

benefits and increased sick leave privileges. As I have said, the Bill is the result of conferences between the Public Service Commissioner and representatives of the Civil Service Association, all of whom agree that it is in the best interest of the Public Service. The Civil Service Association recently met the Premier and asked that the Bill be submitted to Parliament as early as possible. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Gray, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.6 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 10th October, 1950.

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

QUESTIONS.

MILK.

As to Production and Commonwealth Scheme.

Mr. W. HEGNEY asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Will the State Government administer the free milk scheme for school children recently announced by the Commonwealth Minister for Health?

(2) Has the State Government yet been acquainted with any details of the proposed scheme?

(3) If so, what are they?

(4) What is the approximate daily consumption of milk in the metropolitan area at the present time?

(5) What will be the estimated additional daily consumption if and when the scheme comes into operation?

(6) Is the Government satisfied that the supply of milk will be sufficient to enable the scheme to commence on the date foreshadowed by the Commonwealth Minister for Health, namely, the 1st February, 1951?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Under consideration.

(2) Yes.

(3) The outline of the scheme submitted by the Commonwealth is as follows:—

(a) A national scheme to improve the nutrition of children by the provision of a quantity of milk not exceeding one-half pint per day of an approved standard to be supplied to all children 12 years of age and under attending public or private primary schools and recognised kindergartens, creches and nursery schools. Older children may be included where deemed expedient for administration, the idea being that if majority of class under 13 then it may be desirable to include the older children also. Insofar as recognised kindergartens, creches and nursery schools are concerned, we must be satisfied that they are properly run and there is adequate supervision and control.

(b) Aim is to provide 1/3rd pint bottle (narrow-necked with metal cap) of pasteurised milk each school day, together with a drinking straw, and probably 50 to 60 per cent. of children could be provided for in this way, subject to supplies being available. Where this is not practicable, one of the following alternatives is suggested:—

(i) Where there are bottling plants using wide-necked bottles, pasteurised milk or milk from tuberculin-tested herds may be supplied (I) ½-pint bottle to each child, or (II) 1-pint bottle divided between three children.

(ii) Where bulk milk only (pasteurised or from tuberculin-tested herds) is available, 1/3rd pint is to be

supplied to each child subject to satisfactory arrangements being made for distribution.

(iii) In areas where fluid milk (pasteurised or from tuberculin-tested herds) is not available, or where cost of fluid milk would exceed the ceiling price, powdered milk may be supplied, provided satisfactory distribution arrangements can be made.

(4) 22,500 gallons.

(5) The figure of 22,500 gallons, in reply to (4), includes approximately 400 gallons already supplied to State school children in the metropolitan-suburban area. This amount has varied considerably according to the ability of parents to pay for same.

It is estimated that a further 2,400 gallons would be required to give every school child 1/3rd of a pint per day, of which some would be powdered milk (i.e., in dry areas). This would include private schools where children receive a proportion of milk per day.

In addition, approximately 1,500 gallons are sent to the Goldfields daily.

The above figures do not provide for children of the requisite age group of new Australians, as there is no means of obtaining the figures at present.

The approximate total of milk required is 26,400 gallons daily, at the present time. This would provide 1/3rd of a pint of milk to every one of the approximately 66,000 school children from six to 12 years in the State, inclusive of those at private schools.

(6) My opinion is that if we are given time the milk will be available; if not, it will work out as at present.

If the milk is in short supply, then it cannot be delivered.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

As to Pig Swill Restriction.

Mr. W. HEGNEY asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Is it a fact that the Agricultural Department will not permit persons conducting piggeries to use the refuse from immigration camps such as Graylands, although such refuse would be treated by digesters?

(2) If so, what is the reason for such refusal?

(3) If reply to (1) is in the negative, can he indicate the authority responsible for the disposal of the refuse referred to?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Migrants entering Australia from overseas have frequently been found to have parcels containing salami, bacon and other meat products concealed in their luggage. All of these products are potentially dangerous and could be responsible for the

introduction of disease such as Rinderpest, foot-and-mouth disease, and swine fever, which would be disastrous to the national economy.

Experience has shown that persons conducting piggeries cannot always be relied upon to effectively sterilise food refuse, and the risk of releasing such material to them from migrant camps cannot be accepted.

(3) Answered by (1).

EAST PERTH CEMETERY.

As to Committee's Report.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Premier:

(1) Has he yet given consideration to the report of the committee which was appointed to make recommendations regarding plans for the old East Perth cemetery?

(2) Is it intended to give effect to them?

(3) When will he make public the details of the report?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes, but the cost is receiving further consideration.

(3) This has been done.

SUPERPHOSPHATE MANUFACTURE.

As to Supplies of Sulphur.

Hon. E. NULSEN asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Is he aware of the acute shortage of sulphur existing in U.S.A. at the present time?

(2) Would it be too costly to import from other world sources?

(3) Has the Government given consideration to manufacturing sulphuric acid from the pyrite deposit at Norseman for the production of superphosphate?

(4) Owing to the serious position of importing brimstone from foreign countries, and the high cost of transport of pyrite to Bassendean and Albany, if no serious attempt has been made to investigate the cost of the production of sulphuric acid from pyrite at Norseman, will he ascertain the feasibility of such a course, and the cost of installing a plant?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) It is now being imported to a limited extent from Sicily.

(3) Yes.

(4) Yes.

POLICE.

As to Station for Bayswater.

Mr. J. HEGNEY asked the Minister for Police:

(1) Is he aware that complaints are made from time to time regarding the need for a police station in central Bayswater?

(2) Is he aware that members of the Bayswater Road Board and other citizens have made representations at various times urging the establishment of a police station?

(3) Is he aware that the Police Department holds a block of land in the district for the erection of a police station?

(4) In view of the foregoing can he indicate whether any provision is made in the Estimates for this purpose?

(5) If the answer is in the negative, will he have the proposal examined to see if early approval can be indicated?

The MINISTER replied:

(1), (2) and (3) Yes.

(4) and (5) Approval has been given for the erection of a police station at Bayswater, and the building will be proceeded with as soon as the building priority programme will permit.

COLLIE COAL.

As to Prices to State Instrumentalities.

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

(1) What was the price of Collie coal, both large and small, to all State instrumentalities for the years from 1928 to 1931, inclusive?

(2) Since the price of large and small coal became the same, what were the prices for each year?

(3) What was the price of coal for the year preceding the year that the charge for both large and small coal became the same?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

(1)

Year ended 30th June.	Per ton.	
	Large. s. d.	Small. s. d.
1928	18 5	12 6
1929	18 5	12 6
1930	18 4	12 6
1931	18 4	12 6

(2)

	Large and Small.	
	s. d.	s. d.
1946	22 10	
1947	23 4	
1948	25 10	
1949	26 8	
1950	30 6	

The price given for 1950 refers to Griffin coal only. The present price being paid for Amalgamated Collieries coal is 29s. per ton, which is subject to adjustment after production costs to 30th June, 1950, are determined.

Year ended 30th June.	Per ton.	
	Large. s. d.	Small. s. d.
1945	22 2	20 0

TROLLEY-BUS SERVICE.

As to Kalgoorlie-street, Mount Hawthorn.

Mr. W. HEGNEY asked the Minister representing the Minister for Transport:

(1) As it is not likely that the trolley-bus service to and from Kalgoorlie-street, Mount Hawthorn, will commence on the 1st October, 1950, as was indicated by him on the 3rd August, 1950, in reply to my question, can he now give a revised estimate of the date on which such service will begin?

(2) What is the reason, if any, for the delay?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

(1) The conversion of Mt. Hawthorn to trolley-bus operation is now estimated to begin in mid-December.

(2) (a) Priority given to the building of omnibus bodies so that tram services traversing the Causeway can be withdrawn, thus assisting in relieving the serious traffic congestion at this point.

(b) Delay occasioned by a strike of employees at the Commonwealth Engineering Works, Sydney.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

As to Progress at South Fremantle Station.

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What progress is being made with the construction of the new power station at South Fremantle?

(2) Is he yet in a position to announce a definite date on which the new station will be able to generate sufficient electric power to obviate any recurrences of black-outs?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Satisfactory progress is being made.

(2) No. Some items of vital equipment for the condenser contract have still to come from the contractors in New South Wales.

INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

As to Effect of Defeat of Measure.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN (without notice) asked the Premier:

(1) Has his attention been drawn to the fact that the L.C.L. and C.D.L. members in the Legislative Council were responsible for defeating the moratorium for returned soldiers provided for in the Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act Amendment Bill?

(2) Is this the "new order" for recruiting, and does he think it will increase the number of recruits?

(3) If not, will he see that the members referred to in another place are disciplined?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes, I saw the division list to which the hon. member refers.

(2) I do not think it will have any effect upon recruiting.

(3) I cannot undertake—

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: To discipline anybody!

The PREMIER:—to discipline the members of the Legislative Council, who are free to act as they think fit.

TIMBER PRODUCTION.

As to Statement of Honorary Minister for Housing.

Mr. W. HEGNEY (without notice) asked the Honorary Minister for Housing:

With reference to the following report in "The West Australian" of the 6th October:—

Busselton, October 5: Speaking at the Busselton Council Chambers this afternoon, the Minister for Housing (Mr. Wild) said that he had no apology to offer for his recent charge that those responsible were not producing sufficient timber.

Did his remarks refer to members of the Timber Workers' Union and, if not, to whom did they refer?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied:

I was referring to the producers of timber.

HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING.

As to Rumour of Resignation.

Mr. CORNELL (without notice) asked the Premier:

Is there any substance in the rumour that the member for Dale is resigning his post as Honorary Minister for Housing to accept a position as Public Relations Officer for the Sawmillers' Association?

The PREMIER replied:

I have not heard anything of the rumour.

BILLS (4)—FIRST READING.

1. Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Attorney General.

2. Constitution Acts Amendment.

Introduced by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke.

3. The Fremantle Gas and Coke Company's Act Amendment.

4. Railways Classification Board Act Amendment.

Received from the Council.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1. State Housing Act Amendment.

2. Building Operations and Building Materials Control Act Amendment and Continuance.

Transmitted to the Council.

BILL—ACTS AMENDMENT (ALLOWANCES AND SALARIES ADJUSTMENT).

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

BILL—ACTS AMENDMENT (INCREASE IN NUMBER OF MINISTERS OF THE CROWN).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 19th September.

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gascoyne) [5.41]: I listened carefully to the case presented by the Premier when introducing this Bill. The measure differs in some particulars from that introduced in 1947. That Bill requested this House to agree to the number of Ministers being increased by one, whereas the measure with which we are now dealing proposes that the number of Ministers should be increased by two. The case put forward in support of the 1947 Bill—which I opposed strongly and succeeded in defeating with the help of votes from this side of the House—was in my view based on false premises. There is very little in this Bill that is different from what was contained in the measure presented to the House in 1947.

The main reason for the introduction of the Bill of 1947—as submitted by the Attorney General of that time—was that we should have two full Ministers in the Legislative Council. That is not the proposal put forward by the Premier on this occasion, and if this measure were in fact for the purpose of increasing the personnel of Cabinet quite a few of the arguments submitted by the Premier would be valid. But the proposal in this Bill is not to increase the numerical strength of the Cabinet. It is simply to give two Honorary Ministers—two members sworn in as members of the Executive Council—full Cabinet rank. It is not to lighten the burden of the tasks, as outlined by the Premier, that have been apportioned to Ministers. It is not for the purpose of easing the burden of any individual, but merely to arrange that two Honorary Ministers shall be elevated to full Cabinet rank.

In criticising this measure I desire first to draw attention to the remarkable Title. We have never, in my recollection, had a Bill of this kind—it is designed to amend several Acts—submitted to Parliament in this manner. This, surely, is a measure

to amend the Constitution Acts Amendment Act, but its Title suggests that it is an Act to amend certain Acts to provide for an increase from eight to 10 in the number of principal executive offices of the Government liable to be vacated on political grounds. Surely no principal executive offices of the Government are liable to be vacated on political grounds.

The Attorney General: But the Constitution Acts Amendment Act provides for that.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: That Act was amended, and it no longer contains that provision.

The Premier: That is so.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: As a preliminary criticism of this Bill I submit that the long title is wholly wrong and I suggested to the Premier, when he was introducing the measure, that it was an amazing thing for him to introduce a Bill of this kind, for this purpose, with a Title that was wholly inappropriate and certainly quite unnecessary.

The Premier: That had reference to the time when Cabinet Ministers had to resign their seats in certain circumstances.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Yes, it will be found in the bound volume of statutes of 1948.

Mr. Graham: The Attorney General would not know about that.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: He should know about it. He will not find it in the Standing Orders, but if he will examine the clause in the Bill which deals with the Constitution he will find that it proposes to amend No. 12 of 1948 and No. 17 of 1949. Those are the statutes to which I would draw his attention.

Mr. Rodoreda: Did he not introduce the earlier Bill?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: No, I believe a former Attorney General—Sir Ross McDonald—introduced it. This is only a minor matter, but it shows how careless both the Government and its officers are in the preparation of important documents such as this.

The Attorney General: But this Bill has reference to more than one Act.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Yes, and that is a very bad practice, in itself.

The Attorney General: It is a modern practice.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Quite a lot of things that are happening now are modern. They may be said to have the new look, but they are not satisfactory.

The Attorney General: It is a practice that is followed by some of the best draftsmen in Australia.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I do not know that the Attorney General is a judge of the best draftsmen in Australia. We had better keep away from that point. Let us see what the Bill proposes. One of its purposes could be to enable Honorary Ministers to be elevated to full Cabinet rank in order to obviate any payment to them by full Ministers of the Cabinet; in other words to have the Crown pay them, by amending the schedule to the Constitution Acts Amendment Act, thus avoiding the necessity of full Ministers contributing anything to the salaries of Honorary Ministers.

Mr. Oliver: That is not an unworthy proposition.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: That may be the reason for it, but it might also be that the Premier does not wish to derate some of the Ministers in his Cabinet from the position of full Minister to that of Honorary Minister, which is something worthy of consideration, if two Honorary Ministers are entitled to full Cabinet rank.

Mr. Graham: That would create a problem.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It would create no problem so far as I am concerned. I would be prepared to make suggestions in that regard.

Mr. Styants: And to name the two Ministers who should be derated.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Yes, I would go that far. Most of the points presented by the Premier in support of the Bill will not bear much examination. The two Honorary Ministers are doing their jobs enthusiastically and vigorously. They are therefore entitled to the fullest consideration in the matter of salary. But the points made by the Premier with regard to the growing responsibilities of Ministers represent no argument at all. The allocation of portfolios existing at present is the main reason why there is so much ill balance in the load carried by Ministers. I can speak with some authority on this subject because I had, in over 12 years' ministerial experience, some extremely hard tasks—never any easy ones. There is no doubt the position of Premier and Treasurer does not leave very much spare time, but there are other Ministers, even if they have the will to do all that the portfolios demanded, who would not be, in my view, much overworked under the present allocation.

In speaking for this side of the House I say we have had experience, all of us, of the dilatoriness of Ministers of the present Government; their inattention to simple matters requiring simple answers; their inattention to correspondence. I can produce letters from Ministers in reply to mine on simple questions which have taken them three months to answer. So when it comes to an analysis of the existing responsibilities of Ministers and the de-

mand that two should be elevated to full Cabinet rank, it will neither add to the personnel by so doing, because the Bill does not intend to increase the number, nor, as far as my experience goes, will it add much enthusiasm or interest to the jobs that the Ministers have in hand and should be doing.

The Premier stated that the North-West is worthy of a full portfolio. I would refer him to a statement made by the Minister for the North-West which appears in "Hansard" No. 9 of this year, in which he said that he found very little to do in regard to the North-West and it took little or nothing of his time. We know, of course, that for all that is done for the North-West, very little time would be needed. It could all be done one day a week before breakfast. That is about all it would take the Minister to do what he is doing for the North. So that argument raised specifically by the Premier as one justifying this increase will not bear much examination. The Premier must, at times, feel ashamed of the manner in which some matters are handled by some of the Ministers in this Chamber. He certainly cannot feel very elevated about it. Therefore, I say this: If there is necessity for ten Ministers it would be extremely desirable for the Premier to make a better distribution of the responsibilities associated with the different portfolios.

The "Government Gazette" of the 14th April, 1950, gave the distribution of duties of ministerial officers and the departments which come under the control of each of them. It is of no use the Premier trying to defend the work done by some, because all of us who have had any ministerial experience know just what is entailed in others. I am disposed to think that if the Premier uses as his standard the State of South Australia, as he has done on many occasions, he would neither have the right nor would he have the temerity, I think, to introduce a Bill of this kind. South Australia has six Ministers and the Premier, prior to the 1947 election at any rate, held up that State as the best controlled, and the most effectively administered within the Commonwealth of Australia. He even had Ministers travelling to South Australia to find out how they did certain things in that State and how they were able to achieve matters relating to administration.

South Australia has a revenue above that of Western Australia, but comparable with it. It has a population certainly in excess of ours; perhaps 200,000. However, in that much-vaunted State there are but six Ministers and it has a revenue of approximately £26,000,000 or £28,000,000, and it appears that its Premier has ample time to do all the things expected of him in his office and, in addition, to ensure that that State has its case well presented before Canberra.

The Attorney General: Do you agree that the Premier in South Australia himself holds a great many more portfolios than the Premier in this State?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I think he dominates most of them, in addition to holding a great many himself. I do not think it would be possible for Ministers there to be chided for saying something outside; that does not happen in South Australia. I think that in this State, unless we are to have an example of better Cabinet operations and administration—I could say some very unkind things in connection therewith—we cannot support this Bill at all. But I do believe that it is possible to give a better balance to the allocation of portfolios and because, on the present distribution, there are two men who are working as hard as any others in the Cabinet, I am almost convinced to support this Bill from that angle alone. When the Premier makes further comment on the Bill I want to know from him whether it is the intention to appoint further Honorary Ministers.

The Premier: No, it is not.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Well, then, it means exactly what I say; that there can be no more men in the Cabinet and therefore there cannot be any easement of the tasks outlined by the Premier to warrant the appointment of two full Ministers. So it comes back to the question of effective administration. I have the greatest sympathy for men who are Honorary Ministers. I do not know what happens by arrangement in a Government of a Liberal-Country Party type as to the paying of Honorary Ministers. I know what happened in our case; that the title "Honorary" was a misnomer; that the Honorary Minister was paid an amount from the salary of each full Minister.

The Premier: The same applies now.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: So that the Honorary Minister was getting a salary in addition to that which an ordinary member receives. I think, on a close analysis, not of the Bill but of the Premier's comments on it, and since, on his admission, there are still to be ten members of the Cabinet and the labourer is worthy of his hire, that perhaps the two Honorary Ministers are entitled to a greater consideration than they are getting at present. However, I would stress on the Premier, after the years of experience the members of the present Government have now had, the urgent necessity for greater personal attention by Ministers—not a greater delegation of authority to some senior officer—to the duties allocated to them. I will say that what I am requesting does happen in some cases, but it certainly does not happen in others. I would like to see an acceptance of that responsibility by all members of the Government.

Unless members who are working in the interests of their constituencies and their constituents can find that responsibility in Ministers, quite as distinct from their dealing with any State and national matters, they must continue to be the subject of criticism. We know that the Ministers and the Government are protected by the Press. We know that certain things that happen in this Chamber from that side of the House show inefficiency which will not be high-lighted, and I would like to bring about a condition and a position when all of us can look forward to receiving not only courtesy but also immediate attention to the matters which members of Parliament take to Ministers. That is bound up with the will to do the job and not with the attitude of regarding it as being something easy; something part-time; something which perhaps in any circumstances will be a nine days' wonder, but something which will give service to the people irrespective of politics.

In looking at this Bill carefully, I find that the reference to the Fourth Schedule of the principal Act shows that the Act of 1949, which provided for an additional judge, requires the amendment of the total in the Act of 1947 to bring the figure up to £29,400. That figure, of course, does not only include the ministerial salaries, but also includes the remuneration paid to the Governor and now, the remunerations paid to the four judges and the clerk of the Executive Council. In this Bill, members will not find the requisite reference in the amending Act of 1949, but they will find it in the Allowances and Salaries Adjustment Act of 1947.

I hope that the Premier will closely note the criticism I have made because I believe that there is ample room for great improvement in the manner of presentation of matters to this Chamber, quite distinct from inattention to ministerial matters from which I have personally suffered in representing cases of my constituents. The dilatoriness in replying to correspondence is also an extremely important aspect of that criticism. As mentioned earlier, I have every sympathy for the two men who are doing the jobs allocated to them and because I believe they are at least pulling their weight in a team of ten, perhaps we have not at this stage much alternative but to support the Bill. I hope to hear some comment on it from the other side of the House and will be interested to listen to the debate as it proceeds.

MR. GRAHAM (East Perth) [5.15]: I have no hesitation in supporting this Bill which, to my mind, belatedly gives official recognition to a state of affairs that has been in existence and valid in conformity with procedure for many years. A quick look at the records of this Parliament since the end of the first World War reveals the following details:—The Colebatch Ministry

had one Honorary Minister; the first Mitchell Government had two; the first Collier Government, one; the second Mitchell Government, had none; the second Collier Government had one Honorary Minister; the Willcock Government had one; the Wise Government had one, and latterly the McLarty Government had two.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: How many did you say the first Collier Government had?

Mr. GRAHAM: One!

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: I think it had two.

Mr. GRAHAM: My reading of the records indicates that it had one. In any event, it does establish the fact that it has become common procedure. It is completely wrong that a member of Parliament who is, without question, performing at least nearly all the activities of a Minister, should receive no public payment for his services as such. Further, it is ludicrous for other Ministers of the Crown to have to pay him his salary or allowance by dipping into their own pockets to the tune of £200 and upwards for the public service he is rendering. It is absurd that Ministers should be benefactors to the extent of paying this money, which nominally they receive, in order that somebody else might gain the benefit.

Mr. Marshall: They pay tax, too.

Mr. GRAHAM: That may be so, but the person who is not the recipient does bear a greater load.

The Premier: I do not think that is so.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It was, until about 1945.

Mr. GRAHAM: If that has been corrected, it has gone part of the way in overcoming a grievous anomaly. From my point of view, the Bill is most welcome in that it provides additional opportunities for promotion for members of Parliament. It is well known that, owing to the vagaries of the electors, it is possible for members to sit on the Opposition side of the House and, of course, have denied to them, utterly and completely, an opportunity of playing a direct part in the administration of the affairs of the State. Even after the pendulum has swung and members become supporters of a Ministry, there are only a limited number of opportunities for advancement. Those opportunities will be increased by the passage of this Bill.

Whilst the great majority of us are private members at the present time, and all of us have been so at one time or another, I think it could be said that, without exception, at some time there has been a feeling of frustration and disappointment owing to the fact that the private member plays so insignificant a part in the administration and government of the State. To my mind, that is a most undesirable and unhealthy state of affairs. The more members participate in the affairs of the State, the greater knowledge they have of those affairs and, because of the greater atten-

tion it would be possible for them to give to detail, the State must accordingly benefit. I find myself in agreement with the sentiments expressed by the Leader of the Opposition when he referred to the fact that nobody for a moment would deceive himself into thinking that all the present Ministers are overburdened with work. They should, however, have sufficient to occupy their time. It is common knowledge that half of those of the present Cabinet have neither the ability nor the energy necessary to fulfil their ministerial duties.

Mr. Nalder: That is what you say!

Mr. GRAHAM: I venture to suggest that if a secret ballot were taken of all members with a view to noting down the four weak links on the Government bench in this House, the same four names would be mentioned by each member, without exception. It is patent to everybody. At the same time, I feel it is generally recognised that there is sufficient work for the increased number of Ministers, if the work were properly performed, and if there were that application which is so necessary.

The Premier: Do you think the Opposition would ever agree that the work was properly performed?

Mr. GRAHAM: Whilst there is a disagreement with policy, there is no gain-saying the fact that some of the Ministers work hard, but that cannot be said of the entire Ministry, of which the Premier is the Leader. There is a need for Ministers to be familiar with the departments and their various activities. It is not necessary for me to recite the position at the present moment under which certain Ministers have two and three important departments under their control. Irrespective of the natural ability, the work and application of the holder of the portfolio for the time being, it is humanly impossible for any occupant of a portfolio to be thoroughly familiar with the work in hand, with the details of all the representations that are made to him, and at the same time to be able to travel throughout the various parts of the State whenever it is essential for him to do so. It is humanly impossible also for him to appear at the various public functions he is called upon to take part in and to carry out all the duties that are inescapable in the office he holds. In addition to all this, there is his work in connection with his duties in Parliament as distinct from those associated with the various departments under his direct control.

I had the experience several years ago of a Minister with whom arrangements had been made to receive a deputation. Unfortunately, that Minister was not present because of certain circumstances. He was relieved by another Minister who knew nothing whatever of the department he was then administering. He was quite frank about the situation, and said that he knew nothing about the subject-matter of the

deputation or of the activities of the department in connection with which the deputation was being held. I feel there would be a greater prospect of such a position being overcome if there were more Ministers. As I have said on a number of occasions, instead of an increase in Ministers I should like to see each Minister have an assistant Minister or Parliamentary under-secretary, or whatever you may care to term him. There should be somebody who would act as an understudy to relieve the full Minister of a great deal of the detailed work, thus allowing him to handle matters of policy. By this means there would always be somebody present who would be familiar with the department's work in the event of the Minister visiting another State or falling ill. There would be no hold-up if the Minister himself were absent. It is evident to all members that full and proper application is not being made by all the Ministers at the moment. I daresay it was ever so.

There is always one or more weak links in a ministerial team. We have had evidence of this in the fact that even the simplest of Bills introduced into this House have been read by Ministers—every single line and word of them—indicating, to my mind, that the Minister in question had a brief handed to him and was in no way familiar with the Bill or the reasons for it. Whether we have two Ministers or twenty Ministers it would not overcome the position if Ministers did not properly do their jobs. Therefore there is a good deal in what the Leader of the Opposition has said. There is need for the recasting of portfolios and, should I say, for a recasting of personnel. I trust members will forget the personalities involved, because we can all be critical of things as they are at present concerning the Ministry. But, as a general principle, I feel that nobody can validly oppose a Bill of these terms, one which seeks to give official recognition to a procedure that has been followed with only one exception over the past 30 years. I trust that the measure will receive the majority necessary to secure its passage.

HON. J. T. TONKIN (Melville) [5.31]: I desire to make a few remarks on this proposal. It is undeniable that if there were no coalition Government, this Bill would not be before Parliament. There would be no proposition for 10 full Ministers if we had a Government, the Ministers of which were drawn from one party, but because there is a coalition and it was necessary to try to reach a satisfactory arrangement to give due representation to the C. & D. League, this agitation has arisen. We have had evidence of it before; this is not the first time the proposal has been submitted to Parliament.

Last session the Government made a similar attempt but did not succeed, and so it is now having another shot. The intention, of course, is to have both the Ministers in another place full Ministers and make the Honorary Minister for Housing in this Chamber a full Minister so that, instead of having eight full and two Honorary Ministers, there would be 10 full Ministers. Then, no doubt, there would be a tendency to appoint additional Honorary Ministers.

The Premier: No fear!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Premier thinks otherwise now, because the pressure has not started, but it will start, and he will find advocates saying, "You had Honorary Ministers before; why not have another one or two now?" When agitation is started along those lines, the Premier might find the pressure too strong. The Premier may use any argument he likes, but he will never convince me that this proposal does not spring from the fact that there is a coalition Government and that it is necessary to give full recognition to an Honorary Minister of the Country Party in another place. I believe there is no harder working Minister than the Honorary Minister for Agriculture and I consider that the work he is doing entitles him to a full portfolio. Still, I repeat that, in my view, if we had a Government drawn from one party only it would be content with one full Minister and one Honorary Minister in the Legislative Council. The Minister in that Chamber, however, is a member of the L.C.L. and the Honorary Minister is a member of the C. & D. League and is therefore in an inferior position.

Whilst the statement I am about to make cannot be based on fact because I am not in a position to know and therefore can only suppose, I believe that when the difficulty arose after the last election and the L.C.L. was insisting on major representation in the Cabinet, a tacit agreement was arrived at that the Country Party representation in the Cabinet would be increased by making the Honorary Minister in the Council a full Minister. Whether that is so or not, I can only guess, but the circumstances were such as to force me to the conclusion that I am not very wide of the mark. Before the last election the C. & D. League members insisted—and rightly so, too—upon equal strength with the L.C.L. in the Cabinet.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: They did not insist too long.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I said "before the last election" they insisted and got their way. When it came to the last election and the L.C.L. won a neck or two ahead of the C. & D. League, then came the pressure for greater representation for the L.C.L. at the expense of the C. & D. League.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I suspect that was part of the bargain.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Although the C. & D. League had the ball at its feet—

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It did not kick the ball.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: —it could have said to the Premier, "No coalition unless equal representation is granted." But the Country Party members caved in.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Of course, the Government had the footballer representative and they, I suppose, could not kick a goal.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Nothing is more certain than that, had the C. & D. League stood fast and insisted upon equal representation, it would have been successful. Now that Party is in a very unfair position because it has to share the responsibility for everything that is done, both good and bad, and in my view there is more bad than good.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: That is what Mr. Bunning thinks, too.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Country Party members have to accept equal responsibility. There can be no squaring off and saying, "We have only two-fifths of the Cabinet representation or some such fraction." They have to assume equal responsibility for whatever is done but without having equal voice. They could be outvoted in a decision and yet have to accept full responsibility for it. This must eventually develop into an untenable position.

The Premier: You hope.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I not only hope but also believe it is true. Just imagine a man being for long in the position of knowing he could never get a decision his way, through lack of strength, but of having to accept full responsibility for decisions made against his better judgment! Surely that must lead eventually to serious trouble! It has done so before on many occasions under coalition Governments. Take the Bruce-Page Government for example, or the present Commonwealth Government confronted with the necessity for facing up to the question of revaluation.

Mr. Marshall: Or the Victorian Government.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Despite the Prime Minister's denial that there will be no revaluation, we know that there will be.

The Minister for Works: To what part of the Bill are you referring?

Mr. SPEAKER: I think the hon. member is digressing.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I was using that argument as an illustration following the Premier's interjection that I hoped there could be no continued agreement in the circumstances I have outlined. This

brings me back to my original observation that the Bill has not been introduced because the circumstances are such as to merit the appointment of ten full Ministers. It has been introduced because there is a coalition Government in office. I repeat that, in my view, this was one of the tacit agreements made after the last election when the two parties could not agree upon the allocation of the portfolios as between the parties. I go so far as to say that, if the ten full Ministers applied themselves assiduously to their tasks, they would earn their money, but that is beside the point I am making. The point I wish to stress is that this Bill for the appointment of ten full Ministers would not be here if it depended entirely upon the needs of the State.

We have to bear in mind that over the years, although the population of the State has been increasing and the work of departments has been developing, we have been appointing more expert officers in the departments, and quite a lot of the work previously done by State departments is now done by the Commonwealth. If we were called upon to set out categorically the items to justify the appointment of ten full Ministers, it would not be an easy task. But we are asked to approve of ten full Ministers in order to meet the arrangement between the L.C.L. and the C. & D. League. This is a further proof that the country pays for the doubtful privilege of having a coalition Government in office.

I believe it is apparent that the Bill will pass. I do not know what will happen to it in another place. Funny things happen there at times, but we shall see how this proposal works out in practice. As time goes on, we shall see whether the request for the appointment of Honorary Ministers again is revived and whether, in addition to the ten full Ministers, we shall subsequently have Honorary Ministers tacked on to the Cabinet.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [5.42]: I supported a similar measure in 1947 and have not changed my opinion since, though I agree in a great measure with the observations made by the member for Melville. I believe it is possible that the motive for wishing to elevate the two Honorary Ministers to full Cabinet rank may not be quite so laudable as it could have been and may not be along the lines set out by the Premier when moving the second reading of the Bill. His contention was that the sole reason was that the increase in the population of the State and the realm of Government so far as industry was concerned, particularly in regard to extensions of socialism, was such as to warrant the appointment of ten Ministers of full Cabinet rank.

I believe that at present certain Ministers are very much overloaded with work. There seems to me to be an uneven allocation of the work as between Ministers.

We find full Cabinet Ministers in charge of one or two not very important departments while, in another place, the Leader of the House, in addition to having to handle all the Government business sent from this Chamber, is burdened with the responsibility of three most important portfolios, namely, Railways, Transport and Mines. The people of this State have something like £28,000,000 invested in the railways, and as a result they are losing about £2,500,000 a year. Surely some greater importance might be attached to that portfolio than to hand its administration to a man who is already overloaded with the carrying on in another place of the whole, or almost the whole, of the business sent there by the seven Ministers in this House. In addition, he has the portfolio of Transport.

One has only to traverse the city and suburbs to realise how important it is that someone with ample time to observe the chaos that is taking place, and which has increased rapidly in the last 12 months with respect to road transport, should be appointed to this position. The same hon. gentleman holds the portfolio of Mines. The coalmining industry is so vital to the welfare of this State that we could not possibly get on without it. Any hold-up or shortage of coal supplies is keenly felt by industry.

The goldmining industry produces something like 10½ million pounds worth of gold per annum. Yet we find that a man already burdened with the responsibility of conducting the Government's work in another place is also saddled with these three important portfolios. That is a very uneven allocation, and something of which the Premier, or those who allocate the portfolios, should take serious notice. Because of the duties of some Ministers in this House I believe their positions are just sinecures, but we have two or three Ministers here who are, I think, doing work to the extent almost of that of the hon. gentleman in another place to whom I have referred.

Members often adopt a peculiar attitude immediately they are raised to Cabinet rank. For years it has been the custom for Ministers to keep to themselves all information respecting their departments, and to endeavour, even in their answers to members' questions, to give away as little as possible. I maintain that information in connection with Government departments is just as much the concern of the private member as it is that of a Minister; and that the private member has as much right to the information as has a Minister of the Crown. But that is not the attitude adopted by Ministers. They frequently, when answering questions put by private members, do not even take the trouble to see that the replies are in fact answers to the questions. Quite often

their answers are evasive so that with or without the concurrence of the Minister the head of the department dodges the issue. Members frequently have to remodel their questions to elicit information which is just as much their right, as representatives of the people, as it is that of the Minister, who, for the time being, has been elevated to Cabinet rank. That, however, does not in any way detract from the right of private members to know what is going on in the various Government departments.

I am supporting the measure mainly on a matter of principle. I believe that, if there is sufficient work for ten Ministers, they should be paid from the public purse and not receive contributions from the other members of the Cabinet. I have a great admiration for the work performed by the two Honorary Ministers, and I hope, if they are appointed to full Ministerial rank, they will not get into a rut. I would say that the Honorary Minister in another place is one of the most efficient Ministers this Cabinet possesses. Up to date the Honorary Minister in this Chamber has been doing a particularly good job. He has been applying himself very earnestly to the tasks confronting him and, if he continues in the same way should he get full Cabinet rank, I feel that his department will make greater headway than it has done during the last few years.

I believe in the principle that, if a man is doing a job, he should be paid the full wage for it. I remember that over a period of 10 or 12 years of my 25 years in what is a modest and humble occupation compared with that of a Cabinet Minister—that of a fireman and driver in the railway service of this State—I found myself in the invidious position of an acting driver. I was a first-class fireman with a driver's qualification. I was firing on the express between Kalgoorlie and Southern Cross, and frequently it was necessary to run a second division of that train. I would be taken off my job as a fireman on the first division and be given an old rattle-trap engine off the goods service, together with an inexperienced fireman—a cleaner out of the shed—with which to run the second division. For that I was paid the fourth-class driver's rate, whereas my mate who was driving the first division in front of me was paid the first-class driver's rate, or 6s. a day more than I received. I always resented that principle.

An employee should be paid for the work he performs, and if he is doing a first-class job, for which a salary is laid down, he should be paid that salary. It is on that principle that I support the Bill. The Honorary Minister in another place is doing an enormous amount of work. I suppose he does more than half what the Ministers in this House, who are of full

Cabinet rank, do. I believe, therefore, that he is entitled to full Cabinet rank and the salary attached to it. I, therefore, propose to support the measure again as I did in 1947.

MR. ACKLAND (Moore) [5.55]: From the tone of the debate it seems as though there will be so little opposition to the Bill that I will not have the opportunity to express, in a division, my opinion on it. The Premier and the other members of the Cabinet are under no misapprehension as to how I feel about it. I am strongly opposed to the measure. It may be said that I am inconsistent because when a somewhat similar measure was introduced in the last Parliament I supported it. I did so because I believed that the Honorary Minister for Agriculture was doing such a great job, and his portfolio was so important, that he was entitled to full Cabinet status. That Bill was defeated.

Mr. Graham: How important is housing today?

Mr. ACKLAND: I think it was quite right that it should have been defeated. I supported it on only that one point. I think the Honorary Minister for Agriculture was one of the most efficient Ministers we had in the last Government. Now, because the Premier, or whoever allocates the portfolios, did not see fit to appoint that Honorary Minister to full Cabinet rank, I do not think it is my responsibility, or that of any other member of this House, to increase the expenditure of Parliament for that purpose. I have at all times taken the stand that the Governments of Australia are too costly for this country of eight million people; and that applies, possibly, more particularly to Western Australia. I did think that the Leader of the Opposition would oppose the Bill, and had he done so I considered we would have had an array of members voting against it. However, after listening to the speakers so far, who have all expressed their intention of supporting the Bill, I thought I should tell the House that I was opposed to it.

MR. CORNELL (Mt. Marshall) [5.57]: When a similar measure was before the Chamber a few years ago, I voted against it, and it was thrown out by a mixed division. It is a peculiar thing that two of the present members of Cabinet, one of whom this Bill seeks to elevate, also voted on the negative side on that occasion.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The Minister for Works and the Honorary Minister for Housing both voted against it.

Mr. CORNELL: I suppose time mellowes our judgment, circumstances alter cases, and it is very nice to be on the winning side! However, I do not propose to alter my opinion with the passage of time. I intend, like the previous speaker, not to support the Bill. The principal purpose

of the measure seems to me to be to save the present Ministerial team from contributing towards the cost of the Honorary Ministers' salaries. I might be unduly suspicious, but circumstances lately have made me that way. That, I think, to put it crudely, is the guts of this proposal.

There is, unquestionably, an unbalance with respect to the portfolios, as has been said. Some Ministers work prodigiously long hours; and one reason for this is that some of them often like to poke a finger in another Ministerial pie. Instead of sticking to their lasts they want to be sort of acting assistants to one or other of their Cabinet colleagues, without being invited to be so. Nevertheless, the allocation of portfolios is unbalanced and, while some Ministers work long hours, I regret to say that others do not seem to work at all. Some of the portfolios are sinecures whilst others involve a good deal of time and worry on the part of those possessing them.

Mr. W. Hegney: Which are the sinecures?

Mr. CORNELL: If the hon. member whistles, I will point. It appears to me that sometimes it must be an awful shame for some of the holders of those sinecures to take the money.

Mr. Styants: You are embarrassing the Minister for Prices.

Mr. CORNELL: During my brief Parliamentary career the post of Honorary Minister has always been regarded as a sort of apprenticeship to rank yet to come—a sort of work of love in anticipation of higher honours yet to be received. But, if this Bill be passed all the Ministerial team will have equal rank and it will be a team of captains. It has been suggested—not on the floor of the House, but I put it to the Premier now—that if the Premier wants to overcome this difficulty, and do the right thing by the two Honorary Ministers, whom the House admits are deserving of higher Cabinet rank, he could relegate two of the present full-time Ministers to the post of Honorary Ministers, and elevate the two Cabinet cabin boys to the rank of, say, Rear Admiral. By that means he will maintain the status quo and overcome the difficulties which, as members of this House admit, do exist.

Mr. J. Hegney: That would not overcome his difficulties; that would only create them.

Mr. CORNELL: Nevertheless, it seems that this Bill will be carried.

Mr. Fox: You never know.

Mr. CORNELL: There are upsets in the best of regulated families, but many members of the Opposition, no doubt with an eye to the future also, propose to support this measure and for very good reason. However, before I sit down I make this one appeal to the ten controllers of our destiny; that they give some consideration

to increasing the present lousy remuneration they pay to their Whip. As I am the Assistant Whip I do not come into the question at all, but the Whip—the member for Vasse—receives the princely remuneration of £100 per annum. In view of the work entailed—and there is some—consideration should be given by the Ministers when they receive the plums which this Bill has for them.

When those plums are ready to pick some consideration should be given to assisting along the monetary track the poor old Whip who is run dog poor getting together the back bench, on which he sits, to vote on these vital measures. It is my intention to oppose the measure because I do not think it is justified, and in my opinion the Premier did not establish a very sound case which would enable me to support it.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [6.4]: The comments of the member for Mt. Marshall have not prompted me to rise to speak to this measure. However, I wish to make some observations in regard to the holders of Ministerial office and private members. We have heard the member for Leederville, who has had a long and varied experience in this Parliament, saying that as he is about to retire he would advise people not to enter political life. He mentioned, although perhaps not in the same words, that the private member becomes disillusioned and during my short experience I have found the member for Leederville to be quite correct in this connection.

Hon. A. H. Panton: He generally is.

Mr. BOVELL: While dealing with this Bill some comment should be made about the relationship between the holders of Ministerial office and private members. I am not referring only to the present Government but I believe this state of affairs existed with all former Governments and applies in both Commonwealth and State spheres. There should be greater liaison, greater co-operation and greater confidence between Cabinet and members who are keeping that Cabinet in office.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. J. Hegney: That is a good one.

Mr. BOVELL: We are elected by our constituents and it just so happens that certain members are selected for the Ministry. Although the electorate that I have the honour to represent is changed in name, it has not actually changed in constituency. Both my predecessors have been removed from this Chamber by death, but even with their long Parliamentary experience they were not given an opportunity to prove themselves as Cabinet Ministers when our political parties were accepted by the majority of the electors and became the Government of the country.

Mr. J. Hegney: There ought to be a Minister for the South-West.

Mr. BOVELL: That is the only reason I have spoken on this measure. I must express the hope that if this Bill be passed it will be the forerunner of greater co-operation between Cabinet Ministers and private members. I repeat, I am not singling out any particular Government because it is the political set up in all our Parliaments. But, I hope that for once the member for Leederville will be proved wrong, and that the private member entering this Chamber will not be disillusioned in the future but will have some encouragement to know that he is taking part in the real government of the country. I believe that the present set-up denies a private member that right and that privilege.

MR. MANN (Avon Valley) [6.7]: When the Premier introduced this Bill he made very heavy work of it indeed. In fact, he wanted 20 Ministers. He portrayed to the House the enormous responsibilities of these selected people, and told us of the considerable amount of work falling to the Ministers at present. I am surprised he does not have 20 Ministers instead of 10. I have a suspicion of coalition Governments. I am one who said on the hustings that I did not believe in coalitions. I do not; they do not work too well.

Mr. W. Hegney: Do you believe in a change?

Mr. MANN: That is my belief in regard to coalitions. If the 10 full Ministers did more effective work, then it would be all right, but they would not. The Bill is an idle farce except to ease the Ministers' pockets by another hundred pounds, and the State will pay the whole amount. I join with my colleagues in thinking that if these two Ministers are raised to full Cabinet rank they will become a very exclusive body of men, believing that they are born with the wisdom of Solomon to control the State in their own way. Members of Parliament are not required today. Apparently we are a waste of time and are receiving the taxpayers' money for doing nothing. Here is a body supreme which will carry out the administration as it thinks fit—as it has done with the Mt. Barker water scheme. They will arrange things between themselves. The member for Vasse never said a truer word than when he appealed for coordination. There is no coordination. I suppose there is none on the other side of the House either.

Hon. A. H. Panton: We are better disciplined.

Mr. MANN: We are not disciplined, thank God, and I would not accept discipline either. That is definite.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is getting away from the Bill.

Mr. MANN: I am on the Bill again now. From my point of view I feel that the Bill is a farce.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is going to cost a lot of money for a farce.

Mr. MANN: There are many farces presented by the Government which are not necessary at all. I am quite unbiassed because I seek no honour for myself. I will not accept an honour. The Premier put this up in a bad way; he blushed when he introduced the Bill, and no man tells his own story better than the Premier when he blushes. It is a very embarrassing Bill indeed. He did not want to produce it, but he was apparently pressed by the coalition to do so. If the Liberal Party had been returned in sufficient numbers there would have been no Country Party member in the Cabinet.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Hear, hear!

Mr. MANN: And a damn good job, too, for then there would have been no coalition.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

MR. W. HEGNEY (Mt. Hawthorn) [7.30]: I desire to pass a few comments on the Bill. At the outset I should like to indicate that I propose to support it. When a similar measure was before us a few years ago, I voted against it, and the present Minister for Works and several other members on the Government side of the House also opposed it. On that occasion I took the view that, if one of the two Honorary Ministers were to be raised to full status, the second one should be treated similarly.

As against the opinion of the member for Moore and possibly that of a few other members, I hold the view that the time has arrived when an increase in the number of Ministers is justified. I do not approve of the system of appointing Honorary Ministers. That is a practice that has been handed down from Parliament to Parliament as far back as I can remember. Usually there have been eight full Ministers and two Honorary Ministers. The Honorary Ministers fulfil a very definite and necessary function; in fact, they fulfil the functions of a full Minister, and I have never been able to understand why we should continue Honorary ministerialships when those holding the positions are charged with definite ministerial responsibility.

The present Honorary Ministers are discharging ministerial duties, so far as I can judge, just the same as are the full Ministers, and nobody can advance as an argument that it is necessary to serve a sort of apprenticeship before becoming a Minister because, of the Ministers at present holding portfolios, quite a few had had no previous ministerial experience. I am wholeheartedly in accord with the proposal to increase the number of full Ministers from eight to ten and I would certainly not be averse to a proposal to increase the number to 12.

If Ministers are going to do their work as it should be done, they should not be overloaded. In saying this, I am not dealing with the limitations of Ministers because we are all subject to frailties and, in view of the increasing population and the increasing problems with which the State is confronted, I consider that an additional number of Ministers is warranted. The portfolios, however, should be more evenly distributed. An increased number of Ministers would be able to apply themselves more effectively to their reduced responsibilities and this, to a degree, would lighten the burden imposed upon the executive heads of departments.

I can visualise that certain members of the Public Service holding highly responsible positions have tremendous tasks to perform, and if Ministers, loaded up with portfolios, have to make themselves conversant with the legislation to be introduced, receive deputations and participate in the formulation of government policy, a very heavy burden must necessarily be cast on the Civil Service. I repeat that the time is not far distant when 10 full Ministers may prove to be insufficient and 12 or even more may be required. I voted against the previous measure because the proposal was that, although we had two Honorary Ministers, only one was to be raised to the position of full Minister, and I took the view that if one Honorary Minister was entitled to be elevated to full status the same should apply to the other.

I am amazed at some of the statements that have been made by members on the Government side of the House, true though those statements might be. I have no reason to doubt their authenticity. When I first read the contents of the Bill and heard what the Premier had in mind, I naturally assumed that, owing to the increased responsibilities of the State, the time had arrived when we should have 10 full Ministers. I took that as a reasoned statement and concluded that the attitude of the Government was reasonable. I repeat, however, that I am amazed at some of the statements made by members on the Government side who have indicated their opposition to the Bill. I am not one of those who indulge in personalities, but I can see that the member for Moore, the member for Avon Valley, and indeed the member for Mt. Marshall possibly have certain justification for voicing a protest.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What would you suggest?

Mr. Marshall: You whistle and I will point.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: If I understood the member for Moore aright, he said that the cost of government in Australia was too high. But the hon. member stopped there. He did not inform the House in what respect the Governments of Australia were too costly. He did not indicate whether the Legislative Council was an incubus; he did not say whether the

Senate should be abolished; he did not indicate whether the Commonwealth Parliament as a whole should be abolished, leaving the States to assume the responsibility of government. However, irrespective of whether we retain the system of having Honorary Ministers, or whether the present Honorary Ministers are to be made full Ministers, it will make very little difference to the aggregate cost of government in Australia.

I think that the raising of the Honorary Ministers to full Cabinet rank will be a step in the right direction and will be doing nothing more than justice to them. Take the Honorary Minister for Housing. In the course of his work he travels through various portions of the South-West and the wheatbelt, and it would be preferable both for himself and the Government if he were able to face the populace with the status of a full Ministerial portfolio, the same as the Minister for Works or the Attorney General.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Honorary Minister for Housing gets into enough trouble as it is!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I am surprised at the member for Avon Valley making the statement he did, though I have for a long time held the view—from 1947 as a matter of fact—that if the Liberals were returned with the requisite majority, they would not, to use an Australian expression, have a bar of the Country Party.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is a little irrelevant, I think.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: What the member for Avon Valley said was wide of the point, and I wanted to put him on the right track. He was endeavouring to justify his opposition to the Bill and, in the course of his remarks, he said that if there were 20 Ministers it would make no difference, because the private members under the present Government were not taken into the confidence of the Ministry. I assume, Mr. Speaker, that, being absolutely impartial, you would not be taken into its confidence; that you would not be in the counsels of the Ministry. But the member for Avon Valley has apparently not been taken into the confidence of the Ministry, even of the Liberal section of it, of which he has recently become an adjunct.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He was the originator.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I know. He may have some justification for his remarks, because we find that there was a measure passed in this Chamber some time ago, dealing with what is known as the comprehensive water scheme, and residents of the wheatbelt were to be participants in that scheme. By some means or other certain private members following the Government found that Cabinet

had entered into an agreement with certain local authorities in the lower Great Southern in 1949 in connection with this matter.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is too far away from the Bill again.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I am linking this matter up with the proposal now before the House. The member for Avon Valley mentioned that even if there were twice the number of Ministers and they were all full-time, his difficulty would not be overcome. He, as a member of one of the Government parties, found that Cabinet had agreed to something apart from what had originally been agreed upon in connection with the comprehensive water scheme; and certain private members demanded a conference, if not with the whole of the members of the Cabinet, at least with some of them, with a view to getting an assurance that the water supply scheme would not be extended to Mount Barker until the districts for which the scheme was first planned were served. What happened in that connection may be the reason underlying the very vigorous objection of the member for Avon Valley to this Bill.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: I think the reason for the water supply mix-up is that too many Ministers have had a finger in the pie.

The Attorney General: You had one finger in it.

Hon. A. H. Panton: He got it burnt, though.

The Attorney General: Not much.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: Another probable reason—and the member for Avon Valley is again my informant or backs up the contention which I have advanced for some years past—is that the Country and Democratic League broke away from its decision to require the same number of Ministers with full portfolios as the Liberal section of the Cabinet. For some reason or other **Hon. H. S. W. Parker**, a member of another place, handed in his resignation. Some say that the resignation was absolutely voluntary. Others assert that a certain amount of duress was exhibited. I am not in a position to say one way or the other what occurred, but I know that there were some circumstances which arose at the time—

The Attorney General: That is something like your opinion about the Communist Bill just now. Some say there has been duress exercised on the Labour Party in Western Australia.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: That is the most intelligent speech I have heard the Attorney General make in this Chamber.

The Attorney General: I think so too.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: If he improves at that rate, I will alter my opinion in regard to his capabilities.

The Attorney General: It went home, did it not?

Mr. W. HEGNEY: As I was pointing out when the Attorney General interrupted me, there were special circumstances surrounding the appointment of certain members of the Liberal Party and certain members of the Country Party to the Ministry. We find that the Liberal section of the Government demanded and succeeded in obtaining six Cabinet Ministers and the Country and Democratic League secured only four. Now we find that one of the terms and conditions of coalition was that the Country Party would have at least five full-time Ministers. The private members of the Government have reason to complain, but I am not going to allow the personal aspect to sway my judgment of the Bill. The promising young gentlemen who are occupying the back benches of the Government will be able to look to the future—though it may be a forlorn hope—with the knowledge that if they vote for the Bill and in the event of their being elevated to Cabinet rank, they will not have to put their hands in the pockets of other Ministers in order to receive payment for their services. They will obtain a ministerial salary the same as the other members of the Cabinet.

So while some members of the Government side have definitely indicated they will oppose the Bill, I believe that, apart from politics altogether, those occupying the ministerial bench should all be regarded as full-time Ministers and enjoy full ministerial status. The time has arrived, indeed, when in order that Ministers who conscientiously apply themselves to their tasks will not be overworked, there could well be two additional Ministers appointed to Cabinet rank to take on some of the responsibility and spread the duties carried out by members of the Cabinet. I hope the Bill will be passed. I understand it is one of the measures which need a constitutional majority.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is not so.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I am sorry. I assure the Premier that he has my deepest personal sympathy in connection with this and other measures. I say that in all sincerity, because he has a most difficult task in trying to keep two teams, or two sections of one team, together. On this occasion he will have my support towards the passage of this measure.

MR. OLIVER (Boulder) [7.48]: I have listened carefully to everything that has been said. What makes me support the Bill is the fact that there appears always to have been an Honorary Minister. It is only on rare occasions that the Government has not had an Honorary Minister. The only point with which we have to concern ourselves is as to what the cost will be. It would appear that there will

have to be an increase in ministerial salaries from £10,250 to £12,750. I do not think that is too large a price to pay if we are going to secure efficiency. While it may take a little more value out of the pound, there should be no serious effect.

I heartily support the Bill and hope that it will receive the assent of Parliament. The Premier might well consider having some of the more important departments controlled from this House. I think it is necessary that the Minister for Mines should be in the Assembly, so that we need not refer to another place when dealing with mining matters. The portfolio of Mines is an important one and should not be wrapped up with Railways and Transport. Any Minister holding these three positions is much overworked. I have always believed in progress, and that as we do progress everyone should have more leisure. To be consistent, I must therefore agree that Ministers should have more leisure. I agree with the member for Mt. Hawthorn that perhaps ten Ministers are not sufficient and that we should possibly have 12 or 14. I support the Bill.

MR. PERKINS (Roe) [7.51]: I intend to oppose the Bill, for the same reasons that I opposed a similar measure that previously came before the House. Whilst I have the greatest respect for the ability and energy that the Honorary Minister in this House and the Honorary Minister in the Legislative Council are bringing to the administration of the departments they are handling, I think that a question like this should be discussed on other than a personal basis. I believe that certain principles are involved. I am rather astonished that it should be the parties in the present Government who are bringing down a measure to increase the costs of administration. The increase may not be very much, but in the past I, together with other members of the parties at present comprising the Government, severely criticised the Labour Party for its rather free spending of the Government revenue. It does not seem to me to quite line up with the opinions expressed at such times, that the present Government parties should be responsible for increasing the costs of administration.

In what the member for Boulder had to say about the possible need for a further increase in the number of Ministers in order to carry on the Government effectively, I was quite interested. If we are to be consistent, and it can be shown that further Ministers could be used effectively, where are we to draw the line? I am inclined to think that, with the shifting, in recent times, of some of the responsibility from the State Parliament to the Commonwealth Parliament, it should be possible for the State Government to manage with a Cabinet of the same size as in past years. The Bill raises some questions of principle, but I cannot find any good

reason why I should alter the opinions I held when a similar measure was previously before us. I therefore intend to oppose the Bill.

MR. BRADY (Gulldford-Midland) [7.56]: In fairness to the members of my electorate, I feel I should oppose the Bill. The position as I see it is that if we vote in favour of there being 10 Ministers, the State will not get any more service than it is getting at present. It is true that the Honorary Ministers get certain subsidies from the other Ministers for their work, but that is nothing unusual. I understand that the members of the Legislative Assembly are more or less subsidising the members of another place so that they will be on an equality with us with respect to salary. So the precedent is not new.

I am concerned about the continuing increase in the cost of government. I understand that in this State the cost of government is between £120,000 and £140,000 per annum. The passing of this Bill would mean an increase of approximately £2,500. We should not continue to make these increases. The Premier, more than once, when introducing the Budget recently, referred to continually rising costs. We, as the most responsible body in Western Australia, should give some lead to the general public and cut down costs, not increase them.

As a member of this Parliament, I am fearful of where we are heading in regard to the State's economy and as to what the future holds. We should not at this stage be thinking of increasing the cost of administration; on the contrary, we should be reducing it. I can visualise the Government's bringing down legislation within six months to achieve economies in certain directions because of the possible decline of overseas prices, and that sort of thing. I cannot support the measure. As an offset to what is proposed the members of the Government could do something to help themselves by getting the people to take a more thoughtful interest in the government of the country.

Instead of Ministers having to listen to unnecessary deputations month after month and year after year, the Government should take a stand and say, "Let these deputations be cut out. Let the deputations put their case in writing, and let the Minister reply in writing." I feel that too much of Ministers' time is taken up with matters that could be entrusted to departmental heads. Those officers could deal with many matters instead of the Ministers having to concern themselves with details. We were told of the increasing responsibilities of various departments. Nearly all those departments have increased their staffs, and that has cost money.

On the other hand, we find some forms of government working in an honorary capacity. Chairmen of road boards and members of local governing bodies, such as municipal councils, carry on their work week after week and year after year, and receive no remuneration. Yet, because one or two members functioning under the parliamentary system are expected to carry some extra responsibility, they have to be paid for it. I do not think it would hurt some members to do a bit more for the general public. I consider some are getting a great deal more salary than they would in private jobs. If they have to carry a bit more responsibility as members of Parliament, it will not hurt them. Because I do not think we should be increasing costs, I shall vote against the Bill. It may be said, to my detriment, "You are only standing in your own light. If there were a change, you might be a member of the Government." Well, that does not concern me at all. There is a principle involved here, which is that we should be reducing costs rather than increasing them. I oppose the Bill.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—Mt. Lawley) [7.59]: I was rather interested in the remarks of the member for Guildford-Midland because apparently he is of the same opinion as the President of the United States in connection with our local Ministers. In a perfect democracy all citizens are entitled to meet the man who controls them. In the United States of America, until very recently, any member of that country was entitled to meet the President; and so the President had to work while people strolled or marched by him, because that was a meeting. That was only recently done away with. I do not think the Premier is urging that this Bill should go as far as that.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: What is the point in that?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There is no point in it. I did not rise to defend the principles contained in the Bill, as that will be done by the Premier, but because I think some criticism made by the Deputy Premier should be answered by me. The Deputy Premier can always be relied on to make a clever speech—

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Hear, hear! You are quite right.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: —and he did so tonight.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Hear, hear!

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker; I intended to refer to the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: That is the best argument against the Bill that has so far been put forward.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The Leader of the Opposition can always be depended upon to make a clever speech, and he did so tonight, but it was one of the most petty speeches I have ever heard him deliver. He so lacked any forceful argument that he started to attack the Crown Law Department and the Parliamentary Draftsman. That was unnecessary, and showed how weak was his case. He commenced by criticising the long title of the Bill.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You will be asking me to speak on the measure in Committee, now.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: On another occasion when a similar Bill was brought forward, the hon. member did not feel inclined to support it. The object of this measure is simply to increase the number of Ministers, and the object of a Bill should be indicated in the long title. In this case it is necessary to amend more than one Act. Not only is it proposed to increase the number of Ministers, but extra remuneration must also be provided for, and the long title reads, "An Act to amend certain Acts to provide for an increase from eight to 10 in the number of principal executive offices of the Government liable to be vacated on political grounds."

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: I think the Premier is hoping that you will not speak for long.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I think the long title is most appropriate. There has been some confusion also over the description of Ministers of the Crown given in the Constitution Act. Section 43, which the Bill proposes to amend, provides that there shall be eight principal executive offices of the Government liable to be vacated on political grounds. There is some doubt in the minds of members as to what is meant by "political grounds," but that is disclosed clearly in Section 74 of the 1899 Act, which states—

The appointment to all public offices under the Governor of the Colony hereinafter to become vacant or to be created whether such offices be salaried or not shall be vested in the Governor-in-Council.

Mr. W. Hegney: Would you say Mr. Parker vacated on political grounds?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There are the two classifications; those appointed by Executive Council and those appointed by the Governor. The only ones appointed by the Governor and not by Executive Council are the Ministers, and I regret to say that they are removed on political grounds. That is the distinction between the ordinary public servant and the Minister of the Crown. Under our Constitution, when the Governor is of the opinion that his Ministers no longer have the confidence of the majority of Parliament, he relieves them of their executive offices and they become ordinary members again.

Mr. W. Hegney: Are you supporting the Bill?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I rose only to make it quite clear that in this case the Parliamentary Draftsman has done a workmanlike job, and I think that on further consideration the Leader of the Opposition will agree.

MR. NALDER (Katanning) [8.7]: When a Bill similar to this was introduced on a previous occasion, I opposed it. I have listened to the present debate with considerable interest but have so far heard nothing that would cause me to alter my previous attitude. I think consideration could be given to the suggestion that members supporting the Government should act as secretaries to Ministers. In that way younger members would obtain experience that would stand them in good stead in later years should they eventually hold ministerial positions. I support the remarks of other members about the excellent work done by the Honorary Ministers. I would not like it to be thought that I did not feel they are doing excellent work and putting their best into it, but I see no reason why at this stage the Government should think it necessary to increase expenditure in this regard. I must oppose the measure.

MR. HILL (Albany) [8.9]: I think the growth of our State justifies an increase in the number of Ministers. I will give a comparison of some of our returns for 1940-41 with those of last year. In 1940-41 revenue was £11,432,000 odd, and for last year £25,810,000 odd. Ten years ago the wool produced was worth £76,170,000 and the wool produced last year was worth £97,308,000.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That was because Ministers have been wool-gathering.

MR. HILL: The wheat produced has risen from 21,000,000 bushels to 38,500,000 bushels; the number of sheep from 9,516,272 to 10,923,167, and the area of land selected from 346,365 acres to 870,802 acres, and the area of land leased from 2,509,275 acres to 3,415,545 acres. The tonnage of shipping inwards has risen from 3,040,611 to 4,630,989, the exports from £12,191,568 to £61,756,069 and imports from £18,614,730 to £69,443,937.

Mr. W. Hegney: How much of that came through the port of Albany?

MR. HILL: The Savings Bank deposits have risen from £10,193,000 to £33,528,416, while the population has risen from 474,791 to 557,000. The population per Minister for 1940-41 was 59,000. If the Bill be passed, and with the population increased to 557,000, it will mean that the population per Minister will be 55,000 and it will not be many years before it is considerably more than that. I should think it is obvious from those few figures that the State has made great progress and

naturally the work of Ministers has increased. For that reason I consider that the increase in the number of Ministers is fully justified.

HON. A. H. PANTON (Leederville) [8.12]: As one who is not a potential Minister in the next Government, perhaps I can be excused in having a little to say on this Bill before it goes to a vote. For the nine years that I was a Minister I considered that I was being deliberately robbed when I was asked to give £75 a year from my salary to pay for the Honorary Ministers, the Whip and the Secretary of the Party. Might I say at this stage that I am disappointed in the Government Whip because he has scabbed on the Whips of the previous Governments. This Whip receives £100 a year but the Whips, during my time, received £200.

Mr. Bovell: I can assure you I have no say in that.

The Premier: He has an assistant Whip.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: And they keep very good discipline. It is the best disciplined party that I have seen during my 30 years in Parliament. I have not seen one member of the Government parties sidestep over to this side of the House. I was interested in the remarks of the member for Vasse and the member for Katanning. It is not the first time I have heard of the necessity of having secretaries or assistant secretaries, or some other sort of secretaries, to assist Ministers. It is quite obvious that when members start to talk like that—with all due respect to them—they have absolutely no conception of the duty or work of Ministers. That is one of the objections I have to Honorary Ministers. I do not know whether the Honorary Ministers of the present Government have to get the O.K. of the Ministers who are in control of the particular departments to which these Honorary Ministers are attached, but our Honorary Ministers had to do so and the same would apply to the assistant secretaries.

Take the Minister for Mines! I was Minister for Mines and Health and had Civil Defence, Labour, Lands and a lot of others as well. It does not matter what Minister it is, if there is an assistant secretary he would be just the same as the Minister's secretary is today. He would have no responsibilities but would be a sort of statistical or research clerk. In my opinion he would be doing a lot of the chasing round that the Civil Service does today in order to gather information for his Minister. The Minister would have to accept the responsibility and sign the documents unless the Minister cares to sign on the dotted line under something which has been done by the secretary appointed to assist him. In my opinion assistant secretaries would be of little use and from my experience as a Minister I say the Civil Service does a good job. Its

officers have been reared, to a large extent, on those particular jobs that they are doing and the Civil Service has an excellent lot of men in its employ. They know the policy of the Government and it is a very old saying, and a very true one, that the Civil Service adapts itself to the policy of the Government that happens to be in power at the time.

These people know the policy and if a Minister wants to find out anything he knows immediately where to go, and who to approach, in order to find out. If he does not know as soon as he becomes a Minister then he will know in a week or two. He will soon find out exactly what member of the Civil Service he can approach to obtain the information he desires. I think all Ministers will agree with me on that point. When a Minister receives that information from the Civil Service he makes up his mind. To hear the talk this evening one would think that a ministerial job is a marvellous one. Let us get down to tin tacks and we will find out that it is not all that it looks. We can take any Minister, even going back as far as the late Lord Forrester. I think they would all agree that before they took ministerial office not one of them had any conception of the duties of a Minister.

The Minister for Works: Not one.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: There have been some wonderful Ministers in this Parliament. Why, I was a Minister myself for nine years. We all have to learn and we learn a lot from the members of the Civil Service.

Mr. Totterdell: I do not agree.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: What does the member for West Perth know about it? I draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. member's disorderly interjection, because he is not in his seat. I venture the opinion that he is one of those people who believe that a good business man will make a good Minister. I have seen such types coming through here and they do not even make good members of Parliament, let alone good Ministers—not one of them. We have had some very able business men and excellent lawyers—with all due respect to the Attorney General. Some of us remember a K.C. named Mr. Pilkington. I do not wish to say anything detrimental about him but he was a clever K.C. in this State but a very poor member of Parliament—that is, taking him all round. So, do not let us run away with the idea that Ministers are born. All they are born with is good commonsense. If they have not good commonsense they will not be a success either as a member of Parliament or as a Minister.

I remember a dear old man in this House—actually not too old because he died quite young—and I refer to Mr. Peter O'Loughlen. He hit the nail on the head more than once when he said that party politics would

be all right if there were sufficient ministerial jobs to go all round the party. In my opinion that is quite right and there would be little dissension in the party if we could have that state of affairs. However, I hope that members will get the idea right out of their heads that being assistant secretaries would be of any advantage. Ministers already have good secretaries who are trained to their jobs and that is the sort of secretary a Minister wants. The Constitution provides for so much as a salary for a Minister and when I was a Minister we were paid £1,000 over and above our normal Parliamentary salary. When I went into the Ministry I signed an order which entitled Cabinet to deduct £75 a year from my salary. For a long time we paid taxation on that amount, too, until it became too high and then the Honorary Ministers paid their own taxation on it. I consider that the Honorary Ministers should be paid if it is necessary to have extra Ministers. They should be paid by the country and not by the people with whom they are working.

I want to refer again to this idea of assistant secretaries. The policy of a Government is decided at a Cabinet meeting and a number of members used to come in with all sorts of ideas, but on nearly every occasion the Treasurer put his foot on them and softpedalled them. These things have to be discussed by Cabinet before they become the policy of the Government. What are we going to do with assistant secretaries? Are we going to have them sitting at the Cabinet table like they have at Premiers' conferences where there are all sorts of people sitting about? Are we going to have all these assistant secretaries in the Cabinet? All sorts of things come before Cabinet, are discussed by it and have to remain within the precincts of the Cabinet room, otherwise we could not carry on with good government. How are we going to appoint assistant under secretaries and then when they put up a proposition which is rejected, reply to them, "I am sorry, Bill, it is just bad luck."

Mr. Graham: The system of parliamentary under secretaries works in Britain, does it not?

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I do not know whether it does or not. I know from practical experience it will not work here. If we have not enough Ministers at present, then let us appoint more. Personally, I think there are enough if the portfolios are distributed evenly. One Minister can be given too much work to do and another Minister not enough. Therefore, having at our disposal a fully-trained first class Civil Service, whose members know all about the job of supplying information to Ministers, it would be extremely foolish on our part to start training assistant under secretaries. If potential applicants for such a position want an honorary job, there are plenty of such jobs outside of Parliament that can be done. Any amount

of them! I had one to do today. Whatever the member for Guildford-Midland might think about the position of the liaison between a Minister and the Cabinet, the real liaison exists in this House when you, Sir, ring the bells and the members troop from one side of the House to the other to support their Ministers and that is how the Premier should keep the position.

HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Northam) [8.22]: I have not yet been convinced that this Bill is justified.

Mr. May: You could not have listened to the Attorney General.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: As a matter of fact, I listened very attentively to the Attorney General—very attentively!

The Attorney General: Steady! Steady!

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I came to the conclusion, after listening to his speech, that instead of having a Bill before us to provide for ten Ministers at present, we should have a Bill before us for a reduction of one in the existing number or eight. The point I have tried to consider in this Bill is what effect its passing will have on affairs of government and the State generally. The member for Albany quoted a lot of statistics with the idea, presumably, that certain increases in production and in population over the years now justified this Parliament in providing for ten full Ministers instead of carrying on with the eight full Ministers now provided for in the Constitution.

The passing of this Bill will not give the Government or the State any more men to carry out ministerial duties. At present we have eight full Ministers and two Honorary Ministers, making a total of ten in all. If this Bill becomes law we will have ten full Ministers and no Honoraries at all, giving us the same total number of Ministers of ten. It seems to me, therefore, that the passing of this Bill will in no degree provide greater ministerial attention to the affairs of the State. It will not ease the burdens which are now upon ministerial shoulders. The main effect, if not the only effect, of the passing of this Bill will be to raise to full ministerial status two gentlemen who now occupy positions as Honorary Ministers only.

It has been said this evening by several speakers that the two Honorary Ministers are amongst the hardest workers and the most capable members of the Ministry. Presumably, therefore, they have in the past given of their talents, time and ability to their positions to the fullest possible extent and doubtless they are giving full service to the State at present in their honorary capacity. The mere passing of a Bill raising their status from honorary to full-time and fully-paid Ministers will in no degree confer any additional service

upon the State. They will give in the future the same full measure of service to the State as they have been giving in the past.

Mr. Bovell: Do not you think they are entitled to be paid for it by the State?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I have not yet admitted that it is necessary to have ten full Ministers in Western Australia. If I were asked to suggest how the existing difficulty of the Government could best be solved, I would suggest it could best be solved by a re-arrangement of some of the Ministers who are now full Ministers. I think there should be something in the way of promotions for the two Honorary Ministers and something in the way of demotions for at least two of the full Ministers. That is how the problem could easily and very effectively be solved.

This Bill is not one to assist Western Australia. If it were passed, it could not possibly assist Western Australia. This Bill is to help the Government as a Government. This Bill is to overcome some internal problem which has arisen within the Government, probably between the two parties which make up the Government. It has been suggested that this Bill is before us because one of the parties to the Government has requested or demanded that it have made good to it the Minister which it lost as a result of the last elections.

So I think if we are to get down to the fundamentals of this Bill we have to ask ourselves whether the affairs of the Government within this State at present require the services of ten full-time Ministers. Ten full-time Ministers is a fairly big team, even in a State such as Western Australia. I know it has been argued that there is a great deal of work to be done by Ministers. There is a great deal to be done and I sometimes wonder why the Ministers do not do it. I think the problem might easily resolve itself into one of better organisation by the Government. I am sure the Premier could, if he set himself to do it, re-organise his team in such a way as to make it unnecessary for us to pass legislation to provide for the appointment of ten full-time Ministers in this State.

I am sure the Premier could choose eight full Ministers from his present team of ten who could carry out very effectively, and much better than is being done at present, the ministerial duties which are awaiting attention. I do not think any Government is justified in coming to Parliament simply because it has a domestic or internal problem which it could solve by simpler methods, and without coming to Parliament at all. Every member is sufficiently observant during each sitting, and during each session, to know that the present ministerial team is not organised on the best possible basis. It could be organised much better and more effectively. It could continue with eight

full Ministers—not the present eight, or not all of them—and two Honorary Ministers, and give ever so much more effective service to the people of Western Australia than it is giving today, or than it has given during the last 3½ years.

If Parliament passes this legislation, it will be doing the present Government a very good turn; it will be solving a ticklish problem for the Government; it will be making the future of the Government in regard to its domestic and political difficulties much easier than it has been since the election this year. Therefore, I think the task that is still upon the shoulders of the Premier is to prove to the House that there is substantial justification for this Bill. It will not be sufficient for him to say that the population of the State has increased, that production has increased, or that the number of responsibilities upon Governments these days is much greater than it was before the war. Nor will it be sufficient for him to say that revenue today is 50 per cent. more than it was 12 years ago, because we must realise that although revenue might be up considerably today, that increased amount of revenue today only does half the amount of work that it did 12 years ago.

It would be very foolish for any member to be misled into thinking that there is additional responsibility on the Government because the revenue this year is, say, £5,000,000 greater than it was ten years ago. We all know that the value of money has changed considerably since 1939. We know that whereas it might have cost £1 to do a job in 1938, it would cost £2 and perhaps £3 to do the same job today. There is no additional ministerial work and no additional ministerial responsibility because of that.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The Premier had to raise his own funds in those days. He has them given to him today.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: That is so. I have yet to be convinced that this Bill is necessary. I do not think it is necessary in the interests of the State, and I am not prepared to support it simply because it might be necessary in the interests of the Government to help solve some internal trouble which might exist as between the two parties comprising the Government. If there is some personal trouble as between one Minister and another, or if the Honorary Ministers consider they are doing much more than some of the full Ministers, then let the Premier take his courage in his hands and solve the problem without coming to Parliament; let him reshuffle his team effectively. If he does that, I am sure the ministerial affairs of Western Australia will be more effectively carried on than they have been during the last 3½ years, and it will avoid a situation in which the State has more full-time Ministers than it really needs.

MR. OWEN (Darling Range) [8.35]: When this measure was introduced I must admit that I viewed it with an open mind, and I thought I would hear the debate from both sides of the House before I decided which way my vote would go. On this side of the House we have professed alarm for a number of years at the tremendous growth of the Civil Service and the administrative cost to the country. There is no doubt that the Civil Service has grown out of all proportion, and I feel that it is a case of one job making another. There is no doubt, however, that it has thrown more work on the Ministers who look after the extra departments and the increased staff. The arguments put forward this evening, however, have not quite convinced me that we need a larger Cabinet. Mention has been made of the South Australian position, where the Premier of South Australia has a Cabinet of six and holds most of the portfolios himself. I feel that is leaning a little too much towards one man control, as we have had represented by one or two dictators in the last decade.

I think the present team of eight in our Cabinet does give us what is necessary under our democratic system. I do not like the idea, however, of there being 10 in a team and only eight being paid. It seems that the only argument for increasing the numbers is that every Minister can be brought to the status of a fully paid Minister. I am not quite convinced that it is necessary to incur the extra cost of making two further full-time Ministers. I feel that if the members of the Cabinet really got down to business and responded to the appeal made by the Right Hon. the Prime Minister, when he asked all sections to pull their weight and to increase production in whatever field they may be, and that if every member of the present team of eight Ministers did pull his weight, there would be no need for a Cabinet of 10. I therefore oppose the Bill.

MR. MAY (Collie) [8.40]: I do not intend to cast a silent vote on this Bill, and I do not intend to allow myself to be influenced by anything I have heard during the course of the debate. I desire to take an opportunity, as I have done each session since I have been a member, to express my disapproval of the action of the Government in transferring the portfolio of Mines to a Minister not in this Chamber. In my opinion, the portfolio of Mines is one that should be held by a Minister in this House because of the extensive operations of the Department of Mines.

As to the arguments for and against the appointment of two additional full Ministers, I may say that I have observed the work of various Ministers from time to time and I consider that a man who discharges these duties as a full-time job should be paid for his services. I am no slavedriver and, if there is need for 10

Ministers to administer the affairs of the State, they should be paid for their services. Whether the appointment of additional Ministers will lead to an improvement in administration does not matter at the moment. The point I stress is that if the two Honorary Ministers are doing a full-time job, they should receive payment.

In the event of the Bill being passed, I should still like to see two Honorary Ministers appointed. The State is growing tremendously, and the work of administration is growing similarly, and I am not prepared to leave an ever-increasing amount of administrative responsibility in the hands of civil servants. Since I have been a member of this House I have formed the opinion that certain civil servants have too much say in the government of the country. I readily admit that some of our officials are doing an excellent job, but I still maintain that the responsibility for administration should rest with Ministers and the Parliament, and should not be in the hands of civil servants. I propose to support the Bill as I consider that, when a member is appointed as an Honorary Minister and has a full-time job, he should be paid for it. Let me once more stress that, when the Cabinet is being re-arranged, I hope it will be possible for the Minister controlling the Mines Department to be one occupying a seat in this House.

MR. J. HEGNEY (Middle Swan) [8.45]: I do not intend to cast a silent vote. During the debate, I have not heard one really substantial argument advanced from the Government side as to why we should support the measure. Most speakers on the Government side have roundly condemned the Bill, but no good reason has been given for passing it. I have had a good deal of experience over the years with Government departments, and I know of nothing to justify this proposal to increase the Ministerial vote. I do not agree with those speakers who contend that the chief administrators should be called upon to make decisions and that Ministers should not be required to meet deputations. This freedom to approach Ministers by way of deputation represents the very lifeblood of democracy. But for that, what justification can there be for having Ministers of the Crown? Members are elected by the people to represent them, and the people have a right, through their members, to place their views before Ministers. If we wiped out that system, we might as well set up an oligarchy straight away.

I have had experience of Government departments and have had occasion to complain to Ministers that information has been supplied to all and sundry in my electorate except to the member concerned. I suggested to Ministers that I supported that when supplying information and answers to inquirers—information to which they are justly entitled—the

member representing the electorate should be given the information before it is given to local authorities or other interested bodies. I complained to the Premier about this matter, and he issued an instruction to the departments to prevent that sort of thing happening, but there are certain civil servants who just go behind the backs of Ministers. A complaint has been made that some Ministers have not been doing their work. I have not been here long enough on this occasion to know whether that is correct or not. I have come into contact with some departments, and they are certainly active departments, but I cannot speak with first-hand knowledge of other sections of the service. I repeat that the debate has revealed no real reason why the Bill should be agreed to, and therefore I shall vote against it.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [8.48]: I did not intend to speak on the Bill but, as so much has been said, I may as well add a few words. I recall that in 1927—you will remember this, Mr. Speaker—the then Government, led by Mr. Collier, had six full Ministers and three Honorary Ministers. Two of the Honorary Ministers occupied seats in this House and one in the Legislative Council. The Collier Government introduced a Bill to increase the number of full Ministers from six to eight. I have looked up the remarks made by the then Premier, and it will be appropriate to quote some of them at this stage. According to "Hansard" of the 30th November, 1927, at page 2257, Mr. Collier said—

It will be within the knowledge of the House that the number of Ministers has not been increased since the passing of the Constitution Act of 1899, so that for all those years the numerical strength of Ministers has remained the same. It will be recognised at once that the work of administration and of the departments has grown enormously during the past 28 years. It is merely true to say that, at the end of the last century, we were almost at the beginning of things and that, in the interim, the work of government in all directions has increased greatly . . .

I do not regard the principle of appointing Honorary Ministers as sound, and there is no reason why the State should not provide the number of Ministers needed, and also the funds needed, instead of Parliament being furnished with the services of Honorary Ministers who, of course, in most cases, are assisted or paid by portfolio Ministers. That has been the custom or practice for many years past.

I have not gone into figures, but there is no doubt whatever that the number of those in the Public Service

engaged in administering the various departments has multiplied four or five times during the past 30 years or so. One need only have regard to the Lands Department, which was a very small thing 30 years ago. The work of that department alone entails three or four times the effort that it did when the last increase of Ministers was made. The same remark applies to the Agricultural Department: indeed, I doubt whether that department existed in those days.

We find that after the Bill had been introduced it had a swift passage, and went through the first, second and third readings at the one sitting. When the then Leader of the Opposition, Sir James Mitchell, spoke to the Bill, he said—

This Bill should have an easy passage through the House. The suggestion was made some three years ago, and has at last taken shape. Undoubtedly Ministers have too much to do in carrying on the business of the country. In the old days there were only six Ministers, and no Honorary Ministers. There is far too much work for six Ministers to do. Some of us have had to take several important departments under our wing. The present Government had to appoint three Honorary Ministers to assist them in carrying on their duties. That is a very undesirable thing. If the country needs the services of Ministers, it must be prepared to pay for them.

There were six Ministers and three Honorary Ministers in those days, making a total of nine. I understand if this Bill is passed there will be 10 fully paid Ministers and no Honorary Ministers; so there will be only one more than in 1927. I do not think there is anybody in the House who will say that the work of the departments has not increased since that time. Take, for instance, the Minister in charge of housing in 1927: What did he have to do? He was the Minister controlling the Workers' Homes Board, and that was a mere bagatelle. Today there is a large and important department of housing in the State, and the man administering it should be doing that and nothing else. Whoever is in charge of that department should be employed full-time on the work and should be paid for the job.

Again, there is the Honorary Minister for Agriculture. I doubt whether there are many more important jobs than his, and he should be paid for what he is doing. If anyone dares to suggest that he is not doing his job, then he should be put out and someone else appointed to replace him. But I do not think anyone would suggest that the Hon. G. B. Wood is not a hard-worked Minister. He is one of the busiest Ministers of whom I know, and he is kept busy from one year's end to the other.

When a man holds down such a job, he is entitled to be paid for it. Three years ago, when a similar Bill was before the House, having as its object the appointment of an extra Minister, I supported the Government. I have heard nothing since to convince me that I should not vote for this Bill. I have much pleasure in supporting it because I think it is justified.

May I say in passing that during the regime of the Wise Government, Ministers were very hard-worked. I was really concerned about one or two of them, because I could see them going grey-headed and bald-headed, weighted down, with their wings flapping as much as to say, "I doubt whether I can see this term out." I am satisfied that they were hard-worked. I think we should do something to provide for two additional full-time Ministers. What is an extra £2,000 a year to this State? It is a mere bagatelle if the job is being done properly. People who object to this Bill are like those who object to a good engineer being paid an extra £1,000 or £2,000 a year. On one job a bad engineer could involve those who employed him in a loss of many thousands of pounds, and I suppose that with a bad Minister something of the same kind could occur. I intend to support the Bill and hope it will have a quick passage, as was the case with the 1927 measure.

MR. FOX (South Fremantle) [8.55]: I intend to oppose the Bill. I have not heard any argument which would justify the appointment of any additional full-time Ministers. In fact, I think that six Ministers should be sufficient to do the whole job.

Mr. Oliver: You are a slavedriver!

Mr. FOX: No, I am not! But I was speaking to a prominent ex-member of this Parliament who had been a Minister for many years, and he said that the secretary of a large industrial organisation had a harder job to do than a Cabinet Minister. He was in a position to know. After listening to the pitiful tale of the member for Fremantle, I decided to say a few words on the matter.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: The man of whom you spoke got out and took a job in a bank.

Mr. FOX: He was in a position to know it was a harder job, because he did both.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He got out as quickly as he could.

Mr. FOX: He was in a position to know.

The Minister for Lands: The member for Fremantle is supporting Labour policy, you know.

Mr. FOX: I believe in supporting it.

The Minister for Lands: I do not think so. You are a nigger driver.

Mr. FOX: Private members who have to introduce Bills have a harder job than any Cabinet Minister. Cabinet Ministers have their matter prepared for them by the officers of the departments.

The Minister for Education: Who told you that?

Mr. FOX: Nearly every Minister reads his speeches. Some apparently do not read them before they come into the House and know very little about them. We have heard talk about an increase in the responsibilities of those controlling the housing position. What about the increase in the number of people in the Housing Commission? There are hundreds who were never there when we merely had a Workers' Homes Board.

I have nothing to say against public servants. I have the greatest admiration for them, and especially for the heads of departments, because one always receives courtesy and assistance when one visits them on any matter at all. Suppose the Commonwealth Government took a leaf out of the book of this Government and appointed Ministers in proportion to the number which it is proposed to appoint here! On a population basis we will have 10 Ministers for 500,000 people. How many would be needed for 8,000,000 people? No fewer than 160. It is ridiculous to have so many. Six Ministers should be able to do the job in this State.

Mr. W. Hegney: For the whole State?

Mr. FOX: Of course! They should be able to do the job. The heads of departments do a considerable amount of work. Very often one can obtain as much information from those officials as from Ministers, if not more. That is quite natural, because it is their job, for which they are trained. Members of Parliament who are appointed Ministers have not the background of heads of departments. Some of them may have, particularly those who have had industrial experience.

Mr. Oliver: What do you want—government by bureaucracy?

Mr. FOX: No, government by the people, which we have not got in this State at present, because another place rules Western Australia and not this Chamber at all. I have not heard any argument advanced that would tempt me to vote for the Bill, and I therefore intend to oppose it.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray—in reply) [8.58]: I must confess that my timetable has gone astray. I thought we would be much further ahead than we are. This is the position as I see it: For many years successive Governments have appointed Honorary Ministers. I assume they would not have been appointed if they had not been needed. I do not believe they were appointed to hand out sops or to placate someone. They were

appointed because they were wanted. As time has progressed, the work of all departments has increased; and, as a result, the work of Honorary Ministers has also increased.

It has been admitted tonight by most of the speakers, I think, that the work done by the Honorary Ministers, not only in this Government but in previous Governments, has been such that they could be rightly classified as full-time Ministers. So I think a principle becomes involved, and that is, are we to continue with Honorary Ministers when it is generally admitted there is work for a full-time Minister, or are we to have full-time Ministers? I heard it said that no arguments were put forward for an increase in the number of Ministers. Well, I did my best when introducing the Bill to give reasons for the appointment of 10 Ministers.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: You gave all the reasons but the real one.

The PREMIER: No. I shall deal with that point which is that pressure has been brought to bear upon myself or the Government to appoint these full-time Ministers so that we could get over the difficulties of a coalition Government. I think that has been disproved tonight. If that pressure had been exercised by the Country and Democratic League, as has been suggested by some members, it is rather strange that on the cross-benches we have heard at least four Country and Democratic League members say they will oppose the Bill. So that argument is, I think, quite fallacious and falls to the ground.

The real reason the Bill is being introduced is because we think there is a full-time job for 10 Ministers. Those members who support the Bill spoke at considerable length when giving reasons why it should be agreed to. The growth of the State has been given as a reason—it does not appeal to the member for Northam—and also the volume of business that has arisen over the past few years. The member for Fremantle quoted a speech made in 1927 by a former Premier, the late Hon. P. Collier, giving reasons why full-time Ministers should be appointed. That was 23 years ago. The very reasons which the late Mr. Collier then advanced have, I think, been advanced by me on this occasion. I believe that even that hon. gentleman did not visualise how rapid the growth of this State would be. The importance of some portfolios which in days gone by might have been considered as of a minor nature, has increased tremendously.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The same thing can be said in reverse. Portfolios which were very important have disappeared. I can mention Civil Defence, and many others.

The PREMIER: That is coming back again.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Unemployment is another.

The PREMIER: That is so. The need for civil defence is being impressed on us today and, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, it is a matter which is looming large in discussions with the Commonwealth.

Mr. Marshall: I thought defence was a responsibility of the Commonwealth Government.

The PREMIER: It is, but the Commonwealth Government does not accept responsibility for civil defence. I wish it would.

Mr. Marshall: It should be made to, and leave some of the other matters, which are State matters, alone.

The PREMIER: I wish that were so. I was talking of the growing importance of every department of Government. Can any member suggest any department which is not important? It might be said—perhaps I should not say this—that certain departments have not been given all the attention that they should have been given. I think the member for Melville said that he felt there was much to occupy Ministers' minds. That is so. From my own point of view, even if I was the Premier without any other portfolio, I would have a full-time job without an idle moment. But in addition, I am Treasurer, as was the Leader of the Opposition. I confess—the member for Leederville raised this point—that I never knew until I took office that it was such an exacting job. My experience is that whether I am in my office or out of it, there is something occupying my mind continuously; and sometimes it is an uneasy mind.

Every Minister can find plenty to do. In fact, Ministers should not have many idle moments. Some criticism has been made of the Ministers, and there was reference to the Honorary Minister in the Upper House, and his activities in connection with the North-West. Up to the present I have taken a great part of the responsibility in regard to the North-West, and that is why the Honorary Minister for Agriculture has not been fully occupied with North-West matters. This is a department which is growing, and I have been trying to get a grip of it. I am sure that its importance will loom much larger in the future than it has done in the past. Because of that, more time will have to be given to it. Some slighting reference was made to the fact that Ministers read their speeches, and as a result there is no work for them to do, and the job is easy.

Mr. Hoar: It would not be so bad if they wrote them.

The PREMIER: I do not know whether the hon. member knows whether they write them or not. I delivered a speech here the other night which took at least two hours, and I read it.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You read it very well, too.

The PREMIER: I thank the hon. member. I spent hours on that speech—in my office, when I was travelling to the Premier's Conference, and when I went to my home at the week-end. I realised that in delivering a speech such as that I had to understand what I was talking about because there was always the danger of an interjection, or a request for an explanation—and I had in mind my friend the Leader of the Opposition because he is the principal one who deals with the Budget. My advisers at the Treasury might have formed the opinion at times that I was rather dull, because when I could not understand the meaning of a certain matter in my Budget I had to ask them to re-explain it to me until I did understand it. I wanted to be in the position that, if I received a question or interjection, I should be able to put my notes down and give an intelligent answer.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I do not think there was any suggestion of complaint about your having read your Budget speech.

The PREMIER: I know it has been customary to read the Budget speech.

Mr. Marshall: Reading a Budget speech is all right, but it is a bit thick when a Minister reads his speech on some little Bill that has hardly anything in it.

The PREMIER: The reading of a speech is no crime, so long as the Minister concerned understands what he is reading and is able to explain it intelligently. I am convinced that the appointment of two extra Ministers will lead to greater efficiency in government. While I know the two Honorary Ministers are accepting full responsibility today they will, if raised to full Cabinet rank, have the knowledge that they are in complete control of their departments.

In my own case, as Minister for Forests, I know that there are certain documents that the Honorary Minister cannot sign. He must forward them to me for signature and he can therefore not deal with that work as he would like to. I was rather surprised that, because we have had Honorary Ministers practically ever since the beginning of responsible government in this State, certain members think that that principle should be adhered to. I have always understood that the majority opinion in this House was that if a man was doing a full-time job he should be paid a full-time salary for it.

Members: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: That is the principle of this Bill and, that being so, I hope members will support it. Some members have not spoken during the debate and, if they have not already made up their minds, I ask them, even at this late stage, to give the Bill their support, as I am convinced it is in the best interests of the State.

Mr. May: If agreed to, will it mean a re-shuffle?

The PREMIER: Perhaps I should ask the member for Collie to give notice of that question, but I can assure him there will not be a re-shuffle during the present session of Parliament.

Mr. Oliver: What about the Minister for Mines?

Mr. May: I had in mind the Minister for Mines.

The PREMIER: I listened to what the member for Boulder had to say about the Minister for Mines and I have heard the member for Mt. Marshall voice the same objections, though not tonight.

Mr. Marshall: Not the member for Mt. Marshall.

The PREMIER: I am sorry, I meant the member for Murchison, and also the member for Collie. I will make no promise in that regard tonight, but assure members that consideration will be given to the matter. Mention has been made of certain sinecures, but I know of no Minister of this Government whose job is a sinecure. The Honorary Minister in this House is in charge of a growing department, which claims his full attention. I feel that when introducing the Bill I gave in full the reasons why it should be accepted, and I hope the House will agree to it.

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

Ayes	....	....	....	35
Noes	....	....	....	12
Majority for	....	....	....	23

Ayes.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. Needham
Mr. Brand	Mr. Nimmo
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Oliver
Mr. Doney	Mr. Pantou
Mr. Graham	Mr. Read
Mr. Griffith	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Guthrie	Mr. Sewell
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Hill	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Styante
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Manning	Mr. Totterdell
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Watts
Mr. May	Mr. Wild
Mr. McCulloch	Mr. Bovell
Mr. McLarty	

(Teller.)

Noes.

Mr. Ackland	Mr. J. Hegney
Mr. Brady	Mr. Mann
Mr. Cornall	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Fox	Mr. Owen
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Grayden

(Teller.)

Pair.

Mr. Yates	Mr. Wise
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Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1950-1951.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the 28th September on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates, Mr. Perkins in the Chair.

Vote—Legislative Council, £3,966.

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gascoyne) [9.23]: Firstly, I want to thank the Premier for his kindness and courtesy—because I am not in the best of health this evening—in offering to postpone this item. While I may not do one hundred per cent. justice to it, I will endeavour to analyse what appear to me to be some cogent points within the Budget and within the Premier's speech. It is an interesting fact that the Budget was introduced late in September this year and this apparently is early enough, but when it was a matter for great haste, on the last occasion, to suit the Government's purposes, the Budget was introduced in July.

We all know that the Government could not, because of the impending resignations, have controlled the Chamber if Parliament had continued to sit into October of last year. By this time last year, not only had the Estimates been passed, but the Appropriation Bill also. I do not wish to traverse that ground because I am sure the Government has felt sufficiently guilty on that point and further analysis or comment upon it will not make any difference.

In the Premier's speech, which occupied two hours the other evening, only eight members of this Chamber sat through the entire period. That is a matter for adverse comment, and I refrained from drawing attention to the state of the Committee on several occasions. It is grossly unfair to the Premier and Treasurer of this country that members find it difficult to continue to form a quorum when the most important speech of the year is being delivered.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: Hear, hear!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: While I do not agree with the necessity of reciting certain estimates and expenditures, and variations where only a few thousand pounds variation has occurred, there are some most important angles presented in a Budget speech which should be of interest to everybody and which affect the lives of all the community. I acknowledge that it is a different matter today when the Premier is not introducing a Budget to fix or anticipate the rate of taxation. In the Premier's recollections of proceedings in this Chamber, the galleries were filled, in years gone by, with people, not only politic-

ally minded, but also business people and people from all walks of life anticipating how much tax they would have to pay. Today it is very different and the Premier is forced to introduce a drab sort of Budget in a very difficult speech; a speech which is difficult to remove from drabness and difficult to make bright in many particulars.

The Premier anticipates a record expenditure of nearly 26½ million pounds, and in his anticipation of how that expenditure is to be made up, he delivered three most important sentences which had no reference to actual figures. These sentences gave me considerable food for thought and they should be given great consideration by all members. Early in his speech the Premier said—

In successive Budgets and other financial statements, I have referred to the vulnerability of the State's finances to rising costs under the existing scheme of Commonwealth-State relations, which forces us into a position of growing dependence on Commonwealth assistance. The gap between State expenditure and the revenue available from sources other than income tax reimbursements and special Commonwealth grants is widening at a disquieting rate.

I agree entirely with that sentiment, and I will analyse it directly to show how different are those words, expressed on this occasion by the Premier, from those views which he held a few years ago. Another paragraph was this—

Under these circumstances, with the health of the State's finances so precariously dependent on the policy of the Commonwealth which, of course, is subject to the pressure of its own new and growing financial requirements, the development of a more satisfactory scheme of Commonwealth-State financial relations has become a problem requiring urgent action if the States are to survive.

The Premier: You agree with that?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Another paragraph was—

The extent of the State's dependence on Commonwealth financial assistance has for some years been such as to cause concern. So far, the State has received adequate assistance from the Commonwealth but increasing dependence on the Commonwealth Government is an unsatisfactory feature of existing Commonwealth-State financial relations.

And the third sentence to which I draw attention, and one of the most important in the speech, is this reference to the Grants Commission wherein the Premier said—

... in the view of the Commission the solution of part of our budgetary difficulties rests with ourselves.

Let us for a few moments analyse what is meant in those three, to my mind, most important comments. In the first place the Premier raised the point of the vulnerability of the State's finances because of rising costs under the existing scheme of Commonwealth-State relations, which forces us more and more upon Commonwealth assistance, and increases at a disquieting rate the gap between State expenditure and the revenue available. Members who are interested in the subject of the State's finances will find, if they examine closely the Budget tables, just how wide that gap is becoming.

I am somewhat heartened, even at this late stage, to think that the Premier is at last realising the drift in the State's financial position. It has been, I think, my duty on the last three occasions on which the Budget has been introduced, to draw attention to the course we are following and just what is inevitable if that course is further pursued. It is all very well to raise the point mentioned in a previous discussion this evening that responsibilities are becoming greater because of increased expenditure. That does not necessarily follow. It is true, under the Taxation Reimbursement Act, the Premier has not the difficulties associated with the days when financial emergency tax had to be introduced, and if members will go back through the past Budget tables they will find, in Return No. 3 in each Budget, the course which this State has followed in regard to the taxable capacity considered the limit by Treasurers of the past. If they will compare those figures with the figures of today they will see what opulence the present Treasurer enjoys, without the worry of raising the money.

We have only to go back to the year immediately pre-war to find that the Budget was under £11,000,000. One can go back further to the days when it was not possible, either at a Premiers' Conference or a Loan Council, to get approval for loan moneys—if such loan moneys were not to be earmarked for wages for works which involved wages and not materials—in order to employ the unemployed. I can recall a Premiers' Conference which haggled, from the Commonwealth angle, over whether this State should reduce its loan requirements by £100,000. I can recall the dissatisfaction of Premiers, six of them round the table with the Commonwealth representatives, being forced to reduce collectively their anticipated borrowings by £250,000 and to share between them the appropriate reductions. Today, a vastly different position exists from that when in this State not 1,000 but tens of thousands of people were unemployed, and for whom neither private enterprise nor the Government could find employment.

If we look at returns which are shown in all Premiers' and Treasurers' statements as to deficits and surpluses, we will find the true difficulties of government in the

days when the depression was with us, and when war was with us. In the years from 1930 to 1938, government was extremely difficult when the loan programmes of Western Australia rarely exceeded £2,000,000; when the possible borrowing was said to be impossible above the figure of £12,000,000 for all Australia. What a vastly different proposition it is today compared with the time when Western Australia, if it were granted by the Loan Council £800,000 or £900,000 to spend from loan, was getting as much as it could expect. If we look at Return No. 5 of the Budget tables, we will find the deficits approaching £4,000,000 in three years, simply because the Government had little alternative when it had to leave rollingstock piled up by the mile because it could not afford to release it either by new work or replace it by old.

Let us go back to the days when the Savings Bank had to be closed—I will refer to that a little later in my speech—and compare those days with the present! I am sure that the position in which the Premier finds himself with this record expenditure must be giving him some very disquieting moments. He must be wondering where he is heading for the simple reason that so much of the expenditure appears to be uncontrollable. So I will refer again to the sentence which I named first as one of the most important in the Budget speech, and also to the second one, "The vulnerability of the State's finances to rising costs under the existing scheme of Commonwealth-State relations, which forces us into a position of growing dependence on Commonwealth assistance." This brings us to the urgent necessity for a Commonwealth convention to iron out, before it is too late, the Commonwealth and State financial relations because we are heading, in my view, under the present system, very rapidly towards unification. The Premier, in a statement which appeared in the Press today, was reported as having said—

He had recently returned from a Premiers' Conference and he was not in a hurry to attend another.

The Premier: I thought you would cast your eye on that.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The Premier thought I would notice it, did he? In a somewhat facetious question, I asked the Premier a little while ago when he was going to give us a ball-to-ball description of his batting on that very sticky wicket at Canberra. A month before the Premier left for the conference, I anticipated that he would be, with others, on an extremely sticky wicket, because it is my view that the present Commonwealth Government is certainly more anti-State and pro-Commonwealth than any others which have preceded it.

The Premier: I think they all become pro-Commonwealth after a while.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: They do. But when they have revenues they can cushion the blow which all States receive when they go to the Commonwealth for money for different purposes. I am sure that had it not been for the attitude of compassion, if not of generosity, of the Chifley Labour Government we would not be in the healthy position we are in Western Australia today. I am certain that with the buoyant Commonwealth revenues, particularly in the years 1946, 1947 and 1948 the Commonwealth were anxious that a generous attitude should be shown to the States. I think that is reflected in what has been done by the Grants Commission. I will quote shortly from the 15th and 16th reports of that Commission to show clearly how differently they are regarding matters of the claimant States today, compared with their attitude of five, six and seven years ago.

As the Premier stated in his speech the Grants Commission have made it possible for this State, in spite of an orgy of spending in some particulars, to come within the compass of a balanced budget although expenditure was far in excess of that anticipated. The most significant figures in the Budget tables with regard to deficits and surpluses will be found in the year 1945-46. I do not suppose there has been, or ever will be, such a pair of figures in any Budget statement of any State. I am very proud of the fact that as Treasurer, and in deliberately planning for a deficit which exceeded £900,000, because of the gate that was opened in the Taxation Reimbursement Act, we had our deficit wholly repaid. So, for the only time in the history of Western Australia, were the figures for revenue and expenditure identical.

In the year 1945-46, revenue was £14,407,000 and expenditure was also £14,407,000. I draw attention to that because it has relationship to the different trend in the Commonwealth approach to State problems today. When that was done by using the Taxation Reimbursement Act for the purpose, the Commonwealth very quickly amended the Act, and it has not been possible since to do so. What is making it possible, however, is the altered attitude of the Grants Commission. As I mentioned earlier, I am very glad that the Premier is realising how serious this inflationary spiral in Government spending is becoming. In the last year of the Labour Government our taxation reimbursement was £3,384,000: Our grant from the Grants Commission excluding deficit was only £950,000.

The Premier: What year was that?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: In 1946-47. For the year 1949-50 the Commonwealth grant was £5,618,000 and very little less in the year 1950-51. The Premier must smile when

he reads the 16th report of the Grants Commission. As compared with our taxation reimbursement of £3,384,000, in 1946-47 the Premier got last year £5,172,000. The important part of that is that although the Premier has twice as much money from Commonwealth sources, and although he is 100 per cent. up on the 1946-1947 figures, the drift is such that he must continue to be what he attempted to call us three years ago, namely, a puppet of the Commonwealth.

I have mentioned to the Treasurer on more than one occasion that his financing has been so easy that he enjoys being a puppet of the Commonwealth. It is a very easy way out, for with the help of the Commonwealth through the benefactions of the Grants Commission he managed to get £9 per capita on uniform taxation—far in excess of any other State. But in addition to that particular treatment because of disabilities, the Premier is also getting a special grant for a coal strike that occurred in Newcastle. As I mentioned the other evening it was manna from Heaven, unexpected and unasked for. It just fell into his lap. I do not speak critically of his accepting it, because I can deduce from the course of his speech what he did with some of it. I know, for example, that he paid for the Garrett engines—something which he was entitled to do because of buoyant revenue. He is paying for chassis for trolleybuses, replacements for tramway services, and other things which would normally cause an abject Treasurer to wonder and worry what he could do to hide the serious deficit.

Our present Treasurer, however, is in the position of wondering and worrying how to hide a gigantic surplus! It cannot be denied, because he knows how serious it would be not only for himself but to the finances of two other claimant States, if he had dared to finish with a surplus. I think the Treasurer anticipated a deficit of a little over half a million pounds, and he had a job to finish with a surplus of three quarters of a million. There is no doubt about it that this was simply due to a mistake that was made by Mr. Chifley as Treasurer which gave to the Premier over £660,000 for a coal strike which had little effect on us, and which was given to us because the Commonwealth had so much money on the same ratio as the Taxation Reimbursement Act operates.

The Premier: Why do you call it a mistake?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I know it was. I also know it was a mistake on the part of the Grants Commission. I had the opportunity and privilege of putting some pointed questions to the members of the Grants Commission because I lived with them recently, and this gave me the answers I wanted, without disclosing things they should not disclose. The courteous gentlemen of the Grants Commission helped me to find the answers. I am not using that

information as a basis of criticism of the Government, but in a spirit of informing it how easy it has been, and how small has been its worry and concern as to whether it could prove that something cost £100,000 or £50,000, whether it be in education, public works, the Mt. Barker water supply, or any other sphere. It could be done out of hand and without any worry or repercussion to this or any other Budget. So simple has been the financing that the unpleasant part of it has been merely the haggling that has taken place around the Premiers' Conference table. I trust that the Premier when he introduces the Loan Estimates will give us what the Press could not find out at the time, and tell us what actually happened at the Loan Council table. It would be most interesting.

The Premier: You know that the States have the preponderance of voting power at the Loan Council.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: What good will that do? Let the Commonwealth say that the required money cannot be raised and what can the Premier do then, no matter what they may require? I do not desire to indulge beyond what I know I am entitled to do and respecting which I would be within my rights even on the Budget debate, by discussing finance in various phases. For instance, I do not wish to discuss the Loan Estimates, because there are some pertinent questions to be asked of the Commonwealth in connection with its attitude in approving State finance. To get back to my point regarding the Premier enjoying being a puppet of the Commonwealth, I point out that the Treasurer has had approximately double the amount available to us in 1946-47. He received approximately £6,000,000 more than we received. Let members imagine that! The revenue in that respect was more than half the total revenue of the State 10 years ago. Certainly the Premier has had £6,000,000 more from the Commonwealth for the last financial year than we received in 1945-46. I am not sure whether the 16th Report of the Commonwealth Grants Commission has yet become public property. Probably the Premier can advise me whether that is so.

The Premier: I do not think it is public property. The information I have had in that regard from the Prime Minister is confidential.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Very well, I will not disclose the information. When the 16th Report of the Grants Commission becomes a public document, I commend members to read the chapters dealing with the economic policy of the States. They will find in the report of the Grants Commission very much calculated to occupy their minds. In the circumstances, I will quote from the 15th Report of the Commission. One of the important chapters deals with the principles guiding the Grants Commission and the methods it adopts, giving to

us' the complete ambit of its duties and responsibilities. It quotes Section 96 of the Commonwealth Constitution, which I consider will bear repetition. I hope, Mr. Premier, that the 16th Report of the Commission is a public document.

The Premier: Go on. It is here, anyhow.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Section 96 of the Commonwealth Constitution provides—

During a period of ten years after the establishment of the Commonwealth and thereafter until the Parliament otherwise provides, the Parliament may grant financial assistance to any State on such terms and conditions as the Parliament thinks fit.

That is the section under which the Commonwealth Grants Commission is appointed. If members will note the verbiage carefully, they will find conclusively without any need for legal interpretation by the Attorney General or any lay interpretation of mine, that the section discloses that it is at the discretion of the Commonwealth Parliament on a Bill introduced by the Commonwealth Government and at the pleasure of the Commonwealth Parliament as to whether the States may, or may not, receive financial assistance. The volume of any such financial assistance is determined by the Commonwealth Parliament and, indeed, the terms and conditions under which payments may be made, have also to be determined by the Commonwealth Parliament. Thus it will be seen that the largesse received by the Premier from the Commonwealth during 1949-1950 to the extent of £5,618,000 was subject not merely to the whim or caprice of the Commonwealth Grants Commission but was made, even as a recommendation, entirely at the discretion of the Commonwealth Government or the Commonwealth Parliament. That serves to indicate what a flimsy hold we have over the grants that come to us under the terms of Section 96 of the Commonwealth Constitution.

If I may be pardoned for anticipating what the grant may be this year and which will be disclosed in the 16th Report of the Commission, I think we may find that once more the Grants Commission has been surprisingly generous to Western Australia in that there is a possibility that this State will receive much more than it asked for. What a remarkable position for the Treasurer to be in! The Premier asks the Commission for money to meet a deficiency and seeks a grant based on the budgetary position of two years ago, which means that he will require a compensating figure of about £700,000. But in addition to what he seeks, the Premier will again, I suggest, with that good fortune that has followed him through his financial career as Treasurer of this State, find unanticipated sums falling into his lap. How easy it must be

for him in such circumstances. The Attorney General could come to him with some hairbrained scheme for doing all sorts of things at the Crown Law Department or in connection with price control—he might have some thoughts on that subject—and how easy it will be in these days of opulence for the Premier to say to him, "Go for your life, Val."

The Premier: No, it is not so easy as that.

The Attorney General: No, not by any means.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: In any case, I am pleased to note that for the first time during a Budget speech by the present Premier he has indicated a feeling that expenditure has jumped up at an alarming rate and that he is concerned at the inflationary spiral he referred to. I am very pleased indeed to note that the Premier proposes to deal with the problem of inflation when he introduces the Loan Estimates. He said so himself. It will be a very interesting declaration on his part.

The Premier: I had a conversation with a very eminent gentleman in Melbourne about inflation.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: With Professor Copland?

The Premier: No.

Mr. J. Hegney: It must have been Mr. Menzies.

The Premier: No.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: There is ample scope for a very thoughtful Government statement on the subject. I would like to know just what the Premier is doing as a means of resisting the worrying increase in governmental spending and governmental costs. As I previously mentioned, the returns from taxation and Commonwealth grants have jumped up over 100 per cent. and yet governmental expenditure has outpaced receipts. That is the position. If we are to keep our feet on the ground and if we are to be concerned about the future financing of the State when we are in receipt of money from Commonwealth resources that can be cut off within a matter of minutes—that is the case in connection with the Grants Commission and I will show it is also the position under the taxation reimbursement Act—surely it is time that the Government considered very seriously the trend of events when, in spite of all this money being received, governmental expenditure outpaces receipts. I wonder what the Premier would think if, at this convention or conference to be held before next June, the consensus of opinion in Commonwealth circles was that the States should have their taxing rights returned to them. In 1947 the Premier pretended that he would like it; in fact, he suggested that he would insist upon it.

The Premier: But not on the Commonwealth's terms.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: If the Premier had it on his own terms, he would be in a very difficult position today. It is all very well for those who scantily examine the proposal for returning taxing rights to the States to assume that the high volume of money coming to the communities of all the States, because of their taxable capacity, would mean that the time was opportune for the States to have their taxing rights returned to them. But that would be a pipe dream.

One would need to have a grain of wheat in the corner of each eye and one's ears stuffed with wool to give consideration to such a proposal merely because of the high prices of our commodities. Those high prices cannot last, but if they did last, costs commensurate with income, both Government and private, would rise accordingly unless some very drastic measures were taken. So I hope for the sake of this State that, whatever decision is reached at the conference to consider Commonwealth and State financial relationships, implicit in it will not be a return of the taxing rights to the States.

Side by side with such a proposition one must regard very seriously the increasing costs in Commonwealth circles. We must regard very seriously the rising costs of the Commonwealth and its commitments. The Commonwealth next year must find £87,000,000 for the payment of war gratuities.

The Premier: The amount is £67,000,000.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Speaking from memory, it must find £65,000,000 for taxation reimbursement to the States, but an analysis of Federal figures shows that administrative costs have risen from £25,500,000 in 1947-48 to £30,000,000 in 1949-50. The total revenue last year was £580,641,000, but the expenditure was £606,000,000. The receipts from taxation at £504,000,000—including direct and indirect taxation—were largely accounted for by the sharp increase in Customs revenue. If one studies the Commonwealth tables in the quarterly summary of Australian statistics, one will find that income tax reductions, without social service, for 1949-50, have gone from £182,000,000 to £170,000,000, and in view of the slogan about building up for production, development and defence, no-one can anticipate any reduction in taxation. Indeed I should not be surprised if Commonwealth policy in regard to defence outstrips a reasonable contribution if taxation is not to be increased and taxation in a rural sense decreased.

That is an alarming feature in the matter of trends. In this State there is less production rurally in volume, not value, than there was in 1939-40. There is less production from mining than there has been for very many years, except the last

year or two but, compared with the pre-war total, there is cause for very great concern. If we take the population figure we find there has been little or no increase in the rural areas compared with the pre-war figures, but there has been a very substantial increase in urban figures.

All of these trends in a State such as ours must give cause for very great concern. If, side by side with a lessening volume of production, we get back to a proportionate decrease in overseas value we shall surely feel the repercussion involved in the tremendous income of the State compared with four or five years ago and the continuing responsibilities to be financed with a lessening State income. Very many of the things that are being approved today are going to be an impact not merely on this Budget alone; they will be a continuing liability. All those things which are chargeable to Revenue—I shall refer to some of the items in the Budget Estimates—and which are of a continuing kind will give cause for serious concern in Government financing when Government revenues decline.

It is all very well for us to boast of what we are doing for this or that department. Whether it be something of a social service type, in which the Grants Commission plays a part by giving us consideration, or whether it be something within the Education Department, or whether it be additions to the Public Service, all of those charges which are in the nature of a permanency can and will have, if there is a decline in our primary product values or if there is a decline in the amount received from the Commonwealth, a very serious repercussion in this State. If one were to use the term "deterioration in State finances," that could be well illustrated by these figures: The grant in our last year of office—1946-47—was £950,000 and in this year it was well in excess of £5,000,000. With an income from taxation of £5,172,000, the Premier, I think will concede that he has been very lucky indeed to be able to induce the Commonwealth to continue assistance in that volume until next June.

In the course of his speech the Treasurer stated that the grants paid to the claimant States in the last three years have shown remarkable increases. I am wondering what will happen when the impact on the Commonwealth Budget is felt because of lessening taxable capacity through lessening income from overseas, and lessening taxable capacity because of lessening production in some industries and the withdrawal of men, if it is done too substantially, from industry.

The Premier: Why should there be any lessening of production in some industries?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: We have evidence of that in our own State, where there is insufficient meat and insufficient dairy produce of some kinds to supply our interna-

needs at the moment. Unless we can make inroads into our export goods, we are going to be in very serious straits indeed with the shift of production in the dairy industry alone, in the change-over which the Premier knows is taking place because of the attractive prices which are bringing about the slaughter of calves, with potential milkers of the future not being allowed to mature. I feel very strongly on this subject, because I believe the Government is not grappling with the problem at all. I expect that when the Minister for Lands introduces the Estimates of Lands and Agriculture we will hear some very high sounding phrases regarding progress in land settlement which are not real. We will hear of things that are anticipated in the matter of tonnages produced of this rural commodity and that.

The Premier: Do you not expect greater production from all those people who are going on to the land?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE:: Very few more people are going on to the land and I think that 50 per cent. of those doing so are going on to properties that were formerly in production. When the areas which members of Parliament, I understand, are to be shown around, come into production—

The Premier: Not fully developed.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: They are a long way from being fully developed. But the increase in the number of men on the land is brought about by the subdivision of large estates, many of which are not being put to full use. Some of them are carrying an increase in families, which is a very good thing; but certainly very few of them are at a stage of complete development; and in my view the problem there is not to look at the few hundred thousand acres of Crown land, but at the unproductive alienated land. It is not possible for Western Australia, unless we have a different approach to our production problems, to treble its farming population within the next 30 or 40 years. It cannot be done through Crown lands because Crown lands of that kind do not exist. In that connection there is a very vital problem associated with the development of the State and directly with the State income.

I had intended, and had a note to remind me, to read some extracts from a Grants Commission report relative to that subject. But in case I intrude on something that should not at this stage be public, I will refrain from doing so. I would, however, like to draw the attention of members to what has been done in the United Kingdom, in spite of the severest criticism by the critics of the present British Government. I quote from Commonwealth "Hansard" of the 8th June of this year when Mr. Chifley, in commenting on the Appropriation Bill introduced by Mr. Fadden, said—

One matter that has apparently been overlooked by this Government is that the present Labour Government in Great Britain, after the very great efforts that it made for a number of years, has brought the United Kingdom's financial position to a stage that is the reverse of what it was only a year ago. That result was achieved by depriving the British people of many of the things that might be considered as almost essential to everyday life. A year ago, and perhaps not even so long ago as that, the British Government's dollar and gold reserves amounted to only about £340,000,000 or \$350,000,000. By pursuing a fixed policy and by maintaining rigid control of prices, as well as by obtaining the co-operation of the trade unions in regard to wage stability, the British Government today has altered its financial position to what it and the American Government regard as the desirable minimum insofar as Britain's gold and dollar reserves are concerned. It now has nearly £2,000,000,000 in gold and dollar reserves. What the country ought to do is to erect a memorial to the present Chancellor of the British Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps, who, by his persistence, courage and determination, and by refusing to be swayed by the vote-catching clamour of his political opponents, has adhered to a policy that is bringing Britain back to financial and economic stability. Those are facts and not surmises gleaned from some street-corner talk on the matter. I consider that the Government should have given the House a full statement of what has been happening in Britain as well as a full statement of Australia's dollar position.

In running across those words the other day, I thought they were worth repeating in this Chamber. A lot of people, in criticism of the present British Government, simply because it is a Labour Government, would dare to criticise and deride with very little information at hand. On that very important point, which is the basis of all successful government—the question of finance—the British Government has, in one particular, in connection with its gold and dollar reserves, lifted its reserve from £340,000,000 to £2,000,000,000.

To get back to our own position and in connection with the reference the Premier made to the conference of officers, Commonwealth Ministers and State Premiers in the next few months, I hope that the States will be able to get from the Commonwealth not merely the sort of financial statement which is given by the Commonwealth in the introduction of an Appropriation Bill, but a clear assessment, a stocktaking as it were of Commonwealth liabilities and Commonwealth anticipation of revenue from all sources. Unless the

States can get a clear indication of the trend in Commonwealth finance, we cannot hope to reach an agreement appropriate either to the Commonwealth or to the States.

I would hesitate to say that the States should be asked, in spite of the soaring revenues, to curtail expenditure if such expenditure is wisely made. I would be the first to criticise a Commonwealth Government that would endeavour to dictate a policy for the States in regard to the use of State finances from any source, unless it be that during the circumstances of war such authorities had to be set up like the Commonwealth Public Works Council or kindred bodies, which would have to limit and control in a restrictive way the spending of moneys, however raised, within the State, if that conflicted with defence needs. But I would draw attention on that point to what is my considered view, that I hope the Commonwealth, when embarking upon matters of defence, will hesitate about committing Australia for too much.

I am disposed to think that this great little nation of Australia did, during the last war, in having more than 1,000,000 of its citizens in uniform, something which no other nation ever contemplated or could achieve; and I submit that that was very much to the detriment of Australia's economy and her future progress. I hope, therefore, that on this occasion in the preparation for war—always hoping that there will be no necessity for us to engage in it—Australia will not attempt too much. As a nation, our resources are limited compared with those of the great nation of America. Anyone who has studied America's natural resources will know that we are in an almost pauper condition in comparison. We must concede that this country, with its fringe of highly productive land around the coast, should not attempt, in its commitments either oversea or internally, too much for defence purposes, because, side by side with preparation for war there cannot be preparation for tremendous development.

There is a sharp conflict between the requirements in materials and the apportionment of moneys spent internally for development, and in taking from developmental activities the manpower and money so necessary to pursue developmental work. Therefore, I would hope that in the planning of our next five or six years—critical years they appear to be—Australia will not, with her tremendous commitments for past wars, attempt to undertake what appears to be the impossible. I am sure that view would be shared by many military gentlemen, including the one who was here today. Those who hope to see sufficient done in the matter of defence would not wish that it should be overdone.

I am particularly interested in the provisions for the finance necessary under the special Acts which do not come exactly

within the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure in the spendings of the different departments. In this connection I refer particularly to our interest debt charges which, as an impact on the Budget this year, will exceed £4½ million, to be paid from revenue. I am wondering what is to happen with the projected work when a heavy loan programme fails to earn sufficient towards interest. I have on two or three occasions drawn the attention of the Premier to our unproductive loan assets. An example which comes to mind very quickly is the asset of forests, which does not pay. The money invested in our forests is entirely unproductive in regard to returning interest on our loan expenditure in our reforestation policy.

I mentioned earlier this session that we have urgent need to examine the position of our forests wealth. Although timber production is increasing, it still has not reached former figures. Our national asset is being encroached upon. We have a Forests Act, introduced 23 years ago, which we are applying in its entirety today. In addition, special contributions from revenue are made over and above the three-fifths of the revenue which goes to the department from its own earnings. I suggest to the Premier, not only because of my own views but because of those which his Ministers have expressed in connection with the unsatisfactory position of timber production, that he should give early and earnest consideration to the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the whole of the workings of our Forests Department under the Forests Act and, side by side with that, a clear examination of how fair or unfair to this community and its successors is the denuding of our forests capital, not to the profit of the State but to the profit of individuals. I think a Royal Commission would be better than a Select Committee of this House, if the Premier could select the right person to make the inquiries.

The Premier: What would you suggest as the terms of reference, or some of them?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I would suggest that there should be an inquiry into all aspects of forests administration as based upon the existing Forests Act; and whether, in the light of existing circumstances, the Forests Act should be amended to meet the present conditions; whether concessions which are granted under the Act should be granted, as they are now—for example, with a maximum potential cut and no minimum, which gives to certain interests rights which they should not enjoy. Included in the terms of reference should also be the question of the proportion of our timber which should continue to be exported—and some must be exported—and the proportion which should go into channels to provide homes for Western Australians. I will go on, if the Premier likes. I would be pleased to assist

him in drafting the terms of reference if he would agree to the appointment of a Royal Commission.

Failing that, I say that there will be a move from this side of the House for a Select Committee to inquire into all these things, and others, in fairness to our community, because we have a national asset of some magnitude in our forests which is not only not paying its way but is paying a miserable £200,000 per annum to the Treasury under our laws; and the Forests Department is getting three-fifths of its revenue, and still having to be supplemented from loans on which it does not meet interest. Surely that is not a satisfactory state of affairs. I cast no reflection on the present Conservator of Forests because, I submit, it may be that the flaw lies in the statute being applied to present circumstances in spite of the fact that when it was drafted it envisaged, under certain controls, forests in perpetuity.

The Premier: If such an inquiry is agreed to I think your suggestion of a Royal Commission would be better than that with regard to the appointment of a Select Committee.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I hope the Premier will give attention to it, as I am prepared to move for the appointment of a Select Committee and, in so moving, to seek to be the chairman of it.

Mr. Bovell: The matter of the right of primary producers to the timber on their properties should also be included in the terms of reference.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: That would come within the ambit of the Forests Act and the Land Act and its associated matters. I think the hon. member will realise the import of what I am endeavouring to explain. We have had two successive Ministers in the portfolio of Housing, and no-one can convince me that either they or the Premier have been happy about their relationship with and the co-operation they have received from those who control the destinies of our State forests.

I will go further and say that the most efficient mills in Western Australia are not run by private enterprise. The most efficient mill in this State is the railway mill at Dwellingup. As it is wasteful and inefficient that practically the whole of our State forests are held by other interests, there is urgent need for inquiry. I would like to hear members, representing districts in which timber is produced commercially in large quantities, speak on that subject. I would like to hear the member for Warren and the member for Vasse, particularly, as I am certain that something should be done in the matter, and done quickly.

The Premier stated that most of his deficiency was due to railway expenditure. There is an interesting point to be raised

there. It is that the Government is undertaking a huge rehabilitation programme, costing millions of pounds, and I am wondering whether it has taken sufficient stock of where such expenditure is going to place the Railway Department as a whole. What are the economics of this expenditure going to disclose? Will it be capable of earning interest? Although the Minister is not in this House—as he should be—I hope that the Minister who introduces the Estimates of the Railway Department will report fully just what the Government knows of the plans of its officers with regard to railways expenditure. All we now know is that there is likely to be a writing down of capital.

In the course of his speech the Premier mentioned a writing down of railway capital, but that will not repay the debt. It will simply be an attempt to put the railways in a more favourable light and give those who work in that department opportunity of showing how important is their earning capacity.

Mr. Styants: And a few more deputations for reductions in fares and freights.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It will not repay the debt, which will still be part of the total debt of the State. According to the tables in the Estimates, railway revenue for the year just ended was £6,370,000. I am wondering what figure the Premier hopes to get after he spends perhaps another £10,000,000 or more in the shape of Loan expenditure. This Chamber and the country are entitled to an explanation of those anticipations. Is it that the Premier has had to accept as authoritative the schemes and plans of his new Commissioners, without knowing much else about them? I am afraid it might be so and that in this sparsely populated State, with our large per capita railway mileage, we might not be getting the right advice from the new Commissioner from overseas. I am not quite confident that the Commissioners' perspective is the right one. It may be coloured by what they have been used to before coming to Western Australia.

The Premier: I have asked the Commonwealth to agree to send Dr. Chapman to Western Australia to confer with our Railway Commissioners because, as the hon. member knows, the Commonwealth will be well in on this expenditure. The request has been agreed to.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The Premier means they would be well out of it.

The Premier: Dr. Chapman is one of the most expert men in Australia in regard to railway matters, and he is coming here.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Together with this proposal about writing down it is vital that we should have some information about how revenue is to be earned, if we are going to invest another £10,000,000 in our railways after the writing down, in order to obviate a repetition of the same state of affairs.

The Premier: All that is being done is with a view to greater earnings.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It is hard to anticipate how great a revenue can be earned when railway revenues are being encroached on daily at the will of the Government, by means of what is being done for private enterprise and encroachments on remunerative passenger and freight traffic. The road transport of passengers and all kinds of commodities is increasing. The patronage being shown to a private railway company—the Midland Railway Co.—is far outside a just appreciation of its assets.

The Premier: What patronage?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: For example, the protection afforded that company under the transport Act. It is impossible, without pleading either to the Minister or the chairman of the board, to get a permit to haul necessary goods from Perth to my electorate by road—admitting it is 700 miles—although the State ships cannot carry those commodities. Such goods must go to Geraldton over the Midland Railway Company's line.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: If it was super. they would carry it for nothing.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I intend to ask questions to ascertain how much wheat has been hauled by road from the districts served by the Midland Railway Co. I believe that company has had too good a deal at the expense of the State-owned railways. The member for Moore and the member for Roe would know, because of their official positions in very successful interests outside this House, just how much my guess is near the truth, but I suspect that the Midland Railway Company is, under our own transport Act, getting far too much protection.

The Minister for Works: You would not suggest that providing they can carry the wheat we should place heavy road transport on the bitumen roads.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Fancy the Minister coming in with that one! That is exactly what they are doing with the Government Railways.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: To justify the establishment of bulk bins.

The Premier: The railways are hauling all the wheat they can.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I do not know about that.

The Premier: Yes, they are.

Mr. Ackland: The Midland Railway Company uses a lot of Government trucks.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The member for Moore has the point. The Midland Railway Company is using State Government trucks to haul wheat and along State railway routes road transport is operating.

The Attorney General: Of course, they use their own engines.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: It is a pity they do that!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: What a shame!

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Do they use their own axle grease?

The Attorney General: The engine power is the keynote of the thing.

Mr. Styants: That is a concession; using their own engines!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I do not want to make a long speech and I would if I answered the interjection of the Attorney General. If full interest and depreciation, and obsolescence, too, are charged, the losses on the railways, after another £10,000,000 is spent on them, will still be colossal.

The Premier: They will want more than £10,000,000.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Even if they want £20,000,000 I want to make sure it will be somebody's responsibility. It will not be that of the present Premier but it will be somebody's responsibility to see that over a generation that debt is serviced to some degree by earnings from that investment. Therefore, this Chamber is entitled to the fullest explanation of just where we are going; whether the Government knows where it is going if it wipes off millions of pounds and spends a similar or greater sum. I hope the Premier will give particular attention to that and give full information to the Chamber. Following on my earlier reference that revenues are up 100 per cent. on a few years ago, I am wondering whether the Treasurer, in anticipation of his expenditure, is making a genuine attempt to control it. I wonder if he has many disquieting moments when he contemplates what is likely to happen when a severe retrogression takes place. We find in the Estimates many items which will not bear much examination and to which I will draw attention when those items are discussed, following the closing of the general debate. I would suggest that there are many items which are excessive costs and are contributions to certain industries and certain interests. I hope that the Treasurer does make a serious attempt to arrest his expenditure before this retrogression takes place.

The Premier: Would you like to indicate any direction?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I will on the items. There are two, three or more of them, all of large sums. For example, super. carting; but that is an unpalatable one for the Premier to discuss.

The Premier: I made reference to that and issued warnings as to what may happen.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I wonder whether the Premier will heed his own warnings.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: It makes me laugh when the Premier says that because I warned him two years ago and he denied it.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The Premier, as a sort of gesture, issued warnings, but I wonder whether he is taking heed of those warnings himself?

The Premier: I am taking heed of them.

Hon F. J. S. WISE: I am very happy to hear that, because I think the Government should speedily reduce some of the expenditures of that type which certainly warrant drastic reductions.

The Premier: That is one. Have you any others?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: There will be others when I am discussing the items.

The Premier: I would like to hear them all.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am not halfway through yet. I am interested in the figure in the item under "Treasury Miscellaneous" which affects the basic wage and I hope some of my colleagues will have a close look at that figure. A number of people, certainly those on the Government side of the House, popularly but very erroneously believe that the increases in the basic wage are the cause of the tremendous expenditure of Government. Some people would have us believe that that is the sole cause. The method of governmental book-keeping does not show the impact of basic wage increases on each department but under "Treasury Miscellaneous" there will be found an item of £400,000 for last year. The anticipation for this year is £700,000 and apparently £400,000 was spent last year. If we take the proportion that £400,000 is to the total budget of £26,000,000 we will get the impact in part of the basic wage on the State Budget last year. To that must be added the costs of commodities purchased by the Government which have reflection on the basic wage.

It would be safe to say that not more than 2½ per cent.—and that would be a generous figure—of the additional expenditure of government is caused by basic wage increases. It is well to draw attention to that fact. The anticipation this year is that £700,000, on a £26,000,000 budget, will cover basic wage increases. So, it is important that people do not adopt fallacious ideas in connection with the impact of basic wage costs on the State Budget. There are many other matters on which I would like to speak but in the circumstances I will await the items and make some comment upon many figures which are contained in the Budget.

Before resuming my seat I would like to mention once more the necessity for early attention by the Government to matters which are urgent in the lives of the people in the North-West of this State. Unless something is done, and done quickly, to arrest the decline, in production as well as in population, which is threatening, we are going to have a very serious position within the next 10 years. Many people put forward the idea that

the North can be populated if we have an area which will give freedom from taxation, provided that a percentage of such income is reinvested in the North, that no salary or wages of residents of the North be taxed at all. There is a committee of people of the North which is anxious for the Premier to be presented with its point of view and I hope to bring such committee before him in the near future, because unless something is done to attract population to that area, as I said in an earlier speech this year, it may be too late in another decade to give any consideration to the problem whatsoever.

I wish to have a last say as to the Indian Ocean air route. I hope the Premier will personally interest himself with the possibilities of bringing to Western Australia, with Perth as its first landing point in Australia, the projected air route via Cocos Island, the Seychelles, San Diego, across to East Africa; a route which obviates the need to cover any war-infested country; keeps out of the zones of Southern Europe and Asia; would be important in peace as well as in war and to which an extremely active committee in the city of Perth has given much consideration. I again stress the hope that the Premier will give his personal attention to this question because I am certain there is much merit in it to warrant the attention of the Government and civil authorities.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.52 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 11th October, 1950.

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