misleading in the extreme. If the Commonwealth had come out and said, "This bomb is not dangerous and will not affect anyone who is 10 miles away from the explosion", that would have been all right. It would not have mattered if that were the position. If the Commonwealth continues to maintain that the area within 100 to 150 miles of the explosion site is cleared of natives, then its action is wrong.

In point of fact, there are two natives on the Warburton reserve who walked right into the Maralinga testing ground and they were hastily sent on their way. As I pointed out recently, scientists and personnel on the range have been lost in country within a few miles of Maralinga and they were not found for several days. What chance would they have of discovering natives who are going out of their way to avoid being located? The natives feel that if they go bush, then nothing can touch them. If the members of the select committee were to go to the Warburton mission they would find a large number of natives who would go bush and would be in close proximity to the atom bomb site.

The Minister mentioned the question of atrocities which are perpetrated frequently at the Warburton mission. He said that it was no simple matter to stamp out these practices. I would say that it is an extraordinarily simple matter to stamp some of them out. Recently a woman who placed a red hot coal in a baby's mouth was arrested and taken to Kalgoorlie. She was tried before the resident magistrate who cautioned her and sent her back to the mission.

The missionaries pointed out that when she came back the natives naturally felt that all that had happened to her as a consequence of putting the red hot coal into the baby's mouth was that she got what, to her possibly, was an enjoyable trip to Kalgoorlie, and nothing else. As a consequence, the influence of the missionaries was undermined. It certainly was no deterrent to the other natives who are inclined to perpetrate that sort of deed in the future.

When the members of the select committee go to the mission, they will see five women there with babies from a few days to a few weeks old. They are frightened to leave the mission because they have been threatened. If they go back to their camp fires, the same thing will happen to their children, and a red hot coal will be put into their mouths and a red hot needle pushed into their veins. When I said it was a simple matter to stamp out such practices, I had in mind an alteration to the existing legislation which would ensure that when a native goes before a magistrate on a matter of that kind some penalty shall be inflicted. No one is advocating harsh treatment for the natives, but in these circumstances there ought to be some penalty which will act as a deterrent to the others.

I have skipped very hastily through some of the main points which have emerged as a result of the Minister's speech. I have done that deliberately because the Minister has indicated that he is in agreement to the appointment of the select committee. The true facts in regard to all the matters that have been

touched on in the course of this debate will be dealt with at length by the select committee in its deliberations. I therefore think that we could well wait for the report of the select committee before going further into these matters. I conclude by repeating that I am extremely pleased that the Minister, and I presume also the Government, are going to support this motion for a select committee.

I think that if the select committee is appointed, it could well have far-reaching effects on the natives in Western Australia if for no other reason than that the matters concerning the natives at the Warburton mission apply to natives in other parts of the State in varying degree. I am quite certain that, as a result of the committee's deliberations, the natives of the Warburton Range mission are going to be saved a great deal of unnecessary misery and pain. I also think a great many unnecessary deaths will be avoided.

Question put and passed.

Select Committee Appointed.

On motion by Mr. Grayden, select committee appointed consisting of Mr. Bovell, Mr. Oldfield, Mr. Lapham, Mr. Rhatigan and the mover, with power to call for persons and papers, to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned and to move from place to place; to report on Wednesday, the 21st November.

MOTION—UNECONOMIC RAILWAY LINES.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

Debate resumed from the 26th September on the following motion by Mr. Hearman:—

That, in view of the obvious problem of uneconomic railway lines, a select committee be appointed to inquire into and make recommendations on—

- (a) the establishment of an experimental test road to determine the lowest attainable cost of providing a road, and operating road transport vehicles in country areas of low traffic density at present served by uneconomic railway lines;
- (b) a suitable length of road or roads for the establishment of such an experimental test road;
- (c) the type of authority considered most suitable for the conduct of such an experiment and research into related questions;
- (d) the types of vehicles and equipment and operating conditions best suited to the several requirements of giving a satisfactory service to the areas likely to be affected;
- (e) to make any other relevant suggestions.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [6.4]: A lot of discussion has ensued on this motion moved by the member for Blackwood which, in my opinion, is a genuine effort to overcome the difficulties of transport costs in Western Australia. At the present moment the Grants Commission, according to Press reports, is becoming very inquisitive regarding the loss on railways in Western Australia and published in this morning's daily Press was a statement that an estimated deficit of £6,000,000 is laid down for this year's railway financial operations.

It can be seen, therefore, that the transport position in Western Australia is most costly and whilst, in my opinion, the motion of the member for Blackwood does not in any way indicate that any line will be pulled up or discontinued, he is making a sincere attempt to find out ways and means whereby our transport system can be improved at a less cost than today. Let us look at the motion fairly. The first matter to be inquired into is—

- (a) the establishment of an experimental test road to determine the lowest attainable cost of providing a road, and operating road transport vehicles in country areas of low traffic density at present served by uneconomic railway lines;

That clearly indicates that the select committee is to be appointed to inquire into and make recommendations concerning the establishment of a suitable road in areas where lines are unpayable. The Minister for Transport, in speaking to this motion, indicated that the departmental evidence was available and that he considered the select committee could not secure any further information as it was already in the possession of his department. The motion goes on to set out other matters to be investigated as follows:—

- (b) a suitable length of road or roads for the establishment of such an experimental test road;
- (c) the type of authority considered most suitable for the conduct of such an experiment and research into related questions;
- (d) the types of vehicles and equipment and operating conditions best suited to the several requirements of giving a satisfactory service to the areas likely to be affected;
- (e) to make any other relevant suggestions.

Any fair-thinking Western Australian today must give earnest consideration to the problem of the expenditure on the railways. I do not advocate the wholesale lifting of unpayable lines at the moment. We do not know what the future will bring. Let us go back to the days when gold was discovered at Wiluna and it was necessary to build, at considerable cost, a railway line from Meekatharra to Wiluna.

The goldfield at that centre later became an unprofitable project with the result that the line today is unpayable. Whether it is ever likely to come into profitable operation again is questionable.

Mr. O'Brien: It will.

Mr. BOVELL: The member for Murchison interjects that it will, and I sincerely hope that it will, and in the not too-far distant future. But can he outline any industries that are likely to develop in the area which the railway serves? I know that some experiments were made in the district in the growing of peanuts.

Mr. O'Brien: That is so.

Mr. BOVELL: I have not heard much about that project recently, and whether it will justify the continuance of the railway, I do not know. Let us be aware of the conditions of the motion which is one genuinely conceived, in my opinion, to endeavour to assist the State's finances in regard to transport. The member for Blackwood has made a careful study of the transport systems in this State.

Mr. May: Which does not mean a thing.

Mr. BOVELL: The member for Collie had better amplify his interjection. I do not know how it follows. The hon. member should think on these lines, that the State cannot afford, on any one project, to lose £6,000,000 annually which is at the rate, approximately, of £10 per head of population of Western Australia.

Mr. May: You get it back in the development of the State.

Mr. BOVELL: I hope we do. I am not advocating the closing of any lines, but am advocating the question of investigating the transport costs in Western Australia. I believe that all associated with the operations of the Railway Department should realise that a great responsibility rests upon them with respect to the successful and profitable operation of the railways. I do not say that they are not altogether pulling their weight in this matter, but I do say that with these mounting millions of losses the whole of the railway staff should come together and see whether, by closer co-operation amongst all branches of the service, they can do something to reduce the deficit, because it is in their own interests to do so. The taxpayer is not going to continue paying out money at the rate of £10 per head for all time. The responsibility in this matter rests not only on those who are administering the Railway Department, but the others who are also giving their service to it. Generally speaking, our railway officers are courteous and in every way do the job of work that is required of them.

Mr. Ackland: Are they giving co-operation by asking for a 35-hour week?

Mr. BOVELL: If they persist, as the member for Moore has interjected, in their advocacy for a 35-hour week, they will

spell the end of the railway system in Western Australia. We see a loss of £6,000,000 in one year with a 40-hour week; what will be the result of a 35-hour week? I am of the opinion that the responsible officers and employees of the Railway Department—I believe that they are in the great majority—will realise that this is not the time to advocate a 35-hour week for railway employees. If they do, they are only spelling their own ruin.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What would the deficit be then?

Mr. BOVELL: It would be a deficit that the Treasurer could not fund. In conclusion, all I can say is that the motion is a genuine attempt to find some solution to the financial problems associated with our transport systems in Western Australia.

MR. EVANS (Kalgoorlie) [6.14]: I rise to speak on the motion because I find myself vitally concerned with it. The subject is one on which I find much difficulty to speak, and at the same time one on which it is impossible for me to remain silent.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. EVANS: This is a difficult subject for me to speak on as I feel I have not the comprehensive ability to deal with it fully and do it the justice it deserves. At the same time it is not a subject for me to pass by silently because it is of paramount importance not only to the people who live in the outback but also to all those whose livelihood depends upon our railways, and here I refer particularly to railway employees. I do not intend to adopt a spineless attitude towards this measure but to oppose it and make no bones about it.

I regard the motion as the thin edge of the wedge to oust railway lines and replace rail services by road transport which is often sponsored by interests other than those which operate for the welfare of the State. I believe many members will agree with me that in this instance we would do better to trust the devil we know, rather than the devil we do not. I wish to read and to have placed on record a letter I have received from the Locomotive Engineers, Firemen and Cleaners' Union, with reference to this question. It reads—

Members of the above branch are strongly opposed to any proposal concerning the closure of branch lines. We believe that much of the criticism of the railways is unfair and is being sponsored by business interests who stand to gain by the closing of sections of the railways and road transport being permitted to take over. The reason for the desperate position of the railway finances is due to their having been required to function over

a long number of years without sufficient money being provided for maintenance and replacement of equipment—

Mr. O'Brien: Quite true.

Mr. EVANS: To continue—

In recent years new modern locomotives rail cars and wagons have been placed in service and this has resulted in record tonnages being hauled and the revenue from passenger traffic reaching record proportions. There can be no doubt that if the per-way is brought up to standard the railways could, with the modern equipment previously mentioned, provide an efficient and economical service and we claim that judging the performance of the railways over a period when they were compelled to operate under run-down conditions does not give a true picture of their possibilities.

At present speed restrictions have been imposed over the greater part of the service and, because of this, effective use cannot be made of the equipment available.

To renew rails on a 40 year cycle it is necessary for 105 miles a year to be laid—in the last seven years only 400 miles have been completed—the highest yearly total being 90 miles. The renewal of sleepers and reballasting has also lagged behind the figure necessary to maintain the per-way in a reasonable condition. Derailments due to this are also retarding the efficient working of the system. During 1953-54, 354 vehicles were damaged, 14 being written off; in 1954-55 the figure was 266, in 1955-56 it was 450. So far this year 200 vehicles have been damaged due to becoming derailed.

Mr. Hearman: Yes, 266 trucks damaged in 1954-55.

Mr. EVANS: I would remind the member for Blackwood that I do not intend to indulge in frivolous exchanges with him. The letter continues—

Any proposal to substitute road transport would involve the building of roads of sufficient strength to carry heavy vehicles, the capital cost of which would equal the building of a 60 lb. track, both being estimated to cost £11,000 per mile.

Mr. O'Brien: It has never been done yet.

Mr. EVANS: To continue—

We strongly urge that money be obtained to complete the rehabilitation of the per-way and thus permit speed limits to be increased and full use made of modern equipment; if this is done we are confident that the railways will prove that they are capable of providing a transport service, equal, if not superior, to that

operating in other parts of the world and on a more economical basis than can be provided by road transport.

I heartily endorse the sentiments expressed in that letter. The mill cannot grind with water that has passed and neither can the railways be expected to run economically if they are required to function over a long period of years without sufficient money being provided for maintenance and the replacement of equipment. That money has not been forthcoming in the past.

Hon. D. Brand: They have had £20,000,000. What have you to say about that?

Mr. EVANS: The railways should be looked upon in the same light as hospitals or other public amenities which are a tremendous burden on the Treasury, but the need for which no one denies. The Public Library and our educational system are in the same category. Just as the State Shipping Service is a public amenity and the lifeline of the North-West, so are the railways the lifeline of the outback.

Mr. O'Brien: Hear, hear!

Mr. EVANS: It is true that our railways have opened up the State.

Mr. Court: I can see that the Minister for Transport is going to be in trouble.

Mr. EVANS: We have a debt to pay to the railways, so let us repay it by placing the future in debt. Let us, as the legislators of this State, act as real statesmen and review the situation with eyes of reason and justice. We believe in decentralisation but it seems we are doing very little to foster it. Branch railway lines should be looked upon as the arteries of our State, which feed its living heart. Are we going to squeeze that heart by closing the railway lines and pulling them up, which would be tantamount to cutting the arteries out of a living body?

Do not let us adopt a cold-blooded banker's attitude. If the system does not pay, let us scrap it! Railway lines, in such circumstances, would not be the only undertakings to go. False critics decry weaknesses in our railway system. They declare that we must close our branch lines to make way for something in which I claim they have more than a passing interest. It is well to remember that the melody of the song lasts much longer than the voice of the bird. People do remember. Once lines are closed, the betting is beyond 100 to 1 that they will ever be opened again, particularly if the lines are pulled up.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot bet on this motion.

Mr. EVANS: If that were done, the people who would carry the inconvenience would be those in the country; the carrying of inconveniences is becoming habitual to them. Let us remember that experience is the father of wisdom and I claim

that memory is the mother. A glance at the census figures of 1947 compared with those of 1954 will show quite readily that people are leaving the country areas and draining to the city. Therefore, it is quite obvious that we, as the legislators of this State, with an outlook for State welfare, should do all in our power to encourage people to stay on the land. The closing down and pulling up of railway lines will never do that. The supporters of road transport should examine it more and praise it less.

During his speech the member for Murchison gave us some interesting details on the outcome of closing the railway line between Sandstone and Mt. Magnet. I do not wish to go over the ground he covered because he, being the member for that district, knows much more about the subject and particularly about the feelings of the people concerned. Railway lines in country areas can be looked upon as the pulse of decentralisation and the nervous system of the confidence, the courage and the wisdom of the administrators of this State.

Mr. O'Brien: Where would Norseman be today if they had pulled the railway line up?

Mr. EVANS: The member for Murchison has raised the question of Norseman. It is a pity that the Minister for Health, who is the member for that district, is away on a tour of his electorate because he could quite easily back up the statements I am about to make. Many years ago Norseman was in the doldrums and there was talk of closing the railway line to that centre. That was before Norseman became the thriving town that it is today; it was long before water was supplied and that is one example of the wisdom that the legislators of that day employed. They could have taken the easy way out and closed the line to Norseman. Had they done so, it is quite likely that Norseman would not be there today.

I would like to touch on the case of one line beyond Kalgoorlie. This is one which I have heard would be jeopardised if road transport became widely introduced into this State. The line to which I refer is quite familiar to the member for Murchison because it is the branch line which runs from Malcolm to Laverton.

Mr. O'Brien: A big syndicate is now interested in Laverton. Anything could happen there now.

Mr. EVANS: I visited the railway goods yards in Kalgoorlie on Monday last and I was agreeably surprised to find that starting from Monday next the train to Laverton, which has been a fortnightly one in the past, is now to take on a weekly timetable. I asked whether this was because there was an increase in the freight to be transported from that district, and the answer was "Yes." The Lancefield mine at Laverton, which has been in a

shaky condition for some considerable time, has been taken over by vast American financial interests and the Americans have not spared any expense in bringing new equipment to that area and have expressed the highest confidence in the mine.

Mr. O'Brien: Hear, hear!

Mr. EVANS: As a result, the freight to Laverton has drastically increased. Furthermore, the Morgan's mission—that is the Mt. Margaret mission—receives its goods by the train to Laverton; the goods are deposited at a siding called Morgan's and the freight and goods required by that mission are quite considerable, so much so that road transport could not handle it economically because hauliers would have to make several trips. Therefore I strongly emphasise that I am opposed to any form of road transport which will become the thin edge of the wedge and force these lines to be closed.

Before departing from the Laverton district, I would like to add that I was also speaking to the secretary of the Amalgamated Prospectors and Leaseholders Association of Kalgoorlie during the weekend and he told me that prospecting has become quite active in the district during the last few months, possibly as a result of unemployment and present economic conditions. Therefore, with that instance in view, if anyone is desirous of pulling up the railway lines, I would say that he favours a most unimaginative and unrealistic policy.

Mr. O'Brien: Hear, hear!

Mr. EVANS: So I appeal to all members to ignore all those people who criticise the railways. Give the railways a fair go to show their merits.

Hon. D. Brand: What about the £6,000,000 deficit?

Mr. EVANS: Let us ignore these pedlars of gloom and propounders of ill-informed and ill-founded criticism, and let us get down to the job and tackle it as grown-up adults and not as impulsive children.

HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [7.48]: I find this motion one which it is very difficult for me to support although I am not without appreciation of the good intentions of the member for Blackwood who introduced it. I also find great difficulty in agreeing to a select committee to inquire into the matters which are suggested by the hon. member. First of all, I am in grave doubt as to what is an uneconomic railway line.

During my period in the Ministry, I remember seeing a list of railway lines in this State which the railway commissioners appeared to consider should be under examination, at least, as uneconomic railway lines. There was one which it was suggested should be considered and to my

mind it indicated absolute unrealism by the persons who had prepared the list. I will not say the commissioners because I do not know that they had actually drawn up the list themselves or had even approved of it at that time. I refer to the railway line between Tambellup and Ongerup. At that time the war service land settlement project areas were only in the embryo stage. The quantity of production that is coming and will ensue from the development that has taken place in the interim and which is still taking place is something prodigious.

It was known at that time that this development was going to take place and that the areas in question had been approved for settlement by the Commonwealth and considerable activity was then in course. I should think that it was quite apparent to anyone who was following the economic progress of the State that a tremendous difference would be achieved in the quantity of goods that would have to be transported over that line. As an indication of the situation, I think that last year there were 680,000 bushels of grain at the Ongerup siding alone which is the terminus of that line.

By the time the development further east, which is part of the war service land settlement project, has reached anywhere near its maximum, that quantity of grain will probably be in the vicinity of 2,000,000 bushels, which will be over 50,000 tons at that one siding alone. In circumstances of that nature, by what process it is suggested that road transport could suitably fill the bill, I do not know, especially when one recalls that in order to produce that quantity of grain to come away from that area, there must be very considerable quantities of goods sent to that area to satisfy the demands for production and sustenance of those who are there engaged.

One must also consider that the centre I have mentioned is only one place along that route of some 63 miles where development has been taking place very substantially in recent years and where production has increased and will continue to increase. At that time it was known that these projects were in course of development and that there must be very considerable changes in the set-up even supposing it could be allowed that at that time the line should have been classed as an uneconomic one, because I submit that the question of economics is not entirely one of money.

A great many of those lines were thrust out to various parts of Western Australia purely for the purpose of ensuring development and that development, in many cases, can yet be extended and is, in fact, being extended. So the possibilities of handling the quantities of goods required by road transport both ways raises a number of problems of quite another nature. I feel

that by subscribing to this motion, notwithstanding the excellent intention which I feel sure underlies it, I would be subscribing, in all probability, to the belief that there are a number of uneconomic lines in Western Australia.

As I understand it, the method of accounting of the Railways Commission is a peculiar one. If there are 50,000 tons of grain to be transported from Ongerup to, say, Albany, which is a distance of 169 miles by rail, the Ongerup-Tambellup section of the line would get credit only for the 63 miles between those two points. The allocation of the fraction of the freight charges purely on a basis of 63 to 169 seems to me to lose entirely sight of the fact that were it not for that person growing the 50,000 tons of grain at the eastern section of that line, there would be nothing whatsoever to transport over the 106 miles that remain after that portion of the rail journey had been traversed.

Of course, that position is accentuated where goods from any of these places are transported to Fremantle where the distance on the main line is considerably greater. Nor does this argument overcome the problem if there were no railway line and we were relying on road transport—supposing one could afford it. However, what system is one going to use to handle the goods after their transport by road to the main line, because it is to be presumed that if we close the branch line due to its being uneconomic, we are going to continue the main line and not proceed to have road transport for the whole of the distance? Therefore, there must be some method, convenient and swift, of handling the goods at various times—not all goods being capable of being handled speedily and in bulk—from one system to the other at whatever point happens to be the junction.

Mr. Hearman: That has to be done at some point along the route.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Not with rail transport because the train can be shunted off at various points. There is no need to take the goods off a truck and put them on to another one.

Mr. Hearman: At its destination.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Yes, but the hon. member would simply double that process.

Mr. Hearman: No, I would not.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: The hon. member would. I grant that it is done from the factory, say, in Leederville, to the Perth railway station, but there would be no need to do it at some place along the main line.

Mr. Rodoreda: There would only be one handling from the farm to the rail junction.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: The hon. member is getting somewhat confused, I think. I am not concerned about the fact that the goods are to be shifted from one type

of vehicle to another. I am concerned about the speedy method of handling, because there are going to be considerable handling costs involved at the siding where the main line joins the branch line which at present is avoided. There would be considerable congestion and expense if we did not have a better method than there is at present. It could possibly be evened up by handling cargo in bulk. With wage costs as high as they are today, every hour that is expended on work of that nature is going to add considerably to the handling costs. I do not think that one can dispense with that line of argument altogether in considering this question of using road transport.

But, of course, there have been a great many arguments about the closing of various railways, and I understand that a great deal of discussion and investigation went on in regard to the closure of the Bonnie Rock line. I have been supplied with certain information which I understand is quite factual in relation to this particular line not only as to the cost of operation but also concerning the cost of dispensing with it. I am informed that the cost of operating that Bonnie Rock line in 1951-52 was £24,070 and the earnings were £8,255. Therefore, the assessed net saving that would result if the line were closed was an overall £10,244. It is estimated that to pay a subsidy so that settlers would receive the difference between the through freight route and road haulage would cost £19,572.

As there is likely to be an expansion in the district—and that is the point I was making in regard to the other line, even on a larger scale—the road subsidy would increase accordingly to probably £27,500 a year. It is estimated, too, that it would cost £70,000 to construct a suitable road and over a period of five years, plus maintenance, which would be heavy owing to the nature of the traffic. I do not know that that road is to be a sealed road; it is only, I understand, to be a road which would be solidly built up with gravel and so forth, and therefore, obviously would be subject to heavy maintenance almost every year. That is to cost £70,000. So it seems to me that on the facts ascertainable, it will cost more to close the line than to keep it open.

The Minister for Transport: I think you have overlooked the capital expenditure to keep that railway going.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: That cannot be avoided; most of it has gone before.

The Minister for Transport: I mean yet to come; that is the point.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I do not know that it will because the Minister is going to spend on this proposal £27,500 at the end of three years in subsidising road transport and unless that were done he would have considerably more friction with the users of the railway line; and I do not suppose that such a proposal, if recommended by

the Transport Board would be refused, and while there would be considerable costs in the maintenance of the railway itself, that would be set off by the great costs of maintenance of the road and the subsidy from the transport service. Apart from that, one has to take into consideration the capital cost of the road itself. So I think the conclusion that was come to at that time—not by me—was that it would cost more to close the railway than to keep it open.

Accordingly, as I said, the problem to me, in looking over the matters that I have dealt with as shortly as I could, is: What is an uneconomic railway? I have not the slightest desire to offer a word of criticism about the State Shipping Service for exactly similar reasons that I believe it is desirable for us to be very careful in coming to any conclusion as to what is an uneconomic railway. I would certainly decline at this juncture to say that the State Shipping Service is an uneconomic service and yet, looking at its figures as disclosed in the annual report of the manager, laid on the Table of the House some time ago, we will find that the capital cost of the railways and of the shipping service, and the annual losses incurred on the figures, indicate that the shipping service is more uneconomic than the railways.

But, of course, there would be no justification in the circumstances of the North-West of doing anything else but maintaining that service in the best manner possible. So it will be readily seen that holding that view and seeing in many portions of the State—such, for example, as that represented by the member for Murchison and others—that there is a distinct resemblance between the necessities of the one and of the other, that the less we meddle in this matter the better.

Let us have some definite proposition put before us, after which it might be time to investigate them to see if any commonsense can be found in the recommendations being made by the responsible authority. If members look at the report of the State Shipping Service dated the 20th June last, they will find that the year's trading involved a gross deficiency of £697,259. Expenditure, including interest and depreciation, was £1,164,982, and revenues amounted to £767,723. So it will be seen that the revenues were approximately half of the expenditure which, in matters of £ s. d., and in proportion to the size of the two departments, makes the figures of the State Shipping Service a little worse than those of the railways. Yet who is going to advocate the closing of the State Shipping Service? I certainly am not; quite the contrary. I do not believe there is one member here who would do so. Any member who did, I suggest, would be entirely lacking in his duty to that part of Western Australia.

As far as I am concerned, very much the same arguments apply to a number of the suggestions that have been made with regard to the closure of one of these so-called uneconomic lines. I submit that the only proposition that we ought to inquire into is one that is made in regard to individual routes supported by facts and figures which take into consideration both present and future prospects, and all the other details referred to very briefly by me in regard to the Bonnie Rock line.

When those propositions are brought before us individually, with all the necessary data along the lines I suggest, and as no lines can be closed without the assent of Parliament, then it might be time for us to examine them individually and ascertain what is the right thing to do in the interests of all concerned; because it is easy enough to say, "We will do this or that in the interests of the State." But the State, after all, is made up of its people and, therefore, when we talk about doing things in the interest of the State, we should be doing them in the interests of the people of the State—not one section, but all of them.

So the problem is one of considerable magnitude. I have not yet seen what I consider to be a complete appreciation of the position in regard to any railway line in Western Australia, and without that complete appreciation in respect of individual lines, I am not prepared to tackle this problem of inquiry. It might be that, both in regard to the railway system, the State Shipping Service and perhaps other State instrumentalities, an inquiry into the possibilities of obtaining greater efficiency and a better return for expenditure, would be worth while.

I fully appreciate that it is extremely difficult for any Minister of the Crown to be able to check the ramifications of these very substantial departments in any detail at all. Indeed, it is for the departmental heads to do so themselves because in almost all instances they come under the headings I have been discussing of activities of considerable magnitude in a far-flung area, and in many cases in very difficult circumstances. It is extremely hard to separate the losses and apparent inefficiencies that are caused by isolation, sparsity of population and many other considerations of that kind—those that are occasioned by actual weakness, either in the management or in the lower levels of the system. I do not lack appreciation of these difficulties because I know they exist, especially in a country of this size.

Dealing for a moment with the railways, what a proposition we would have if we were to close 2,000 miles of the railways. Even then we would have about 250 persons to the mile of line. The Minister can correct me if I am wrong but at present I think it is about 140 persons per mile. Has anybody yet succeeded in making a profitable venture of railways under such a proposition with 250 persons to the mile of

line? If I understand the position, Great Britain has no less than 1,100 persons to the mile of line and the United States nearer 2,000. I do not know that in either of these places the railways systems are profitable at this juncture. What are our prospects with a rate of 140 persons to the mile? If we were to close half of them, we would only have 250 persons to the mile.

Mr. Moir: The railway system in New South Wales with a much denser population shows a heavier loss.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I am going along those lines. What prospects have we, when we consider the position in other countries with eight times the population to the mile of railway line, and in many cases with development of a much greater character than we have, where the railways are losing or are not making a profit? What prospects have we of dealing with this question and trying to have a so-called economic railway? I do not know how that position could be overcome. We have a country with vast distances, which is capable of tremendous production. Our best course is to increase substantially the production as much as possible, minimise the cost of running this undertaking to the best of our ability, and that needs application by the management from the top to the bottom.

The Minister for Native Welfare: Don't you think that road transport would be run as economically as the railways?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: As far as individual road transport systems go, they probably run their business more efficiently than the railways, but there again I do not think they have a task of the same magnitude.

Mr. Moir: They do not have to make tracks.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I do not think it is easy to make comparisons. I do not want it to be supposed that I was making a comparison between those two systems, because I was not. Road transport definitely has its uses. I have recently obtained some information from New Zealand which I have not yet had the opportunity of examining closely enough to make any lengthy reference to it in the House, although I propose to do it as soon as I can. That indicates that road transport facilities there have been liberalised and less restrictions have been placed on road transport. That has been done by the Government of New Zealand, which is also responsible for the New Zealand railway system.

While it appears from that part of the subject matter I have been able to read of it, they are unable to give an appreciation of exactly what has been the result of this liberalisation, it does not appear from the correspondence that it has had a detrimental effect upon the railways as yet. So there is another line of inquiry

which the Government might take in hand to ascertain what has been done there in regard to liberalising the opportunities for road transport. There is no question but that some of our restrictions today are rather foolish, as the member for Roe pointed out a few days ago when discussing this very motion.

I think that a combination of road and rail transport properly conceived, which apparently was the aim in New Zealand, properly co-ordinated and without the petty and in some cases annoying restrictions imposed upon people with very little return to the railways in the net result, would be a much better proposition than considering the proposition that is set out in this motion. While I am not by any means ready to support this motion, I must again commend the member for Blackwood if only for giving us an opportunity to express a few views on this subject.

MR. HALL (Albany) [8.18]: I desire to oppose the motion. Nevertheless, the member for Blackwood has put forward something worth while. In my remarks at the opening of Parliament, I mentioned that we have only bituminised the cart tracks of our forefathers, and I am still of that opinion. If an attempt were made to compete with the railways we would have to outlay the finance and build highways suitable for that purpose. As one member of the Country Party mentioned in regard to the spur lines, we have to be sure that we can offer centres the same service as is provided by the railways. Settlers there have to be protected just as much as the people in the cities. Before doing away with railway lines, we should exercise some commonsense and wait till the Transport Board has looked into the matter and cleared up what rails are to be eliminated and what are to be left.

Mr. Nalder: We might be waiting a long time.

Hon. D. Brand: The Transport Board would have an unbiased finding!

Mr. HALL: It has already started an inquiry.

The Minister for Transport: It has actually finished the job and the recommendation is in the hands of the Government. The Government has made a decision.

Mr. HALL: We should look into the costs and check them very carefully before we eliminate the spur lines which serve the people who live in the outback. We would have to check the finances to find out whether a line was an asset or a liability. I am also of the opinion that we should look to these spur lines and not eliminate them because they do not pay.

Perhaps if we looked very closely at some of our refreshment rooms we would find that they are not paying. A question was asked in another place recently

regarding refreshment rooms making losses. Perhaps this could be overcome by the introduction of a buffet service in a corridor car by the removal of two berths in one compartment, which would provide a servery. This would eliminate the cost of refreshment rooms and the overhead cost of a house for the attendant, and would represent an almost immediate saving without affecting the haulage of the railways.

Also, before we destroy our spur lines, consideration should be given to reducing our grades. If we are going to build highways, we should be sure that those highways would be more efficient than if we reduced, our grades and decreased haulage. We would cart at reduced costs and this would help our railway finances. This action would strike immediately at the lower income group of the railway lines.

MR. ACKLAND (Moore) [8.22]: I do not intend to take up much of the time of the House; in fact, originally I did not intend to take any part in the debate. I find myself very much in the same position as the Leader of the Country Party and cannot approach this matter with any real enthusiasm. At the same time, I am not disposed to oppose the motion, because I feel the member for Blackwood, in introducing it, was prompted by rather high motives and a desire to be helpful. But I do feel he could easily find himself in the position of pulling a lot of chestnuts out of the fire and he could be duplicating—I was going to use the word usurping—the functions of those who are more qualified than lay members of this House to weigh this matter correctly.

My real reason for rising to my feet was because of the contributions made by one or two members on the opposite side of the House. I would like to point out to them that much the same conditions as those of a run-down railway system exist in the coalmining industry. Today we find Collie and the coalmines languishing. We find that people are turning their attention to alternative fuels. It is done I believe—

Mr. May: Do you think it is wise?

Mr. ACKLAND: —mostly as a result of the action of the miners themselves and ever-increasing costs of producing the coal. Costs have increased to such an extent that it pays many people to use some alternative fuel in their businesses. The same applies to the railways. We hear they are showing a deficit of £6,000,000.

It is true that, under present conditions, many of these lines are not contributing a reasonable amount of revenue as compared with the cost of maintaining and operating them. But I am convinced that if the railway unions themselves realised they had a guernsey and that they had a job to do in trying to make the railways pay, the position would not be nearly as bad as it is. I would be very sorry indeed to see many of the branch lines closed.

Mr. May: They have been very good to the farmer.

Mr. ACKLAND: It would be a retrograde step. I believe that our production can be increased very considerably in Western Australia, and I also think those who are paying the freights for things to be transported by the railways are doing their share. We find an increasing production in every primary-producing industry in Western Australia, whether it be mining, wheat, wool or anything else. We discover that, with better methods—particularly in the industries in which I am vitally interested—production averages have increased considerably. Wool production is going up and still can go up. But the Railway Department itself, from the commissioners down to the lowest-paid man, is not pulling its weight; and if railway lines have to be removed, I feel that the department will be more responsible for this position than any other section of the community.

So whilst not being prepared to oppose this motion moved by the member for Blackwood, I feel that in asking for a select committee to be appointed he has stuck his head out quite a long way. I remember being on a committee which worked very diligently for a long time to make inquiries into the Railway Department and its activities. I found that the committee's findings which were suitable to those in authority at the time were accepted, and the committee was made responsible for their acceptance.

Mr. Bovell: I was a member of that committee.

Mr. ACKLAND: The other recommendations, which were not acceptable, were ignored completely; and I am inclined to think the member for Blackwood would find himself in a somewhat similar position. Without having any enthusiasm whatever for this motion, I do not intend to oppose it.

MR. OWEN (Darling Range) [8.38]: Like the previous speaker, I cannot work up a great deal of enthusiasm about this motion. It is admitted that the problem of uneconomic railway lines is a big one. It is a problem which is facing us in all sections of our railways and needs considerable thought. I feel the Government departments could handle the matters raised in the first three paragraphs of the motion. However, I feel that paragraph (d) which reads—

the types of vehicles and equipment and operating conditions best suited to the several requirements of giving a satisfactory service to the area likely to be affected;

is one about which quite a lot could be done in the event of its being found necessary or desirable to close further uneconomic railway lines. It is a fact that in the past six years some three sections of

railway line have been closed in the Darling Range electorate. Of these, two have been taken up; but whilst the service on the third has been suspended for a number of years, the permanent way is still in position. The people affected by the suspension are by no means satisfied with the service they are now getting by means of road buses and road goods services.

Although the service has been suspended for about three years, it was only recently that the residents in that area sought a deputation to the Government. They first asked to place their case before the Premier and then the Minister for Transport, and they finished up before the Transport Board, in an endeavour to get the railway system restored. The deputation was told that it was definitely uneconomic; that the losses had been considerable.

I think it was shown that in the last three years of operation by the service the figures were, in the first of the three years: operating expenses, £31,452; and earnings, a mere £7,320, which was less than 25 per cent. The following year the operating expenses were £41,457, and the earnings had receded to £6,296. In the following and final year of operation, the operating expenses rose to £43,190 and the earnings fell to £5,004.

It must be remembered, however, that during the last part of the final term mentioned, the service had been temporarily suspended because of strikes. The figures for that year, therefore, are not a true indication of the earnings of that line. I am sure that because the line has been closed, the operating expenses of over £40,000 have not been altogether saved to the department. Certainly it has not earned the £5,000 or £6,000 which it earned during the year 1952-53.

Mr. Nalder: What would be the main item that would be carted?

Mr. OWEN: During these years the operations were practically confined to passenger transport because the area from Bellevue to Mundaring—and even as far as Mount Helena where that line rejoins the main line—was served by the railway passenger service with, I think, one or two goods trains per week; it was also served by a railway road bus service; by a railway goods service; by the Beam Transport Service; and also, of course, by a number of carriers operating in the district. So, it was practically impossible for any one section of those services to pay its way.

But the point I make is that, although the earnings of between £5,000 and £6,000 were denied the department after the service was discontinued, so were many more thousand pounds of passenger fares which those passengers would have paid to be transported from Midland Junction to Perth. It can be seen, therefore, that because of the system of bookkeeping

practised by the Railway Department, by which the proportion of revenue earned by transporting goods and passengers over a particular section is credited to that particular section, if the railway is closed or the services are suspended, then possibly twice that amount of revenue is lost to the short section between Bellevue and Perth. This would apply generally over any other section.

So if we start from the far-flung lines which operate in the district represented by the member for Murchison, and we progressively close them, then the section of line adjacent to the section being closed will not pay its way. We would probably finish up by having only the metropolitan service left, and that certainly would not pay its way. It would be a progressively retrograde step to start closing our railway lines even if the sections concerned did not pay their way.

Getting back to this particular section of the railways in the hills, it was stated by the deputation at which members of the Railway Department were present, that there was sufficient rollingstock. I have before me a letter from a resident of the hills area who was stating a case for the reinstatement of that service. Dealing with the deputation he said—

Take first the question of rollingstock. Mr. Earnshaw stated that the department simply had not got any. Well that was a surprising statement. The introduction of diesel rail cars both on country and metropolitan lines and the number of bus services to distant country districts must have released from traffic very many coaches which were in serviceable condition. Admittedly many of them have been in use for 50 or 60 years but they are so well constructed and have been so well maintained that to the average passenger at least they look good enough for another 50 or 60 years.

They were certainly much more comfortable to ride in than are many of the present buses. The writer goes on to say—

If the department could be persuaded that sufficient of such coaches could be found no doubt they would then say, "what about . . . to pull them?" Well, when the whole of the suburban trains were pulled by steam, there were enough engines to do the Mundaring journey as well and although the old N class seems to have disappeared one would think that with the advent of diesels on the suburban line there should be enough of the D, DS, Dd, and Dm classes to provide what would be needed for our service. There are, I believe, twenty of the two latter classes all under fifteen years old. It is my firm belief that if it were a matter of political expediency or if for any

other reason it were deemed necessary, the service to Mundaring could be resumed within two days, subject of course to the track being in order.

Coming back to the condition of the permanent way. One would gather from the remarks of railway officials that apart from the section Bellevue to Boya which is maintained as a private siding, no money was being spent on the maintenance of the rest of the line. Well I can say that since the trains were withdrawn, in two places to my knowledge, drains to carry creek waters underneath high embankments have been renewed.

Further on he says—

These two jobs alone must have cost some thousands of pounds. In addition as I have recently learnt the line is patrolled every Thursday and I am also informed that the patrol trolley has been seen on a Tuesday.

It seems that although this line has been out of service for a few years, the department has not saved a great amount of money by closing it because, as has been pointed out, there is still a certain amount of maintenance being carried on and a lot of revenue being lost on the Midland Junction-Perth section, owing to the closure. I believe that if this service were reintroduced and allowed to function on its own, not in competition with a railway passenger and goods service, it would pay quite a lot more revenue than it did in the years prior to its closure. I feel that the whole question of closing this line should be inquired into, as there are many residents of the areas affected who are dissatisfied with the present road service and consider it not nearly as good as the old rail service.

The Minister for Native Welfare: And they are charging higher fares.

Mr. OWEN: That is so. Further, the present road service is not paying its way, and I am afraid that shortly the position will be thrown into the melting pot again, as the bus proprietors will find it uneconomic to carry on. I know that the transport authorities are inquiring into the matter in an endeavour to solve the problems of both passenger and goods transport, particularly in the metropolitan area, but also in the country districts, and they have a big job ahead of them.

Although I feel that parts of the motion put forward by the member for Blackwood are superfluous, I believe it has served a useful purpose in ventilating the many matters raised in the course of debate, and I hope that those questions will be considered during the inquiry which is taking place. If the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Railways go thoroughly into the points I have mentioned I feel sure they will give consideration to reopening that line.

It was said that a diesel service on that line would cost up to £250,000, which is a lot of money; and although the initial capital cost of a road service would not be so high, I feel that the useful life of the buses would not be so long as that of railway diesels; and if the cost were spread over the period of useful operation, I do not think there would be a great deal of difference between the cost of a diesel rail service and the cost of a diesel road service.

I hope the authorities inquiring into the question will take these matters into consideration before deciding on the future of those many sections of railway which are at present classed as uneconomic.

MR. RODOREDA (Pilbara) [8.45]: I was keenly interested in the speech of the Leader of the Country Party, as he was one of the few who dealt with the motion. The member for Blackwood must feel gratified at the debate which has taken place on his motion, but I doubt whether he for one moment has expected it to be carried. I intend to vote against the motion and I can see the member for Murchison and the member for Kalgoorlie looking very pleased, and I hope that before I have finished neither of those two members will burst a blood vessel.

I am opposed to the motion on the ground that all the information asked for is already available. As regards the establishment of an experimental test road, there are already thousands of miles of road in this country carrying motor transport, so there is no need to inquire into that or into a suitable length of road. I can supply a suitable length of road in my electorate, if it is required.

The next matter sought to be inquired into is the type of authority considered most suitable for the conduct of such an experiment and research into related questions. Once again, all the information is available, and that applies also to the types of vehicle and equipment and the operating conditions best suited to the several requirements of giving a satisfactory service and so on. All that information is available and has already been collated, I believe, as it should be before any question of closing railway lines is considered by this House. That information should be closely inquired into and collated.

I cannot see my way clear to vote for the motion. I am opposed in principle to select committees, as I do not think they are worth the time and money spent on them. Since I have been in Parliament, practically no recommendations of any select committee have been implemented by either Government, except in the case of a select committee on some special Bill. Select committees to inquire into nebulous matters of this type are totally ineffectual. The debate has developed into a discussion on the closing of railway lines; and as

most other speakers have pursued that course, I think I would be granted equal liberty to do so.

First of all, I agree with the Leader of the Country Party when he says that the time to consider the closing of any line is when a definite proposal is brought to this House by a Government or a Minister. The facts and figures will be given to us then and, as the Leader of the Country Party said, we can treat each case on its merits. I ask members: What is the alternative if we do not seriously consider and take action in respect to the closing of some of our railway lines? There is only one alternative that I can see, and that is to pour more countless millions of loan moneys into the railways and lose more and more as each year goes by.

The Minister for Transport: Railways which most people do not want to use.

Mr. RODOREDA: We have already written off £12,000,000 and the interest—

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: I did not hear the member for Murchison say "Hear, hear."

Mr. RODOREDA: —on that is still payable by the taxpayers. But the deficits on the railways would be more than £6,500,000 if the true story were told. What is the alternative? Are we going to keep on losing £6,000,000, £8,000,000 or even £9,000,000 per annum and not put an end to it? Why, the impact of this £6,000,000 is astonishing! It is fantastic to think that we, in our sane senses, could consider keeping a system that gives us that return.

In a few years we will have to get away from ordinary figures and use light years or something of that nature to define the deficit of the railways. While they are using up all this loan money, carrying interest all the time, it is money that we have not available to the Government to use for the building of hospitals, schools and other necessities of life. The member for Kalgoorlie referred to the cost of hospitals.

Mr. Nalder: A lot of the country people have to contribute, too.

Mr. RODOREDA: There is no alternative to hospitals. We must have hospitals but we do not necessarily need railways.

Mr. O'Brien: Yes, we do.

Mr. RODOREDA: There is no need for the member for Murchison to burst a blood vessel, because I have not started yet. I must cross swords with the Leader of the Opposition—

Mr. Bovell: What has the Leader of the Opposition to do with it?

Mr. RODOREDA: I apologise to the Leader of the Opposition. I meant the Leader of the Country Party. He quoted the State Shipping Service and drew an analogy between the railways and the State Shipping Service. I cannot agree

with what he had to say in that regard because there is no alternative to the State Shipping Service but there is to the railways. Now we have a modern form of transport.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Did you read my notes? I was going to say that.

Mr. RODOREDA: I am sorry I pinched the hon. member's thunder. He will have a chance to speak on the Railway Estimates. As I said, there is no alternative to the State Shipping Service, and the Leader of the Country Party was not quite in order in making that comparison.

Hon. A. F. Watts: They both lose money.

Mr. RODOREDA: But there is an alternative to one but not to the other. Perhaps the Leader of the Country Party will admit that. No one is happy with the losses of the State Shipping Service.

Hon. A. F. Watts: I think there is an alternative, but not altogether.

Mr. RODOREDA: There is no practical alternative.

Hon. A. F. Watts: In regard to the railways.

Mr. RODOREDA: There is an alternative to the railways, yes. We have modern transport.

Mr. Bovell: Modern aircraft could be an alternative to the State Shipping Service.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: No.

Mr. RODOREDA: If members want the taxpayers of this country to pay £6,000,000 into a form of transport for which there is an alternative, to my way of thinking it is strange reasoning.

Hon. A. F. Watts: The expenditure required to make road transport function properly, as was evidenced by the period when road transport was carrying—

Mr. RODOREDA: Shall I sit down and let the hon. member have a go?

Mr. Nalder: You asked a question and you are entitled to a reply.

Mr. RODOREDA: We have to give serious consideration to that aspect of the problem. I would like briefly to trace the history of the railways from the time they were first built. We have a grid system of railways because in most of the country areas in those days the only alternative method of transport was by wagons and horses. As a result, the railway lines were built not more than 30 miles apart, if it was practicable to do so. The limit of transport in those days was supposed to be 15 miles, and it took most of the day to do that journey and back again. That is the reason why we have so many railway lines parallel to each other in this country and not more than 30 or 40 miles apart.

But the position has changed altogether since then and no one would suggest that nowadays it is impossible to cart to a rail-head which is more than 15 miles away. That has been recognised by respective Governments ever since 1933 when I first became a member of Parliament. I would like members to bear with me while I quote from the 1933 Hansard with respect to a couple of railways which the Labour Government proposed to construct and brought Bills to this House for that purpose.

Mr. Roberts: Where was the member for Kalgoorlie then?

Mr. RODOREDA: He was only a glint in his father's eye! I would like to quote from the debate that took place in this Assembly on the 15th August, 1933, on a Bill for a proposed railway line from Yuna to Dartmoor; that is a railway north of Geraldton. The quotation is from p. 336 of Hansard of that year, and I said—

It is not the actual railway which the people in question require, but transport facilities at about the same cost as a railway would offer. We have no assurance from the Minister—and I doubt whether he has power to give one—that motor competition with this proposed line will be prevented.

There was no Transport Board in those days.

As has already been said, it is the greatest certainty in the world that motor competition will obtain alongside the proposed railway. I suggest to the Government that that aspect of the situation be looked into. The Minister said that when no railways were available, motor freights were high. However, there is such a thing as calling tenders. If the Government did not think that the tenders received were low enough, what would be wrong with the Government themselves giving the district a twelve months' trial with motor traffic? That would afford the district a chance to prove itself. When it had proved itself, and had grown too big to be handled by motor transport, Parliament might well be asked to give consideration to the provision of railway facilities.

That was in 1933, when motor transport was at the stage where it had just got away from solid-tyred trucks. This, of course, had increased its efficiency and, as an aside, the cost of motor transport in the North-West today is half what it was 30 years ago. In 1925 when the trucks first started and took over from the camel teams in the North-West the cost was 1s. per ton per mile each way. Now the transport in the North-West is costing 6d. per ton per mile each way—just half what it was 30 years ago—and I hate to think by how much railway freights have increased since those days!

It is rather interesting to see the division lists in regard to that proposed railway in 1933. The Bill was carried but, of course, the railway was never built. On that division the ayes numbered 29 and the noes 10, and included in the 10 who voted against the Government Railway Bill were "Mr. Tonkin, Mr. Rodoreda, Mr. Sleeman and Mr. Hawke." Just as an aside, I would like to see the reaction of Ministers on the front bench now if members on the back cross-benches voted against Government measures! However, we live and learn.

There was another Bill which provided for the building of a railway from Southern Cross southwards, which was brought down the same year and was passed by the House; but the railway was never built. The Government had more sense than to build a railway where there were only a few farmers gathered together and which would only incur more railway losses. The only railway that was built since those days was the line to Big Bell, which may have been justified; but I doubt it.

There has been a sufficient test made to prove that motor traffic is able to service a district completely and without subsidy. Members will recall that there used to be a railway from Port Hedland to Marble Bar. I will never forget it, because on the last train to be run on that line my effigy was placed on the front of the engine as the M.L.A. who gave the railway away. But, in fact, the effigy of the Leader of the Opposition should have been there instead of mine.

The same predictions that were made then, concerning what would occur if the railway were pulled up, have been made subsequently in this House. At that time many members said that the people in the district would not be able to survive; that the babies would die, the women would starve, and nothing would be able to be done to get the people out of their troubles once the railway was pulled up. However, there is not one person in that district today who would care to see the railway service put into operation again.

Mr. O'Brien: That is not what I heard!

Mr. RODOREDA: When we were discussing the Bill brought down to pull up that line, I had a member sitting alongside me who knew even less about it than the member for Murchison. It was not what the hon. member heard! There is more activity in that country now than ever there was when the railway was operating there. I do not say that it would not have happened had the railway remained there, but that is a fact. The people are happy because they get a service twice a day, and sometimes more often than that; whereas the railway provided a service only once in every two or three weeks. Often, before the ships leave Port Hedland, the perishables that have been discharged from their holds are in Marble Bar.

An important point, too, is that no subsidy is paid on that road transport. I was responsible for persuading the Transport Board not to give a franchise to one contractor to run the road transport service, but to leave it open to all and sundry and to pay no subsidy. That system has proved to be very satisfactory. It is run at no greater cost than that which would have been involved with the conduct of a railway service, because railway freights have increased considerably over the last few years.

Mr. Nalder: Are they Government-owned trucks?

Mr. RODOREDA: No, privately-owned trucks. It is open to anybody to transport goods along that road, but no subsidy is paid. All of the districts in the North have been developed without railways, and no subsidy has been paid to any road transport contractor. Wittenoom Gorge, which is a tremendous project, has been developed without railways, without a sealed road, and without a road subsidy. People told me that what has been achieved there could not be done, but it has been done. Nowadays the road transport trucks are carrying out 250 tons of asbestos fibre per week, and nearly a similar quantity of goods is being transported into Wittenoom Gorge.

Therefore it is ridiculous to say that if a railway line is pulled up the people in the surrounding districts will be jeopardised. Such a statement is not true. There is another factor, and that is that motor transport will steadily become more and more efficient. So whilst I cannot agree to support this motion, because I do not think it will achieve any good or bring any more facts to light, I am glad that the member for Blackwood has introduced it.

There are one or two other matters that I must deal with. Both the Leader of the Country Party and the member for Darling Range made some comments about the accounting system of the railways and queried the fact that only a portion of the freight on a branch line was credited to that line. What else could be done? I cannot see that there is anything unfair in that system, because the main line would handle the same quantity of goods if they were brought in by a wheelbarrow.

Mr. Owen: Not in the case I mentioned.

Mr. RODOREDA: The goods would be double-handled at some stage or another. If the goods are brought in over a distance of 50 or 60 miles to the rail junction, they still have to be transferred from the motor-truck into the rail-truck. I do not see any difficulty involved there. I fail to see how any other accounting system could be devised. What else could be done? Would the hon. member credit half the freight carried on the main line, or one-tenth of it, or one fifth of it, or what would be

done? Obviously the branch line has to be credited with its mileage proportion of freight charges and nothing more.

It was stated by the member for Moore that the railway unions are responsible for the losses on the railways. That is the queer type of thinking indulged in by the member for Moore in every debate that takes place in this House.

Mr. Ackland: You know that that is a mis-statement.

Mr. RODOREDA: Well, what did the member for Moore say?

Mr. Ackland: I said that they had to wear a guernsey and were obliged to pull their weight.

Mr. RODOREDA: The member for Moore said that the railway unions were responsible for the railway losses.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: No; he did not say that.

Mr. RODOREDA: That is how an argument starts, so I will by-pass that. The member for Moore then went on to say that we want more production to make our railways pay. I admit that that is quite true, provided the increased production results in the freight charges involved being paid. The railways in this State will never pay, and the Leader of the Country Party told us why. The railways will never pay because of the small population per railway mile in this State, and also because the more the railways carry, the more they lose. That is irrefutable. If the freights that should be charged are not received by the railways, then if 1,000 tons are being carried, the further they are carried the more the railways will lose. Unless the population along the railway routes is increased, unless there is a tremendous boost in production, and unless we discontinue carrying wheat and super for practically nothing, the railways will never be made to pay.

No matter what the railway unions do it will not affect the situation to any great extent. I say the same in regard to the State Shipping Service. As long as the freight charges imposed are less than what it costs to carry the goods per ton, no railway commissioner and no manager of the State Shipping Service will make a State transport system pay.

HON. SIR ROSS McLARTY (Murray) [9.10]: I want to say only a few words on this motion because later in the session I hope to say a good deal in regard to the railway set-up generally. I think the member for Pilbara has made what I would term a practical approach to this particular motion, and I agree with a good deal of what he has said. I do not agree with him, however, when he says that all select committees appointed from this House are of no value, and that no good has ever come from them. I would remind the hon. member that I have served on a few myself.

Mr. Rodoreda: And what good came from them?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I remember serving on a select committee to inquire into vermin and noxious weeds, and I am sure some good came out of that.

Mr. Rodoreda: Not one recommendation was put into effect.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I can assure the hon. member that quite a number of recommendations were put into effect, and they proved of great benefit to the country. I think the member for Blackwood is to be commended for the manner in which he has presented this motion to the House. It must be evident to all members that he has given considerable thought to the matter. Some members have approached it from the angle and belief that it deals with the pulling up of certain railway lines; but of course that is not so, as the member for Blackwood clearly indicated when he introduced the motion.

I was interested to hear the Minister for Transport say tonight that the Government had given consideration to the matters, I understand, contained in this motion—and others I suppose—and that Cabinet had come to a decision. I take it therefore that it is a firm decision, and in the near future we will all be very interested indeed to know what the policy of the Government will be in regard to the railways.

The Minister for Transport: I said a decision on the inter-departmental committee's report; and not necessarily on the motion.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I understand that; but the Government has reached a decision on this inter-departmental committee's report which will have considerable effect on railway policy in the future.

What the member for Pilbara said is true: we cannot stop progress in any direction. It does not matter where it lies—whether it be in our looking towards atomic power, automation or any other future moves that may take place. Of course, we know only too well that rapid changes are taking place in connection with transport. As the member for Pilbara pointed out, not so many years ago the railways were the sole means of transport, and those who wanted to be conveyed from one place to another did not give consideration to any means of transport other than the railways. But road transport has improved considerably and is continuing to do so.

It cannot be denied that primary producers can obtain very much more efficient service in many instances from road transport than they can from rail transport. If they were compelled to use rail transport and were not permitted to use road transport, I am sure it would be retrogressive; and of course the primary

producers concerned would not only be losers in many cases, but they would be very heavy losers.

As one who held a responsible position in a Government, I am not unmindful of the fact that we do owe an enormous capital sum on the railways on which interest has to be paid. It presents a very serious problem to the Government indeed. Accordingly I am prepared to take a realistic view of the position. I know that whatever measures may have to be taken relative to railway policy in the future may not be palatable to many people; and we cannot expect them to be. We cannot continue to lose millions of pounds a year on a railway deficit.

This year it was £6,000,000, with no guarantee at all that in the future the losses will not be considerably greater. Is it only the user of the railways that has to bear this loss? Of course it is not! But the users of the railways have to bear their share of it. All these losses will have to be made good from one direction or another, and that is a fact we must face up to. I say again that although the action that will have to be taken will probably be unpalatable to a large number of people, nevertheless the facts will have to be faced.

We hear members saying, "You must not pull up this line"; or, "You must not pull up that one." It has been an unfortunate circumstance with our railways—and I found that to be so when I was in office—that a parochial attitude generally intrudes itself into these matters in a very large way. When it has been suggested in the past that some particular railway line should be discontinued, the member for the district concerned—and I am not thinking of any particular member at present—has offered most vigorous opposition to it, and has whipped up opposition to the proposal in the district concerned.

When the member for Blackwood introduced this motion, or perhaps when he was speaking on the Railway Estimates, he gave the earnings and the costs of maintaining certain of our railways. The costs in relation to some of the earnings were fantastic. I readily admit that where people have gone out into certain districts knowing that they would be served by a railway, they cannot be abandoned. I remember that on one occasion when I was giving consideration to the continuance or discontinuance of a certain railway line, it was represented to me that it would be much cheaper to buy the settlers out and transfer them to some other district than to continue to run the line.

Coming to this position where certain railways might have to be discontinued and agreeing that other forms of transport would have to take their place, I cannot help thinking that a satisfactory form of transport can be arranged equal

in efficiency to the railway service that is now provided. I also agree that that service should not be provided at a greater cost than that at which the railway service is provided. When one takes into consideration the enormous cost of maintaining those tracks which, in some cases, involves the construction of almost a new track, the position from a financial point of view becomes an impossible one.

The Minister for Transport: The position is that essential rehabilitation of the railways will cost more than the entire capital outlay of our railways since they were put down.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The statement of the Minister should make an impression on every member of this House. Any member who has the slightest regard for the finances of the State must be very greatly struck by the information just given to us by the Minister. I heard it said tonight that if these lines are left as they are, in time there will be an increased population in the State to be served. Let us assume that is correct—and it probably is. But is there any guarantee at all that when that comes about, greater use will be made of the railways? We have an important road transport system which often is more efficient and less costly than the railways. No doubt the predicted increase in population will make use of the improved road transport system if it suits them.

As was pointed out by the member for Blackwood, more can be done about co-ordinating road and rail transport. Much can be done in that direction. Another thing in regard to the capital cost of road transport—and here the Deputy Premier might have something to say, knowing that the petrol tax allocations have been fully utilised—where roads have to be provided to replace railway lines, a considerable proportion of the cost would be borne by the petrol tax. So we would not be involved in capital outlay on which interest would have to be met.

The Minister for Transport: In many cases if traffic is small in volume, no road need be provided and no additional expense would be involved.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Minister is hardly correct. It does not matter even if there is a small volume of traffic on the road, there is still some cost in maintenance.

The Minister for Transport: There is one length of railway line which only carries six tons of goods per day. What additional cost would that be on the road serving that centre if the goods were transported by road?

Hon. D. Brand: The Government must have the goodwill of the people in overcoming these problems. It will have to give the people an alternative form of transport.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I am not supporting the continuation of a railway line that carries six tons of goods a day when road transport can very easily cope with that freight.

The Minister for Transport: A wheelbarrow would be sufficient as an alternative!

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I said that in the construction of roads, the payment of a considerable proportion of the costs would be made through the petrol tax and the State would be relieved of a great financial burden. The member for Boulder said something about the losses suffered by the railways in New South Wales. We are aware of that, but we cannot formulate a railway policy for this State on what is happening in New South Wales. If we did we would be in difficulty.

Perhaps this is not the time for me to say this: I think we have already reached the stage in regard to certain action that has to be taken, because the Grants Commission contends that we are not receiving so much from individual undertakings as compared with the standard of the other States. We cannot continue along this line. We have just about reached saturation point. I am impressed when I hear of what the New South Wales railways are losing, but I am alarmed about the financial set-up of the railways and its relationship to the Grants Commission, and the demands made by that commission on the claimant States to reach the same financial standard of the other States.

The Leader of the Country Party referred to shipping in the North-West and to the very heavy losses that are suffered by the State Shipping Service. He went on to say that was the reason why certain railway lines should not be discontinued. The member for Pilbara is perfectly correct in saying that the conditions are not comparable. What he said was this: There is no alternative practical means of transport for the North, whereas there is an alternative for the centres lower South.

Mr. May: This is still linked with the development of the State. Do you think we would still continue to develop the State without the railways?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Do not let the member for Collie get the impression that I want railway lines here, there and everywhere to be pulled up without providing any other form of transport, or that I want any railway line to be pulled up because it is not paying.

Mr. May: Where would the North-West be without ships?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: the North-West has no other practical means of transport. It relies almost solely on shipping, particularly the furthestmost northern part. That position will remain unchanged for a long time.

Mr. May: It means that we have to stand the cost of development.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: That is true. That is the only adequate means of transport for the North-West and we have to stand the cost of development. This should be viewed from a national outlook; but of course the national outlook should also apply to the railways, particularly the lines in the sparsely populated parts of the State. I am supporting this motion. The member for Blackwood spoke to me at considerable length about introducing it. He had this matter in mind for some time and considered it was a practicable proposition.

When he says there are already roads in different parts of the state which can be regarded as test roads, the member for Pilbara is correct. In other parts of the State that might not be so. The suggestion of the member for Blackwood that there should be test roads of a certain length was a practicable one and has much to commend it. I am glad this motion has aroused considerable interest. We have heard from the debate on the second reading some practicable proposals. In considering the whole position of railway finances, members should not be guided by an entirely parochial attitude. They should look at this problem from the broad aspect and from the State's point of view. I think any of us will admit that present conditions in regard to the railways cannot continue indefinitely; in fact they cannot continue much longer, and the sooner we take a practical approach to this matter and get down to hard facts the better it will be for the State. I support the motion.

MR. JAMIESON (Beeloo) [9.31]: In opposing this motion, I would like to say that I can see no good rising from the provision of a test road because, firstly, wherever this test road is constructed possibly conditions would not be similar to some other conditions and, secondly, the amount of freight likely to be hauled over such a particular road could be, with reasonable ease, computed from figures available from the railways and other sources in a given district. That in essence is my main reason for opposing this motion, but I feel the debate has taken a turn in regard to references made by the member for Moore, by way of interjection, when he denied certain things.

Mr. Ackland: I have just read that speech and there is not a word of what you and the member for Pilbara said in it.

Mr. JAMIESON: He made reference to union members and said they are not pulling their weight and went on to make reference to the Collie coalminers not pulling their weight. Then he tied this up with the railway difficulties that exist today. He further went on to try to malign every worker in the railways from the commissioners down to the lowliest man

on the permanent way. However, many of the people he represents are not as lily-white as he makes out, and he is a party to their activities in many ways.

Mr. Ackland: More misrepresentation!

Mr. JAMIESON: I draw attention to the heading in last night's "Daily News"—"Railways Concerned About Illegal Road Haulage". It was pointed out to the Grants Commission that in the last 12 months there had been 640 convictions recorded and the loss of freight revenue involved was £15,000. The report went on to say that the department was also concerned about road haulage of superphosphate and referred also to the fact that while that number of offenders had been caught, too many were not. In the main, it is the rural people who are served by the railways in this State to a great extent.

For my part, I do not think that booting one type of person is the way to attack a measure in this House, as is so often done by the member for Moore. It is not a fit and proper approach to this question, which is, in essence, what we can do to improve the position. I believe the member for Blackwood was quite earnest when he put forward his proposition. Our views differ widely, but I do not know whether anything would be achieved by such a move.

However, I would say that the workers on the railways play their part. Do not let the member for Moore forget that point when he gets on his feet in this House. He is not back 300 years ago as lord of the manor with so many serfs to put his boots into. It is high time he remembered that and got down from his high horse and approached subjects before the House in the manner in which they should be approached by a person representing rural people.

MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood—in reply) [9.35]: I would like to thank all members who have participated in this debate. The question as to whether the motion is passed or not is now, in view of the information brought forth during the debate, done away with. Further, I feel the objective to a great extent has been achieved with this debate which has been in the nature of a curtain raiser to what may take place in a few weeks' time. I would suggest that members endeavour to make a completely objective approach to this question of transport. If we are going to allow the intrusion of party political aspects into this question we will be failing the State as a whole.

The manner in which it should be approached or the standard adopted has been fairly well set out in a statement by Sir John Elliot, who is a distinguished British expert, in his report on Victorian transport. He says—

If the people as a whole are ignorant of the essential facts about their transport system, or are hostile to it

(and the one situation will almost certainly beget the other), goodwill becomes impossible and the atmosphere highly unsuitable for the objective approach without which no worthwhile solutions can be hoped for. In such breeding-grounds, selfish propaganda and political opportunism flourish, and the transport system, buffeted about in the political arena, loses any cohesion it may have had, with the inevitable result that solutions most likely to operate in the public interest over the years are pushed further away, while the transport organisations themselves lack the financial refreshment which is so essential if they are to keep abreast of their task, and dissipate what resources they have in wasteful competition and unco-ordinated effort. No one really gains, and in the long run, the public is the loser.

It would seem as a result of the report of the sittings of the Grants Commission in this State which appeared in this morning's issue of "The West Australian" that possibly some of the predictions I made about the approach that the Grants Commission is likely to make in regard to our railway deficit, are to be fulfilled. The debate has very largely developed along the lines of whether railway lines should be closed or not and I feel that those who have championed the cause of not discontinuing any railway services have, without exception, failed to suggest what has to be done to meet this £6,000,000 deficit which is predicted for next year.

I would like to draw attention to the trend in railway deficit which is going steadily higher. In 1954 it was £3,809,522; in 1955, £4,615,844 and this year it is estimated to be £6,000,000. Quite obviously members on both sides of the House have to face up to the problem that this trend in our railway deficit indicates. The problem is to find some cheaper method of providing the essential transport for the normal commerce of the State. Some discussion has taken place tonight on what is an uneconomic railway line. It would seem that the difficulty is not so much to determine what is an uneconomic railway line as to determine what is the cheapest and best form of transport service to satisfy the requirements of a particular area.

It does not seem to matter whether we use road, rail or any other means of transport, provided we give a satisfactory service at the least possible cost. That appears to be the question to which members must apply themselves. I do not think any member suggests—I am not trying to read it into anything that members have said—that people in the country, generally, should not be given a satisfactory and efficient transport service. What I do say is that we should pay attention, and give serious consideration, to what is

the cheapest means of providing that service, taking into account all the problems involved.

The debate seems to suggest that any test road set up, and any test conducted, would rather indicate that railway lines would have to be closed. I am of that opinion myself. I think that those of us who take a realistic view of this question and who have made a study of it, have come to the conclusion that some lines will have to be closed; and it certainly seems that the Minister for Transport has reached that conclusion, too. In passing, I would like to thank him for the manner in which he dealt with my motion. I have no particular grievance because he said he would oppose it.

When I moved the motion I pointed out that there was no indication that the committee set up by the Government had reached any conclusions at all or had, in fact, made much progress. I doubt whether there was any official public statement to the effect that such a committee was functioning. Had it been known that this committee was functioning it is probable that I would not have moved the motion. However, as I pointed out, it does not seem to matter much what the Government does so long as it does something, and the Minister did indicate that the Government had taken certain steps and was considering further action. Tonight, by interjection, he indicated that further progress had been made. If this motion has contributed in any way towards that progress, then, of course, I shall feel quite well rewarded for the trouble I have taken.

As far as the question of a properly conducted test is concerned, I still think that what I suggest in the motion would be of some value inasmuch as there are certain matters I have mentioned of which I doubt whether any departmental head has much knowledge; I refer particularly to the application of the most modern handling methods from road to rail and rail to road, and the general application of modern road transport loaded to its economic limits. I did give some thought—I think I discussed it earlier in the debate—to the matter of axle loadings and so forth and their effect on road transport, and I pointed out that a test would indicate to what extent it was a waste to stretch our existing limits. However, these are changes that undoubtedly will come.

The approach I had to the problem of discontinuing some of these rail services is one that was generally supported by my party. I accept the proposition that some of these uneconomic lines will have to be discontinued, and I think that if some proper test authority were set up, a determination of which lines were to be discontinued could be made as a result of actual figures produced within the State, having particular reference to our problems. However, if the Government is

satisfied that it can make that determination without any further inquiry, it is not for me to say that it cannot do so.

I realise that certain political implications are involved in the question of closing uneconomic lines, and I recognise that considerable difficulties might confront individual members. I had hoped that if a properly constituted authority had been set up to conduct such a test as I have outlined—of course, such an authority could have been set up without any select committee at all—the data so produced might have enabled us to keep this whole question on a non-party basis; and I believe that is the proper basis on which it should be discussed. However, if the Government has made rather more progress in the matter than I anticipated, I have no complaint.

Various suggestions have been put forward such as inquiries into methods to achieve greater efficiency. In that regard, we have had many inquiries of different kinds at different times into railway matters, and I do not know of one that has not suggested that we should tackle the problem of uneconomic lines. I cannot visualise any further inquiry that would not suggest that we tackle this problem. When we come up against this question, we find that it is not a matter of setting up some body to inquire into it because we know what the answer is going to be before we set up the inquiry. It is a question of whether Parliament as a whole will face up to the problem. What is the good of instituting an inquiry if we are not prepared to accept the advice that it gives us? The whole thing simply comes right back on to Parliament, and unless we are prepared to face up to it, then an inquiry is merely a waste of time.

Some members have indicated that they do not want any lines to be discontinued. Well, they have to face up to the fact that they can expect a continuing deterioration in our railway finances, which are already extremely embarrassing to the Treasury, and would be to any Government in office. Furthermore, if they really believe that these lines should be maintained in operation, they should be advocating their rehabilitation because, make no mistake, the physical condition of some of the road beds is so poor that it is essential for immediate expenditure to be made on them if we are to continue to operate those lines.

There are lines in this State in such a bad condition that there is no useful purpose any longer to be served in running the track recorder car over them, and the only thing to do is to spend the many hundreds of thousands of pounds necessary to put them in order or, if we are not willing to do that, we must face up to the fact that the Railways Commission will shortly have to discontinue some services, because of the safety factor, if for

no other reason. We must be prepared either to spend a very large amount of loan funds on railway reconstruction over the next few years and be prepared to go without many schools, hospitals, water schemes and so on, which are urgently needed, or else agree to the closure of some lines.

I have not heard any member belittle the efforts that have been made since the last war or the expenditure on our railways, which has embarrassed the Treasury considerably, but the position remains that very considerable further expenditure is necessary if the railway system is to be rehabilitated. The problem with which we are faced is that of determining the cheapest way of providing a transport service where it is required and I am convinced that in many instances road transport will be more satisfactory than rail service.

In my opinion, those members who have opposed the motion in the belief that it would lead to road transport being shown to be more efficient in some cases, fear the consequences of such an investigation. They desire to keep the railways open but are not at all satisfied that the departmental service would compare favourably with road transport if proper tests were conducted. That rather indicates to me that it is time those members examined their thinking in this regard.

We are not dealing simply with a question of railways or trade unions but of what will give the greatest benefit to the State as a whole, and I think our decision in this regard might well, in the future, influence the decisions of the Grants Commission. I thank members and the Minister for the manner in which they have approached the motion. I feel that the debate has been worth while because it has shown where members stand, and I hope that when difficult decisions are to be made in the future, the highest possible standard of ethics and debate will be maintained.

Question put and negatived.

BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

MR. ROSS HUTCHINSON (Cottesloe) [9.57] in moving the second reading said: After the debate just concluded, in which words were thrown backwards and forwards concerning millions of pounds, and when the subject was one of State-wide significance, this measure may perhaps seem rather small and humdrum. However, I submit that it is of some real importance, despite the fact that it deals with the homely things of life.

The measure seeks to widen the list of goods that may be sold by shops named in the Fourth Schedule of the Act; shops

which may be referred to briefly as the small corner stores. The reasons for the Bill fall into three main parts; firstly to assist the small corner shopkeeper to make an adequate living; secondly to give the public and particularly the housewife a little extra legitimate service and, thirdly, to legitimatise in part what is now a widespread illegal trading practice.

To go back to the first reason—that of assisting the small corner store shopkeeper—I wish to point out certain facts which no doubt are known to many members. In the first place, the small corner store shopkeeper is gradually going out of existence under the present set-up. He finds himself unable adequately to cope with the competition of the large stores that can buy in bulk and so legitimately undersell him. Despite this fact, it must be remembered that the small shopkeeper does give a particular service to the area in which his shop is situated.

As regards the suggestion that the public will be given a little extra legitimate service, if this Bill is passed it will assist in some way to aid tourists and holiday-makers as well as the public. Holiday-makers who go to our various tourist resorts frequently find that they are unable to get a meal and require some sort of assistance at the small corner store. In the shops they are confronted, if they arrive after six o'clock, with wire screens covering the grocery section, thus preventing the would-be purchaser from buying those goods. Holiday-makers are affected by that when they go to tourist resorts and when they go home because frequently when returning home, they find their refrigerators empty and they are unable to prepare a meal without the assistance of the small corner storekeeper.

As regards legitimatising what is an existing illegal practice, I would suggest that the housewife, or the public in general, force the shopkeeper into becoming a petty criminal because when anyone goes into a Fourth Schedule shop to ask for a tin of peas, a tin of camp pie or a lb. of tea, he finds himself faced with the wire-screens—that is, if it is after hours—and usually the shopkeeper informs the would-be purchaser that certain goods cannot be purchased. However, in 90 cases out of 100 the shopkeeper takes the risk and sells the article and so many countless thousands of illegal acts occur the year round. I think we should endeavour to do something about that aspect.

This measure has an eighth schedule which merely names the goods that I would like added to those that may be purchased in the hours that a Fourth Schedule shop may trade. A close perusal of the list will show that it is not revolutionary but a rather reasonable list. I have made it so because in trying to solve one problem, I do not want to create others. For instance, I do not want to create a problem associated with the employment of labour and I do not want to

split the retail grocers' association in regard to it. In 1955 the Bolte Government in Victoria introduced similar legislation and the list of goods included in that measure is somewhat similar to the one I have in the proposed eighth schedule. I have added one or two extra items to the list but a close perusal will show that I am not trying to undermine any Labour principles. I think that members opposite can view the matter objectively without bringing party politics into it. I think if they were to consult the various women's organisations, they would find fairly general approval for the Bill and possibly would also find that some would think it does not go quite far enough.

As regards legitimatising an existing illegal practice, the Government made this particular point when it introduced its betting legislation. It was pointed out at the time that an evil existed and that illegalities went on at certain street corners where people were betting and, as it seemed to be part and parcel of our way of life, we should legitimatise such a practice. In a sense, the same argument applies in this case. The moral issues, too, are somewhat similar although the two cases are not parallel all the way. I want members to realise just how frequently the law is broken with regard to the factories and shops legislation. A team of inspectors endeavour to police the Act and impose penalties on those unfortunate shopkeepers who are forced into selling goods that they should not sell during certain hours.

Mr. Nalder: The inspectors are not permitted to impose penalties.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: Yes.

Mr. May: They can prosecute.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: Through them penalties may be imposed and inspectors frequently threaten the shopkeeper. They give him a warning and say, "If this occurs again, I will see that your shop is closed down at half-past 5 or 6 o'clock for a period of six months." Not infrequently they also say, "This will break you, because you will not be able to make a living if I take this action." I would like to return to the point regarding assistance to the small grocer. He has an important place in our community life, but unfortunately he is gradually going out of existence. If that does occur it will be deplorable because there is always an occasion when the womenfolk require a small item at the corner store.

As evidence of the fact that small grocers are not doing very well I quote the following cutting taken from the issue of the "Daily News" dated the 11th August, 1956:—

Small Grocers Will Go Under In Price War.

Many small suburban grocers say they face bankruptcy or extinction in a grocery price war.

One storekeeper appeared in the Bankruptcy Court recently. Others say they face the same fate unless the public resists the lure of streamlined self-service super markets.

"When we go under, the public will find themselves the real losers," said a suburban grocer today.

Retail Grocers and Storekeepers' Association Secretary A. C. Kirby said that the position was becoming critical for many small traders.

After having invested hard-earned savings and given many years of service, credit and home deliveries, their outlook was extremely bad.

If this Bill were to become law, it would assist, in some small way, the small storekeeper to make a success of his business in a legitimate way. I still say that he would probably have to engage in illegal trading, because my Bill does not go far enough to fully extend that type of trade.

The Minister for Native Welfare: Would not the effect be to help some small shopkeepers and put the retail grocer out of business?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I cannot see the strength of that argument.

The Minister for Native Welfare: Would not the small shop get the trade that should legitimately go to the retail grocer?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: If the Minister will consult the list of goods at the back of the Bill, he will observe that it is not a revolutionary list and the prices of these goods are generally higher in the small corner shop than in the ordinary retail store which buys in bulk. Furthermore, the small corner store which stays open very often until 11 p.m. to allow people to make incidental purchases and for the convenience of the forgetful housewife, would not have any real effect on those stores that are forced to close at 6 p.m. In fact, the retail grocers' association has given its blessing to the schedule that I have drawn up in this Bill. It could have objected to the small stores selling processed foods, canned foods, etc.

I would like to point out that the Bill, if passed, will not affect trading hours or working conditions. In part, it will legalise an existing illegal practice. I feel sure that I will get the support of the member for Wembley Beaches on this legislation. During the debate on the Address-in-reply he put forward an argument with which I agreed completely and at this stage I think it would be proper for me to read portion of his speech to the House. *Inter alia*, the hon. member said—

The restriction of trading hours under the Factories and Shops Act imposes unnecessary restraint on the activities of many small business people, and particularly those in various areas catering for tourists and visitors who may require goods outside the existing permissible trading hours. I consider that consideration

should be given to amending the Act so as to provide that where such contingencies arise, it will be possible, in the circumstances I have outlined, for such people to obtain the goods they require.

That is not quite parallel with the idea I have in mind because I do not propose to alter the existing trading hours. I am only extending slightly the list of goods which Fourth Schedule shops sell now. However, from the tenor of the remarks that have been made by the member for Wembley Beaches, I think he may see his way clear to support this Bill.

Originally, it was my desire to ensure that shopkeepers would be able to throw away completely the wire screens they have to place over certain sections of their shelves after ordinary trading hours. In other words, that they may have been able to develop again a normal forearm that had been—thus instancing the Darwinian theory—attenuated and flattened over the years by their reaching under the wire screen to obtain the goods required by the customer.

There is another matter. When the Bill is in Committee, I would like the schedule which I have set out extended to include salt. The Housewives' Association, which has given general approval to the Bill, has asked that that item be added to the list. If the Bill reaches the Committee stage, I do not think any member would oppose that small addition. I feel, too, that there is some demand for the inclusion of such items as band-aids and flavine which are required in an emergency.

In conclusion, before any member decides that he should vote against this measure because it is too revolutionary or too much against party policy, I would advise him to see his wife and ask her how many times she goes to the small corner store to force the shopkeeper to become a petty criminal. I feel sure that members will find that their wives will say, "I do that quite frequently. I do not mean to. I do not mean to be forgetful; but at certain times, in those hours, I find that I must have such and such an item." I think it will be found that the womenfolk really want this legislation; and when the womenfolk want something, they usually get it.

The Minister for Lands: You should train them better.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: Perhaps the Minister for Lands has disciplined his wife to such an extent that she never puts a foot wrong.

The Minister for Lands: I would not say that.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I commend the Bill to the House and I hope it will have an easy passage. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Minister for Works, debate adjourned.

BILL—CHILD WELFARE ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Mr. Moir in the Chair; Mr. Ackland in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Section 137A. added:

Mr. ACKLAND: I move an amendment—

That all the words after the word "is" in line 4, page 2, down to and including the word "child" in line 18, be struck out with a view to inserting other words.

I consulted the Minister for Child Welfare in this matter and he arranged that Hon. A. R. Jones and I should meet the magistrate in charge of the Children's Court and the Under Secretary for Child Welfare; and between the four of us we ironed out the amendment standing in my name on the notice paper. I think it is superior to the clause as it stands. Members will recall that I adopted a clause that appeared in an English Act; that Act was in two parts. It was thought that an amendment along these lines would be more suitable.

Amendment (to strike out words) put and passed.

Mr. ACKLAND: I move an amendment—

That the following be inserted in lieu of the words struck out:—

found guilty of an offence with respect to which payment of damages, costs or restitution may be ordered, the court, on being satisfied that any parent or guardian of the child has conduced to the commission of the offence by neglecting to exercise due care or control of the child, may order that the damages, costs or restitution be paid—

- (a) by the child; or
- (b) by the parent or guardian; or
- (c) by both the child and the parent or guardian, in such proportions as the court may determine.

In an order for payment of any sum, the court may direct that such sum be paid by periodical payments.

Mr. JAMIESON: To be consistent with my views on this measure, I must oppose the amendment. It is wrong to make one person pay for somebody else's misdoings. It is like making a man his brother's keeper, and we should not legislate along those lines.

Amendment (to insert words) put and passed.

Mr. ACKLAND: I move an amendment—

That after the word "child" in line 22, page 2, the words "and such order may be made by the Court in addition to any order made in respect of the child" be added.

This addition is favoured by the gentlemen to whom I have previously referred. They felt that the Child Welfare Act, which gave power to deal with the child, should not be altered, but that the parent should carry some of the responsibility if the court felt that that was desirable. But we have already dealt with that part in the previous amendment which has been carried.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That after the word "heard" in line 28, page 2, the words "nor shall any such order be made requiring a parent or guardian to pay an amount greater than one hundred and fifty pounds." be added.

As I said on the second reading, there should be some limitation on the penalty. We have already agreed to the amendment giving the magistrate a discretion to make an order for the payment of damages and for such payments to be made by instalments. Even then it is still desirable to have a limitation.

Mr. ACKLAND: I accept this amendment and consider it a wise addition to the clause. This brings the penalty provision into line with the legislation passed in two States of the U.S.A.—Michigan and Washington. In those States the maximum order for damages is 300 dollars, and the proposed £150 in this amendment is somewhat similar.

Mr. JAMIESON: I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out the words "one hundred and" in line 4.

I consider that the maximum order for damages against a parent should be £50. That would be a sufficient penalty to remind parents of their responsibility.

Mr. ACKLAND: I oppose the amendment on the amendment and would point out that the sum of £150 is the maximum. In most cases the amount which the magistrate would award would be much smaller than that. The person whose property has been damaged should be protected as fully as possible, and it is likely that such damage would run into many hundreds of pounds. The damage might be occasioned to a person in such circumstances that it would impose a very great hardship on him, so he should be given reasonable compensation.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: There is less occasion for the amendment on the amendment than there was half an hour ago; in fact, there is less occasion for the limitation at all than there was at that time, because the substituted words to which the Committee has agreed makes it entirely discretionary on the magistrate to award any order for damages at all. As the Bill originally stood, the term "shall" was used, and that made it mandatory on the magistrate to make an order for damages. The Interpretation Act is perfectly clear on this. When the word "may" is used, a discretion is conferred; therefore, the magistrate need make no order against a parent.

It seems ridiculous to reduce the maximum to as low as £50. In most circumstances the magistrate would not make an order for a substantial sum against anyone who was unable to pay it. On the other hand, as the member for Moore said, the actual damage occasioned could run into a very great sum. In some cases the child doing the damage might have means of his own to meet any compensation awarded against him. Why then should the person suffering the damage not receive compensation to the extent of £150 if the magistrate comes to the conclusion that the child should pay? I oppose the amendment on the amendment.

Mr. JAMIESON: Once a discretion is given to the magistrate to award damages, a wide and dangerous field is opened up. When it is mandatory on the magistrate, to some degree a constant approach is made, but when the power is discretionary, the whims and fancies of individual magistrates vary considerably. Magistrates are human beings and are affected in the same way as the ordinary individual; and, in some circumstances, they may not judge reasonably in a case where damages have been occasioned. Consequently the parents of the child concerned might not receive just consideration.

Mr. EVANS: I support the amendment on the amendment. In my opinion it is much better to impose a limitation on the amount which a magistrate can impose rather than to give him a discretion to impose up to £150. I have spoken to several of my constituents regarding this matter and one man was most hostile. He said "If you voted for this measure and my kiddy got into trouble while I was working in the mines I would have to pay a sum of money amounting to £150. If this happened I would come to you or any other member and ask you to justify your actions." If a father were away working the court could fine him because he did not stay at home to look after the kiddy.

Hon. A. F. Watts: That is nonsense.

Mr. EVANS: Not as much nonsense as I have heard from the Leader of the Country Party tonight. I support the amendment on the amendment moved by the member for Beeloo.

Amendment on amendment put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	....	....	....	10
Noes	....	....	....	18
Majority against				8

Ayes.	
Mr. Evans	Mr. Norton
Mr. Hall	Mr. Potter
Mr. Jamieson	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Lawrence	Mr. Toms
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Heal
(Teller.)	

Noes.	
Mr. Ackland	Mr. Johnson
Mr. Andrew	Mr. W. Manning
Mr. Bovell	Sir Ross McLarty
Mr. Brand	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Corneli	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Court	Mr. Roberts
Mr. Crommellin	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Graham	Mr. Watts
Mr. Hearman	Mr. O'Brien
(Teller.)	

Amendment on amendment thus negatived.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. ACKLAND: I move an amendment—

That all words after the word "section" in line 1, page 3, down to and including the word "child" in line 14, be struck out with a view to inserting other words.

This amendment has been prepared and included because of the debate during the second reading stage. When speaking to this Bill, the Minister was concerned that there was not sufficient definition regarding "parent"; and until that time, I had not realised that it could include such people as are covered under this amendment.

Amendment (to strike out words) put and passed.

Mr. ACKLAND: I move an amendment—

That the following words be inserted in lieu of the words struck out:—

the term "parent" includes the natural parent, adoptive parent, legal guardian, or any person having or purporting to have the control of the child, but does not include officers of the Child Welfare Department, licensed foster mothers, licensed foster parents, school teachers, or members of staffs of children's institutions.

Mr. EVANS: Having read this definition I object to the words "or any person having or purporting to have the control

of the child." I think what is proposed is a very wide definition of the word "parent." Therefore, I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out the words "or any person having or purporting to have the control of the child."

Mr. BOVELL: Perhaps the word "legal" could be inserted before the word "control."

The CHAIRMAN: Order! We are dealing with an amendment on the amendment.

Mr. BOVELL: I thought that this might overcome the objection of the member for Kalgoorlie.

Mr. ACKLAND: I hope that the Committee will not accept the amendment on the amendment. This matter was discussed to a considerable extent and the wording was queried by me when the amendment was being drawn up. The magistrate of the Children's Court had a great objection to including the words "de facto parent." He was of the opinion that the amendment as worded would give satisfactory coverage. He was most anxious that those men who were living with women to whom they were not married, and who either had children from them, or had taken over the responsibility of a widow and her family, should be responsible.

To meet that suggestion I accepted this phraseology. If the Committee would rather have "de facto parent," which I understand covers most of the phraseology here, I have no objection. I assure members, however, that the wording of the amendment is due more to the magistrate of the Children's Court and the Under Secretary for Child Welfare than it is to me. I was not sure how to define the word "guardian" as I wanted it defined. This phraseology has come from a source with a great deal more knowledge than I have, or than even the member for Kalgoorlie has.

Mr. JAMIESON: The term "legal guardian" must surely cover a de facto parent. I cannot imagine any set of circumstances where a de facto parent was not a legal guardian. With regard to the amendment to delete the words from the clause, I must support the member for Kalgoorlie as "adoptive parent" and "legal guardian" give sufficient coverage, and to put the responsibility on a person who might be temporarily minding someone else's child is not fair.

Mr. ACKLAND: A de facto parent is not covered by the phrase "legal guardian." He is not legally responsible in law. Among the people we would want to bring under the provisions of the Act are those who have taken wives away from their husbands or who are parents of illegitimate children, even if they are accepting the responsibility. The amendment moved by the member for Kalgoorlie will exclude

from the provisions of the Bill people whom I, and I believe most members of the Committee, would like to be included.

Mr. JAMIESON: With due regard to the advice that the member for Moore has had, I suggest he get his advisers to obtain some advice because I do not think that under any circumstances the parent of an illegitimate child can deny responsibility. If the hon. member is not sure about this, he could report progress and check on his advisers.

Mr. EVANS: The member for Moore mentioned that a de facto parent is not covered by the deletion of these words. I suggest to him that in accordance with what the member for Beeloo has said, he should seek further advice and have a definition framed that will cover the position and will not endanger other, possibly, innocent people. The words "purporting to have control of the child" appear. Who will be the one to purport? A kiddy could go into a neighbour's backyard and be playing there, and the neighbour could, under the definition, be purported to have control of the kiddy.

Amendment on amendment put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	....	....	....	....	10
Noes	....	....	....	....	22

Majority against 12

Ayes.

Mr. Brady	Mr. Lapham
Mr. Evans	Mr. Lawrence
Mr. Hall	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Jamieson	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Heal

(Teller.)

Noes.

Mr. Ackland	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Andrew	Sir Ross McLarty
Mr. Bovell	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Brand	Mr. Norton
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Court	Mr. Potter
Mr. Crommelin	Mr. Roberts
Mr. Graham	Mr. Toms
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Watts
Mr. W. Manning	Mr. O'Brien

(Teller.)

Amendment on amendment thus negatived.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

House adjourned at 11.2 p.m.