

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 3rd October, 1945.

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

QUESTIONS.

COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS.

As to Absence on Commonwealth Service.

Mr. RODOREDA asked the Minister for Railways:

1, What was the total amount of travelling expenses paid by the State Government to the Commissioner of Railways whilst on loan to the Commonwealth Government?

2, What was the longest unbroken period for which these expenses were paid and what amount was involved?

3, What extra expense was incurred by the State Government due to extra salaries paid to Railway officers elevated to higher positions whilst the Commissioner was on Commonwealth Government service?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Nil.

2, Answered by No. 1.

3, Nil. The whole of the Commissioner's salary and expenses were met by the Commonwealth, hence no extra expense to this State.

TAXI LICENSE, PEMBERTON.

As to Delay in Issuing.

Mr. HOAR asked the Minister for Transport: In view of the fact that a taxi license was said to have been approved for Pem-

berton at the beginning of this year, and bearing in mind that Pemberton has suffered much inconvenience in the interim; why was the issuing of a permit delayed until the 7th September.

The MINISTER replied: This is a matter arising under National Security (Land Transport) Regulations and therefore outside State jurisdiction. The Director of Emergency Road Transport for Western Australia advises, however, that immediately following upon a proposal early in the year to permit a taxi to operate in the Pemberton area, the applicant for the permit withdrew his application by telegram. The matter then became confused by conflicting claims of the original applicant and others, and it was not until September that the position became sufficiently clarified to make a decision.

BILL—LEGAL PRACTITIONERS ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by Hon. N. Keenan, and read a first time.

BILL—CLOSER SETTLEMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILLS (2)—REPORTS.

1, State Government Insurance Office Act Amendment.

2, Soil Conservation.

Adopted.

MOTION—GAOLS, ADMINISTRATION, SITE, ETC.

To Inquire by Royal Commission.

MR. HILL (Albany) [4.35]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should immediately appoint a Royal Commission, including at least one person from outside Western Australia with a wide knowledge of modern methods of penology, to enquire into and report upon—

- Better methods of prison management and administration for this State;
- The site for the necessary new gaol or gaols, and the best types of buildings to suit modern ideas and ensure safe custody;
- Desirable amendments to our prison laws;
- Any other matters calculated to improve gaol conditions and to assist in the reform of prisoners who are capable

of reformation without exposing prison staffs or other citizens to undue risks of loss or injury.

I must admit that my personal experience of these matters is rather limited. One of my earliest memories is of a visit that I made, when a young boy, to the convict hulk "Success" in Adelaide. That was many years ago. That hulk was an example of the old brutal methods of dealing with prisoners more than a century ago. I have also made a couple of visits to the Albany gaol, which is now used as a store-room by the Water Supply Department. As one goes through that place and sees the leg-irons and weights with which the prisoners used to be manacled, one can only feel very thankful that that gaol system is now a thing of the past. Personally I hope the day is not far distant when that unsightly building will be removed and replaced with a proper store-room. For some reason or another great public interest is taken in crime. There is nothing that the papers like so much as a good old crime for sensation, and members of the public read the various reports of the different manhunts with great interest.

In the fiction section of our parliamentary library a large proportion of the books deals with crime, and, in addition, many of the volumes in our main library deal with the same subject. The function of our Government is to endeavour to prevent crime, but its complete prevention is impossible. The rapid capture and punishment of criminals not only assist as a deterrent, but protect the general public. I have here a book on penology, and I would like to quote, rather briefly, from it. This book states that there are three objects of prisons. One is to make the prison, as far as possible, self-supporting; another object of the prison system is to treat prisoners so that they may return to society as useful members instead of a social menace, and a third purpose is to protect society from the ravages of those who, in free life, have menaced their fellows. A prison must make every effort to keep the inmates within its walls. Both management and discipline are directed to this purpose. The remarks in the book dealing with the importance of discipline explain so aptly a very difficult problem associated with prison management and administration that I will read them. They are as follows:—

Keeping in mind the purposes just outlined, let us look at the community which must be administered with such objects in view. In the prison you have a small community closely guarded from contact with free society. Its members are denied liberty, shut away from friends, relatives and all the usual associations of family and free community life.

They are all of one sex in each institution and, for the most part, very much of the same age. There is no home life, and very few of the motives which play upon the man in free society operate upon them.

Moreover, it is a peculiar community. The members of it are there against their wills, desirous of getting out as soon as possible. They are stamped by judicial action with a social stigma. They comprise a great variety; hardened criminals and chance delinquents, normals and those with personalities warped intellectually, emotionally and habitually. All of them have broken some law intended for the protection of society. They are supposed to be self-supporting, yet in most prisons are deprived of the usual economic motives. Instead of working in order that they may be fed, clothed and housed, they work for fear that they may lose privileges or be punished. If they "soldier" they will be fed, clothed and housed as well as if they give their best efforts to their work.

Furthermore, one of the purposes for which they are there is to be trained for social life, yet they must be silent, must observe many rules which seem intended to make life as much unlike that outside the prison as possible. They get none of the social intercourse common to those on the outside. Thus in the prison community you have the queerest combination of diverse personalities, without the social and economic motives usually depended upon to move men for the better in free society, and yet it is the task of the warden to guard, feed, clothe, house, warm, keep at work, treat when sick, discipline when unruly, and so deal with these men that the institution will be as little a burden as possible to the taxpayers and yet turn men back into society better fitted to live there than they were before. Such a task might well appal a saint and sage rolled into one.

In my opinion that extract from the book suggests a very good case for a thorough examination by a Royal Commission of our prison system. As to the incidence of crime in Western Australia, I think a few statistics will be of interest. I shall give some figures dealing with the position for the year ended the 30th June, 1943, showing that the number of prisoners serving sentences in that year were as follows:—

| | Males. | Females. | Total. |
|---------------------------------|--------|----------|--------|
| First offenders .. | 576 | 81 | 657 |
| Second offence .. | 130 | 20 | 150 |
| Third offence .. | 47 | 4 | 51 |
| Fourth conviction or more | 974 | 125 | 1,099 |
| Total prisoners for year | 1,727 | 230 | 1,957 |

Daily average for year:—males, 230.67; females, 12.84.

The duration of the sentences served by the prisoners will also be of interest. An analysis shows the following particulars:—

| Sentence. | Male. | Female. | Total. |
|--|-------|---------|--------|
| One to three months .. | 913 | 112 | 1,025 |
| Three to six months .. | 332 | 82 | 414 |
| Six to twelve months .. | 139 | 6 | 145 |
| One year to five years .. | 74 | 2 | 76 |
| Five years and over .. | 13 | — | 13 |
| Detained during Governor's pleasure .. | 4 | — | 4 |
| | | | 1957 |

When we consider that for the year 1942-43 there were less than 2,000 convictions throughout the whole of Western Australia with its population of nearly 500,000, members will agree that that is a rather wonderful record.

Mr. Watts: Those details refer to convictions with prison sentences.

Mr. HILL: Yes; the figures do not include records of fines. Members are perhaps aware that prisoners in our gaols are divided into three categories for the purposes of safe custody. At the Fremantle gaol they are divided into sections containing the more recalcitrant and unresponsive types and short term sentence men. At Barton's Mill, we have a sort of clearing house for the main body of prisoners, and then there is the Pardelup Prison Farm where the best behaved and more responsive prisoners, together with first offenders, are detained.

Mr. Watts: That is what you say Pardelup is supposed to be.

Mr. HILL: Yes, that is what the men there are supposed to be, but I will deal with that phase later.

Mr. Watts: Good!

The Minister for Lands: To the satisfaction of the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. HILL: The first point to be dealt with is the unsatisfactory working of our prison administration and our prison system generally. I would like to deal with the case of a woman who was received in the Fremantle gaol in September, 1941, and was released on the 10th June, 1943. She was at York approximately between April and May, 1942. On her release, she made a statement to Mr. Wilson, the Deputy Controller General of Prisons, and to Mr. Dickson. In her statement she alleged that the matron manhandled some of the women. She also said that the matron was continually stealing Government

property and showing favouritism to certain inmates in repayment for bribes. She also alleged that while at York blankets supplied to the gaol were not distributed among the prisoners who, in addition, were insufficiently fed. She also alleged that the visitors to the gaol did not contact the inmates to ascertain whether they had any complaints to make. I do not intend to mention the name of this woman, but I have her permission to make it available to the responsible Minister so that the statement she made can be before members.

Mr. Watts: What was done regarding her statement after she made it?

Mr. HILL: From what I can ascertain, the matron was sent on her holidays after which she was suspended and dismissed from the Government service.

Mr. Watts: And that was all?

Mr. HILL: Yes, so far as I know. Then we come to the question of the safe-keeping of prisoners. In recent years there have been far too many escapes from our gaols. In "The West Australian" of the 6th April, 1943, there was a report about Arthur Raymond Williams, aged 23, having escaped from Barton's Mill on the previous Saturday afternoon. The man was serving a sentence of three months' imprisonment. In the Albany news published in that paper under date the 7th April, there was the following:—

Arthur Raymond Williams, who escaped from Barton's Mill prison last Saturday, was arrested on the Albany-Denmark train at Torbay station this morning by Constable W. C. Handmer, who had made a smart run to that centre by car. Williams was sentenced at Albany on March 6 to a month's imprisonment on a charge of having given false information in regard to enrolment under the Defence Act. Two days later he escaped from the Albany lock-up and was re-arrested the same day by Constable Handmer some distance from Albany. He was given a sentence of two months additional for this offence and was serving the terms at Barton's Mill.

The escape of Charles Robert Woods from Barton's Mill on the 7th December, 1942, was also reported in "The West Australian" and the fact that the man was recaptured on the 26th January, 1943. During 1943 quite a number of reports appeared in the Press about escapes of prisoners from Barton's Mill.

Mr. Watts: Let us hear about some of them.

Mr. HILL: In the issue of "The West Australian" of the 9th March in that year there was recorded the escape of three prisoners from Barton's Mill prison at 1.55 p.m. on the previous day. They were Sydney Cox, Francis Gilbert Ward, and Harold George Thorne. In "The West Australian" of the 19th March, 1943, the following appeared:—

Harold George Thorne, who escaped from Barton's Mill on the 8th March and was arrested at Southern Cross on Saturday, escaped again from the Perth lock-up yesterday at about 7 a.m. He climbed on the roof and forced his way through some iron bars. Then apparently he dropped about 16 feet from the top of the wall into the police yard.

In the issue of the same paper under date the 22nd March, 1943, there appeared the following regarding a prisoner named Stanley Joseph Harris who had escaped from Barton's Mill:—

Stanley Joseph Harris, when being sentenced (after his recapture) to one month's imprisonment, to be cumulative on his present sentence, asked the magistrate if he could make an order for him to serve his sentence in the Fremantle prison instead of Barton's Mill because he was afraid of other prisoners. The magistrate said he would make the request to the proper authorities if the accused would give him full details in writing.

Here are some other reports that were published:—

"The West Australian," 22nd December, 1943. Gaol Escapees. Break from Manjimup Lock-up. Michael Thomas Crawford (27), Kenneth John Burbidge (21) and John Courbrough (20), the escapees from Fremantle Gaol, who were recaptured by the Manjimup police and sentenced in Manjimup yesterday to further prison terms, escaped from the Manjimup lock-up last night by climbing through the roof of their cell. One was barefooted when he escaped. They are still at large.

"The West Australian," 27th December, 1943. Women Escape from Gaol. Four women prisoners escaped from the Fremantle Gaol about 7.40 p.m. on Friday and have not yet been recaptured. They are Grace Johnston, Elizabeth Rita Bryce, Sally Blechynden and Roberta Lorraine Lockyer. According to a police report, the women first assaulted the matron of the gaol and, gaining possession of her keys, made their escape.

"The West Australian," 29th September, 1943. Three Prisoners Escape. Harold George Thorne (29), Arthur Alfred Long (37) and John Leslie Outen (22), escaped from Barton's Mill prison on Monday night. Thorne has escaped on previous occasions.

Thorne was arrested in Sydney.

Mr. Watts: In Sydney?

Mr. HILL: Yes.

Mr. Watts: How long afterwards?

Mr. HILL: On the 15th December. The following are further newspaper reports:—

"The West Australian," 1st October, 1943. Dawn Thelma Malone (19) pleaded guilty before Mr. W. J. Wallwork, S.M., in the Perth Police Court yesterday to a charge of having escaped from legal custody at Fremantle on September 29th. Accused and two other girls scaled the wall of the Fremantle Prison and escaped.

"The West Australian," 13th December, 1943. Gaol Guards Eluded. Three long-term prisoners escaped from Fremantle Gaol between 2 p.m. and 2.30 p.m. yesterday and are still at large. They are John Courbrough (20), Kenneth John Burbidge (21) and Michael Thomas Crawford (27). It is believed that the prisoners gained access to a part of the prison where a ladder was and used this to get over the wall. It is probable that at the time of their escape they were wearing the usual prison garb, old Army clothes. They were all serving sentences for stealing and burglary.

This year we have had quite a succession of escapes from Pardelup. I desire to stress the fact that Pardelup is supposed to be a prison where men are put on their honour and consequently are allowed quite a lot of latitude. One instance will show how some of the prisoners have taken advantage of that latitude. Thomas Clarke and Charles Lewis Whelan were among four others who walked out of Pardelup and stole a utility truck, which they drove for 30 miles and then robbed a store. They got back to Pardelup and the prison authorities knew nothing about their escape until a complaint was made of the robbery at the store. Later on, four other prisoners escaped from Pardelup. They were Kevin Hugh Butler, Keith Charles Percy, Thomas Clarke and Charles Whelan, alias Laurance. They with another man named Carroll, were all escapees from Pardelup. Carroll is a dangerous person and apparently the authorities did not desire to keep him in the lock-up at Mt. Barker, where there is only one room. He was therefore sent to Albany for safe-keeping. Those four men escaped by removing a sheet of iron from the Mt. Barker lock-up.

Mr. Watts: What kind of a record did Carroll have?

Mr. HILL: Carroll is a notorious and dangerous criminal. His record is a bad one. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that the residents of Mt. Barker do not like prisoners of his type being sent to Pardelup, from which prison they can walk out as they like.

Mr. Watts: Does he seem responsive as a first offender?

Mr. HILL: I am afraid he is what may be termed a confirmed criminal. He is a prisoner who should under no circumstances be sent to Pardelup. The motion also asks that the Royal Commissioner should inquire into the question of a new gaol site in the metropolitan area. There has been much controversy over a proposed site. I know that one day, as I was walking along Murray-street, I saw a big plan hung up in front of the City Council's offices. I say without hesitation that that plan was very misleading. All sorts of objections were raised to the proposed site.

The Minister for Lands: That is miles away from where it is likely to be.

Mr. HILL: I agree.

The Minister for Justice: You might have a good site on one of the islands at Albany.

Mr. HILL: We might, but I do not agree with the Minister's suggestion, because one of the main objectives of a gaol should be to give first offenders—those who have made their first slip—every chance to reform.

Several members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HILL: They should not be kept in prison and so be likely to become confirmed criminals.

The Minister for Lands: What about the confirmed gaol-birds?

Mr. HILL: Some of them are.

The Minister for Lands: They want safe custody.

Mr. HILL: I admit they are a problem and a serious menace to the community. We must make proper provision to see that criminals of that type are not given the opportunity to escape. Several questions were recently asked in the House dealing with this subject and I do not think there is any need for me to quote the answers to them, as these will be fresh in the minds of members. Paragraph (e) of the motion asks that desirable amendments shall be made to our prison laws. The motion also suggests that a person with a wide knowledge of modern methods of penology should be brought to the State to act on the Commission.

The Minister for Lands: You have just had one over here.

Mr. HILL: I am afraid our Government departments make one big error, not necessarily only in connection with gaols but in connection with pretty well all matters. In South Africa, where the Government is handling the transport problem very efficiently, the Government is continually sending its senior officers and promising young officers to other parts of the world to get experience. I am of opinion that we also should send our senior officers and promising young officers to the other States, and to other parts of the world, to get experience that will enable them to keep our methods up to date. Certainly our gaols should be kept up to date. As I have said, we must give our mild type of prisoners every chance to make good, so that on their release they will become useful members of the community. On the other hand, we must make sure that the prisoners who are a menace to the community are kept in safe custody. The final paragraph of the motion suggests that the Commission should inquire into and report upon any other matters calculated to improve gaol conditions and to assist in the reform of prisoners without exposing prison staffs or other citizens to undue risks of loss or injury. This is really a dragnet paragraph. On some occasions escaped prisoners have seriously injured the constables who have arrested them.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I notice that some members are reading newspapers. I ask that they put the newspapers away.

Mr. Hill: I hope the Commission, if appointed, will deal with every possible phase of the subject so that we may get the best results from its labours. The motion should meet with the approval of the Government. If our prison system is satisfactory the Government will be absolved from censure. If, as many contend, it is not satisfactory, we will know who is to blame. I sincerely hope the House will accept the motion in the spirit in which it is moved. I am anxious, as I am sure are all members, that our prison system should be conducted on the best and most modern methods of penology.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

MOTION—SANITARY SITE, SOUTH PERTH-CANNING DISTRICTS.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

MR. CROSS (Canning) [5.0]: I move—

That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon the following matters:—

(1) Whether that area of land, consisting of approximately 75 acres 1 rood 30 perches, being portion of Canning Loc. 37, on deposited plan 3383, lot 25, situated right on Clontarf highway, the main road between Armadale and Fremantle and against Clontarf Orphanage, is a suitable place for a sanitary site.

(2) Whether the proposed new site will be detrimental or have any detrimental effect on—

(a) The inhabitants of Clontarf Orphanage;
(b) the inhabitants of Castledare Orphanage;

(c) the children who attend South Como School;

(d) the staff and students of Aquinas College;

(e) the proposed new school for which land has been recently acquired, adjacent to Hobbs avenue, South Perth;

(f) the owners of surrounding lands;

(g) the construction of workers' homes on the numerous blocks of land recently acquired by the Workers' Homes Board as set out in the "Government Gazette" of the 21st September, 1945;

(h) residents of either the Canning or South Perth Road Board Districts;

(i) the general progress of either South Perth or Canning Road Board Districts.

(3) Whether there are any alternative proposals which will eliminate the need for any sanitary site within both the South Perth and Victoria Park districts, within a reasonable time.

I think I am fully justified in bringing forward this motion for an inquiry, because hundreds of my electors are acutely affected. They consider that it would be a retrograde step to place a sanitary site in the proposed spot. At the best, the proposal is only fiddling with the matter. On Monday night, I noticed a statement in "The Daily News" associated with the name of Ray Brown. I have lived in Victoria Park for 30 years, and I do not know of anybody by that name and have never heard of him. He is not on the roll for Victoria Park or South Perth on which the last Federal election was fought. This gentleman said he spoke for some associated districts organisation. I do not know of that either, and I have not met anybody else who does; but I want to point out that in the representations I have made on two deputations, first to the former Commissioner of Public Health, Dr. Park,

and later to the Minister for Health, I received solid support. I was supported by representatives from the South Perth Road Board and the Canning Road Board. I also received support from the Canning Progress Association, the Como Parents and Citizens' Association, the Como Progress Association, the Canning A.L.P., the Clontarf Orphanage, the Castledare Orphanage and the Riverton Progress Association, which is not far away from the site, and from owners of properties in the vicinity of the site. So it cannot be said that I have not had support for the attitude I have adopted.

Furthermore I have had nearly 100 letters of thanks for the action I have taken in opposing the proposed new site. On the 25th May, I received a letter signed by the residents of the houses in two streets, and any member can see that letter because I have it here. The residents thanked me for the action I had taken in preventing the establishment of the site in the proposed location because they said the new site was within a mile of their residences in Como and South Perth respectively. I repeat that it cannot be said I have not had any support. I can assure members I have had solid support behind me, and we are determined that this iniquity shall not be perpetrated in South Perth if it is possible for us to prevent it. It is my opinion that the whole of this trouble has been caused by the neglect of the City of Perth, the outcry that arose from the rotten conditions which obtained at the City of Perth sanitary depot.

The Minister for Lands: Hear, hear! They ought to be shot!

MR. CROSS: The Minister took the right action. I believe that is one of the doubtful blessings that have arisen from the contract system. You, Sir, will remember, and others in this House will recall that the former member for Victoria Park, the late Councillor Raphael, on numerous occasions complained about the conditions under which the sanitary contract system operated in Victoria Park. From my personal experience, I can say that before I had my house connected with the sewerage system, there were occasions when we were lucky to get a clean pan once a fortnight! The member for Victoria Park can bear me out when I say that that goes on today.

MR. READ: You are exaggerating!

Mr. CROSS: That is not an exaggeration at all.

Mr. Read: You know it is.

Mr. CROSS: The truth is that the pans were tipped into one receptacle and the dirty pans put back.

Mr. Read: Why did you not report it?

Mr. CROSS: I did, to Councillor Raphael and to Councillor Fraser as well. Even today, with regard to the rubbish service, one is lucky to get attention once a month. That sort of thing happens today, so the member for Victoria Park can look after that part of the contract system.

Mr. Read: You are saying that under Parliamentary privilege.

Mr. CROSS: I have said it outside as well, and it is true. Later on, an outcry arose, and there was a public meeting at the R.S.L. hall in Victoria Park. Many speakers voiced their opposition to the way in which the contract was being carried out at that time. As a result, Mr. Panton went to the site—

Mr. SPEAKER: Not Mr. Panton; the Minister for Health.

Mr. CROSS: Well, the Minister for Health; he was the Minister for Health at that time. When he saw the conditions he said straight away, "This has to stop"; and he did the right thing. But that has been brought about by the neglect of the City of Perth in the past. Contrast that with the action of the South Perth Road Board 12 years ago, when the late Mr. Abjornson was chairman of the board. Before sewerage was even contemplated, the South Perth Road Board decided upon and enforced a rule compelling the installation of a septic tank in every house built in South Perth. Against that, even today the City of Perth is still building houses in Carlisle and permitting the installation of the pan system. I know it is proposed to alter that, but the position is that in South Perth on the 5th May, 1941—which was well after the war had started—there were still well over 1,200 premises not connected with the sewerage system and without septic tanks; but, in spite of the war, approximately half of that number have been connected so that today South Perth has only 677 more to connect.

In the area within a mile of where the new depot is to be, all the houses have either installed septic tanks or been connected

with the sewerage system. Now, because of the neglect of the City of Perth it is proposed to force the residents of the district to endure again the same sort of neglect as operated in connection with Victoria Park under the City of Perth. I believe that at the present time the council is somewhat repentant and anxious to improve the position. I believe it has taken every possible step to eliminate the nuisance which caused an uproar. What I want to point out is that whereas South Perth has only 677 houses to connect with the sewerage system, there are 2,635 pan services still in operation in the Victoria Park area under the control of the Perth City Council. I have taken two deputations on this matter—one to the Commissioner of Public Health and one to the Minister for Health. It is interesting to know the history of this proposed new site. Until recently, its location seemed to be the world's greatest secret. One of the first things that enlightened me was when we had a deputation to the Commissioner of Public Health. On that occasion a letter was submitted from the Town Planning Commissioner, an extract from which is as follows:—

I am under instructions from the Hon. the Premier, to select and recommend areas suitable for housing and would be glad if your board will consider the removal of the sanitary site in Welshpool-road to one less likely to impair residential values and where no reasonable objection could be taken to the establishment of a sanitary service. Your early advice on this important phase of your Board's administration will be appreciated.

I thought to myself, "Why shift the sanitary site situated in the Welshpool-road to a place of which nobody who did not know the locality would be aware, and where there are few people living close by?" I started to fish in order to find out where this site really was. I visited the Commissioner of Public Health and the Town Planning Commissioner, but it was a chance remark made by the latter at a public meeting at Victoria Park on the 2nd December, 1944, which gave me the clue. After a long recital of grievances against the City Council's sanitary system—and he made plenty of complaints—Mr. Davidson said he had discovered a suitable area for a sanitary site for Perth on the confines of the Canning district, but nothing eventuated. He said he had a report on the site made by a qualified inspector attached to the Town Planning Commissioner's office. When I saw the

Town Planning Commissioner, I said, "The confines of the Canning district are not the place on which to put a sanitary site." He said, "I am going to have three sites: one for South Perth, one for Perth, and—a little further down—another for Canning." I was still puzzled as to where it was. I said that was all good building land and Mr. Davidson told me I had not objected to the Dunbrick Company. Mr. Davidson let drop a chance remark to the effect that it was on Lot 25. I found where Lot 25 was, and that is how I knew where the site was.

I saw the Commissioner of Public Health and told him about it, and I reported it to the South Perth Road Board, by letter, on the 13th July, 1944. I saw Dr. Park and told him I considered that a depot for the disposal of sewage should not be near any residential or potential residential area, but in a locality where consideration had been given to the possibility of a spread of population to the area. Dr. Park said that, while it was true that a site or sites had been recommended by the Chief Health Inspector, and agreed to by the Town Planning Commissioner, he agreed that further consideration should be given to the matter, and another site sought in a district more remote. At that stage Dr. Park said they could not agree that the present recommendation was the best site procurable. He agreed that no sanitary site should be placed in an area where later on there would be a centre of population. I notice that the Town Planning Commissioner has been busy at the Premier's direction to get blocks for workers' homes, and in the "Gazette" of the 21st September last there are 5½ pages of resumptions of blocks of land—232 resumptions of blocks of land for workers' homes—all handy to the proposed sanitary site. If 232 houses are built on those blocks there will be at least 500 people living there.

In Ryrie-avenue and Monash-avenue, within a mile of this site, dozens of people have bought blocks of land, and several of them already have permits and are waiting to build of their own accord, while dozens of people are already living there. When we went to the Minister the other day a representative of the Como Progress Association, who lives within a mile of the proposed site, said that the Como Progress Association represents 400 or 500 people who have built their homes and are living there, in the direction of the proposed sani-

tary site. He said that within three-quarters of a mile of that site there were houses worth £1,000 each, and when those houses were built they had either to be sewered or connected with septic tanks. He said the department would not get over the difficulty by shifting from the present site to the new one. He pointed out that the children at the Kent-street school spent only portion of the day at the school, but the new site was close to where people had to live all the time.

The road running through from Canning Bridge is to be the main road to Cannington. This man said that the proposed site was only half-a-mile from the road, but that is wrong. The site abuts right on to the main Clontarf road, and if members doubt that I have here a map which is drafted correctly and to scale, and which shows the position of the site. Mr. Jones, the secretary of the Canning Road Board, is an engineer as well as a Road Board secretary. He has had a great deal of experience and I take a lot of notice of what he says, because I have found him a capable and level-headed man. At one of the deputations he said he thought that if Victoria Park Depot were properly looked after and if in that area they concentrated on sewerage and septic tanks it would be as well to leave the site where it is for the time being, because it would quickly disappear through the installation of septic tanks and deep sewerage. Mr. Grant, representing the Canning Road Board at that stage, said that for years the Canning Road Board had been worrying over the sanitary site and have had arguments about it for a long time. He said it was no use changing from one site to another, leaving it in one district till many houses were built around about and then changing to another district. He stated that on the South Perth side there are some good houses, while on the Canning side there are houses of a poorer type, and people are not going to build houses worth £1,000 in close proximity to a sanitary site.

At the deputation to the Minister the representative of Canning said that the site was right on the Canning boundary on the Fremantle-road, and the land was the best class of land they had for residential purposes, and that it was claimed that the land itself was the very best in the metropolitan area. The brother representing the Clontarf Orphanage said that, if the site was so un-

pleasant, it should not be transferred to another place where it would be equally unpleasant, because the orphanage was very close to the new area, and children had to live there for 24 hours a day. He made a strong protest against putting the site so close to the orphanage, where it was bound to be detrimental to the health of the children. He pointed out that there were three institutions involved, Clontarf, Castledare and Aquinas. He said that previously they suffered inconvenience from the blood and bone factory, at Welshpool, four miles away, which could be smelt at Clontarf.

The Como Parents and Citizens' Association representative said that that body had plans and projects to assist the Education Department with regard to schools, and the new school it was proposed to build in Hobbs-avenue. The proposed sanitary site would not be far from the school. The vehicles would pass the existing school and the proposed school in Hobbs-avenue. He said that if it were objectionable to the Kent-street school it would be objectionable to all schools in the vicinity, and he felt that all their efforts would come to nothing if the new site was gone on with. He thought the progress of the district would be held up, and that some other way should be found by the authorities to meet the position. The South Perth Parents and Citizens' Association representative said that the value of land in the area would deteriorate. One man went so far as to say that he would get out of the district. I believe I was fully justified in bringing this matter forward, and I wish to point out that the site is only $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles from the Como school. It is exactly one mile from boundary to boundary, from the proposed sanitary site to the school.

Mr. Read: If it was half-a-mile it would be all right.

Mr. CROSS: Let the hon. member live within half-a-mile of the site, and see how he gets on. The member for Victoria Park said that half-a-mile would be all right, but the site runs right up to the Clontarf boundary, and alongside of it for several chains; it has a frontage of 22 chains to the Fremantle-road, and 22 chains frontage to one of the main roads that carries all the traffic from Armadale to Fremantle. The site is only just over one mile from the Aquinas College property, only $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles

from the college itself, and in two directions there are houses within three-quarters of a mile of it. It may be that the area is suitable for a sanitary site, but there might be strong objections to it. It is close to the Clontarf Orphanage, where some 300 children live, and where it is proposed that many more children will live.

For the sake of the health of those children the site should not be there. Owners of land there know that no one would buy land alongside the sanitary site, even if the Town Planning Commissioner did agree to subdivide the land, and its value would deteriorate. The orphans have no parents to represent them, as have the children at the Kent-street school. They look to me to speak for them, and I will not let them down. If this is such a good site and is in such a wonderful position, surely it will stand a public inquiry. However, it may be that there are counter proposals. I had a conference with the Acting Lord Mayor and the Town Clerk, and the member for Victoria Park was present. The Acting Lord Mayor informed me that expenditure was authorised for over £10,000 to make a road to the site. He admitted that the estimate might even go as high as £12,000 or £15,000, but manpower was not yet available.

It is still proposed to take the sanitary carts past a lot of houses and struggle through the pine plantation, and I suppose this will be done in the daytime. In spite of what the Minister has said, it is done in the daytime. To the Acting Lord Mayor, I suggested that a concerted effort should be made by the Government, the City Council and the South Perth Road Board to get the unsewered houses connected with the deep drainage system or, if that was not possible, to put in septic tanks. The Secretary of the South Perth Road Board advised me that when a septic tank had to be put in it meant a difference of only a few pounds when connections were made with the sewer later. This proposal to have a new sanitary site within five miles as the crow flies of the Perth Town Hall is a disgrace to whoever suggested it. We are not living in archaic times; we are living in modern times. Even if a special effort and a little more expenditure were entailed to provide modern conveniences, we should undertake them and not have a sanitary site at all. The Acting Lord Mayor said

that in future no more building permits would be granted unless the houses could be connected with the sewerage system or septic tanks were installed. That is a step in the right direction.

If a serious effort were made to connect up the unsewered houses, the work could be completed in less than two years. Quite a lot of the unconnected houses are within the sewered area. Most of those in South Perth are within the sewered area. If 500 or 600 houses can be sewered during war-time—this in a space of 18 months—and there are only 677 remaining to be done, they could be dealt with within two years or even less. In Victoria Park there are still 2,635 houses with pan services, and 1,100 of these are in an area already served by a public sewer. Another 878 are in an area which the department proposes to sewer in its first programme of works. There are 542 in an area where no sewerage is contemplated in the near future, and it would be necessary for these to have septic tanks. The Acting Lord Mayor stated—and the member for Victoria Park was a witness—that if this work were undertaken instead of wasting money on a road that would be used for no other purpose, assistance could be given to poorer people to get their homes connected with the sewerage system.

Surely we have enough brains and surely we can arrange sufficient co-operation between the local authorities to prevent this abortion—the placing of a sanitary site near an orphanage! If an earnest effort were made, the difficulties could be overcome in that area, and then similar action could be taken in other parts of Perth so that modern conveniences would prevail generally. If we are to have a new order, let us have it without the rotten pan system! We in Victoria Park have had enough of that system. Let us forget the past and look to the future! When the boys return from the war, let them find their homes connected with the deep sewers or with septic tanks so that they will enjoy proper conditions in their homes.

I hope that the motion will be accorded a sympathetic reception. Let us disregard the mistakes of the past! Even the Perth City Council did not have all its own way in what was done. I have inspected that site dozens of times with the late Mr.

Abjornson, and it was in a shocking condition. No wonder there was an outcry about it! The Minister said that the proposed new site would be only a temporary expedient. Seven years ago, I urged the provision of a trolley-bus service for South Perth and was told that it would be provided in a little while, but we are still waiting and do not know when it will be provided. If permission is given to establish this sanitary site, it will still be there in 30 years' time. Let us make a job of this business and not fiddle with it! If it is to be used for only two years why have it at all? Why waste £10,000 or £15,000 on the construction of a road which will be of no use for anything else? Let us take immediate steps and insist upon the requirements being met in a proper manner! Let the Minister close the site and insist upon the City Council carrying out his instructions! We should not rely upon promises. Legislation should be passed to ensure that no new home is erected unless it is connected with the deep sewer or provided with a septic tank.

We might be told to consider the cost of going further afield, but how much longer would it take with a five-ton truck? Some weeks ago I was travelling on the road between Northam and Goomalling when a truck laden with 18 tons of wheat was travelling at 45 miles an hour. I had to touch 50 miles in order to overtake the truck, and the road was not of the best.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think the hon. member is getting away from the motion.

Mr. CROSS: I was merely citing that as an example of what can be done with modern transport. A programme should be mapped out to meet requirements. Men and material will be available in the course of a few months, and people ought to be ordered to have their homes connected with the sewerage system; many people have money stored up. If this were done there would be no need for a sanitary site. In order to deal with refuse, an up-to-date incinerator should be installed. If it costs a few pounds more to cart night soil further afield for the time being, it is better to incur that expenditure and safeguard the health of the people. I appeal to members to take a statesmanlike view of the motion and say that the sanitary site must go forever. If substantial arguments can be adduced in favour of the

adoption of the proposed site, they should certainly be able to bear the searchlight of an inquiry.

On motion by Mr. Read, debate adjourned.

MOTION—WOOL.

As to Transport to Appraisalment Centres.

MR. MANN (Beverly) [5.38]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House there is pressing need for the Government to take immediate steps for the transport of wool to appraisalment centres, and that if the Railways cannot immediately cope with the work, approval should be given for carriage of wool by road where recommended by the local authority.

I do not propose to follow the line adopted by the member for Canning. First of all let me explain the position of the wool industry in the farming districts. In many parts of the State south of Geraldton, shearing has been completed and in other parts it is in full swing. There is a large accumulation of wool on farm properties and there are no conveniences for storing it, and the ability of the railways to transport it before November seems to be hopeless. I have figures showing that roughly 8,000 bales of wool are stored on various farms. I communicated with the Chief Traffic Manager and he informed me that no definite quantity of wool could be lifted until November, owing to the haulage of wheat and chaff having first priority. This being the position, the appraisements now taking place cannot be filled, and there will be a long delay in the appraisalment period this year. Apart from farmers having wool on their properties and no proper storage accommodation for it, they are compelled to stand out of their money for a considerable time.

The industrial outlook in this State is very serious. There is a possibility of a strike recurring amongst the Collie coal-miners. That dispute has not been finalised. Rumours are prevalent that railway men and tramway employees are dissatisfied about the conditions of pay during the Collie strike period. If the railway employees go on strike with the idea of recovering the pay they lost, the position will be hopeless. I appeal to the Government to say that, if the Railway Department cannot do the job of transporting the wool, it will permit the farmers to do it themselves. My motion expressly stipulates that if the

railways cannot cope with the work, approval should be given to the carriage of wool by road where recommended by the local authority. We have arrived at a stage where the railways have fallen down on their job hopelessly. This applied to the period even before the outbreak of the war.

By legislation, the Railway Department has virtually been given a monopoly of all transport. I suppose there are few countries in the world where such a monopoly exists. If the railways were able to do the job, the farmers would be quite prepared to support them, but where incompetence occurs and the railways cannot handle the traffic, farmers should not be inconvenienced as they are being at present. Apparently the Commissioner of Railways does not know his job or more transport would be made available. Wheat has priority at present and is being transported to ships' sides.

Mr. Thorn: And much of it is being brought down by road.

Mr. MANN: Apart from the railways, 43 ten-ton military trucks are carting wheat to the port. What is the trouble with the railways? Is it that the engines are hopelessly out of repair or is the rollingstock also at fault? The Minister is leaving Perth tonight, but I hope some other Minister will reply to the motion at once and give us some idea of the actual position. The farmers must get their produce away from their farms both on account of lack of storage space and because they need the money. In our farming areas we have men who have been plodding along during the long years of war with very little labour to assist them. Many of these men are old and have been working exceedingly hard. We cannot shut our eyes to the industrial unrest that exists in the State, and those men are being given very little encouragement to carry on. Consequently, I appeal to the Government to relax the restrictions and permit farmers, when recommended by the local authority, to cart their own wool. There is no hope of the wool being carted by the railways for a considerable time.

The farmers are in an exceedingly unfortunate position. They cannot take the law into their own hands or they would do so. If they could only get supplies of petrol, the farmers would defy the law of the land, just as the miners did, in order to get their

produce away. Under existing conditions, the farmers are being driven to distraction. Because there is insufficient petrol available to them, they are penalised by being forced to hold the wool on their farms. I suggest that in all fairness the action I propose should be taken in order to assist these men to meet their obligations. The holding of the wool on the farms will mean a long delay in appraisalment, and so long as it is held on the farm there will be the risk of damage by fire. The industrial trouble at Collie caused a tremendous setback to the railways. I hope the Government will not defer consideration of this motion. Many motions are adjourned for weeks, but this is one that calls for an immediate reply from the Government. If the railways cannot shift the wool from the farms, the farmers should not be required to hold it until railway transport is available.

On motion by the Minister for Lands, debate adjourned.

MOTION—YAMPI SOUND IRON-ORE.

As to Koolan Leases Control and Local Smelting.

Debate resumed from the 19th September on the following motion by Mr. Cross:—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should take necessary action to—

- (1) Acquire for the benefit of the State, the seven iron-ore mineral leases on Koolan Island, now held by Brasserts, Limited; and
- (2) After obtaining control of the leases to make certain that the iron-ore is smelted in Western Australia, either by the State or by private enterprise.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland) [5.45]: The member for Canning is to be commended for bringing this matter under the notice of Parliament with a view to getting an expression of opinion whether this State should not take more interest in it than has been displayed up to date. We read a lot of the value of the deposits of iron-ore on Koolan Island. It would appear that they are to be handed over on a very small royalty charge for exploitation by private interests and for private gain. I would not mind that so much if the resultant labour involved in the exploitation of the iron-ore, that is to say its conversion into manufactured lines, was to be done in Western Australia. It is true

that we will gain some advantage from the suggested royalty payment, and it is also true that the State will receive some reward from the fact that generally speaking the labour that will be required for mining the ore will be drawn largely from within Western Australia.

I suppose it is also fair to assume that the provisions required in connection with the working of the deposits will be drawn from Western Australia, but that is so small a factor compared with the colossal value of the ore itself that the question arises whether it is really in the interests of Western Australia that we should hand over the whole of the deposits to one company. It would appear that the ore in question is of very high value. We are led to believe it is. I do not think, therefore, that all the deposits should be exploited at the one time. There should be some division so that a portion of them only might be mined. The experience gained in the working of that portion under any system at all would enable us to get a true idea of the actual value of the iron-ore, and the best means of getting for the State the advantage of the heritage that is ours by reason of the deposit being situated within our boundaries. Previously in this House, during the discussions I have heard, there has been a difference of opinion as to whether the deposits are not too far removed from the centre of population for us to make economic use of them.

The English company that has secured some right over them has, so far as we know, gone into the question of values, and is satisfied that it can mine the ore and market it as far away as Japan. It therefore appears that isolation is not really a reason why Western Australia should not be deeply interested in the matter. Of course, we are a State of huge distances. These deposits are far removed from the centre of population and from this Parliament House. It does not follow, however, that we should lose interest in them in proportion to their isolation or their distance from possible examination by members of Parliament. While I admit that I do not know a great deal about the matter, it appears to me that Nature has deposited on Koolan Island a very valuable necessity for the needs of man. Industry depends upon a deposit of this kind. We know what has been accomplished in the Eastern States by the Broken Hill Pty. Co., Ltd. It would appear that

unless we are very careful, the only proceeds we will get from Koolan Island are what we will receive in the form of wages for the men working there and for the provisions that will be drawn from within the State—apart altogether from any royalty that may be paid.

There is a danger that if water transport, which is the only possible transport for iron-ore, is used to take the ore away from the shores of Western Australia, the boats that will take it will not come back empty but will bring from the place where the ore is discharged for manufacturing purposes those provisions that are necessary for the maintenance of the mining staff. These are matters into which members should go. It would have been better had the member for Canning—it would have been more helpful to the House as well as to the State—moved for the appointment of a Select Committee to investigate the whole question very closely, and educate us as to the actual position, rather than leave us where we are to-day with only limited knowledge of the value of the deposit, its control and ultimate destiny.

The question is whether the iron-ore is to be mined and used for the benefit of the State to a major extent, or whether we are going to allow it to be exploited and transferred to some other State, leaving us to rely simply on the limited royalty that we are likely to receive. The House should take the matter seriously into consideration. We should ascertain in the first place whether it is not possible for us to gain greater knowledge of that which lies on Koolan Island, and then a better control of it so that we may reap for this State that which Nature intended, namely, that those adjacent to and in control of the deposits should get the reward of their being there, and also that we should find out whether they could not be worked for the benefit of Western Australia and not in the interests of others far-removed from our shores.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [5.50]: I associate myself with what appears to be a reasonable approach to this matter by the member for Guildford-Midland. These deposits are a very rich portion of the nation's domain and they may become even more valuable as time goes on. It is, I think, very much incumbent upon us to make sure that this asset that Western Aus-

tralia has received by the bounty of Nature should be utilised to the advantage of our people, for any additional population we may get, and for the expansion of the State. The leases referred to are those held by a company known as Brasserts Ltd. The motion does not refer, I understand, to any lease held by the Australian Iron and Steel Co.

The Premier: They are on a different island.

The Minister for Lands: They are on Cockatoo Island.

Mr. McDONALD: I think the lessees of Cockatoo Island have spent a good deal of money there and have many men employed there, and are doing genuine work in the development of the deposits. So far as I know, Koolan Island, held by Brasserts, and the subject-matter of the motion, is not being developed at all. I believe it has been lying idle since the tentative proposals that were put up shortly before the war began. This matter may cover a wide field. For example, the deposits at Lake Chandler are, I believe, in part to be sent to Tasmania for further processing in connection with the production of aluminium. That course may be inevitable. It may be that highly specialised machinery and plant are required in the processing, and that these are to be found in Tasmania, and economic conditions may not justify that machinery and plant being established in our State.

Similar factors may or may not apply in the case of the deposits at Yampi Sound. I do not know. As the member for Guildford-Midland said, we are fortunate enough to have natural resources of great value and possibilities, and we should therefore take every reasonable precaution to make certain that they are used for the benefit of our State. Like the hon. member, I speak without any exact knowledge of the subject. Maybe there are circumstances which would mean that smelting of the ore could not be undertaken in Western Australia in competition with similar industries in the Eastern States or in other parts of the world.

The Premier: Coking-coal is one of the problems.

Mr. McDONALD: There may be various factors associated with the whole matter. We may impose conditions which are impossible of compliance, and lose even the

minor benefit we might receive from the use of our iron-ore although it may be sent to another State for further treatment. I would be glad if the Minister for Mines would inform the House on this technical matter. I have no desire to cast a vote concerning the question, about which, I am free to confess, I have very little knowledge.

The Minister for Mines: You will get the full history when I have an opportunity to give it.

Mr. McDONALD: I will look to the Minister to inform my mind and enable me better to know what attitude I should adopt on the motion.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

MOTION—VERMIN ACT.

As to Adopting Royal Commission's Recommendations.

Debate resumed from the 19th September on the following motion by Mr. Watts—

That this House requests the Government to give Parliament an opportunity this session of deciding whether all, or how much of the recommendations for alterations to the Vermin Act made by the recent Honorary Royal Commission should be given legislative effect.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE
(Hon. J. T. Tonkin—North-East Fremantle)
[5.58]: Members of the Royal Commission, which made inquiries into this subject, pursued their investigations with marked diligence and a very sincere desire to find a more successful method of combating vermin and disease than is at present in operation. They spent a great deal of time, travelled long distances, and interviewed many witnesses in a very sincere attempt to find out as much as they could about the various problems, so that they would be in a position to make recommendations adequately to deal with them. They have presented a report which would take the average person a good eight or nine hours of hard reading to peruse. The Leader of the Opposition when introducing the motion mentioned that the report was not made without a very lengthy consideration of the evidence that had been tendered. His motion requires that legislation shall be introduced this session in order that his wishes can be met; that is that a full

discussion on the recommendations should be allowed and the decision of Parliament given. The hon. member showed quite clearly that the Commission would not go so far as to make the report without a lengthy consideration of the evidence.

The subject is of such importance, and so much evidence has been given, that I do not think the Government should be required to introduce legislation until it has given a lot of consideration not only to the report, but to the evidence. I would like to read some, if not all, of the evidence in order to see whether the conclusions arrived at are fair and just. I have not so far had the opportunity to read any of it. It was, in addition to the other duties that a Minister has to perform, a task to read the report, so I cannot agree that I can introduce legislation this session to meet the hon. member's wishes. But this motion ought, in some degree, to give him what he is seeking to obtain, that is an opportunity for members to express their views on the recommendations made in the report. If those views are expressed the Government will have additional information before it when considering the legislation to be introduced to give effect to some, or all, of the recommendations.

It appears to me that the Commission has succeeded in bringing forward many good points that are well worthy of consideration. But I also think that some of the recommendations are not practical; we could not put them into operation for various reasons. Take for example the one dealing with the use of a mobile unit, which is one of the big things involved. The mobile unit is to be used for the purpose of eradicating rabbits by ploughing up the burrows. A single mobile unit would probably cost an amount made up in this way: It would require a foreman at £6 a week; two labourers at £5 5s. 0d. a week, equalling £10 10s. 0d.; a motor truck at a cost of about £3 a week; ammunition £1 a week; depreciation on the vehicle £1 10s. per week, and a tractor and plough—which would have to operate for 25 weeks in each year—at £4 per day. We feel that those costs would be entailed, and they amount, for a single unit, to £42 a week, or £1,644 per annum. We would need a number of these units to deal only once a year with certain properties and many have to be dealt with two and three times a year. So, members can see from these figures where

we would get. I do not think that the scheme suggested could finance the use of mobile units on the scale necessary. I think, in that recommendation, there is something which could not be put into practical effect without considerable modification.

Mr. Berry: That is the cost of one unit?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes.

Mr. Berry: How many units would we want?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I suppose we would require one in each district.

Mr. Watts: Do not be silly; that was never suggested, or anything like it!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: What would we require?

Mr. Watts: Whatever you like.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Let us have the figure. The hon. member was in a position to go into all of this, and he should know how many of these units would be necessary.

Mr. Watts: If you started off with five you would do very well.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Is it seriously suggested that five mobile units would be sufficient to go over the job, even once, in the affected areas?

Mr. Watts: These units are supposed to be only supplementary.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: In some districts the conditions are so bad that a mobile unit would have to stay at least six weeks on a property. As a fact, I am told, it would take considerably longer than that in some places to do the job. I ask members whether, under these conditions, five units would be anything like adequate. From men to whom I have spoken in connection with this matter I have ascertained that if a farmer is determined to see that no burrows remain on his property he can successfully cope with the rabbit menace.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mann: What do you know about it?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I deal with them.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have spoken to farmers who say they have no rabbits on their properties. That brings me to another point, namely, the size of the mesh recommended to be used in rabbit-proof fences. The other States use 1½ inch mesh.

Mr. Seward: Victoria does not.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am informed that it does. The recommendation is that the mesh shall be 1¼ inch. I am advised that whilst kittens will get through 1½ inch mesh they cannot survive unless they return to the doe.

Mr. Seward: Your advisers do not know what they are talking about.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: They cannot return to the doe unless there are burrows in which the doe can remain. Therefore if the burrows are destroyed there is no need to have 1¼ inch mesh because 1½ inch is sufficient. Whether that is so or not has never been proved but that is the advice tendered to me. If it is so then we would be foolish to increase our costs by about £6 a mile—that, I think, is the difference in price of the two meshes—by erecting fences of 1¼ inch mesh when 1½ inch would do if the burrows were destroyed. I bring that point forward to show that these matters require consideration before they can be acted upon, and I am certainly not in a position to introduce legislation immediately in order that this discussion can take place. The recommendations of the Commission involve several departments in expenditure. The views of those departments have to be obtained on these matters and that cannot be done in a few minutes, or even a few days, so it is not possible to introduce legislation this session.

Mr. Watts: How far have you got in five months?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Leader of the Opposition, when speaking, made it clear that this was a subject requiring lengthy consideration.

Mr. Watts: That is granted.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: He was on the inquiry for four months. Even then he wanted time for a lengthy consideration of the evidence. Those are his own words. His report was then made available. I have not had access to the report for anything like five months, or even three months.

Mr. Watts: It has been in the hands of the department since the 28th May.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I want considerable time before I could have legislation prepared for consideration by Cabinet so that it could be brought to

this House to be discussed by Parliament. Members know when we usually rise, and they understand that the legislation would have to be introduced in sufficient time for it to be considered by this House and then by another place. I could not have it ready in time for that to be done. It is desirable that there should be a full discussion on the report because there are so many different points of view in connection with certain matters. One recommendation that I do not like, for example, is that to shift the responsibility from the individual farmer to someone else. That recommendation proposes that the work shall be undertaken by the board at half the cost to the farmer. Now, what farmer is going to spend his time and money eradicating rabbits from his property if by not doing it he can get the board to do it for half the cost? That is a decided weakness in the recommendations, and one which further indicates the necessity for due consideration to be given to what has been suggested. But I repeat that the Commission has brought forward many very good points which, no doubt, can and will be embodied in legislation to be introduced when an opportunity is afforded. The Leader of the Opposition would be unreasonable to expect that in such a short time as is at our disposal legislation could be prepared when it took his Commission such a long time to arrive at its conclusions.

Mr. Watts: Is the member for Mt. Magnet equally unreasonable? He seconded the motion.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If he adopts the same attitude as does the Leader of the Opposition, he is unreasonable too. If members paid due regard to the necessity for the Minister to have the same opportunity as did the members of the Commission to consider this matter they would realise that it is unreasonable to expect that legislation to deal with the recommendations could be introduced this session. Much as I would like to do so, I am afraid I cannot. It is necessary that some if not all of the evidence should be read in order to know whether the conclusions arrived at are sound.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I wish to be perfectly clear on this: I think

a discussion on the Commission's report is very desirable, and that as many aspects of the matter as possible should be considered and commented on, and I think this motion of the Leader of the Opposition presents that opportunity. After that discussion has taken place—in the light of that and of the recommendations made in the report—desirable legislation can be framed to meet the position. I wish again to emphasise the necessity for sufficient time being given to have this job done properly, as I think we can find incidents in the report that show that the reasoning is not altogether clear nor the conclusions sound. Close examination is necessary in order to find the right conclusions. For example, we find in the report the evidence of Mr. Lefroy, of "Cranmore Park," which shows clearly that, because of considerable expenditure that enabled him to net fully his property, he was able completely to eradicate rabbits.

The Premier: And it cost him 6s. per acre.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: £3,300 to do the job. The Commission then makes the statement that it has no intention of saying that the fencing of properties is absolutely necessary in order to eradicate rabbits. It proceeds to say that the majority of farmers could not face the expenditure entailed in netting their properties, and that is where I think the reasoning is at fault, because the evidence shows that rabbits are responsible for considerable destruction on properties. The figures show that rabbits destroy as much as from 20 to 50 per cent. of the carrying capacity. Mr. Lefroy said that, notwithstanding his superphosphate deficiency, his carrying capacity was increased at least 50 per cent. by the eradication of rabbits, and that represents a lot of money. In view of that, I say farmers cannot afford to leave their properties unfenced—if fencing will eradicate rabbits.

Mr. Watts: Fencing, of itself, will not.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Commission says many farmers cannot afford to fence. Of course they can afford to fence if fencing will save them such a tremendous loss. Under those circumstances, they cannot afford not to fence. Mr. Prosser, of "Marracoonda" said, "No warrens, no rabbits." He said it was not necessary to fence at all. In view of one man completely fencing his property and getting

excellent results, and another man getting an excellent result by not fencing at all, we would have to see whether it is worth while recommending expenditure on fencing, when it is possible to eradicate vermin without fencing.

Mr. Watts: It depends largely on the type of country involved.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The suggestion is that the agriculture protection board should have power to borrow money, purchase the netting, and make it available to farmers at 10s. per cent. above the actual cost of the money. Who is to pay for administration, handling, storage, wastage and bad debts? Will 10s. per cent. cover that? I do not think it will, and there is a weakness. That money could not be made available to the farmer at 10s. per cent. above the actual cost of the money without entailing further expenditure by the board, and in my opinion sufficient revenue would not be available to meet that cost, the cost of the mobile units, and of the other works which would have to be done. I think the principle of the minimum rate which should be levied is excellent, but 3/8th of a penny is too low. I think it requires to be higher than that, and that the rate before Government assistance is given should be at least 1d. I mention that to indicate that there are a number of points of difference which should receive full consideration.

It is not a matter of just accepting the Commission's recommendations and proceeding quickly to introduce legislation thereon. I think it ought to be conceded that the Government should have at least as long, to give consideration to the evidence and recommendations, as the Commission had to take the evidence—during which time it was considering what it was hearing—and draw up its report. The motion is that the House should be given an opportunity to discuss all or some of the recommendations and, framed in that way, it entails the introduction of legislation this session. I regret that I am unable to do that, and I suggest that members take this opportunity to express their opinions on the report of the Commission.

MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall) [7.40]: I appreciate only too well the fact mentioned by the Minister that he himself has not had sufficient time to consider the report. I con-

cede this only because he has not long held the office of Minister for Agriculture, for it must be realised that the report has been before the Government and the officers of the department for a considerable time and it is only reasonable to assume that, in consequence, those officers ought to be in a position to submit their views on the report for the Minister's consideration.

I do not read the motion as the Minister, in the concluding portion of his speech, suggested should be done, namely, that the Government should accept the recommendations of the Royal Commission and give effect to them. Far from it! That would be tantamount to assuming that the report was perfect. I say here and now that there are features of the report that I do not wholly support. On the other hand, there are features that I do support, and I am in accord with the motion except that it ends a little too soon. I would have preferred to see the word "immediately" appended to the motion. I had hoped that the Minister would be able to assure the House that those portions of the report dealing with the urgent problems associated with vermin and the defects which the Royal Commission unanimously agreed exist in the Act would be dealt with. To put into effect the whole of the recommendations will take some time, but there are portions of the report and some of the recommendations which could and must be given effect to at the earliest possible moment.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Where will we find those portions?

Mr. LESLIE: By a study of the conditions that have existed for many years.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But in what part of the report?

Mr. LESLIE: Ever since we have had rabbits in Western Australia, their destruction has been the responsibility of the individual, and the failure of those efforts over the years—without there being any need for a report by the Commission on the point—is evidence enough that this system must cease. The responsibility must be placed elsewhere. When a danger threatens the State, the Government takes a hand, and that has to be done to combat vermin, and done urgently. Owing to the seasons we have suffered, the rabbit at present is not as great a menace as it was; rabbits are not

visible in such large numbers as they were previously. Still, they are prevalent. The excellent season we are enjoying will be enjoyed by the rabbits also, and I prophesy that before many months have passed, we shall have rabbits literally swarming all over the country.

Although some farmers have taken the measures they have been compelled to take and other farmers have taken measures because of a desire to protect their properties, there are still vast areas that have not been treated and on which the vermin is breeding. Without desiring to flog the question of Crown lands, the evidence shows that vermin does breed on Crown lands and on abandoned holdings for which the mortgagees will accept no responsibility because they claim that they have not entered into possession. If we could define who is the holder of such land and compel him to take action, we should have done something to assist in the eradication of this pest.

At the beginning of this week, I returned from a visit to the north-east area of my electorate. In spite of the amount of grasshopper ploughing that has been done in the last year or two and although it is assumed that the copious rains will have destroyed the breeding grounds of the grasshopper, this pest is evident at present in considerable swarms. A journey along the road from Bencubbin to Lake Brown shows that the grasshoppers are moving from the railway reserve to the crops alongside. It makes no difference in what direction the road turns or the direction of the prevailing wind relatively to the road, the grasshoppers are moving from the railway reserve to the cropped lands adjacent, proving definitely that the grasshoppers have been breeding on that railway land. I do not say that that is the only place where they are breeding; they are breeding in other parts. Breaking away from the railway line north and south, grasshoppers were to be seen, and although they were not so plentiful as in previous years, they were in sufficient numbers to cause concern.

I am of course dealing only with the types of vermin that infest the area I represent. Within the precincts of the House may be seen evidence of the fact that the emu is also a growing menace in that district, and that something must be done immediately if

it is to be combated. In the main hall of this building there is a week-old chick, one of a brood of nine caught nine miles west of the Koorda townsite. This chick was sent to me by Mr. J. S. Montague who, with members of the Koorda Road Board, are desirous of urging the necessity for immediate action. These chickens were seen purely by chance, and it is safe to assume that there are dozens of nests in that district as well as further north and east, and probably also west and south, of which we shall not be aware until the birds are big enough to start causing considerable damage to the crops. Therefore, if the recommendations of the Royal Commission in regard to those pests were given effect to immediately, we would at least be getting somewhere in the warfare against vermin.

I repeat that this is a matter of urgency. I see no great difficulty in implementing a different system of controlling the rabbit, not one that will remove from the farmer the responsibility of destroying the rabbit or other vermin—that responsibility has always been with him and he cannot escape it—but one that will assist him to carry out the destruction of vermin. The season when the rabbit pest can best be coped with coincides with the time when the farmer normally has to devote a great amount of attention to his ordinary farming operations. What is he to do? Is he to allow his ordinary farming operations to go by the board and reap no benefit from his land for the following year, or should he concentrate on the work of destroying the rabbits which, if allowed to remain, will destroy only part of his crop? Or is he to let the rabbit breed while he carries on his normal farming operations as speedily as he can, and then turn his attention to the rabbit after it has established itself? That makes it a difficult task for him to undertake. In the result, he will be dividing his attention between his ordinary farming work and the destruction of the rabbit, and neither task will receive the attention that it should.

We have had in the past a system by which rabbit inspectors were appointed by local authorities, but what actually did the rabbit inspector do towards destroying even one single kitten rabbit? All he did was to serve a notice on a farmer stating that he was not complying with some ideas

which the inspector had at the back of his head. If the inspector could go to the farmer and say, "We are going to get rid of your rabbits. I shall myself undertake the work of assisting in destroying them," we should be getting somewhere, and I do not think that such a procedure would involve the expenditure of a large sum of money. I am firmly convinced that that is the only method effectively to deal with the rabbit menace. Instead of walking round like a policeman and telling the farmer that he has a rabbit on his farm—which the farmer well knows—the inspector should himself take part in the destruction of the pest.

The inspector should say to the farmer, "We are going to destroy these rabbits and we are going on to the next farm to make sure that the rabbits there are destroyed; we are then going on to the abandoned farms and on to Crown lands and railway reserves to clear the rabbit out altogether." That is the way to tackle the problem; it is the only way. The report of the Royal Commission will disclose that that is what was in the minds of the members as the only way in which the problem could be solved. The evidence has shown that the present system of dealing with vermin is unsatisfactory. I refer not only to the evidence at present lying on the Table, but to the evidence of the years. We must start at once to alter that system; but we are faced with the position that no legislation to deal with any part of the Commission's report will be brought down this session. It may, and we presume it will, be brought down next session, but that means it will not become effective until 1947 or 1948, because it is unlikely that the legislation will be dealt with until late next year.

This delay in making a national effort to deal with a pest which is causing much loss not only to the farmer and his dependants, but also to the State, is deplorable. I desire to stress the urgency of the matter. I think members will agree that the types of vermin I have mentioned—the rabbit, the emu and the grasshopper—are causing the greatest amount of financial loss and so are the greatest menace. They are destroying a staple production valuable both from the point of view of its volume and its benefit to the State. I hope the House will agree to the motion in order to indicate to the people that Parliament is fully impressed

with the necessity for immediate action to solve the problem of vermin destruction.

On motion by Mr. Hoar, debate adjourned.

RESOLUTION—GAOL SITE AND MODERN PRISON REQUIREMENTS.

To Inquire by Joint Committee.

Message from the Council received and read requesting concurrence in the following resolution:—

That a committee of three members of each House of Parliament be appointed to inquire into—

- (a) The requirements for a modern gaol;
- (b) Whether the site selected by the Government, known as the Claremont site, should be used for this purpose;
- (c) If not, to report on and recommend any alternative site.

That the committee may adjourn from time to time, and from place to place; may sit on those days over which the Houses stand adjourned; have power to call for persons, papers, and records; and shall report to His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor.

MOTION—RAILWAYS.

As to Improving Metropolitan-Suburban Services.

Debate resumed from the 19th September on the following motion by Mr. North:—

That this House recommends that the Government obtain a report in the near future upon the best means of improving the Metropolitan-Suburban railway services and suggests that experts be engaged (locally if possible) to advise upon—

- (1) Straight-out electrification;
- (2) Diesel electric traction;
- (3) The elimination of level crossings in favour of subways or bridges;
- (4) The erection of and best site for a modern central railway station and the substitution of island platforms in suburban stations where possible;
- (5) Any desirable changes in the present route, including the best site for a new railway bridge over the Swan at Fremantle.

to which Mr. Cross had moved an amendment that the following paragraph be added:—

"(6) The general improvement of tramways and trolley-bus passenger facilities in the metropolitan area."

MR. NORTH (Claremont—on amendment) [7.56]: I support the amendment. I think it can do no harm whatever to include in the motion the investigation of the tramways and trolley-buses.

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

MOTION—WOOL.

As to Investigating Mather Plan.

Debate resumed from the 19th September on the following motion by Mr. Mann:—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should investigate and present a report to Parliament on the practicability of carrying into effect in Western Australia the plan known as the Mather Wool Plan.

MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall) [7.58]: I listened with considerable interest to the Minister's remarks on this motion. I am not prepared to debate whether or not the Mather Plan is sound. I have read Mr. Mather's book and will say that I am in accord with his object, which is to decentralise industry and at the same time establish industries in the Commonwealth for the processing, as far as possible, of our primary products. That is an object with which we cannot help but be in whole-hearted agreement. It is the basic idea which evidently prompted Mr. Mather to write his book. I willingly concede that his book contains much wild conjecture, guess-work and fantastic estimates, but I also think he has given us an idea on which to found most desirable investigations. I take it the idea of the member for Beverley is that the House should make an investigation and present a report to Parliament on the practicability of carrying out the plan in Western Australia.

I do not think the Minister or any member of this House on his own, or anyone in this State on his own, as an individual is in a position to say whether the whole of the propositions put forward in the plan are practicable or not. There is a lot that is not practicable, but there are points that may be. It is all very well to say that we know the other nations will not take our wool if we process it here! I agree it is only natural that they should desire to retain in their own countries the industries they have had for years; and if it is possible to keep us as hewers of wood and drawers of water while they carry on the industrial part of our economic system, they will do so. So long as we are content to allow that position to prevail, it will prevail. It is the duty of this House

and of Governments to try to find a way whereby we can acquire for ourselves more of the industries necessary to process our products. There is one direction in which we can do it; and it would, I believe, from what Mr. Mather says, effect a considerable saving. It would establish industry, create employment and wealth, increase our population and provide a good living standard for that population. It would effect a considerable saving in the handling of the product and in the processing of the product through saving of freight and our own use of by-products obtained for the processing.

Eventually we would find that we would be placing completely processed woollen articles and fibres on the market at competitive prices with the dreaded threat of synthetic fibres. Tackling the problem in that way we will not find it difficult to maintain even the unsatisfactory—unsatisfactory because of its smallness—consumer demand that has existed for woollen products. We would not find it difficult to maintain even that and of course it would then be possible to extend it in the face of competition from the mighty synthetic fibre industries. I see no reason why the House cannot accept the proposal by the member for Beverley for the investigation of this matter and the presentation to Parliament of a report upon it. I would not care if the report stated that the plan is of no use and cannot be applied. At least we would have had the satisfaction of knowing that a committee of experts had investigated it from every angle and that we could accept their statements and their findings, based on evidence, with reliability.

It is possible that already in the hands of the Government there are reports that may dispel quite a lot of the proposals put forward by Mr. Mather, but we are not in possession of those reports. We do not know what experts, if any, may have discussed the angles suggested by Mr. Mather. So I hope the House will accept the motion and ask the Government to investigate the plan. In view of the fact that this House must have the necessities of our State and of our industries at heart, I do not see how it is possible for us to turn the proposition down and be consistent. I propose to vote for the motion,

and I do not see how any member with consistency towards his principles can do otherwise.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland) [8.5]: I am going to vote against the motion, mainly for the reasons advanced by the Minister. This problem is not a Western Australian problem. It is true that it interests and is vital to Western Australia, but it is not one that Western Australia can judge. It is an Australia-wide problem.

The Premier: It is world-wide.

Mr. Leslie: Then let us instigate an inquiry on those lines.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: There is a central organisation dealing with this problem. The Central Wool Council has already given close consideration to the Mather plan—not actually to the plan as submitted by Mr. Mather, but to exactly the same ground as is covered by the Mather plan. I had the privilege of discussing this matter with experts whose business it is closely to analyse reports and propositions of this kind, and it was clearly demonstrated to me that the Wool Council has already adopted a large proportion of the Mather proposals. That has been done, not because Mr. Mather put them up, but because of the knowledge of these experts and their responsibility to the woolgrowing industry of Australia and the investigations they have made, together with other expert bodies charged with the responsibility of going into matters of this kind. As a result of that, and not as the result of Mr. Mather's publication, they have put into operation the most practicable portion of what Mr. Mather says needs doing. It has been done.

Mr. Watts: Whereabouts?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Therefore, what is left of the plan is to me an impracticable proposition and not worth adopting; because this expert council, which is charged with the responsibility of attending to the industry on an Australia-wide basis, is not interested in the plan. So it would be sheer waste of time for the Government to go into this matter. Pamphlets dealing with the plan are available to members if they wish to read them, and members can gather for themselves what Mr. Mather advocates. But if they go a little further in their reading, they will find that the ex-

perts have already adopted and put into practice the major part of what Mr. Mather is advocating. I agree with the Minister that the matter has been closely investigated, and all that is good in the plan is in operation, the remainder not justifying any action on the part of this Government, which has already a lot of work to do.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [8.10]: I venture to think that the very modest request of the member for Beverley might well be acceded to at the instance of this House. All the hon. member has asked is that a report be made by the Government to Parliament on the Mather plan. It would be a report in which the Government had the advantage of its own knowledge and the advice of its experts in the appropriate departments. I am quite prepared to believe that the matter is one of very great complexity. We know it has repercussions on international markets and on our British markets for wool. I do know this, however, that the view held by the Minister is not in some other directions entirely acquiesced in.

I have heard discussed the extra cost or freight involved in sending to England a large amount of foreign matter in our wool. It is said to amount to a very substantial figure per annum. If that could be eliminated, freights might be lowered. There is also the advantage of local industry dealing with raw material raised in our own country. But I am quite prepared to believe that there are difficulties about the Mather plan which render it either unsound or impracticable of adoption, but because those who produce wool and probably still believe that there might be something to their advantage, possibly, in part of the Mather plan I think that a report of the kind sought by the member for Beverley would be of interest to them, and would give them information on a subject into which they are still inquiring. I think, therefore, that the hon. member's suggestion is one that might be acceded to.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [8.12]: I had no intention of entering into this debate until I heard the quite contradictory views expressed by the last two speakers. I venture to voice the opinion that had the international wool agreement been featured and its expressed

conditions, as we know them, published a fortnight before they were, this motion would not have appeared on the notice paper. The member for Beverley, like other woolgrowers interested in the business, has for a long time been actuated by a keen desire to discover not only the future of wool in the markets long experienced, but the future of wool in competition with synthetic and other fibres which today challenge it. I think I am interpreting his motive aright when I say that in his reading of the Mather plan he saw an opportunity, knowing what was coming from international sources, for wool to be used in various ways which have not previously been developed. I listened carefully to the hon. member when he introduced his motion, and that was my reaction to his fears, as well as his hopes, for the future of wool.

Tonight we had the member for Mt. Marshall describing the plan as containing "wild conjectures and fantastic estimates." He used those words in his opening sentence. He finished by loudly applauding the plan. The member for West Perth stated very clearly that he believed the marketing and the use of wool to be matters not only of urgency for Australia but of great complexity. He used those words. But further the hon. gentleman said that this House should approve the motion and have this Government arrange for the investigation sought, and so have the matter in that way referred to Parliament. But I point out this: We would only be tinkering with the examination of this problem in making an investigation in that manner. It is widely known and generally accepted that the Commonwealth Government is providing tens of thousands of pounds for research into problems of wool. Those conducting the research are to examine carefully the possible markets now and for the future, to examine carefully the challenge that synthetics are likely to make to wool and, in a general way, to continue, with funds direct from the Commonwealth and from the Wool Council, through the C.S.I.R., investigations at a high expert level into this plan and all other plans which might give a lead for the better use of wool.

Now the international arrangements have been made on the basis of a 14-year plan for wool, which anticipates absorbing not only the many million bales of Australian wool still unsold by the Imperial Govern-

ment, but for that quantity to be gradually fed on to the markets of the world concurrently with the current clips, and I suggest they are matters quite outside the scope of an investigation, locally, into the Mather plan. With that background, and with the definite knowledge that many other authoritative people, much better equipped than the best authority that we, as a Government in this State, could refer this subject to, are continually inquiring into the matter, I think the hon. member, actuated by his national attitude towards wool and its uses, is seeking an answer to the many problems which woolgrowers face. That being so, may I suggest to the House that we shall have authoritative views expressed in reports made on this plan and on all other plans dealing with the uses of Australian wool and its abuses by its present users. We shall have reports on all the things that are likely to be competitive with wool.

I think that since this motion cannot achieve the results that the tabling of such reports would bring about, the best way to overcome the difficulty associated with the transmission of such knowledge to the House, and through this House to the people, is for my colleague, the Minister for Agriculture, to undertake to table in the House every report submitted to him from the Woolgrowers' Council, from the C.S.I.R. and from the special committees now being set up and paid by the Commonwealth Government to investigate problems of wool. We would then be much better informed than if we were to refer the Mather wool plan to the best authority in the State who, in spite of his having expert and extensive knowledge, would not be in a position to give anything like the critical examination and the expert advice that the other authorities I have mentioned will be able to submit. Since my colleague, the Minister for Agriculture, cannot again speak, I would like to say that the best plan is not to carry a pious motion, or even an insistent one, but to ask the Government to undertake this investigation and to get its assurance that all information that it receives in connection with the future of wool, including an examination of the Mather plan, will be tabled as it comes to hand.

MR. MANN (Beverley—in reply) [8.20]: I appreciate the Premier's remarks. It seems rather strange that it is necessary

for a motion to be brought down to the House to have this information revealed to us. I agree that on many aspects the Mather plan is not far-fetched. Those who have been able to see the C.S.I.R. journals have an idea of what is happening regarding wool, but it is only through the Press, and particularly "The West Australian" that we have any knowledge of what the position of wool is, or of what it will be in the future. I appreciate the Premier's statement that the House will have tabled full reports on the whole question of wool. The position in the last 12 months has been causing the wool-growers of Australia great concern. None of us desires to see again a position such as that in the depression period, when wool fell to a low price, with tops at about 9d. per lb. Neither does the manufacturer desire to see such a position.

The Premier: We export 100 per cent. of our production.

Mr. MANN: Modern science means that we can compete with synthetic materials. Australia's greatest export value today lies in her wool clip, and I was hoping that the Commonwealth Government would do more regarding scientific investigation. The whole idea of investigation into wool today is on the basis of competition with synthetic fibres. The reason for this motion was to see if it were possible to establish more factories in this country, and more appraisement centres, and so give Australia a chance to produce the largest amount of cloth in the world. Some people believe that the Old Country—particularly Yorkshire—through its climatic conditions, is the best maker of woollen cloth in the world, but science has advanced so rapidly in the last 20 years that no-one can say that, in five years' time, we will not be able to produce an article of cloth equal to the best produced in Great Britain. I am looking further, also. If we can advance the industry and produce goods and sell them overseas we will be doing something to help Australia. I believe the buyers from America and Great Britain would buy scoured wool.

With regard to the remarks of the member for Guildford-Midland, I say he had no idea of what he was talking about. He made a most extraordinary speech and meandered on about the Wheat Board, first of all, till I think the prompting by the Minister gave him a lead.

Mr. Watts: The Premier came to the rescue then.

Mr. MANN: The Premier came to the rescue to try to save the wrecked ship.

The Minister for Lands: Perhaps it was an inspiration to the Premier.

Mr. MANN: Perhaps so! If stabilisation had not been decided on I would still have brought this motion forward. I think the Minister for Agriculture resented its being brought on as wasting the time of the House, but we are here for the discussion of all matters pertaining to the State, no matter how small or how large they may be. Time sometimes makes small matters grow, in future legislation. The Minister will realise that the motive behind my introducing this motion was one of sincerity as regards the State and those I represent. I appreciate the Minister's remarks and I hope the papers will be tabled, and that full publicity will be given to the whole position of the wool industry.

Question put and negatived; the motion defeated.

BILL—CHILD WELFARE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco) [8.29] in moving the second reading said: This is a very little Bill, but I feel that if it becomes an Act it will have a far-reaching effect on the children of the cities of the State of Western Australia. Some years ago I wished to bring down this Bill, but, owing to war conditions and the manpower shortage it was impracticable. The whole intention of the Bill is to raise the age at which children can obtain licenses for street trading. The age at which a child may now obtain such a license is 12 years, and this Bill proposes to raise that age to 14 years. It has been suggested by some people at the Education Department and some at the Child Welfare Department that 16 would have been a more suitable age, but I have purposely been modest in introducing this Bill, because I did not wish it to have a rough passage. If the Bill becomes an Act and is found advantageous to the children—as I am sure it will be—it will be an easy matter to amend the Act and raise the age to 16 years. I would like to see children off the streets altogether, as is the case in Adelaide and in other parts of the world.

I have further reasons for suggesting that the age should be raised to 14 years. As we know, we have raised the school-leaving age to 15 years and parents and children have become accustomed to thinking that, at 14 years, children should think of their future careers. If they wish to enter the Civil Service they have then two years in which to equip themselves to pass their examinations. If they decide on other careers which they must enter at 15 years of age, they have one year of school life ahead after 14 years of age. I am presupposing that very shortly we will implement the Act to raise the school-leaving age to 15 years. If a child is serious, at the age of 14 it commences to concentrate upon those studies by which it hopes to reach its goal. Such a child will not wish to embark upon the time-wasting although lucrative employment of street trading, knowing that school life is limited and that if it fails to pass its examinations in some particular avenue, there will be no second chance. It is a deplorable fact that many children dislike school life and do not appreciate study. In my opinion 14 years is quite young enough for such a child to be allowed to engage in street trading. This briefly disposes of my reasons for making the age 14.

The age at which a child may now receive a license is 12, and my reason for attempting to raise it to 14 years is that I consider the years from 12 to 14 constitute an extremely important period in the life of a child. It is mainly an adolescent stage when the girl is blossoming into womanhood and the boy into manhood. It is then that children begin to understand the physical meaning of sex and begin to realise their responsibilities to themselves and to others. It is a period in which school training, after-school study, physical training, physical care, the selection of companions, home-life, and guidance from guardians are factors in determining the character, which has been in a formative stage during the preceding years of the child's life.

The period of 12 to 14 years may be described as the molten stage awaiting to solidify. During those two years, thoughts, desires and emotions change from day to day. Some are battled with, others gain ascendancy, and it is for the guardians to see that a proper balance ensues. These children are in my opinion like buds about

to blossom. If the plant is not cared for, we never see or know the beauty that might have been developed from that neglected bud, and we do not reap civically or nationally the benefits of true citizenship that are lying latent in the child, a citizenship that would mean much to the peace and prosperity of the world. Hitler knew the value of capturing the emotions of the young and directing them into the worship of the Fuehrer and hatred of all anti-Nazis; and war was the outcome. No amount of kindness or the knowledge of defeat either in this or the next generation will obliterate the fruits of that training in the German people. Russia is another example. Immediately after the revolution, the youth of that country was organised so that the system which had been evolved would be stabilised. Japan has realised through countless ages the value of directing the emotions of the children towards the adoration of the Emperor.

In my opinion no nation will have been really defeated in the recent war that is allowed to keep the training of youth in its own hands. There can be no peace between east and west or between nation and nation. Cruelty, crime, unhappy marriages, broken homes, divorce, disrespect of law, poverty and suffering must remain part and parcel of our civilisation until we have learnt the lesson that education begins with life and that the most important period of life's span is from the first to the 14th or 16th years. It is the period of the formation of character.

I have said that children are allowed in many countries the right to trade in the streets at the age of 12. It is the age at which children can attend high schools where specific courses are given to fit them for adult life—girls in domestic science including mother-craft, dietetics, sewing, crafts or arts, secretarial or academic studies, and the boys devote a fair proportion of the day to manual training or commercial studies. A wide range is open to suit the character and desires of the child. Some children at the age of 12 cannot decide upon a career, while others decide and then change, which is quite understandable, as some develop earlier or later than others. The important point is that we ought not to encourage this indecision by giving lawful facilities to those children who are undecided.

ed in their minds or too immature to judge. We should not allow them to trade on the streets thus giving them an unwise outlet for their energy and an excuse for their indecision. These particularly are the children that ought to be sheltered. Section 104 (3) of the Act reads—

Such license shall not be issued unless it is shown that the moral or material welfare of the child will not suffer by such trading.

I would like to ask: Who amongst those that sanction the license are qualified to decide whether a child of 12 is fitted or not to engage in street trading without its affecting his moral, physical and general welfare? Is the child medically examined to determine whether he is sufficiently robust to stand at street corners on cold winter nights and often wait about until the picture shows are over? Are his family circumstances investigated? Is he able to go without a regular hot evening meal at a reasonable hour? We should bear in mind that 75 per cent. of city children do not receive a hot mid-day meal. What they get is often a starchy roll and an icy pole. Some of the boys engaged in street trading must necessarily go without the evening meal until 8 or 9 p.m., and then they are often too tired to eat.

Mr. Fox: You could not buy a newspaper in Fremantle after 10 o'clock at night.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: But one can do so in Perth.

The Premier: Very rarely!

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: One can buy newspapers when coming away from the pictures. Perhaps the Premier does not know of that.

The Premier: You are right; I do not know.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I should like to ask whether the schoolmaster is questioned to ascertain whether street trading interferes with the boy's work at school. I know it is often boasted that Australians have the finest physique of all nations, but that is just ignorance and wishful thinking. Let me quote a statement by Prof. Harvey Sutton in Sydney in the early stages of the war. He said—

Although there are 2,250,000 males in Australia between the ages of 18 and 45 years, of this number only about 660,000 are really fit.

We know that six months of good food and training in the Services have made a wonderful difference to many of our boys. I consider it a disgraceful admission; it took a war to make the difference. The test taken throughout the schools of 60,000 children showed conclusively that children attending State schools were less in weight and height than those attending private secondary schools. The average weight of those attending private secondary schools was four to ten pounds greater and the height was correspondingly greater. The reason for this is obvious. On the one hand we have poor feeding or ill balanced diet and irregular hours of rest or recreation; on the other hand we have good regular diet, rest and recreation.

I have said that it is almost impossible to decide the moral issue. It is impossible to police the present Act. It is also difficult to determine the age of a boy between 10 and 12. I have asked many children their age when they have been engaged in street trading and, as they have not known the provision of the Act, we may take it that they answered truthfully. Their ages have been as low as 10 and 11 and sometimes even less. One small boy who paraded from the corner of William-street along St. George's Terrace to Milligan-street in the winter months told me one night that his age was nine.

The Premier: They go to the pictures.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I hope some day that the Government will bring down legislation making it impossible for children to attend pictures that are unsuitable for them. I told this child that he must get off the street because he was too young to sell papers. Two nights afterwards, with a friend, I met him again. My friend asked him his age and he replied, "Twelve." I asked him, "How did you manage to become 12 overnight?" He said, "Well, my brother is twelve and he sells papers, and so I am twelve, too." If members will take notice, they will observe that few of these children wear arm badges. Those who do not are nearly all unlicensed children; but they are helping their brother or their cousin, or a friend, sometimes for adventure and sometimes for a cut in the profits. I believe that the policing of children is the task of the Child Welfare Department—

I may be corrected in this—but I believe it is so, and it is almost an impossible task for the department.

The work should be done in conjunction with the Police Department. The police have a better chance than others to control children late at night. This is an age when juvenile delinquency is increasing in nearly all cities. One of the reasons, I presume, is that mentioned by the Premier, the films. Another is that the children have greater license now than had children in the past. They go where they want to go and do what they want to do. Many of the films which children attend are the wrong sort for them. We have over-crowding in the cities.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I think the member for Subiaco is getting a little away from the purpose of the Bill. She had better confine herself more closely to it.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I will. I was trying to show the reason why children should not be licensed until they reach 14 years of age, and that delinquency is increasing because these children are on the streets, or in places where they should not be. We have only to glance at police reports. I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you will allow me to say that this is the consequence, among other things, of over-crowding in houses. We have had headlines in the Press stating that 13 people were living in a cowshed. Those children cannot have had the advantages of the ordinary child. We have also recently had Press reports that the R.S.L. had said that many of the houses in which their members had lived since the last war are pigsties.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I hope the member for Subiaco will connect these remarks up with the Bill. They have nothing to do with it.

The Minister for Lands: Those men were not in overcrowded cities, but in the backblocks, at Lake Grace.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: That is true. I wish to point out, however, that though the children may live in the backblocks, eventually they come to the city. If thousands of children are brought up under those conditions we must expect an increase in juvenile delinquency and crime.

The Minister for Lands: You are spoiling a good case.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: There have been recent cases of boys waylaying a girl and of boys of 10 to 12 years forcibly interfering with a girl of 13 years. During the past two years we have had no fewer than 3,501 charges on various counts before the Perth Children's Court; of course, those cases were not confined solely to Perth; Fremantle and Midland Junction are included. In my opinion, the numbers are a terrible indictment of our legislation, our administration, and our home-life. Will you allow me to read the figures, Mr. Deputy Speaker? They certainly do link up with the Bill and are as follows:—

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Neglected children | 201 |
| Destitute | 48 |
| Uncontrollable | 30 |
| Parents contributing to neglect .. | 37 |
| Unlawful control of motor cars .. | 167 |
| Unlawful possession | 32 |
| Breaking and entering | 1,314 |

Mr. Cross: What are the ages?

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: They all came before the Children's Court. To be quite fair, the last figure I mentioned may include more than one charge against particular individuals. Other figures are—unlawfully on the premises 43, wilful damage 39, unlawful assault 67, charges against adults for having carnal knowledge of children 23, indecent assaults 4, and boys taking bicycles and riding without lights 1,391.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I think the member for Subiaco is discussing the whole of the Child Welfare Act. She must confine herself more strictly to the amendments in this Bill.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I shall try to do so. Those figures I have given do not nearly represent the total. The cases of the uncharged are enormous. As you, Sir, are making me curtail greatly what I wanted to say, I will get back to the question of the seriousness of these offences. Many people will think that a great many of the charges I have mentioned are not definitely serious, but all charges that come before a court are serious because they have a hardening effect upon the child mind. In my opinion, few charges would be laid—and this is where I wish to connect my previous remarks with the Bill—if we gave greater attention to the upbringing of our children and the tightening of our laws for the protection of children. We cannot any

longer depend, as some members think we can, on the parents of today, because they are the product of our present system.

We must remember that the cases dealt with under these headlines which I have here—and which I would not be allowed to read out—are not isolated. I have mentioned 241 cases of children who have been absolutely neglected and have come before the Children's Court. Our only hope lies with the children. The Premier mentioned films. He may remember that the other night three children aged seven, eight and nine respectively, returning from a film, saw something which they coveted in a shop window. They crept out at 1 o'clock in the morning with a hammer and smashed the window to secure the object they wanted. They are not to blame for their adventure.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Subiaco is very persistent in wandering away from the Bill. I wish she would stick more closely to it. It is not permitted to discuss the whole of the Child Welfare Act under this Bill. If the hon. member would realise that, it would be better for everyone.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: This is dealt with by the Child Welfare Department.

The Premier: The hon. member may not have the last argument, but she will have the last word!

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I have dealt at some length with the moral and educational aspect. Let me now say a few words about the economic side. It is true that, during the depression, some children brought to their homes from £1 to £4 from street trading, but we hope those days are over. We hope that a depression will never come again. But we still have the sorry plight of widows or women on maintenance with young children whose incomes range from £2 10s. to £3 a week. By the time these women pay for rent, light and wood, there is very little left for clothes and other things, and their children usually have to trade on the streets. But if the child of a widow trades on the street, the amount she gets from the Child Welfare Department is reduced in accordance with the amount earned by that child. Many children have made anything from £1 to £4 a week; in fact, I know of one lad who made £300 from street trading. He made it during the time the Americans were here.

I have seen children at night counting out the proceeds from street trading and reckoning up their profits for the day. I have listened to what they said, and they have made £1 each during the day and night. That was when the Americans were with us. Some members may contend that street trading makes a child cute and alert. It may be so, but they do not become cute and alert in a manner likely to bring forth the highest principles within them. I do not want to give the impression that boys selling newspapers or working on off-days are bad boys. I trust that I have not done that, because I did not mean to do so. I have personally known many of them to be very good, wholesome lads, who have either saved the money so earned or given it to their parents. What I did wish to point out is that the present Act is unfair to the children. It is unfair to their education; it is unfair to their health; and it is unfair to their adult life. The children of today are the world of tomorrow, and we can only hope for a better world by giving liberally to childhood and youth those things that belong to childhood and youth, treating children as children until their characters are formed and they are fitted to grapple with the problems of adult life.

On motion by the Minister for Education, debate adjourned.

BILL—SUPREME COURT ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Second Reading.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [8.57] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill which has received the sanction of the Legislative Council and is now before this Assembly for its consideration. It proposes to add to Section 69 of the Supreme Court Act a new ground upon which the court will be authorised to dissolve a marriage. Briefly, if a husband and wife have lived separate and apart for a period of not less than ten years immediately prior to the petition and are unlikely to resume cohabitation, the court has power to dissolve the marriage. In conjunction with that authority which is proposed to be given by this Bill, there are two other factors. The first is that the granting of the petition for dissolution of the marriage is in the absolute discretion of the court. If there is any factor which, in the opinion of the court,

means that the petitioner should not be entitled to this relief, the judge has absolute discretion to refuse it.

If, for example, the judge thinks that the separation which has, in fact, existed for ten years or more was due to some reprehensible attitude or conduct on the part of the petitioner, then he has power to say that this remedy shall not be available to the petitioner. The second factor that I want to mention is that the judge or the court is directed to refuse a decree for dissolution of marriage unless and until provision is made for such maintenance as, in the circumstances, the court thinks proper for the respondent and any children, and the custody and care of such children. When the matter was discussed in this Chamber on a previous occasion some apprehension was expressed by members that a husband might secure a divorce, marry again and have a second family, with the result that he would disregard his obligations to the first wife and any family that she might have. By this Bill the judge is directed to refuse the petition unless such provision for the existing wife is made by the petitioner as the court thinks proper in the circumstances.

Mr. Fox: A poor man would have a very poor chance of getting a divorce in those circumstances.

Mr. McDONALD: Not at all. He would have just as good a chance as the richest man in the world because the Bill provides "such provision as the judge thinks proper in the circumstances." The circumstances or lack of circumstances of the petitioner will be weighed just the same as the wealth of a well-to-do petitioner. I will return to that aspect at a later stage. I am sure that members are well aware that there has been a steady revolution in the thoughts of men and women towards the matter of divorce. The old ideas on this subject are just as much out-of-date as the belief that it is right for a child of 12 years to work in a factory or to trade on the streets. Those things belong to the archaic times. I believe that the House, feeling this, will be anxious to give this matter very careful and responsible discussion, the more so because there are many more people in this community than we might imagine whose lives are saddened and frustrated by the existing divorce laws. That position is accentuated in consequence of the disturb-

ance and dislocation of six years of war, and marriages that may have been hastily and impetuously entered upon in those unsettled times.

For these reasons the question of the relation of married people whose marriage has failed is going to be a still more important and urgent social problem. Because of that I think the House will be anxious to give this Bill careful consideration. The Commonwealth Parliament has, I believe, already dealt with this matter in a minor degree. I am not sure whether its Bill has become an Act, but I am almost certain it has because it was so obviously desirable. Under the legislation before the Commonwealth Parliament machinery was created to facilitate divorces between Australian women and soldiers of other Allied nations. In addition, apart from soldiers, machinery was set up to facilitate divorce where the husband and wife were residents of different States. The latter was a reform long overdue because divorce, in those circumstances, was sometimes so costly as to be a problem for some people.

Now I have said that there has been a steady revolution, advancement or change in the opinion of all thoughtful people towards the matter of divorce. One of the most remarkable evidences of that was the passage of a private member's Bill introduced into the British House of Commons by Mr. A. P. Herbert, the Independent member for Oxford University. His Bill was passed in October, 1937, just shortly before the war.

Mr. J. Hegney: That was based on the Western Australian Act.

Mr. McDONALD: It was partly based on our Act, but I am interested to observe that it has gone beyond the Western Australian Act.

Mr. J. Hegney: I do not think so.

Mr. McDONALD: It most certainly has!

Mr. J. Hegney: Ours is more liberal.

Mr. McDONALD: It has gone beyond ours. In some respects ours is more liberal, but in others the British Act is. Let me give an instance of that which I observed when reading the two Acts. Under our Act there can be no divorce on the ground of cruelty unless it is allied with habitual drunkenness. The two things must be proved. In England a wife may get a divorce because of cruelty alone. That is

evidence of an advancement of the views of the British House of Commons beyond the legislation now on the statute-book of this State. Other countries have examined this problem very carefully. There are various views ranging from that held in Southern Ireland where a divorce is not permitted at all—divorce is not permitted there unless the law has been altered very recently—to the view of Mr. Bernard Shaw who said that divorce should be as easy, as cheap, and as private as marriage. Between these two views members can take their choice as to what is correct.

Mr. J. Hegney: They had that in Russia, but reverted.

Mr. McDONALD: The Russians went to extremes, as the hon. member points out, but I think they have retreated somewhat from that extreme alteration of the law, but even so the law in that country is at present, I think, more liberal, in the matter of divorce, than that of any Australian State. Allow me to say a few words on the principles involved in this proposed change of law. First of all, it is not startling. In a previous Bill before this House it was proposed that five years actual separation should be cause for divorce. Now this Bill proposes that the parties must be separated for 10 years.

Mr. Withers: I think it was three years the first time it came here.

Mr. McDONALD: I speak subject to correction.

Mr. Withers: It has been here two or three times.

Mr. McDONALD: At all events the period is now 10 years, and the court must find that the parties are not likely to resume cohabitation. There must have been 10 years' actual continuous separation between husband and wife.

Mr. Leahy: Ten years is a long time.

Mr. McDONALD: In other words the marriage has to be absolutely dead, so that it exists in name only, and in cases such as that the question is how long will we allow to remain on the statute-book legislation that upholds a marriage which has ceased to exist in fact and which can never be revived. There is nothing alarming in the dissolution of a marriage that has been dead for 10 years and that is shown to have no possibility of coming to life.

Mr. Fox: What about reconciliation?

Mr. McDONALD: The member for South Fremantle is much more optimistic than I am if he talks about reconciliation after 10 years. There has been a law in New Zealand since 1928—they have had nearly 20 years' experience of it and I believe it is still there—that does not go quite so far as this proposal, in one respect, but which goes further in another respect. Here is the New Zealand law, and I want members to note what it says. By the New Zealand Matrimonial Causes Act of 1928 it has been a ground of divorce that the petitioner and respondent are parties to an agreement for separation, whether made by deed or in writing or verbally, and that such agreement is in full force and has been in full force for not less than three years. New Zealand is not altogether without credit for advanced legislation. In New Zealand if the parties agree to separate—even though it is only a verbal agreement—and remain separated for three years, either party can apply for a divorce.

There is, in the New Zealand Act, a provision that involves certain safeguards. That provision is that if the judge is satisfied that the separation was brought about by conduct for which the petitioner should be held blameworthy, the court has discretion to refuse to dissolve the marriage. In New Zealand, where the parties separate by consent, the marriage can be dissolved after three years, whereas this Bill proposes 10 years. In the year before the war the South Australian Parliament also moved with the times. That legislation is the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1938, which provides that if during the five years preceding the commencement of the action the husband and wife have been living separately, under and pursuant to a decree or order granting a judicial separation or relief from cohabitation, made by any court whether superior or inferior in any part of His Majesty's dominions, a divorce may be granted. There the period of separation is five years, whereas this Bill proposes 10 years. In other words, we double the period.

It is to be observed that in South Australia the separation must be pursuant to a decree or order of some court, by which the parties have been allowed to live separate and apart from each other, but that does not mean very much. It is quite easy,

even in this State, by consent, for an order for separation to be made in any police court, and that would represent an order within the terms of the South Australian Act. We find that the State of South Australia and the Dominion of New Zealand have already made advances on these lines. There is nothing of an alarming innovation in a law that has already for some years been to a large extent on the statute-books of other States or Dominions. I will add a word or two now on general lines. I did not propose, when the Bill was last before this House in 1939, and I do not propose now, to detain the House at any length. However, it is necessary in a Bill of this importance, which is profoundly important to the social basis of the life of the people of Western Australia—not only now but in the future—to say a few words.

Mr. J. Hegney: It is proposed to make it retrospective.

Mr. McDONALD: It will apply in the case of any people who have been separated for 10 years. Might I suggest that my friend should give me credit for sincerity in this matter. I am not personally concerned in it.

Mr. J. Hegney: But there are others.

Mr. McDONALD: I am speaking of something that is of profound importance to the social life of our State, and so far the British law and the Australian law of divorce have been based on the idea of an offence against society of a kind that society must inevitably condemn. If it has not had a criminal it has had a quasi-criminal basis. The law so far has only been prepared to take notice of the cruder forms of matrimonial misconduct, and all the other matters that may arise and which may inflict even greater suffering than physical punishment have been beyond the purview of the law. That is one of the reasons why I say that people are now viewing divorce from a different angle, not as a matter of offence and punishment, but as a matter that involves the foundation of society. Also they are regarding divorce not from the point of view of the physical side, but from the spiritual and social side.

I will quote two things from A. P. Herbert's book entitled "The Ayes Have It." On the third reading of the Bill in the House of Lords, five Bishops of the Church

of England expressed their opinions, and when it went to the vote, only one of the five voted against it. The Bishop of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich said—

I do not believe that this is a State Bill divorced from Christian feeling. I believe it represents the truest Christian feeling in this country.

Mr. J. Hegney: Was he interpreting the Christian feeling aright?

Mr. McDONALD: I have no wish to enter upon a theological discussion. In 14 days 100,000 people in England signed a petition in favour of divorce reform, and before this Bill was passed by the House of Commons, the Methodist Conference had given it unanimous support, and people of all religions throughout England wrote letters to Mr. Herbert in support of the Bill. The Lord Chancellor, Lord Birkenhead, whose name is well known to members, spoke on this matter of divorce reform. He pointed out what happens when two people who are married do not agree and do not live together—the effect on society as well as the effect on the individuals and their children. He said—

Do not at least let us delude ourselves; let us face the facts.

He was dealing with separation without divorce.

I will tell your Lordships what it means, and I challenge contradiction on this point. It means that new connections are formed; it means that, in the overwhelming majority of the cases, the man or woman who is deserted in the circumstances described enters into adulterous relations with others. In some cases the moral declension and succession of adulterous relations which one would expect follows; in other cases a monogamous union is formed, which is necessarily of an adulterous character, but in which the parties remain faithful to one another, and of course their children are illegitimate.

Lord Birkenhead goes on to say—and I again commend the member for Middle Swan to his book; it is in our parliamentary library—that this is a spiritual and social matter, and we have to get away from the old conceptions of divorce based on theories formed hundreds of years ago. But the long fight has gone on. It has gone on and an appreciation of the true position is inevitable; it will come sooner or later. Under our existing law, if one spouse deserts the other against the will of the other, the one who is deserted may obtain a divorce after three years. If a woman leaves her

husband against his will and stays away for three years, she does it because she has made up her mind that the marriage is a failure, although the husband who is deserted may be of opinion that it is not a failure, or that it can be redeemed from failure.

In those circumstances—and that is the existing law, the law today on our statute-book—the deserted husband or wife can get a divorce. That means that where a marriage has been interrupted by separation for three years and one party says it is a failure, it is finished, that is, the one who goes away, and the other says, “No, it is not a failure,” the court will grant a divorce to the one who thinks the marriage can still be made a success. But where both agree it is a failure and they separate admitting to themselves it is a failure, then they can get no divorce at all, unless one of them is prepared to undertake that shabby piece of perjured testimony which we are all familiar with, to give the wife the opportunity of a quick and easy divorce on the ground of adultery. If one says the marriage is a failure and the other thinks it is not, a divorce can be obtained by our law; but if both agree it is a failure, we hold them together for the rest of their lives. But they will not be held together. The result is that they form, in many cases, other associations and illegitimate children are born who can never be legitimated.

There was a case before our own courts quite recently. I had the report handed to me today. I do not even know who the judge was, but I believe this to be a transcript of his remarks. He said—

This is a wife's petition claiming dissolution of marriage on the ground of the respondent husband's adultery. The suit is undefended. The parties were married in 1935 in Western Australia and took a short trip to the other States and New Zealand and returned to Western Australia, ostensibly to settle in this State, but the parties only lived together in Western Australia for three days when, owing to some incompatibility which has not been altogether disclosed, they separated and again for some reason which is not too clear the husband agreed to pay to the wife the sum of £5 per week during their joint lives so long as the wife remained chaste. These payments have been made under the deed right up to the present time. In 1936, the wife now admits, the husband formed an association with another woman with whom he was living and has lived ever since; there being one child of this association. It is quite clear that the marriage between the parties was tantamount to a mar-

riage in name only. . . . This marriage has never been a marriage in the strict sense of the word, and were I to act according to the letter of the law I should, perhaps, dismiss this petition on account of the delay which has taken place with the full knowledge and approval of the wife; but it is quite clear, from what the wife said, that it is really the respondent husband who wants the relief, and as I think this is so I therefore decided to grant the petition.

The judge also said—

The circumstances of the case prompt me to say that it is time there was some amelioration made in the law concerning grounds for divorce.

He further said—

If the Legislature sees fit to make any alteration in the law, the terms of the alteration will be for the Legislature to consider, as I do not think it is my province to suggest what alterations there should be.

That is a case where the parties had been separated by agreement for ten years. If the husband had not formed this association with the other woman, there would have been no ground for divorce, because there was no desertion; the separation was by consent. There are many cases—very often cases in which the people are of very high character—where there may be perhaps one of the usual grounds for divorce, but they hesitate to go to the court, perhaps because there are young children at high school or at the University and the children would not want their friends to read their parents' names in the papers in connection with the divorce court. The man may feel that his position might be jeopardised and that his power to maintain his wife and children, or to contribute to their maintenance, might suffer. Again, there are people who shrink from publicity which we allow in this State, in which all the causes of difference in married life are brought out in open court.

Mr. Cross: It is time that some of that undue publicity was cut out.

Mr. McDONALD: There are many people who shrink from all those circumstances being brought out.

Mr. J. Hegney: The member for Canning wants criticism to be cut out.

Mr. Cross: No, undue or sordid publicity. The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. McDONALD: This is a Bill, therefore, what I venture to suggest is—I will not say in line with modern thought and with advanced humanitarian social views—

going some distance towards them. The British reform was strongly espoused by some of the bishops of the Anglican Church who years ago would have opposed it. I think the safeguards here are ample, perhaps they are excessively cautious. I do not know what kind of guarantee any reasonable person would want that a marriage is dead and done for; but it seems to me that ten years of complete separation should be sufficient to satisfy anybody. In addition, the judge even then has power, if he thinks the circumstances are such that the petitioner—the one who wants relief—is not worthy of it, to refuse it.

Lastly, the judge shall refuse the petition unless there is such provision, as is proper in the circumstances, that is, having regard to the means of the wife and the husband respectively, for the wife who is to be divorced and her children. I hope that the matter—which is one of great importance and will assume still more importance in the future—will receive the earnest consideration of the House. I venture to submit the Bill to the House as one which I think will save much suffering to many people now and in the future, people very often of the highest character who, husband and wife, have acknowledged to themselves, sorrowfully but realistically, that they are unsuited perhaps for reasons for which neither of them is to blame, and they have to go on separate paths. Those are the people, among others, whom this legislation will help to live their lives, or to start a fresh life if they wish to, because they have only one to live, in happier circumstances. I ask the House to give this Bill its earnest and I sincerely hope favourable consideration. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Needham, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.37 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 11th October, 1945.

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

QUESTION.

HOUSING.

As to Incompleteness of File.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER asked the Chief Secretary: With reference to the papers re Housing tabled on the 25th September, in accordance with the resolution passed by this House on the 20th September—

1, Is the Minister aware—

(a) that the file tabled only contains papers, etc., up to the 21st May, 1945;

(b) that the file contains a draft agreement only;

(c) that certain alterations have been suggested by the State Government to the Commonwealth Government;

(d) that a draft agreement dated the 6th April, 1945, was submitted to the State Government by the then Prime Minister?

2, (a) Has any definite agreement yet been reached;

(b) If so, will the Minister lay a copy of such agreement on the Table?

3, Why was an incomplete file tabled in the first place?

4, Will the Minister arrange, forthwith, that the file be brought completely up to date, thereby complying with the resolution above-mentioned?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

1, (a) Yes, (b) Yes, (c) Yes, (d) Without the file I am unable to say.

2, (a) A draft agreement prepared by the Commonwealth Crown Solicitor has been received from the Prime Minister. This