

a water scheme of an independent source to serve the country districts. The country people today, in my opinion, are not only on the sheep's back but also in the safest part of the country with the sheep because of the availability of an independent water scheme and an independent power scheme. They are on the outside looking in for a change. If catastrophe does strike us, the decentralised areas will represent the only places from which anything will be pulled out of the wreck.

Hon. D. Brand: It is only completing the scheme which our Government started.

Mr. HALL: I hope it will continue. Going further from that, we find radio stations among the industries decentralised. I do not get much coverage myself from them but they serve our district and are absolutely essential in any decentralisation plan of which we have heard so much in the last two or three days.

Mr. Norton: What about television in the cities?

Mr. HALL: I believe in television for Western Australia. If we look at the Goldfields today we will find that they are being subsidised and decentralised. We have to admit they are decentralised and, with the price of gold as it is, kept by subsidy—and no one can dispute that fact. The Goldfields are decentralised and industries can be established there as they have the water. If an attack were made on the City of Perth, I would say the metropolis would be most vulnerable to radioactive fall out and the water supply from Mundaring Weir would be contaminated. The position was certainly not helped by the efforts of the previous Government.

Hon. D. Brand: Is not that the position in all cities throughout the world?

Mr. HALL: Yes, but the hydrogen bomb would be less effective if decentralisation were carried out.

Hon. D. Brand: Aeroplanes will reach wherever you go.

Mr. HALL: That is right, but the aeroplane is vulnerable to attack. A guided missile would have to come from a submarine, and it would come in minutes. However, an attack from the air would take two or three hours.

I have not spoken for long, and have covered my ground fairly quickly, but I would like to emphasise that decentralisation is the answer. We must also use the assets of the State. Unless we decentralise, we will have no chance of survival or of putting up a fight. The country people are the people who are on the outside and they should be helped by the people on the inside. The Government will need to have a look at these things very carefully and perhaps, by decentralisation, something will be saved out of the wreck.

On motion by Mr. O'Brien, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.42 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 16th July, 1957.

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

QUESTIONS.

NATIVE WELFARE.

Government Acquisition of Beechboro Land.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) What led up to the acquisition by the Government of the 20 acres of land in Beechboro, upon which it is proposed to establish a native reserve?

(2) Why was the Beechboro area chosen for such a reserve?

(3) What price was paid for the land?

(4) Does the Government not know that the land in question is very low-lying, and that 10 acres or thereabouts is swamp land, and most unsuitable for the purpose for which it is proposed?

(5) Does the Government know that the people of the Beechboro district are strongly protesting against the establishment of this reserve?

(6) Will the Government stay its hand in this matter in view of the tabling of a petition in this House on Tuesday, the 9th July, such petition being from the Beechboro residents requesting the Government to reconsider its intention to establish this reserve?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) The urgent need for a reserve for natives who live and work in the metropolitan area and Swan districts.

(2) Because it was most conveniently situated to the school, shopping centre and places of employment for the natives mentioned.

(3) A sum of £3,000 (including residence, furniture and improvements).

(4) The area of high land is suitable for the purpose required.

(5) Some residents are in favour, some against, as is usual in these cases.

(6) No.

SUBIACO FLATS.

Capital Cost, Revenue and Expenditure.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) What was the ultimate capital cost of the Subiaco flats?

(2) What was the amount of revenue and expenditure in connection with these flats—to be quoted for each 12 months since commencement of operation?

(3) What percentage return each year does this represent on capital expenditure?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Cost not finalised but should not exceed £580,000.

(2) and (3) The complete project has not yet had a full year in operation as the last flat was not occupied until the 24th September, 1956.

COMMONWEALTH AID ROADS ACT.

Allocation of Funds.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Does the Commonwealth Aid Roads Act provide that not less than 40 per cent. of the money provided under this Act be spent on construction, reconstruction, maintenance and repair of rural roads?

(2) What proportion of the total amount received by the State under this Act was made available for rural roads for the financial year 1955-56?

(3) What local authorities received an allocation from the amount made available and what were the amounts allocated to each respectively?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Yes. The relevant section of the Commonwealth Aid Roads Act is Section 9 (3), portion of which reads as follows:—

Each State shall, out of the moneys paid to it under this section in respect of a year, expend an amount, not being less than the amount ascertained by apportioning two-fifths of the amount paid into the Trust Account in respect of that year amongst the States

in the same proportions as sums payable to the States under this section are divisible under the next succeeding section—

(a) on the construction, reconstruction, maintenance and repair of rural roads or on the purchase of road-making plant for use in connection with rural roads.

Rural roads are defined in Section 4 as—

Roads in rural areas (including developmental roads, feeder roads, roads in sparsely populated areas and in soldier settlement areas and roads in country municipalities and shires) other than highways, trunk roads and main roads.

(2) Of £5,089,383 received by the State in 1955-56, the sum of £2,770,606 was made available for rural roads, including important secondary roads.

(3) As this answer is very lengthy I am laying it on the Table of the House.

TRAMWAYS.

Removal of Disused Tracks.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) How many miles of disused tram tracks previously operated by the W.A. Government Tramways are there in the metropolitan area?

(2) Where are they located?

(3) What are the terms and conditions under which they are to be removed?

(4) When will they be removed?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) In terms of "single track"—15½ miles.

(2) City; Victoria Park; Leederville-Mt. Hawthorn; Maylands.

(3) At its cost, the Government removes rails and sleepers and makes good the roadway to the satisfaction of the local authority.

(4) Removal depends on availability of finance.

HOSPITALS.

Erection of Building at Albany.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary:

In view of the Government's announced intention to proceed with the erection of a hospital building at Albany, can he inform the House—

(a) Is this the proposed Albany regional hospital?

(b) If so, will it contain all the facilities required in a modern regional hospital?

(c) Are the working plans and specifications in course of preparation?

- (d) What is the estimated cost?
- (e) Is it proposed to call tenders for this work?
- (f) When are tenders expected to be called and work commenced?
- (g) Is it the intention of the Government to have this work carried out by day labour method of the Public Works Department?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

- (a), (b) and (c) Yes.
- (d), (e), (f) and (g) As it is proposed to call tenders early next year, it is not desirable to disclose the estimated cost. The work should commence within a few weeks of the acceptance of a tender.

RAILWAYS.

(a) *Malcolm Siding.*

Hon. A. R. JONES asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is he aware that because Malcolm is an unattended siding, Laverton people are forced to have goods consigned to Leonora which—

- (a) involves additional railway freight of a further 16 miles;
- (b) involves additional road haulage of a further 24 miles?

(2) Will he have an official or a caretaker appointed to Malcolm to lessen the burden now placed upon the Laverton people?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Laverton people are not forced to consign goods to Leonora. Malcolm may be used in the same way as many other unattended sidings are used throughout the railway system.

- (a) Fourteen, not 16, additional rail miles will be involved if people choose to use Leonora. Extra rail costs would be nil on quantities up to 3 cwt., and from 10d. to 4s. 6d. per ton on various classes of goods for quantities above 3 cwt.
- (b) Only if consignees choose to use Leonora.

(2) The quantity of goods carried over the line in recent years does not warrant the appointment of an attendant at Malcolm.

(b) *Deficit for 1956-57.*

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Will he inform the House the amount of the railway deficit for the year ended the 30th June, 1957?

- (2) How much of this total represents—
 - (a) operational loss;
 - (b) interest?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The commercial (annual report) figures are not yet available, but on a Treasury (cash) basis the deficit, including depreciation and interest, was £4,647,864.

(2) (a) £2,531,145, including depreciation.

(b) £2,116,719.

(c) *Postponement of Question.*

Hon. A. R. JONES (without notice) asked the Minister for Railways:

Why is it necessary that question No. 4 on the notice paper should have to be postponed?

The MINISTER replied:

For the reason that the full information has not yet been obtained.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Presentation.

On motion by the Chief Secretary resolved:

That the Address-in-reply agreed to on the 10th July be presented to His Excellency the Governor by the President and such members as may desire to accompany him.

MOTION—URGENCY.

Prisons Department, Dismissal of Principal Warder Thorne.

The PRESIDENT: I have received the following letter from Hon. A. F. Griffith, M.L.C., Suburban Province:—

The Honourable
The President,
Legislative Council.

Dear Sir,

I desire to inform you that at today's sitting of the Council it is my intention to move, under Standing Order No. 59, the adjournment of the House to discuss a matter of urgency, namely, the dismissal of one Principal Warder Thorne by the Prisons Department.

This is a matter of urgency because, in my opinion, Principal Warder Thorne has been wrongly dismissed from his employment, which dismissal took effect as from the 11th July, and my endeavours are being directed towards his reinstatement.

Yours faithfully,
(Sgd.) Arthur Griffith.

Under the Standing Orders it will be necessary for four members to rise in their places to support the proposal.

Four members having risen in their places,

HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (Suburban)
[4.46]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Wednesday, the 17th July, at 2.30 p.m.

I find it necessary to move this motion in order to bring before the House the question of the dismissal of Mr. L. W. Thorne, who was employed at the Fremantle Prison until the 11th July—last week. The reason I must bring this matter before the House in this manner is, I think, obvious. If I were to move in any other way it would, perhaps, be some time before I would be given an opportunity of ventilating the circumstances which exist in connection with the matter; and so, with the tolerance of the House, I think this is the most effective method of making sure that the circumstances will be made known.

Mr. Thorne had been employed by the Prisons Department for the last 32 years. Last week, you will remember, Mr. President, I asked the Chief Secretary, without notice, a number of questions concerning the dismissal of Mr. Thorne. I asked whether he had been dismissed because of misconduct or inefficiency; or, if not for one of those reasons, for what reason he was dismissed; and the Chief Secretary informed me, in a very lengthy reply, that Mr. Thorne had been dismissed because he had failed to maintain membership of the union of which he was a member until he recently resigned from it.

It was stated by the Chief Secretary that, although virtual notice had been given by him—the Chief Secretary—this man had really sacked himself because he was not prepared to abide by the agreement which had been entered into between the union and the Government. You will remember, Sir, that I asked a question without notice of the Chief Secretary inquiring whether he thought this was compulsory unionism without legislation. His reply was to the effect that he did not know about that, but that he did think there were Acts of Parliament which enabled these agreements to be made.

The Chief Secretary: That is not what I said.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: At this stage I do not want to misquote the Chief Secretary; but I understood him to say, "Whether it could be said it was done under Act of Parliament I do not know, but I would say that an Act of Parliament authorises these agreements to be entered into."

The Chief Secretary: That is nearer the mark.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I have since had an opportunity to make further inquiries into this matter, and the intention behind my action today is that I am hoping the Government will review this case and reinstate Mr. Thorne to his former position,

for reasons which I will bring before the House. The following is an undated letter from the Prisons Department addressed to Principal Warder Thorne:—

As you have failed to maintain your Gaol Officers' Union of Workers' membership I have no alternative but to give you four weeks' notice of dismissal as from the 14th June, 1957. You will cease duty on the 11th July, 1957.

It is not denied, of course, that Mr. Thorne, although he had been a member of this union for many years, decided to resign from it on religious grounds. It is given, however, that the reason for his dismissal was that he failed to maintain his membership of that union. I propose to have this matter dealt with in two parts. The first is that he has been wrongfully dismissed. I would like to take this opportunity of saying that in other places the Labour Party, as a party, supports the view that people who hold religious beliefs, who come within the category of conscientious objectors, should be given some protection from becoming members of a union, or, because of their failure to do so, from being dismissed from that union.

Whilst I know there is nothing in the Arbitration Act of this State dealing with this subject, I would like to refer the House to the Parliamentary Debates of the 22nd Commonwealth Parliament, First Session, 1956, Hansard No. 14. On page 2833 of that volume it is extremely interesting to find that Mr. Harold Holt, as Minister for Labour and National Service, introduced amendments to the Conciliation and Arbitration Act under the heading of a Bill entitled, "Conciliation and Arbitration Bill, 1956," which specifically dealt with this question that I am now discussing. In the course of introducing these amendments, Mr. Holt said—

Briefly, the purpose that we have in mind is to meet the situation which has been brought to our notice that certain persons in the community, who, by virtue of conscientious beliefs which they hold, are not willing to become members of a union, find themselves prejudiced for the purposes of employment in an occupation to which preference applies.

Quite a lot was said about this matter; and I would now like to quote from the same volume of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates where, on page 2834, Mr. E. James Harrison, the member for Blaxland, said this—

We offer no objection to the amendment proposed by the Government. We take the view that people who have a genuine conscientious objection to joining a union should be given some relief.

The Chief Secretary: Repeat that word "genuine."

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: At this stage, am I to infer, from that interjection, that the man whose case I am now putting before the House is regarded by the Chief Secretary as not being genuine?

The Chief Secretary: I did not say that.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You implied it.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I am putting forward the case of a man who is genuine. Therefore, surely the Chief Secretary, by using the word "genuine" is implying that his case is not genuine, because we are not dealing with any other case except that of Thorne. May I ask the Chief Secretary to whom the interjection applies?

The Chief Secretary: I will tell you later.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Mr. Harrison, speaking on behalf of the Labour Party, said that there was no objection, by the Labour Party, to the inclusion of the proposed amendment in the Commonwealth Arbitration and Conciliation Act. It is also interesting to note that that contention was supported by none other than the Federal Leader of the Australian Labour Party. On page 2834 of this same volume of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, Dr. Evatt said this:

This is a very important amendment. It has been discussed by the Opposition which reached the conclusion that it should not be opposed. One can easily understand how a political party which has been largely founded on the sacrifice of trade unionists must approach this question carefully, lest what appears to be a concession and recognition may be subject to abuse. I believe that what has won the day, so to speak, in this particular case, as has already been indicated by my colleague, the honourable member for the Australian Capital Territory (Mr. J. R. Fraser), is the obvious sincerity of the gentlemen who made representations in connexion with the matter, not only to the Government, but also to members of the Opposition. They are obviously sincere men, and they have their conscientious beliefs.

I do not propose to labour that part of the subject any more except to say that it is obvious that the policy of the Federal Labour Party is to show consideration to those people who hold conscientious religious beliefs.

The Chief Secretary: Would you like us to follow everything that is part of the Federal Labour Party's policy?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I would like notice of that question—

The Chief Secretary: I thought you would!

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: —because if we followed the whole of the policy of the Federal Labour Party—. I will not conclude what I was going to say, but will leave it at that. In any case, the interjection has no relevancy to the subject under discussion. Before quoting these extracts from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, I prefaced my remarks with the comment that this legislation does not apply in Western Australia; but obviously there is provision made in the Commonwealth Arbitration and Conciliation Act for such cases.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Accepted by the Australian Labour Party.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Of course! I showed that by quoting the remarks of Dr. Evatt, who is supposed to be the Federal Leader of the Australian Labour Party.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: He is not supposed to be; he is!

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The reason given for Mr. Thorne's dismissal is contained in a letter he received from the Prisons Department, part of which reads—

Failed to maintain your Gaol Officers' Union of Workers' membership.

I have had a look at the agreement under which Mr. Thorne was employed, and I venture to say that the subject of the notice has nothing whatever to do with the letter itself.

Dealing with the preference-to-unionists clause which is No. 19 in Agreement No. 34/55, it says—

Where a worker, other than a member of a union is engaged, such worker shall within 14 days of engagement make an application for membership of the union and complete such application.

I contend that Mr. Thorne has fulfilled the terms of that clause. He made application for membership; and having done that, he had fulfilled all that he was required to do. There is nothing in the agreement which says that he shall continue to retain membership during his employment. The Chief Secretary has laughed at this remark.

The Chief Secretary: I consider it silly.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I do not consider it a silly matter that a person should be sacked because he does not continue to be a member of the union.

The Chief Secretary: I am laughing at what you are now putting up.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The Chief Secretary can deal with what I am now putting up and criticise it when he speaks; but it is no laughing matter when a man is dismissed from his employment.

The Chief Secretary: That is not what I am laughing at.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Then the Chief Secretary is laughing at nothing.

The Chief Secretary: What you are now saying amounts to nothing.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Here is the case of a person who has been employed by the Prisons Department for 32 years. That was his livelihood and that was his source of income. Because of a conscientious religious belief—whether the Chief Secretary, I, or anybody else shares that point of view has nothing to do with the matter—he wants to resign from the union. His reward after 32 years of service is to get the sack. It must be borne in mind that he has only three years to go before he reaches the retirement age of 65 years.

I know that the Labour Party, as an organisation, gives preference to unionists. I would like the House to know that I, too, favour trade unionism; but I do not favour compulsory unionism. I think that the original intention of the union has been defeated completely.

The Chief Secretary: Do you believe in an employee having to abide by the agreement made with his employer?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The Chief Secretary will save his voice by dealing with that in his speech. In any case, I did not get his interjection. Let the Chief Secretary answer afterwards. It will not be so hard on his voice. This man has been dismissed because he failed to retain his membership in the Gaol Officers' Union. In the circumstances, compulsory unionism is being practised in this case.

It was said by the Chief Secretary that he made every effort he could to talk to Mr. Thorne; but in the answer he gave to my question, he said, "When persons concerned will not listen to reason." It seems obvious that the Chief Secretary is a better judge of reason than the man himself. The man has reasoned that for a conscientious belief he should be entitled to resign from his union, but surely his reasoning is that he should also be allowed to continue in his work. The Government has taken away that person's right to work.

The Chief Secretary: He has taken away that right himself.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The Chief Secretary knows that that is not correct. He did not take away the right himself. I presume this was the Government's decision. If the Government had allowed the person to continue working he would still have been there, and he would still have been in receipt of an income as a worker. But the Government did not do that; it sacked him on the spot, and in fact said to him, "You will get out of here in a month's time." I understand this person has actually been dismissed. He was living in the department's premises near the Fremantle Gaol, but I suppose he will have to leave them. I do not know this

for sure; I would like some assurance on that point. I think that possibly he will have to leave.

This person finds himself being sacked, after having been employed for 32 years in his job, and with three years to go before retirement. What does he get sacked for? He is sacked because he believes in his own conscientious mind that he should not be a member of the trade union.

Let us assume for a moment that some other religious body, without naming any religion, were to find suddenly that one of the objectionable things to its course of religion was trade unionism, and its followers resigned from trade unions. Would they get the sack? Would the Government dismiss them because they were no longer members of the trade union? If a person were a member of the Civil Service Association and resigned from it, would the Government give him the sack? That is what I would like the Chief Secretary to tell us. I do not know whether the Civil Service Association has any affiliation with trade unionism.

Hon. G. E. Jeffery: Have they a preference-to-unionists clause?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Yes; they have. There is preference to unionists mentioned in the clause which I read out from the agreement; but that clause, in my opinion, must surely mean that preference is given to a unionist who has fulfilled the terms of his agreement. Here is a man with three years of service to go, and he is sacked. I do not think such a state of affairs should prevail.

The advice that I propose to give to Mr. Thorne is that he approach the Arbitration Court and find out whether he has any rights in this matter. In the meantime, I move this motion to gain the opportunity of ventilating the position, in the hope that the Government will reconsider what it has done to this man and let him complete his three remaining years of employment so that he can retire at 65 years of age, and not let him at 62 years of age find himself categorically sacked without any source of income and without any place to live in.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [5.7]: I suppose it is necessary for me to again cover the ground that I covered the other evening when I answered a question without notice. As Mr. Griffith said, this man has been employed by the Prisons Department for approximately 32 years. For 29 years of that time he has been a member of a religious body. Since the inception of the union—on what date I do not know, but over 23 years ago—he has been a member of it. We find now, after all those years, that he suddenly comes forward with an excuse that his religious beliefs do not allow him to belong to a trade union.

Hon. L. C. Diver: He might be a better member at the present time.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know about that. That was why I asked the mover of this motion to emphasise the word "genuine" which he used. If anyone tells me it is genuine to abandon a course of action which has been adopted for 23 years giving conscientious objection as an excuse I have to take a lot of convincing that it is genuine.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: What do you think was the man's reason?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know; but I would not take the reason he has given as genuine. I was aware that the hon. member was very credulous, but I did not think he was so credulous as to believe such a cock-and-bull story as was put up to him. I did not think he was so simple. I thought he had passed through the kindergarten stage.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Do you think it was British justice to sack a person because he did not want to be a member of a trade union?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The position is this: The mover of the motion spoke about compulsory unionism, but the situation has nothing to do with compulsory unionism. It has nothing to do with being a member of this trade union or any other. This man really sacked himself. The hon. member asked if the Government would give further consideration to the case. I would point out that this man would not even give consideration to his own interests when I got the gaol superintendent firstly, and the Comptroller General secondly, to interview him and discuss the matter. He would not give any consideration to the matter.

The mover has talked about compulsory unionism, but that is not the point at issue at all. The point is that the employees and employer had come to an agreement, registered in the Arbitration Court, which contains a clause agreed to by both parties that persons employed in the gaol must be members of the Gaol Officers' Union. That was the reason for his being sacked, and why he could not be kept on. If he were allowed to remain, the agreement between the Government and employees would be broken. He has deliberately broken that agreement. It just happened that the reason had something to do with membership of the union, but it could have been any point in the agreement and the same action would have been taken. Whatever has happened in connection with this matter has been brought about by the individual himself.

Something was said by Mr. Griffith to the effect that he believed in unionism, but he has merely jumped on the band wagon for political purposes when taking

up the case of someone who has deliberately put himself beyond further consideration. All I want this House to do is to weigh up the facts of the case and then decide who is right and who is wrong. We did not put the individual off; he put himself off by breaking the agreement that he had observed and worked under for over 23 years. That was why he was put off.

Would this House stand up to any Government which allows and condones a person being kept in employment in defiance of an agreement made between an employer and an employee? That is the only point. The mover of the motion said something about religious beliefs. I also believe at all times in giving consideration to the conscientious objections of any person, but I cannot be convinced that a person is conscientious in his beliefs when he has adopted a course of action for over 23 years.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Have successive Ministers endorsed the agreement made between the union and the department?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: As I told the House previously, I traced this agreement to the time when it was signed by the Chief Secretary in 1935—Hon. J. Drew; and also to the time when it was signed in 1947 by the then Attorney-General, Mr. Abbott, when the McLarty-Watts Government was in office. I have also ascertained that the agreement was signed by Hon. V. Doney, a member of the Liberal-Country Party Government, in 1950. So the principle has been accepted right down through the years. I say that all that has been done is that the individual, who is working under an agreement between the employer and the employee, broke it.

Hon. H. K. Watson: The employees' union.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The employees' union of which he was a member since its inception, which was over 24 years ago. Suddenly he decided he was not going to belong to the union. I say that no Government or department could carry on under conditions of allowing its employees to break an agreement that had been duly signed and registered between the employer and the employee.

If this agreement had been suddenly made after this man had been working in the department; or if after he had been a member of this religious sect for so many years the agreement had then been made between the employer and the employee, this individual could have had some grounds for complaint. But that is not the case; because, as has been outlined, there is an agreement which has existed for over 23 years, and this man has been a member of the religious sect during the whole time and was also working in the gaols. If the hon. member can make out a genuine case of the Government's wrong action in that state of affairs, I have a lot to learn.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (Central) [5.17]: I really think Mr. Griffith has made out a pretty good case.

The Chief Secretary: You are easily satisfied.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Much more easily than the Minister. I have been permitted to have a look at this agreement, and there is some doubt in my mind whether the Government has not exceeded the powers of Clause 19 of the agreement which reads—

Preference to unionists. Where a worker other than a member of the union is engaged, such worker shall within 14 days of engagement make application for membership of the union and complete such application.

The Chief Secretary: You mean he can then immediately resign.

The **PRESIDENT**: Order!

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: From what I understand, this man became a member of the organisation and was accepted by the union, and suddenly he found that his religion debarred him from belonging to any organisation.

The Chief Secretary: After 24 or 25 years.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: His religion might have provided for it all along. I dare say that the Minister does not know every point of his own religion; he will know just the ordinary principles. This man's attention may probably never have been drawn to this point. He may not have thought that unionism was such an organisation. As there were only three years to go when this man was to have the rights and privileges of the work he had done—privileges by way of some pension or other—I think an injustice has been done to him. Personally I believe in unionism.

The Chief Secretary: Are we to employ him in defiance of the agreement? Would you employ him in defiance of the agreement?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I think in that case he might be given some consideration. The Minister possibly does not know this man as well as I do; he probably does not know him at all.

The Chief Secretary: I do not.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: If the Minister knew him, he would probably give further consideration to the matter. At this stage I think it would have been very decent of the Government—I am not specially picking out the Minister—

The Chief Secretary: You can pick me because I am the responsible Minister.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The Chief Secretary is only doing what he is told, the same as another Minister does. He does exactly as the civil servants tell him.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: How long were you a Minister?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Someone suddenly finds that this man had not paid his union dues, and the Minister comes along in his high-handed attitude, and the Under Secretary says, "We have notification that this man has not paid." The reply is, "Then sack him."

The Chief Secretary: He wrote in and resigned.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Well, that is different from being sacked. I understand he was served with a notice of dismissal.

The Chief Secretary: He wrote in and resigned from the union.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Not from his job.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: That was the natural thing to do—on the ground that he suddenly found his religious beliefs refused to allow him to remain a member of his religion and of this organisation. There are certain religions that do not believe in eating pork. I have no feeling of disrespect because of that.

The Chief Secretary: They eat it as chicken.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The Minister may disobey some of the orders of his religion. I do not know exactly what his religion is, but there may be some principles in it that he violates. In this instance the Government might have let the man finish his two or three years. He had paid his union fees for all those years, and it was not as though he wanted to defy the union, but he felt he could not maintain his religious beliefs and still remain in the union.

In the circumstances I think the Minister should treat him exactly the same as would the Minister's chief—the Leader of the Opposition in the Federal Parliament. He is much above the Minister; he is elevated far and away above him, hoping some day to be Prime Minister of Australia. If he can be tolerant enough to provide for this, it is time a clause was put in the agreement providing that if a person has for a number of years—I would not say just after the agreement had been amended so that he could say "This is a way out"—been a member of an organisation and suddenly finds he cannot continue, some amendment could be made to the agreement to enable him to carry on. There would be no difficulty; it needs only a notice in the "Government Gazette."

Maybe, as the Minister has said, the Chief Secretary in the last Government—not the Labour Government but the Liberal-Country Party Government—signed the agreement; but he probably did not read all that he signed. As a matter of fact,

I am doubtful whether a Minister would have time to read all the matter put before him.

The Chief Secretary: You cannot get out of it that way.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: In this case the Government has made a mistake, and I shall support the hon. member who has brought the matter to the House. I think an injustice has been done to the man, and I do not like injustices being done to anyone if they can be rectified.

The Chief Secretary: You do not want the Government to suffer an injustice?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I know that this Government is doing more injustice to the people of the State than any that I have been associated with in the past.

HON. H. K. WATSON (Metropolitan) [5.24]: The facts that have been brought to light by Mr. Griffith disclose a deplorable state of affairs in the administration of the Government in the State. The hon. member has raised a point which gets down to fundamentals. We hear a lot about the four freedoms. Surely the freedom to work is one. The rule of law in the days of the Romans—and it is our basic law today—was expressed this way—

Live honestly; do harm to no man; and give every man his due.

The Minister for Railways: Who practises that?

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I do not think the Government is practising it as far as this man is concerned.

The Chief Secretary: Do you stand up to all your agreements?

Hon. H. K. WATSON: Yes.

The Chief Secretary: So do we.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: There is nothing in the law of this State which permits any Government or union to say that a man shall not work and shall not be given a position if he is not a member of a union. That being so, we find in this agreement a more or less innocuous provision under the heading, "Preference to unionists" as follows:—

Where a worker, other than a member of a union, is engaged, such worker shall within 14 days of engagement make application for membership of the union and complete such application.

There is no provision here—nor do I think it would be held valid in law if it were—to say that a man shall not be given a position if he is not a unionist. The basis of this is preference to unionists; so that if there are two men applying for a position, preference shall be given to the unionist. That is all right, other things being equal. But here we have a man who has been in employment for 29 years.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: For 32 years.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: The Chief Secretary makes a point of the fact that for 29 of those years the man was a member of the religious sect to which he belongs today, and it is only at this stage that his conscience has stirred him sufficiently to resign. But surely there must have been some profound stirring of conscience if a man, after all those years and with only three years to go before retirement, feels that his religious principles are such as to compel him to resign from the union. Surely these beliefs are to be respected.

The Chief Secretary: In defiance of the agreement?

Hon. H. K. WATSON: Not in defiance of the agreement.

The Chief Secretary: How else can you do it?

Hon. H. K. WATSON: There is nothing in the agreement which says that if a man resigns from the union he shall be dismissed; and I would say that if there were such a provision in the agreement, it would be invalid and contrary to law.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I think you are quite right in that respect. It does not say he shall continue to be a member of the union.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: And much less does it say he shall be dismissed. Moreover, Mr. Griffith in moving the motion has explained to us the position as it exists under Federal legislation, and he has given us the views that have been expressed by all leading members of the parties in the Federal Parliament. There it has been conceded that if on account of religious principles a man feels he ought not to be a member of a union, then he ought not to be compelled to be one.

I understand that, with respect to the legislation which Mr. Griffith mentioned, it was made clear that the objection to unionism was on purely religious grounds. There was no question of wanting to save union fees or anything like that; because that particular legislation goes further, and the people concerned, as Mr. Griffith explained, were quite prepared to pay their fees to charity, the Government, or anything else. It was not a question of saving fees. The objection went much deeper than that.

As I have said, Mr. Griffith gave us the views of all the leaders of the Federal Parliament. I should think the views he expressed ought to commend themselves to any reasonable person and to any reasonable legislative body. I would say that apart from the Government of Western Australia—because we have the fact that the Chief Secretary has vigorously defended its stand—and apart from the Chief Secretary and his colleagues, we would not find any other body of men in the world except in the black republic or in Russia who would stand for such an action as has been taken here.

HON. F. R. H. LAVERY (West) [5.29]: I would not have risen to speak to the motion except for the remark just passed by Mr. Watson. I happen to be in the privileged position of having known Mr. Thorne for a great number of years, and he is a gentleman of high repute. He has led an exemplary life, and he is sitting in the Chamber tonight, so he can hear what I am saying.

[Resolved: That motions be continued.]

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: Having made those remarks about Mr. Thorne, there should be no doubt in members' minds as to my opinion of his integrity, etc. I would also like to dissociate myself from any feeling of politics in regard to this matter, because if any member of the community came to me with any of his difficulties or troubles, as Mr. Thorne has done with Mr. Griffith, I would do exactly the same as Mr. Griffith has done.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: That puts the Chief Secretary in his place!

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: I am not putting anyone on the spot. I am saying what I would do, as a member of Parliament, if any person in the community came to me with any of his troubles. But I want to try to bring before members certain points in regard to this matter.

During his speech on the Address-in-reply, Sir Charles Latham gave us a little of his history in this Parliament. His experiences have extended over a great many years, and he has a knowledge of Parliament which I will never be able to have. But surely Sir Charles is not so naive as to try to convince any member in this Chamber that if a person becomes party to an agreement saying that he shall do certain things, he can slip from beneath that agreement, if that agreement has the force of law. I want to forget Mr. Thorne completely for the moment and say that any individual who becomes a party to an agreement registered in the Arbitration Court of this State and then dissociates himself from that agreement—

Hon. H. K. Watson: He did not sign the agreement.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: I can answer that, too. Mr. Watson, with his experience, is not so naive as to think that if an individual signs such an agreement, or if several individuals sign an agreement to do certain things, some other individual should be permitted to carry on the same type of work without signing it. Surely we have reached the stage where we have grown up! So far as the trade union movement is concerned, all these agreements are ratified by the Arbitration Court. Innumerable agreements have been made in

Western Australia—brought about by conciliatory methods—and registered under the Arbitration Court.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Quote some of them.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: When they are ratified by the Arbitration Court they are the same as any Act of Parliament passed in this State—they are the law of the land. Therefore any person who acquiesces in an agreement by taking a job under the conditions laid down in that agreement, and then repudiates it, as happened in this case, has no redress. In this instance the person concerned has done nothing else but repudiate the agreement.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Does the agreement say he must maintain his membership of the union?

The Chief Secretary: Don't be so silly!

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: We have still another member trying to have us believe that he is naive.

The Chief Secretary: He is trying to make out that he is still in the kindergarten.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: Having spent a great deal of time in the trade union movement in this State, and knowing a good deal about the Arbitration Court system, I feel that I can speak with some authority on the matter. Mr. Griffith, Sir Charles Latham and Mr. Watson have tried to imply that, having joined an organisation—in this case the Gaol Officers' Union—a person is entitled to get out of it if it suits him and retain his position. Let me bring the whole question to its logical conclusion: If every officer in the Gaol Officers' Union—that is the union concerned at the moment—did get out of the union, what would be the use of the agreement? It would be of no use because there would be no organisation.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: It probably wouldn't matter very much.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: Surely we have reached the stage where our Arbitration Court laws have some standing! Surely members must realise that if we have an agreement under the Arbitration Court, and that agreement says that certain things shall be done, they ought to be done!

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: How often do the waterside workers break them?

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: I am not speaking of them at the moment.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: But I am.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: Also I was not referring to the stop-work meeting held by the farmers in Northam a few days ago.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: It was not a stop-work meeting.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I wish Mr. Lavery had been there.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: I am referring to a man who is in a most unfortunate position.

Hon. A. R. Jones: You want to have a bob each way.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: There is no person in this Chamber who regrets his position more than I do. As I have said, he is a man of the highest integrity—a real gentleman. I am particularly sorry that having acquiesced in this organisation, and having joined it, and having been there all those years, he has, because of his particular religious beliefs—I have known about them since 1925, when I first met him—repudiated the agreement. It is a pity that he could not have kept going for the next three years. I do not mean to be disrespectful, but this matter just proves that when religion is taken out of its proper perspective it causes trouble.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You want him to forsake his religion for his union.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: Mr. Thorne has placed himself in an unfortunate position. No other person in the community would be employed in a position if he did not abide by the conditions of the particular award of the Arbitration Court. I rose only to try to point out to Mr. Watson, Sir Charles Latham and Mr. Griffith what would be the position if every member of the association signed up with the union and then wiped it off. It would be just too silly, and I find myself in the unfortunate position—

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Of having to support a Government that does this sort of thing.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: An agreement has been broken; and while I have the honour to represent the people of this State in Parliament, I will always try to uphold the laws.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East) [5.40]: I intend to oppose the motion, and I do so because I do not think the time of Parliament should be taken up on this matter.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It should be decided in the court?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I can understand the feelings of this man who finds himself in the unfortunate position of having to go to his member; or, in this case, to a member in another district, who is prepared to sponsor his case. Also I can understand that member asking questions in the House in order to elicit information, as the hon. member did. Up to that point I do not think I can find any fault in the action taken by Mr. Griffith. But when he pursues it by moving this motion, I think he is on the wrong track.

In the course of his remarks he said that he had advised this gentleman, or was going to advise him, to approach the

Arbitration Court. There I think he might be on the right track; and I say to him, with the greatest respect, that in my opinion that is what he should do. Do not let us have a motion such as this and the time of Parliament be taken up with it. It is unpleasant to hear religion—

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Questioned.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Yes; a man's religious motives questioned. Sir Charles Latham, in the course of his remarks, put one construction on the agreement or award, as I presume it is.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: No; it is an agreement.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: It was an agreement which the parties entered into; and I assume it was made an award, or had the effect of an award. It has been approved over a number of years, and by various Ministers. Mr. Watson placed another construction on the interpretation of the agreement; and, of course, the Chief Secretary has been advised by his officers as to their interpretation. There we have a certain amount of difference, and the Arbitration Court has been set up to sort out such differences. If the department in charge has wrongly dismissed this man he can, through the Arbitration Court, apply for an interpretation of the clause or the agreement and vindicate his rights in that way.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Can an individual approach the Arbitration Court?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I think so.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Yes.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I am speaking without the Arbitration Act in front of me; but I am pretty certain that the answer to Mr. Jones's question is "Yes".

Hon. A. R. Jones: Would the union pay his fees?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I do not think so; I do not think anyone would expect the union to do so. The filing fees and out-of-pocket expenses would probably not exceed 10s., and I do not think he would have much trouble in that regard. Like Mr. Watson, I think the rule of law should apply; and if this is an award, everyone should comply with it. I think we all agree with that.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: It is not so much the award.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: If the award is being interpreted in a way in which it should not be interpreted, the man who is suffering from the misinterpretation should avail himself of the proper channels in order to get his rights. I do not think bringing the matter to Parliament and creating a rather unpleasant debate will serve the man's cause. I hope he can get back, and I hope the matter can be sorted out. I think that Mr. Griffith will do him the greatest service if, shortly, he asks leave to withdraw his motion and adopts the other course I have mentioned.

HON. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM (South-East) [5.45]: I want to say only a few words on this matter. I was very pleased to hear what Mr. Heenan said, and to see the attitude he adopted. I agree that the atmosphere engendered in a discussion such as this is not of the happiest nature. An ultimate approach to the Arbitration Court might not only have had a more satisfactory result, but I think the very act of bringing this matter to Parliament has opened that channel to the man concerned.

When this person received notice of dismissal, the most natural thing for him to have done would have been straight away to go to the secretary of his union and discuss the matter with him. It is possibly natural that the secretary would not have been sympathetically disposed towards advising him as to what his best approach might be; and the man would have been just as ignorant as he quite obviously was when he was first employed of the fact that he had available to him an approach to the Arbitration Court and had to take action in 14 days.

Hon. H. K. Watson: A man who has a just grievance will go to the court.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I agree. Normally when a man seeks employment in a certain field he is told, if not by his colleagues, by the secretary of the union, that it is necessary for him to join the appropriate union. This he generally does; but, at the same time, he does not acquaint himself of all the facts appertaining to the 14-day clause and all it entails.

Apropos of the remarks made by members concerning his being stricken by conscience and remorse after 32 years I would say that that is not quite correct. Generally speaking, in the earlier years of a man's life his religious beliefs are not particularly strong. That is very evident to anyone who attends church. It will be found that the congregation of any church generally consists of people of middle age and upwards. As people get older, so their religious feelings and beliefs are intensified. That is absolutely certain.

It is conceivable that although this man has had these religious beliefs for a number of years, like many other people he suddenly finds that he has an intensification of these beliefs—he has probably become more interested in these aspects—and finally discovers that he is actually operating against one of the beliefs of his religion and church. Accordingly he takes the natural course and writes to the union, explaining the position; and because of that he has suffered the consequences.

I would like to ask the Chief Secretary whether he can give us an assurance that there is no member employed in the Government service who is not a member of his union. Is there any other known

member employed in any sphere of Government employment who is not a member of his union? Is this the only man who has ever been discovered in this difficulty? I appreciate the fact that possibly the Minister cannot answer that question off-hand.

The Chief Secretary: I have no idea of any member so placed where there is an agreement covering him.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I think the agreement is secondary.

The Chief Secretary: You want to ask Mr. Watson about that, because he considers an agreement sacrosanct.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I have been a unionist in my working years; and if because of some subsequent eruption it were necessary for me to find employment elsewhere, I would naturally join the union of the trade concerned.

The Chief Secretary: Did you say that you did not think much of an agreement?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I said it was secondary to this man's religious beliefs. That is an argument I can debate at some length and with some success. Basically that is one of the four freedoms; the freedom of worship. No other construction can be put on the matter but that this man has been penalised because of his religious beliefs. Basically, that is what has happened. Certain other facts come into the matter; but, fundamentally, this man has been precluded from earning his living because of his religious beliefs.

The Chief Secretary: Because he has broken an agreement.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: He has been precluded because of his religious belief; his right to worship.

The Chief Secretary: Because he has broken an agreement. That is why he was sacked.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: As far as I can see, the agreement is subject to a variety of interpretations. The wording of the clause is quite specific, and it does not impose on the worker the necessity to continue in the employment.

The Chief Secretary: Oh, don't give us that!

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: This fact has been ridiculed, but members know that time and time again we have had to go through Bills clause by clause and word by word; we have had to make sure of punctuation and be certain that every point is correct.

Hon. H. K. Watson: The agreement simply says what it says.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: It says that he shall within 14 days apply for membership and complete application, which he did. He has complied with the Act.

The Chief Secretary: Do you say that having done so he can resign on the 15th day?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: No.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: It does not need a very great flight of the imagination to conceive of a position where a man applies for a job and is told he must join the union. He does so, and within 14 days finds he has broken portion of the faith to which he subscribes. It does not need much imagination to appreciate such a position. It is more likely that it would happen within 14 days or 7 days than within 32 years.

The Chief Secretary: What about after 35 years?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: After the age of 35 he sees his church in a light different from that which he did previously. His belief becomes more intense, and he seeks to learn more about his religion than he did earlier. I think the Minister will agree that that is so in the normal course of a man's religious life.

The Chief Secretary: He takes over 30 years to find out his religion.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: After 30 years he becomes more intense in his beliefs. That being so, this man did quite right in notifying his union secretary of the circumstances and the position in which he found himself. I would like to know whether the Chief Secretary agrees with the right of any man to have freedom of worship without penalty or punishment. If he does not agree with that principle, then he is going contrary to the expressed belief of the leader of his own party. I support the motion.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [5.55]: To my mind this argument about the dismissal of Mr. Thorne boils down to a question of whether his religious beliefs, which caused him to resign from his union, are genuine or not. From the interjections made by the Chief Secretary, I would say that he sacked this man because he did not believe that Mr. Thorne was genuine. That is the conclusion to which I have arrived after listening to the debate. I would like to know whether Mr. Thorne's service, after 32 years, was considered to be of a satisfactory nature. I feel it must have been satisfactory because he started on the lowest rung of the ladder, and eventually attained the job of senior or chief warden at the end of his 32 years of service. Accordingly I take it that he has given 32 years of good and faithful service.

After having done so, his religious beliefs become intensified, and because of this he gets the sack. I feel the Chief Secretary must make up his mind one way or the other. He must decide whether

this man's beliefs were genuine or not. If Mr. Thorne's actions and beliefs were genuine, then I think the Chief Secretary was wrong; if not, then the man himself was wrong. That is how I view the position.

It has been said that the man changed his mind after 35 years. If members considered the crowds that attend the various evangelistic meetings held at Langley Park and other places, and the effect these meetings have on the congregation, they would appreciate how easy it is for a man to become more intense in his beliefs; and, indeed, it is quite possible that he could even change his beliefs. Thus, it would be quite easy to appreciate the position in which Mr. Thorne found himself.

The Chief Secretary: He did not change his belief.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: He intensified his belief. If the Chief Secretary attended these evangelistic meetings to which I have referred, he would find them choc-a-bloc and overflowing with people eager to listen to what the preachers have to say. Members will know the effect that a speaker like Billy Graham can have on a congregation. Because of what they hear, the congregation tend to intensify their beliefs. Surely it is their right to intensify their religious beliefs at that age if they wish to do so.

I feel that Mr. Thorne had every right to intensify his religious beliefs. I think he was quite genuine; had he not been so, he would not have sacrificed himself after 32 years of service. None but a fool would do that. Accordingly we must assume that Mr. Thorne was genuine. Mr. Heenan said that we should permit the law to take its course. The rule of law, however, recognises religious beliefs because every court in Australia has given some relief to conscientious objectors in time of war. We find, therefore, that the rule of law is on Mr. Thorne's side.

The Minister for Railways: Conscientious objectors are kept out of the firing line.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: They are exempt from going into the army because of their religious beliefs. They do not go into the front line; that constitutes exemption.

The Chief Secretary: But they have to go to a court to secure exemption.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Maybe they do.

The Chief Secretary: Well, let this man go to the court to secure exemption.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I am not arguing that point. The law does recognise a person's religious belief. Before this man was sacked, he should have been given an opportunity to establish his belief.

The Chief Secretary: What opportunity?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The opportunity should have been taken to delve a little further into the problem he is facing today. I would conclude my remarks by saying that the Chief Secretary must make up his mind whether this was a genuine intensification of Mr. Thorne's religious beliefs. If it was, then the Chief Secretary was wrong in the action he took. If those beliefs were not genuine, then I would condone the Chief Secretary's attitude.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS

(Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [5.59]: The debate seems to have wandered from the real cause of this man's dismissal. Mr. Thorne was not dismissed because of his religious beliefs, but because he was not prepared to abide by the terms of the agreement under which he was employed, which state that he must be a member of the appropriate union. All this action amounts to is preference to unionists. If members opposite do not believe in preference to unionists, then let them say so.

Hon. A. R. Jones: I do not.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Members who do not believe in preference to unionists, in certain cases might support the preference clause. To follow up the religious angle, would it be right, for instance, for a doctor to say that according to his beliefs he did not think it necessary to belong to any organisation and accordingly proceed to practise without being a member of the British Medical Association? We could extend that argument to lawyers and dentists and other professional men. Several members have referred to the question of freedom of religious belief, but I do not think they can follow that line of argument to its logical conclusion. There is no such freedom as some of us here seem to visualise.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: We have a form of freedom.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The basic principle—preference to unionists—has been observed by this Government the same as it was endorsed by other Governments and the Government of which Sir Charles Latham was a member.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: The Minister did not know anything about this until it was brought to his notice.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: You did not know until it was brought to your notice.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I know there is a preference-to-unionists clause in most Government works. I had a lease at one time with a Government instrumentality; and in the lease agreement was a preference-to-unionists clause.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Do you take "preference" as synonymous with "compulsory"?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There is nothing compulsory about it. If this man does not want to join the union, he does not have to work in that occupation.

Hon. H. K. Watson: That is compulsory.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is no more compulsory than when a man belongs to any other organisation. If one wants to have L.C.L. endorsement, one must first of all belong to that organisation.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Of course.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yet the hon. member says he does not believe in it. I consider Mr. Heenan took up the right angle when he supported Mr. Griffith's proposal to advise this man to take his case to the Arbitration Court to see if there was some way around this. If there is, I would say it would be most unfortunate for many industrial organisations, and very unfortunate perhaps for professional associations.

I think everybody who looks at this fairly and squarely, will agree that the Chief Secretary has taken the only possible action that could have been taken. He has done the only thing possible, and therefore I hope that this motion will be withdrawn.

HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (Suburban—in reply) [6.4]: In reply to Mr. Heenan, the only unpleasantness there has been in this discussion was the attempt by the Chief Secretary to ridicule this man and imply that he was not genuine. I am indeed very grateful to Mr. Lavery, who has known this man all his life, for getting up and saying that if he had been in my position he would have done exactly the same thing because he has known the man for 32 years and knows his calibre. However, the Chief Secretary knows nothing of the man.

The Chief Secretary: I was judging by actions.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The reason the Chief Secretary would judge by actions is that he is not able to understand the other person's point of view.

The Chief Secretary: Thanks.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: That is my opinion in this matter. Where the Chief Secretary does not understand the other man's point of view, he has no chance of arriving at a decision without prejudice. This man has been a member of a religious organisation for a lifetime; and the Chief Secretary suggests that, because he came to a certain conclusion a month ago, there should be no work for him. I suggest that the Chief Secretary does not understand the man's point of view, and cannot possibly be a judge in this matter. I take this man to be genuine, as I am entitled to; and Mr. Lavery also considers him to be genuine.

The Chief Secretary: You don't always take notice of Mr. Lavery, do you?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: On this occasion, yes.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Mr. Lavery says he has known this man for 32 years, and it would be unreasonable of me to suggest that his opinion of the man was all wrong. The Chief Secretary has suggested that I took this action for political purposes. What possible political gain could I obtain by bringing before the House a matter of this nature? The man lives in Fremantle. The last time I brought up a matter that did not concern my electorate, the Chief Secretary blackguarded me for that; but this time he imagines it is for political purposes.

The Chief Secretary: It is.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: That is balderdash. It is just because it was suggested to me, through an organisation to which this man belongs, that I help him.

The Chief Secretary: You did not advise him to go to the members for his district.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: There is no chance there; they are all too much Labour.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I know that the Chief Secretary is one of his members, and he would have got very short change there. The man is at the back of the House now. See if he is a genuine-looking man or not.

The Chief Secretary: I judge a man by his actions.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member must not make reference to a person who is sitting in the House.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I am sorry, Sir. The Chief Secretary should not judge a man by his actions.

The Chief Secretary: I can only judge him by his actions.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: He should be judged by his past life. The Chief Secretary should take into consideration his age; whether he has been in trouble or led a respectable life; and whether he has been a satisfactory servant of the Crown for 32 years. I am told—and can accept the explanation I have—that here is a man who has been a member of a religious organisation for a lifetime, and his conscience brings him to the point where he resigns membership from his union and his reward for his conscience's belief is the sack.

The Chief Secretary: Do you believe in a person breaking an agreement?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I do not think he has broken an agreement. I think he has carried out the section which says he

shall apply for membership of a union. I will give this man some advice if the Chief Secretary will allow me—

The Chief Secretary: I will until quarter past six.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I am going to advise this man that he pursue the possibility of going to the Arbitration Court.

The Chief Secretary: That is sensible.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I am glad we agree on that point. I cannot agree that I should not have brought this matter before the House. It is one of the great principles upon which we live that this Parliament is the custodian of freedom of religion and independence of thought.

The Chief Secretary: He has his freedom of religion.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Then there is no reason why I should not bring the matter before the House. Having done that, I thank members for hearing the case and bringing forward useful information. I am going to advise this man to go to the Arbitration Court; but my purpose in bringing the matter here was to point out to the Government that this man has been, in my humble opinion, wronged.

The Chief Secretary: Unfortunately, the agreement was broken.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I thought that the Chief Secretary would give this matter further consideration, but we have had the answer from the Government that there is no intention to reconsider it. I thank you, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to ventilate this matter. I ask for permission to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1), £21,000,000.

Standing Orders Suspension.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, resolved:

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the Supply Bill to pass through all stages at any one sitting.

First Reading.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [6.12] in moving the second reading said: Last year a sum of £19,000,000 was granted by the Supply Act (No. 1), whereas this year £21,000,000 is requested. The details of these two amounts are Consolidated Revenue 1956, £13,000,000; 1957, £15,000,000. The General Loan Fund in 1956 was £4,000,000.

and in 1957 it is £4,000,000. The advance to the Treasurer in 1956 was £2,000,000, and it is again £2,000,000 in 1957.

The additional £2,000,000 required from the Consolidated Revenue Fund is to provide for increased costs which will be experienced generally in this financial year by the various governmental services, particularly medical and health and education. In addition, debt charges for servicing the public debt in the current year will increase considerably.

The Estimates for 1957-58 which will give full details of the revenue and expenditure for the present financial year, are in course of preparation, and will be placed before Parliament as early as possible. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. C. H. Simpson, debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

BILL—LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

MOTION—RAIL CLOSURES.

Call for Reopening, Inquiry, etc.

HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Midland) [7.33]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House the Government having grossly mismanaged the handling of the country rail line discontinuance, and having not conformed to the conditions imposed by Parliament, and accepted by the Government, this House now calls on the Government to reopen lines already closed and not to discontinue any further rail services until—

- (a) a searching and expert inquiry has been made into each line and the reports and recommendations from such inquiries are submitted to, and accepted by, Parliament; and
- (b) the Government honours the undertakings given to Parliament when the amended rail discontinuance motion was passed in 1956; and
- (c) the Government brings forward to Parliament acceptable proposals in accordance with the motion of this House agreed to on the 8th November, 1956, and which was ignored by the Government.

Members will have studied the motion as appearing on the notice paper. But in order to refresh their minds I will state the terms of the motion as submitted to

this House, and then the successive steps by which the railway motion was first dealt with by this House, then referred to another place, accompanied by certain amendments, which received the full support of the Opposition parties in this House; and then will refer to the motion as amended in another place, and finally returned to this Chamber and adopted.

The first motion was submitted to this House on the 1st November of last year. The terms of the motion were as follows:—

That in the opinion of this House, having regard particularly to the considerations referred to in Appendix "A" to this motion, the services provided by the railways listed in Appendix "B" to this motion should, notwithstanding certain other considerations, be discontinued and that such railways should cease to be operated.

Then followed the details of Appendix "A" which stated the reasons brought forward by the Minister for Railways; and Appendix "B", which gave a list of the actual railways that were being affected. After considerable debate the motion was amended as follows:—

That all the words after the word "House" in line 1 down to and including the word "operated" in line 10 be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—

the discontinuance and cessation of operation of the railways referred to in Appendix "B" for the reasons mentioned in Appendix "A" be deferred:

- (a) until after they have been considered and a decision made by the Legislative Assembly, and
- (b) until after the Government has brought forward definite separate proposals in respect of the area served by each railway—of road transport and roads in lieu of rail services.

That motion was carried in this House, and then referred to another place for consideration. In that place, the motion in its original terms was considered, and not the Council's amendment; and it was finally returned to us in its original form, plus three conditions which were accepted by the Government at the instance of members of the Opposition. The three provisos or conditions were as follows:—

- (a) ensuring that through increased efficiency and economies throughout the W.A.G.R., including workshops and administration, a substantial reduction in the railway deficit will be achieved as a result of the cessation of the railways in Appendix "B"; and

- (b) ensuring an adequate replacement system of passenger and freight transport before cessation of operation of the railways in Appendix "B"; and
- (c) overhauling and reorganising the metropolitan Government passenger transport services with a view to reducing substantially the deficit in such services.

That motion, as passed in another place and returned to us, reached us on the 13th December, and the debate on that motion commenced the following day. That debate continued until the 18th December, and the motion as received from the Assembly was passed by a majority of this House at 4.30 a.m. the following day.

Those, then, were the terms on which a majority of both Houses accepted the Government's proposals regarding the projected rail closures. The purport of the present motion is to call upon the Government to honour the conditions specifically stated in the motion carried by Parliament, and to demand that lines already closed shall be reopened and further closures suspended until the Government has complied with the terms of the motion.

This is substantially identical with the motion unanimously adopted at the 31st biennial conference of the Road Board Association of Western Australia at which 88 road boards were represented. The motion then carried is set out in a letter to the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly from the secretary of the Association, Mr. C. A. P. Gostelow, which reads as follows:—

I have been instructed to advise you that the resolution following was carried today by a unanimous vote at the morning session of the 31st biennial conference of road boards, at which 88 road boards are represented—

W.A.G. Railways.

Kondinin:

That this conference protests strongly against the closure of any railway line in the agricultural areas without an exhaustive inquiry into the financial and overall economic aspects by investigators from outside the State, and demands that lines already suspended be reopened pending such inquiry.

That motion was carried unanimously. Mr. Gostelow continued—

I have also to advise that conference decided that the Hon. the Ministers for Railways and Transport be invited to attend the conference at 11 a.m. on the 11th instant when further railway resolutions will be debated.

That is a motion very similar in its terms to that which I have moved. In today's issue of "The West Australian" appears also the following under the heading of "R.S.L. Moves on Rail Closures":—

The R.S.L. Land Conference yesterday agreed to a motion that Congress oppose the discontinuance of railway lines in rural areas and recommend that the Government institute the fullest possible inquiry into the management of the railways. The motion, which was submitted by the State Executive, will be discussed at the 41st Annual State Congress today.

That was a move made by the R.S.L.

The Minister for Railways: By one sub-branch.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: The motion which I submit is also in line with paragraph (b) of the original motion passed by this House, which is as follows:—

- (b) until the Government has brought forward definite separate proposals in respect of the area served by each railway—of road transport and roads in lieu of rail services.

It is also in line with paragraph (b) of the motion carried by the Assembly and finally accepted by a majority in both Houses. I have not the text of that with me, but the purport was that the rail services should be dealt with on the spot and be subject to discussion with the people in the areas concerned and adequate alternative services provided. That was accepted by a majority of both Houses.

The specific reason for the present motion is to call upon the Government to honour its undertakings as implied by its acceptance of the terms of the motion as passed. We contend that the Government has not complied with the terms and conditions which Parliament laid down. On the contrary, there has been a ruthless implementation of the Government's original programme and a complete disregard for the people in areas affected by rail closures. This, we submit, is a breach of faith with the affected persons, many of whom are being seriously inconvenienced and who are only now beginning to realise the full impact of the closures.

Those people have every right to feel aggrieved. They ask why the railways in particular should be selected for the axe. They point out other governmental losses about which nothing is said. They refer to losses on the State Shipping Service. On this there has been a loss of £1,000,000 to serve 10,000 people, as compared with £1.7 million operational loss on the railways extending over the greater part of the State. They also refer to social services and the high rates of health and hospitalisation which cost the Government a lot of money.

Then there is the question of education, in regard to which the transporting of school children to school alone costs

£900,000 per year. There are the losses on water supply and the extensive housing scheme for the metropolitan area; and they pertinently ask why there are these discriminations between the country and the capital city. They say that together with other producers they produce 90 per cent. of the export income of the State, and they point out that they were induced to go into the more remote areas by the promise of railway facilities and regard that as a contract.

They claim that a railway represented a sense of security, that it was there to stay and that it created stabilised land values. Although under the Railways Act a service could be suspended, no line could be pulled up without Parliamentary sanction. The closures, of course, have a reverse effect. These people point out that for many years it has been the policy of all Governments—of whatever political colour—in all States of the Commonwealth, that developmental lines have always been regarded as uneconomic in the first stages of operation.

They claim that agricultural science has made marked advances in recent years, and that improved methods of farming give promise of increased production of wealth from the soil and increased freights for the railways. They point out that while the necessity for cheap freights might render railways uneconomic, the wealth created in land values and in sustaining a population which pays Federal and State taxes and creates flourishing towns, far outweighs any losses that might occur in the form of railway deficits.

In this connection it may be mentioned that the Henry George League a few years ago—in 1947—submitted to the Taxation Department a question, the purport of which was to ask what would be the increase in land values due to the introduction of railways. The department replied that unimproved land values in those areas—as at the 30th June, 1940—represented £47,787,573. Much of that value must have been created by railways, and today those values would be very much greater. The affected man claims that he went to those areas in good faith, believing that a Government also would keep faith in promises either expressed or implied by past policy. Now he finds that the Government, without proper consultation with local bodies and without any attempt to secure increased efficiency or economy, as required by the conditions of the motion passed in this House on the 18th December last—

The Minister for Railways: Who said that?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: The men in the country who are affected are saying these things. I am putting this forward as a statement which I regard as factual—

The Minister for Railways: But who is responsible for the arguments you are submitting?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: The people who have been affected, at Yuna, Ajana, and Northampton.

The Minister for Railways: You say that this is what they are saying. But what do you say?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I quite agree with the claims made. These complaints are widespread and are being made throughout the country. They claim that the Government, without conforming to the conditions of paragraph (b) of the motion, which requires adequate alternative services of freight and passenger transport to be provided; and without doing anything tangible by way of reducing the big deficit on the metropolitan railway services; and despite the fact that these considerably exceed the losses on the lines closed or listed for closure, has ruthlessly proceeded with closure plans.

Of the 17 lines listed for closure in Appendix B, 13 have been closed. They ask why the Government has acted so hastily and ruthlessly. There was no indication in the Minister's speech that undue haste was contemplated. I remember that when this subject was before this House for discussion the Minister said that the steps contemplated would take time and that the C.B.H. installations had to be discussed with the company, and that other steps would be necessary before any plans could be proceeded with. In connection with the Yuna and Ajana lines, I approached the Minister with an idea that I had of submitting a proposition to the Midland Railway Company which I fully believed might be prepared to undertake the running of those two lines, if the Government was agreeable—

The Minister for Railways: They have made no approach.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: The Minister was kind enough to give me a good deal of information which I passed on to the company. He gave me to understand that if it submitted a proposition it would receive every consideration, and I am satisfied that he meant what he said. Unfortunately, the Midland Railway Company, after giving the matter serious consideration decided that it was not in a financial position to carry on with that work. I also discussed the matter with the Main Roads Board and the Transport Board, but at no point where I made contact was there any suggestion of an intention of immediate haste. I asked what was a junior officer of the Transport Board doing making an inquiry in the Yuna district—that was following my interview with the Minister—and I was assured by the board that it was only a routine measure, and that in due course the board itself would examine things on the spot. That was not done, and we are now asking why.

The Minister for Railways: Are you not satisfied with the alternative services?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: No. I want to stick to the terms of the motion as submitted. Hon. A. F. Watts led a deputation to the Premier on the 13th March and the Premier gave no indication that the Government was going to act hastily. In fact, Mr. Watts was assured that the matter would receive every consideration. These bulldozing tactics have brought repercussions; and what are the effects?

The Minister for Railways: Five months does not represent hasty action.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I can tell the House some of the effects of what has been done. At Northampton the people were most concerned about the railway closures, partly on account of increased costs which they now have to meet; and as that was the stock centre, they foresaw some difficulty in handling the stock from sales held there from time to time. A trader there told me that before the closure of that line they could get second-class goods from Perth to Northampton for £9 7s. per ton, but when the line was closed they had to pay rail freight of £9 to Geraldton; and then, instead of an extra 7s. to Northampton by rail they had to pay an extra £2 for road haulage.

They explained that at a landed cost of £9 7s. at Northampton they could take delivery from the railways and could compete with their rival town of Geraldton on equal terms and sell at the same price. While there was a small increase in the cost landed by rail as compared with Geraldton, they could offset that by lower local rates and taxes, and in some cases lower rents; but they could not absorb the extra £2 which it cost them when the rail service was discontinued.

The result of the closure of the line therefore was that a great deal of trade which they previously got from between Northampton and Geraldton would probably go to Geraldton; and in any event, the cost of living would be dearer in the town of Northampton itself—

The Minister for Railways: I suggest that Wesfarmers could land stuff there cheaper than that.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Yuna was placed in the same position. Prior to the rail closure fruit could be landed at Yuna or Aiana at 3s. 6d. per case, but after the closure it cost 4s. 6d. per case by road transport. The landed cost in each instance was 8s. That was only one item; but there is then the question of the farmer who purchased a Sunderseeder, the rail freight on which from Perth to Yuna used to be £27 10s. When the line was closed the freight on that machine by rail to Geraldton was £25, and then it was necessary to engage a carrier at a further cost of £14, which made the cost of freight to land the machine at Yuna £39 instead of £27 10s.

Previously a considerable amount of wheat was carried on the Yuna and Ajana lines, and I am informed by

one individual that the railways have been said not to be fussy about carting wheat as it was an unpayable line. But the late Mr. Braine, who until recently was secretary of the Wheat Pool, pointed out that wheat was a bulky commodity, and as the railways were relieved of the cost of loading and unloading it, it could be shown by figures that wheat was really a profitable item of freight. He pointed out that in any case it was better for the trucks which had to travel that line to come back full of wheat than to come back empty as has happened on a number of occasions.

A public meeting held in Northam on Friday night was attended by over 700 people, all of whom were extremely interested in what the meeting had to discuss.

At that meeting, the following resolution was carried:—

That this meeting protests strongly against the closure of railway lines in the agricultural areas without an exhaustive inquiry into the financial and overall economic aspects by investigators from outside the State and demands that the lines already suspended be reopened pending such inquiry, and also requests the Legislative Council to rescind the motion already agreed to in regard to railway closures.

This motion is in line with the motion now submitted and also the motions carried by the Road Board Association and the R.S.L.

Those attending the Northam meeting came from all parts of the State—from Northampton and down as far as Ravenshorpe and the South-West. I would say it was a non-political meeting because, although it was called by the Farmers' Union—which is a non-political body—the meeting was immediately asked to select its own chairman; and as far as possible—because the two issues are interwoven—the discussion was on non-political lines.

There were men present with affiliations with the Labour Party, the Country Party and the Liberal Party, and they were all of one mind. A man named Sayers, from the Burakin-Bonnie Rock area said that since the railways had closed there had been no mail services in his district, and that local mails over a distance of perhaps 15 or 20 miles took 15 or 20 days between the time of despatch and the time of delivery. He said that wheat from that area would cost an extra 10d. a bushel to rail to the port and no doubt superphosphate and other lines would cost more in proportion.

Mr. Hobley of Pingrup said a ton of fencing wire cost him an additional £10 by road now that the rail service had been suspended. He said that eight bags of potatoes cost him an additional £2 5s. I

would remind members that that meeting was held in the Premier's electorate, and I repeat that it was not political in the ordinary party sense, nor was it intended to be. It was a reflection of feeling of the great body of men who attended.

Despite these widespread protests, the Government did not allow time for local consultations or an adequate survey of district potential or possible evaluation of development in affected areas. It is interesting at this stage to see the Government's almost panic-stricken reaction over the closure of country lines. As against that, no apparent action to effect economies is called for by paragraph (a) of the motion or in paragraph (c) which seeks to reduce the deficit on metropolitan railways, despite the fact that the losses on the metropolitan railways exceed the losses on the country lines by over £1,000,000; or despite the fact that 842 miles of country lines are listed for closure with, apparently, no decrease in railway staff. There are now 2,000 more employees in the railways than there were when the McLarty-Watts Government was in office, and as wages and salaries represent 70 per cent. of the total railways expenditure—

Hon. A. R. Jones: More than that.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Well, that is the figure I have been given, and that is an item that certainly demands some explanation. That should be the point at which serious consideration should be given to running the railways with less staff in order to cut down running expenses. Paragraph (b) of the motion carried last December calls for adequate alternative passenger and freight services prior to any rail closure. This was also implied in paragraph (b) which was added by another place when the original motion passed by this House was sent forward.

As previously mentioned, widespread complaints followed because these alternative services had not been provided. What has the Government done? First of all, it came out with the statement that it had decided to close progressively a considerable section of our railway system. Through the Press it received praise for taking such a courageous step. On second thoughts, and after taking note of the repercussions in the affected areas, it went through the motions of submitting the matter to Parliament.

The Minister for Railways: That is incorrect.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I say, "It went through the motions."

The Minister for Railways: Not as a second thought.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I say it "went through the motions" advisedly, because the action of presenting the motion to Parliament made the question a matter of opinion. It had no binding force on the

Government. It was not an Act and had no force in law. It was not inherently wrong to submit the matter to Parliament; it was perfectly right. However, some prior intimation should have been given—at the elections, for example; but at that time the Government was silent. In the Assembly elections for the Murchison electorate a circular was sent out intimating that no railways would be closed without parliamentary sanction or without prior consultation with the people concerned. Despite that assurance the Government made a statement regarding rail closures and only brought the matter to Parliament as a result of the pressure of public opinion.

As I said earlier, the motion submitted and finally passed—subject to certain conditions—had no binding force on the Government. The conditions were ignored and the Government went ahead like a bulldozer—and just about as intelligently.

The Minister for Railways: Whose opinion is that?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I am saying that.

The Minister for Railways: That is your opinion?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Yes.

The Minister for Railways: Tell us the date when the pamphlet was issued. Never mind; I will tell you. It was 1953.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: The attitude of my party is quite logical. It is gravely concerned with mounting railway losses. It takes the view that on certain routes road services might be substituted for railway services with resultant economy to the Government and advantage to the users. It is obvious that in this connection, in some cases, subsidies would require to be paid. It is also possible that payment of such subsidies might be cheaper and better than the continuance of an uneconomic rail service.

Those points could be determined only by an examination of the local conditions and following consultation with the people concerned on the spot. Examinations, so far, have been perfunctory, and no such consultation at top level has taken place.

In reply to a question asked by me, the Minister has revealed—and I thank him for that information—that the total railway deficit for the financial year ended the 30th June last was £4,647,864. This represented an operational loss of £2,531,145 and interest charge of £2,116,719. It has been announced in the Press that the Premier foreshadowed a loss for the coming year—that is, for the financial year 1957-58—of £7,300,000. Without question, this is a very serious matter. It is imperative that some action should be taken to examine the position and arrest the drift. For the year ended the 30th June, 1956, the total deficit was £4,600,000. This represented an operational loss of £1,700,000 and interest at £2,900,000.

It is hard to reconcile the figures given, but I have taken them from official reports and I must assume that they are correct. All States in the Commonwealth are similarly affected; there is no exception. Members can consult with top-level railwaymen in each State, as I did during my recent holiday visit to the Eastern States, and they will find that all States are experiencing serious losses on their railways.

For instance, the railway loss in New South Wales for 1956 was £8,000,000; in South Australia it was £2,000,000 on 2,564 miles of railway, with an operational loss of £2,200,000. I mention that fact because our operational loss was £1,700,000 for a great deal more miles of line, because we had 4,119 miles of railway. Yet in South Australia, which is always regarded as being a very rationally managed and progressive State, the railways suffered a deficit exceeding ours by £500,000.

The interest charges in all these States is covered by the Treasury, and is regarded as a contribution towards the developmental expansion of the State by helping to keep down basic living costs. That is important, because if railway freights are increased it means that almost every cost in the community is increased; and this, in turn, affects the cost of living. That point, however, is sometimes forgotten. The policy, dating right back to 40 years ago, and instituted very energetically by the late Sir James Mitchell—who has always been hailed as a man with sound ideas and great vision—has been to assist the community, particularly those men on the land. The railway policy followed by Sir James Mitchell, although costing a lot of money, was undoubtedly instrumental in opening up the back country.

As I have already said, that has been the experience in every other State of the Commonwealth. Suddenly, however, we have reversed this trend. We have gone right against the idea that people in remote centres should receive the benefit of railway facilities. That seems peculiar when we consider our own past experience and the present attitude adopted towards railways in all other States of the Commonwealth. In the railway departmental reports and recommendations to the Government which were tabled when the original motion was under discussion, experts envisaged the closure of a total of 2,000 miles of line. True, the motion itself lists only 842 miles, but the railway users are well aware of the attitudes of the departments concerned and also the attitude of the Government. Indeed, it has been categorically stated that no worth-while economies could be effected until 2,000 miles of railway had been closed.

The Minister for Railways: Who said that?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: It appears in the reports that were tabled in this House.

The Minister for Railways: But it was not stated by the Government.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: These reports were quoted freely by all members.

The Minister for Railways: The Government did not say that.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I ask the question: Why does the Government place these reports by experts on the Table of the House if we are to ignore them? Surely we must take some cognisance of them. Having regard to all the facts the conclusion is inescapable that the Government acted with undue haste in the first instance in regard to these rail closures. It was a case of gross mismanagement in the handling of the whole matter. An examination of the position should have been made by experts skilled in railway operation, preferably experts on the 3 ft. 6 in. gauge. The Government was in duty bound to honour the terms of the motion carried by both Houses last year, but it has not done so. It has flouted the intention of Parliament and steam-rolled its programme into execution. I repeat, in the strongest possible terms, that it should now carry out the directions as contained in the motion submitted.

On motion by Hon. A. R. Jones, debate adjourned.

MOTION—RAIL CLOSURES.

Rescission of 1956 Resolution.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (Central) [8.15]: I move—

That the resolution passed by this House on the 18th December, 1956, reading as follows—

That in the opinion of this House, having regard particularly to the considerations referred to in Appendix "A" to this motion, the services provided by the railways listed in Appendix "B" to this motion should notwithstanding certain other considerations, be discontinued and that such railways should cease to be operated—

Subject to the Government—

- (a) ensuring that through increased efficiency and economies throughout the W.A.G.R., including workshops and administration, a substantial reduction in the railway deficit will be achieved as a result of the cessation of the railways in Appendix "B"; and
- (b) ensuring an adequate replacement system of passenger and freight transport before cessation of operation of the railways in Appendix "B"; and
- (c) overhauling and reorganising the metropolitan Government passenger

transport services with a view to reducing substantially the deficits in such services.

Appendix "A."

(1) The annual cash deficits of the State railways.

(2) The condition of State railways generally and particularly of the railways listed in Appendix "B."

(3) The need for improvements in the economical operation of the State railways and for the concentration of railway resources to permit of all-round improvements in the cost of operating the railways.

(4) The facts that the railways listed in Appendix "B" are unprofitable and that their rehabilitation and operation would involve heavy expenditure when compared with existing and anticipated future traffic on those railways.

(5) The rising costs of operating railways.

(6) The need to avoid, to every possible extent, any necessity to increase rail freights on the remaining railways, and to provide for the adequate rehabilitation and operation of the remaining railways.

(7) The recovery of materials for use on other railways.

(8) The availability and use of other means of transport.

(9) The most satisfactory and economical employment of staff.

Appendix "B."

Railways.	Length of Rail- ways. Miles.
Meekatharra to Wiluna	111
Cue to Big Bell	19
Malcolm to Laverton	64
Geraldton to Ajana	67
Wokarina to Yuna	38
Burakin to Bonnie Rock	76
Mukinbudin to Lake Brown	8
Lake Brown to Bullfinch	50
Bullfinch to Southern Cross	22
Boddington to Narrogin	51
Busselton to Margaret River	38
Margaret River to Flinders Bay	29
Elleker to Nornalup	61
Brookton to Corrigin	56
Lake Grace to Hyden	58
Katanning to Pingrup	59
Gnowangerup to Ongerup	35

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The intention of this motion is to give the House an opportunity to rectify a mistake—I say "mistake" emphatically—made on the 18th December last year by the Government. I am perfectly satisfied that if members had known then the effect the motion was to have on the economic stability of Western Australia and the hardship and injury that were to be suffered by the people affected by the rail closures, they would never have given their assent to that motion.

There is an old adage which runs as follows:—

Those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad.

This is one of the general applications that can be made to the present Government, because I know of no action in all the years that I have been in Parliament taken by any Government which has had such a destructive effect on the economy of the State as this one has. It is a very serious matter indeed.

A good case was made out by Mr. Simpson in this regard. He told us of the revolt of the people in the communities affected by the services suspended; of various meetings held in different parts of the State; and of the attitude taken up by an important body, the Road Board Association, and its resolutions, which were forwarded to the Government. I endorse the remark of Mr. Simpson when he said he was amazed that not one representative of the Government was present at the meeting held last Saturday at Northam, the principal town in the Premier's electorate.

The Minister for Railways: Was a letter from me read out at the meeting? They were requested to do so.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I was sitting at the back, and I cannot say definitely whether it was read out or not. In any case the Minister will have the opportunity of telling this House about the contents of the letter.

Hon. L. C. Diver: That letter was read at the meeting.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: It was surprising to me that on such an important occasion there was no representation from the Government, which had taken on the responsibility of initiating the action which has had a very damaging effect on farming property values. I know of one property purchased by an Eastern States buyer less than nine months ago. He bought it on the clear understanding that there was a railway service. At the time there was no mention of the suspension of that line. When he purchased the property he paid a price commensurate with the value of the railway line to him. One can imagine his feelings now when he finds that the value of his property has been reduced by no less than £3 per acre. This is what I call deliberate robbery.

be, and is hereby, rescinded.

The Minister for Railways: Is the line worth £3,000 to him?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: It is not for one year. Let the Minister not lead me astray that way. My remarks apply to the sale value of the land. If he were to offer it for sale today he would get £3 per acre less.

The Minister for Railways: If he has not offered it for sale, how does he know the market price?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Because values have gone down. I would like the Minister to visit the country east of Lake Grace. Not only now, but in the last few years when times were more prosperous to farmers, a block of land in that district could not be sold, because of the lack of a railway service. Members who have visited that district will bear out what I am saying. The railways have a definite bearing on the value of the land. What has the Government done now? It has deprived the purchaser I referred to of what he seemed to have.

The Minister for Railways: Then they should patronise the railways.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: They have patronised the railways. Where are the railway losses? Can the Minister answer this question: Why not get rid of the concerns which lost £1,000,000 last year and which can be carried on by private enterprise with no injury to the people of this State?

The Minister for Railways: Which ones are you referring to?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I can give them. There is the Tramway Department, which lost £266,000 last year. This traffic can be carried on by buses. If that were brought about there would be no loss to the Government and a profit would accrue to the private bus company, just as profits have been made by private bus companies for a long time, despite their giving a far better service than Government transport. Then there is the loss on ferries. In one year the loss was £6,948. Why not get rid of them? Nobody will miss them.

The Minister for Railways: We will when the Narrows Bridge is completed.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: A private concern can run the ferries more successfully. What did the Government do with the State hotels last year when it could have sold them at a profit?

The Minister for Railways: They are not in the metropolitan area.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I am telling the Minister what the Government can sell. There are seven State hotels, and the total loss was over £2,000 last year. A substantial amount would be obtained by selling them. Then there is Cave House which last year lost £7,891. During the last four years the loss was

£17,519. Why not sell those concerns? Will they do any injury to anybody in this State? Will their sale lower the price of anybody's property, as the Government is lowering the property of the farmers by the suspension of lines?

The Minister for Railways: Why didn't your Government dispose of them?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The loss for the State Brick Works was £48,545, yet private brickyards are paying dividends to shareholders. The State Saw Mills lost over £13,549; yet sawmills run by private concerns are showing a profit. I admit that the country water supplies lost £634,112.

The Minister for Railways: Get rid of them!

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The reason this Government has made a loss is that it is not game to increase water rates for country towns, because many of such towns are in Labour electorates. I dare say that those people are prepared to pay more for their water, but the Government knows where the votes come from.

The Minister for Railways: Did they pay more when your Government was in office?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Our Government did not attempt to close the railways, or to take away from the people what the State gave them as a right when they were asked to go into the country, to cut down the timber by axe and to work, not eight hours a day, but 14 hours a day to turn the countryside to the profit of the people of Western Australia. Who made the wealth of this State? The people who went out to the wheatbelt. There are only two sections who contributed to that wealth—the people who went on to the Goldfields, and those who went on to the wheatbelt afterwards. I shall not be on this earth much longer; but for as long as I am here, I shall back the people who went out and improved this State.

The Minister for Railways: Nobody is condemning them but you.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The present Government is taking away their rail service. It is cutting those people's throat with a piece—

Hon. G. E. Jeffery: Of railway line.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: There is no doubt about that. In regard to the country water supplies, I have no objection to the people of the Goldfields getting water cheaper by a small contribution from the general taxpayer. Let me exclude two big concerns from the figures I quoted—the country water supplies and the Fremantle Harbour Trust. Let us not forget that the harbour trust should be making a greater contribution than it is doing, because it derives income from goods coming in and going out of the State.

The Minister for Railways: It is all free going outwards. It is free for produce of the soil.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: That applies to wheat, and the Minister knows why.

The Minister for Railways: No, I don't.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I thought so; otherwise he would not have made the mistake. In the items which I have mentioned the Government could have saved £345,000 over the last four years. The Government is not making that much loss on the railways.

The Minister for Railways: That figure is a long way from the loss of millions.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: But the State is not losing millions on the lines suspended.

The Minister for Railways: The railways are costing the State millions.

The Chief Secretary: That is because Country Party members have come along every year to ask for concessions for farmers.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: When will the Chief Secretary grow up? I have a lot of sympathy for him, especially to-night, because his throat is so bad. I thought it would not be necessary for him to come back into his seat and interject. As events turned out, I am afraid he cannot resist doing that.

If the Government sold all those concerns it would derive a great deal of capital, but I suppose it would only waste the money after getting it. If that money were used to write down the capital investment, a lot of interest charges would be saved. The Minister has given us figures, and told us the railways are losing money. I believe they are, but because of bad management. There is no mention of ministerial management. I declare that the Government is not even attempting to look into that type of management. The affairs of the railways are left to the three commissioners. I say they ought to be dismissed immediately.

The Minister for Railways: You will not let us.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Let the Government give us the opportunity! The Government will get a ready supporter in me.

The Minister for Railways: Your Government tied our hands so that we cannot do anything.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The tonnage carried is increasing. The lines are not being lengthened and there is no extra cost. In 1953 the tonnage carried was 3,262,993; in 1954 it increased to 4,140,949; in 1955 it went to 4,304,782; and in 1956 it rose to 4,523,421. So there has been a gradual increase in tonnage. Does that not indicate to the Minister that

this resulted from the work of the people on the land and those engaged in industry? Why does the Government blame them when there is a loss in the Railway Department?

The Minister for Railways: Who is blaming them?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: It is not as though they are not increasing railway usage. The ton mileage has also increased considerably. In 1953 it was 409,590,730; in 1954 it was 537,798,882; in 1955 it was 563,504,766; and in 1956 it was 608,418,206. This is an increase of nearly 50 per cent. from 1953, or in a period of four years.

I cannot understand why the losses mentioned are being incurred. On page 7 of the commissioners' report in respect of the year ended the 30th June, 1956, this statement is made, "Operational results reach new levels." I want to emphasise the words "new levels." It goes on, "The tonnage of goods and livestock increased by 9 per cent." Let the Minister get that into his head, before standing up and saying that the man on the land is not doing his job, or is not using the railways. Later on the report states, "Haulage of wheat was better than expected, and for the last two months it reached a scale not before experienced in the history of these railways."

The Minister for Railways: That included two harvests.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I am telling the Minister what went on.

The Minister for Railways: The railways did not move the wheat the year before.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Someone whispered in the Minister's ear. I am not blaming the Ministers in this House for the action taken. I exclude them from blame. It is the Minister for Transport, a newcomer to politics, who has a bee in his bonnet.

The Minister for Railways: He has nothing to do with this.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Of course he has. He runs the Government as far as transport is concerned. The Premier gives us a statement, and he contradicts it a day or so afterwards.

The Minister for Railways: You hope he does, or you think he does.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Statements have been made that not nearly the quantity of commodities is being carried now that was carried 10 years ago.

The Minister for Railways: Not as much as 30 years ago.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I am going to take the business of the agricultural areas of the State or the South-West, generally, from where most of our production comes. I will give the figures; and the reductions are because of the

changes that have taken place. In 1938 the amount of coal, shale, etc., carted was 239,000 tons. In 1956, despite the fact that we used less coal than previously, some 521,000 tons were carted. So there was an increase there. In 1928, 25,000 tons of wool were carted; in 1954-55, the figure was 48,000 tons; and in 1955-56, it was 61,000 tons. There was an increase there.

The next group comprises hay, straw and chaff. There has been a decrease here, because there is not the same amount of chaff being carted over the railways as there used to be. The figures are: In 1928, 80,000 tons; in 1954-55, 12,000 tons; and in 1955-56, 10,500 tons. This is only natural because we have gone from the day of the horse to the mechanical period; and in consequence we have not an increase there. With regard to the wheat grower, in 1928 there were 851,000 tons of wheat; in 1954-55, 778,000 tons; and in 1955-56, 1,062,000 tons.

The Minister for Railways: There were two harvests in that year.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: It does not matter; it was carted over the railways.

The Minister for Railways: The year before was counted in that year.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The Minister means that we took two years' production in one.

The Minister for Railways: Part of it.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Of course we did not!

The Minister for Railways: We did.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: All these figures are for the one period in each year.

The Minister for Railways: You know there was a carry-over.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I know they take the figures from the 1st July to the 30th June in each year. There may have been a carry-over from the previous year.

The Minister for Railways: You know there was.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: It does not matter. I will admit that the tonnage was 778,000 tons. Anyhow it was used and carted. Firewood carted in 1928 amounted to 359,000 tons. In 1954-55, the figure was 19,000 tons; and in 1955-56, it was 18,000 tons. So the railways are not carting firewood. It is probably coming to the metropolitan area by road. But do not blame for that the men for whom the railways have been closed. This is a shocking thing. Every time I think of it it makes my Irish blood boil.

The Chief Secretary: I thought you were pretty green.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The figures show that in 1928 the timber carted amounted to 559,000 tons; in 1954-55, it

was 311,000 tons; and in 1955-56, it was 323,000 tons. Most of it is coming by road, but do not blame the farmers for it. And the Minister has not been closing railways in those areas, except the one where he thought too much timber was being sent to South Australia. He threatened to close it once.

The Minister for Railways: Parliament said it should no longer be operated.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Parliament did, but it did it in another place by the influence of the Minister for Transport.

The Chief Secretary: He was not here, though.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: No.

The Chief Secretary: What happened here?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Members did not quite understand.

The Chief Secretary: Oh!

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I am not going to excuse members who voted for it. One thing which I will tell the Labour Party, and which is perfectly true, is that when it meets in Caucus and it decides on what it is going to do, it does not matter what individual opinions are held, members support the decision so that the Government has a bulk vote.

The Minister for Railways: The same applies to the Country Party.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: It does not.

The Minister for Railways: Of course it does!

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Ask members of my party whether Charles Latham has not been out of step with them; and he has not been carpeted for it, although he was probably wrong. We do not tie our members hand and foot as the Minister does. Of course this has a bad influence on the public.

To continue with the freight figures, I point out that the fruit and vegetables carried in 1928 amounted to 55,000 tons. In 1954-55, they amounted to 42,000 tons; and in 1955-56, to 38,000 tons. The reason, of course, is that it is quicker to transport these goods by road to the ports. Fertilisers carted in 1928 totalled 217,000 tons; in 1954-55, 366,000 tons; and in 1955-56, 357,000 tons. Members will probably know that last year there was a reduction of area under wheat. The next item is water, but we have not been carrying water during the last few years. I now come to miscellaneous ores and minerals. They went from 678,000 tons in 1928 down to 156,000 tons in 1954-55, and to 187,000 tons in 1955-56.

I am quoting these figures because in the total it looks as though very little progress has been made; but when we take an item such as the last one I have quoted,

which has been reduced from 678,000 to 187,000 tons we realise there is a difference of 500,000 tons in the amount carted, because the mines are not producing the ore.

The next is grain and grain products, which amounted to 161,000 tons in 1928; 160,000 in 1954-55; and 277,000 tons in 1955-56. "A" class goods were—40,000 tons in 1928; 86,000 in 1954-55; and 83,000 tons in 1955-56. "B" class goods—52,000 tons in 1928; 67,000 tons in 1954-55; and 67,000 tons in 1955-56. "C" class goods—17,000 tons in 1928; 98,000 tons in 1954-55; and 92,000 tons in 1955-56. First-class goods—153,000 tons in 1928; 113,000 in 1954-55; and 108,000 in 1955-56. Second-class and third-class goods—55,000 tons in 1928; 53,000 in 1954-55; and 52,000 in 1955-56. All other paying goods amounted to 82,000 tons in 1928; and 133,000 in 1955-56. Livestock was 103,000 tons in 1928; 128,000 tons in 1954-55; and 137,500 tons in 1955-56. So it goes on. The totals amount to 3,697,000 tons in 1928—and in one item alone, minerals, there is a difference of 500,000 tons—3,406,000 in 1954-55, and 3,793,000 tons in 1955-56. So the railways are being used more every year.

I dislike the story that the people are not supporting the railways, because they are; but we get some instances that make us wonder just what goes on. During the last seeding period a man at Bruce Rock rang a firm in Perth and said he wanted a part for his drill, and asked whether the firm would put it on the train and send it via Merredin to Bruce Rock, and he would get it in the morning. The next day he went into Bruce Rock to pick up this part, only to find, after the station master had made a thorough search, that it was not on the waybill and had not arrived. One of the geniuses in Perth had sent it via Narrogin and it had gone over the Corrigin line so as to arrive at Bruce Rock the following evening. In the morning, when this man found the part was not there he came straight to Perth in his car, picked up another part and was back at work again about four o'clock that afternoon.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: And he had broken the law, perhaps.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I suppose he should not have taken that part back by road because of the railway being there.

The Minister for Railways: He had two parts.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Those are some instances that are annoying. It makes people feel that things are very bad. I have a letter from the chairman of the Farmers' Union, which is a non-political body. I am always grieved because it is unpolitical, inasmuch as I think it should get behind the Country Party; but it has never felt inclined to do so. Nevertheless we have never hesitated to stick up for

those engaged in the industries which it represents, and we help them when we can.

People say we have cheaper freights in Western Australia than in the Eastern States, but in this letter the chairman states—

From time to time I have stated that wheat freight paid by Western Australian growers is comparable with freight paid by growers in other Australian States.

Recently figures have been published from Government sources which set out to show that this State pays the lowest freight for distances of 100 miles of any Australian State, with the exception of South Australia. It is claimed furthermore that Western Australian growers are being subsidised by the Government through cheap freights and that wheat is hauled by the railways at a loss. I entirely discount these statements and maintain that if wheat was hauled at a loss then it seems elementary that the greater the quantity of wheat hauled during any quarter, then the greater the railway deficit for that quarter would be. We find, however, that just the reverse is the case.

The schedule of average freight rates to terminals, based on actual deductions from growers' certificates for the nine years from the 1945-46 harvest to the 1953-54 harvest, shows that increases in this State were from 4.604d. per bushel to 13.343d. per bushel for the nine year period.

So they have increased three times—

In comparing freight rates per ton for a distance of say 100 miles paid in each State by growers, consideration must be given to the wide disparity in the average haul in each State and the consequent effect which telescoping of freight rates has in these circumstances.

The freight rate for a 100 mile haul in N.S.W. is 30s. per ton, but the rate for 500 miles is only 83s. and not five times as great or 185s. This clearly illustrates the effect of "telescoping" and should be considered against the fact that the nearest growers' siding to a terminal point in N.S.W. is Willow Tree which is 132 miles from the port of Newcastle. The most distant growers' siding in New South Wales is situated in south-western N.S.W. and is about 500 miles from the nearest port of Darling Harbour. The average haul in New South Wales is 300 miles. To give the far distant grower the advantage of a lower freight, or alternatively to protect him from the incidence of his isolation the closest growers are loaded unduly and for this reason to quote the figure of

100 or 150 miles in N.S.W. and to compare it with a State like Western Australia gives an entirely misleading comparison unless mention is also made of the above facts and also that Western Australia has a maximum haul of only 259 miles but an average haul of about 170 miles.

In comparing charges made in New South Wales against charges made to growers in this State, consideration should always be given to the ability of industry in any locality to meet a certain charge.

The great bulk of the wheat which carries the long distance haulage charge in N.S.W. is produced in the Western and north-western parts of that State on land which has never needed artificial fertilisers, which maintains prolific and much above average yields, and which attracts high premiums from millers.

The low average freight in South Australia is brought about by the multiplicity of small ports in that State and the consequent low average haul.

In Queensland, which must be regarded as a socialistic State, freight rates for grain over the various distances have little meaning as the freight is averaged in that State and every grower, regardless of his distance from the port, pays the average freight. It is interesting to note that although Queensland has the greatest wheat production potential of all the Australian States she is currently importing wheat from South Australia and meeting transportation costs of 5s. 6d. per bushel. One wonders just how much of this situation has been created by socialistic practices, such as the one above.

In Victoria, much the same position obtains as it does in N.S.W. The freight rate for 100 miles is loaded to lighten the burden on the maximum freight haul of 390 miles, such maximum and the large volume of grain hauled from the 300 mile range gives Victoria the average haul of about 225 miles. Again it can be seen, to make a comparison between the charge for a haul of 100 miles in Victoria as compared with a haul of the same distance in this State is quite misleading.

That explains quite clearly that the story about Western Australia having cheap freight rates is not true. The reverse is the position; and, as a matter of fact, we are paying much higher freights in some parts of the State than people are paying in other parts of Australia.

The Minister for Railways: Which parts?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: It has been said that all the other States are closing some of their railways. I obtained from Victoria figures regarding the mileage of railways closed in that State, and this dates back to 1953. The total mileage closed in Victoria, which has about the same mileage of railways as we have, was 291 miles. The lines closed are only odd lines; and I would like to read the sections to members so that they will get an idea of what has been involved. The sections closed are as follows:—

Wangaratta to Whitfield (narrow gauge).

Mainly stock district.

Maffra to Briagolong.

Mixed, mainly stock.

Moe to Walhalla (narrow gauge).

Mainly stock, little mining.

Beech Forest to Crowes (narrow gauge).

Little stock, Otway Forest area.

Mainly timber.

Newton to Cressy.

Sheep and stock area.

Ballarat to Buninyong.

Oaten hay, cattle and potatoes.

Ben Nevis to Navarre.

Little wheat, oats and sheep. Lands-brough was in this section so we shifted the bulkhead to Stawell.

Murrabit to Stony Crossing.

On Murray River, mostly stock.

Yarram to Woodside.

Cattle country.

Korumburra to Outtrim.

Once coalmining but died out with advent of Morwell scheme.

The Minister for Railways: All agricultural lines.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: They were only small lines.

The Minister for Railways: Have they any proposals for further closures?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: No.

The Minister for Railways: None?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: No. The other sections closed were—

Bittern to Red Hill.

Apples and fattening country.

Clarkefield to Lancefield.

Potatoes, hay, livestock. Too near Melbourne.

Redesdale to Redesdale Junction.

Apples and livestock.

Newlyn to Daylesford.

Oaten hay, potatoes and livestock.

Nayook to Noojee.

Old mining area, part section of Warragul to Noojee line.

Cressy to Irrewarra

Sheep, hay, livestock. Too near Geelong.

The total mileage closed was 291. The freight rates there, in comparison with those in this State, are—

Wool (average 300 lb. bale)—20s. 4d. per bale.

Wheat—47s. 1d. per ton for 150 miles.

Oats and Barley—45s. 2d. per ton for 150 miles.

Firewood—37s. 10d. per ton for 150 miles.

Superphosphate—26s. per ton for 150 miles.

I think I have given sufficient evidence to show that the stories we hear from time to time about what the farmer has not done, or what he ought to do, are both misleading and unfair. If we want to close all the lines that are not profitable, why do we not close the line from Coolgardie to Esperance?

The Minister for Railways: That is developmental.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Very developmental! The greatest amount of traffic on that line comes from Norseman—and that is only because the farmers are wanting the product from that town.

The Minister for Railways: It is the Goldfields.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: That traffic is because of the pyrites; and the farmers pay a subsidy on that—or at least they did when sulphur was so difficult to get and we had to use pyrites. There are nine sidings in that area, and the total amount carted over the line in one year was 16,510 tons. The tonnage of wheat carted over the Burakin-Bonnie Rock line was 57,998 tons; and on the Hyden line, where I think the cruelest thing possible is being done because of the closing of the railway, 18,666 tons were carted last year.

Yet the Minister takes it for granted. He must have done so; I am sure he did not investigate the position. Had he done so he would not have agreed to the closure of these lines. If he had known what I know, I am sure he would have been ashamed to come to this House and support the resolution he put forward. I know the Minister well enough to realise he is not such a hard-hearted individual as he looks. I have not heard of a more deplorable thing in my life than the closure of these lines and to me it is really disheartening.

I went out into that country and I know what the railways mean to the people there. I know what the women suffered in those early days; and after going through all that, their reward was the establishment of a railway. There was a big ceremonial opening. The late Mr. McCallum went to the town and opened the railway by bringing in the engine for the first time to Narembeen. That is one of the sections that is to be closed.

The Minister for Railways: There is to be no second closure; you have been assured of it a dozen times.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: After the statements made by the Premier, one never knows. There will probably be someone else with greater influence.

The Minister for Railways: I told you that on the 1st November last in this House.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I think, as far as the Minister is concerned, I could believe that; but there are other influences.

The Minister for Railways: You would not believe anybody.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I believe the odd one; but I am afraid I cannot believe the Labour Party.

The Minister for Railways: That is understandable from your angle.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The Minister must know that I have made out a good case. Can the Minister imagine anything more disappointing for a fellow who has a substantial overdraft at the bank because he has gone on clearing additional land—and has taken up a lot more light land, and as a result gone into debt—than to find that, through a blooming bald resolution passed by both Houses of this Parliament—and I think it was a mistake in this House—the railway line near his property is to be closed! I hope that members of this House will follow my advice and rescind the motion which was carried in the dying hours of last session and at an unearthly hour in the morning. I believe that if members had had clearer brains on that occasion we would not have agreed to that motion.

The Minister for Railways: It was discussed seven weeks before Parliament finished.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: It was not seven weeks before it came to this House and went back again.

The Minister for Railways: It was on the 1st November.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Even if it was seven weeks before the session finished, there was such a rush of legislation that it was almost impossible to keep one's brain from getting tangled.

The Chief Secretary: Your brain was not tangled.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: My word it was! And so was the Minister's brain. The newspapers put themselves on a pedestal, and there will be no report of the proceedings in this House. Yet the newspapers start telling the people of this State what they ought to do! Is there any justification for their charging 4d. for the rag we get every morning? I say very definitely that there is not. What do we pay for? We pay for those blooming

advertisements in the Press, the cost of which goes on to the price of the articles advertised. Let them do the work for which they are trained.

When their reporters go out to cover meetings they cannot even report the proceedings accurately; and when one wants the statements corrected, the attitude is, "We are above suspicion; we are like Caesar's wife." The newspaper does not make any correction. I do not know whether the Minister is able to get any statements corrected, but we cannot do so. They take the attitude that they are infallible—they cannot make mistakes.

They say that it does not matter what the wheat industry has done for this State, the people concerned should be made to cart their wheat over dirty, dusty, lumpy roads. I have had to cart it over such roads, and I know what it is like. I realise that it is not as bad as it was in those days. But when we have a scorching hot day of about 135 degrees in the sun, and one gets a puncture and has to change a tyre, with a full load of wheat on the truck, it is not an enviable experience.

So I ask the Government to alter the decision it has made and I ask members to agree to the motion I have moved and give the people outback a chance. Those in the city are living in luxury compared with those outback. Even if they are not living in luxury, they are certainly better off than those in the country.

The Minister for Railways: Pork is certainly a luxury—a luxurious price.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Who determines the price?

The Minister for Railways: I do not know.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Do not for one moment think that the farmer fixes the price.

The Minister for Railways: It is sold by auction.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Whenever he offers anything he says, "Please, what will you give me?" I do not know who makes the profit. I do know that he sells his sheep and his cattle by auction. How does he sell his wheat? We have a better system now than when I was a young fellow in the industry. We now export it; but we have to take the overseas price, selling in competition with other countries in the world. How do we sell our wool? Do we fix the price for that?

The Minister for Railways: At the best you can get.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Do not forget that there are no more hard-working or liberal-minded people than those on the land. I hope members will agree to my motion, and not make the life of the farmer harder than it is. Mrs. Hutchison comes here with her hard luck stories, and very truthful ones, too.

The Chief Secretary: Do not ask for interjections.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I am not doing so. I am giving her due credit, and I am asking her not to think that all farmers are bloated people with heavy gold chains on their breasts. They are hard-working people who have to put up with a good deal; and if she votes for my motion, she will have an opportunity of showing her appreciation. I say to her, "Will you on this occasion vote to expunge from the records of this House the motion that was agreed to last year?"

HON. L. C. DIVER (Central) [9.0]: After having had a second look at this question of rail closures, I trust this House will vote in favour of rescinding the motion it carried last session. Our Premier has said that because he has not attended meetings in the country this question has become politically hot. When we have a question which is so vital to the people in the country, and when we consider how important to them is this closure of 840 miles of line, it makes one wonder that the Premier should make a statement such as that.

There is nothing in the political field of greater concern to these people than the discontinuance of these lines. Consequently, what is there so amazing about its being politically hot? It was obvious when the motion was brought to this House that this matter would become politically hot. It will continue to do so, until the motion is rescinded, and until a more logical approach is made to the matter of transport in this country.

Fancy these people in the outback being expected to accept a position such as that outlined by Sir Charles Latham and Mr. Simpson! I know the position does exist where a man in the country in the Beacon area writes a letter and mails it, and 20 days later he is lucky if he receives a reply through the channels made available. The Government would have us believe that these are reasonable conditions, and that the settlers should be satisfied with their mail arrangements. As regards their smallgoods and stores, they are told to make their own arrangements.

The Minister for Railways: They have weekly services now.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: That may be so; but we have heard these statements before. One thing, however, is certain; and that is, that whatever service is provided by road transport, it will not equal that which these men have been getting previously from the railways. Even if it was only a weekly rail service up and back, they were certain of it. That transport service was built up subsequently by the backstop of our Minister in another place, who is working on the assumption that the wheatbelt can be operated on lines similar to those being used in the transport-

system in the North, where they load at port and unload at destination. In no circumstances does that apply to our wheat-belt.

These people have been told, "We have found it very convenient in the metropolitan area to allow the merchants to collect their wares at shipside and deliver anywhere within a 35-mile radius. These people can have a free go with their transport. But the people at the other end of the rail system must apparently be penalised because of their isolation, and because they have not got the weight of numbers in Parliament to vote on their behalf. They are told that they will have to cart their produce to the siding, and unload it at the siding, and pay for the reloading on to another vehicle for it to be taken to another railhead.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It will also cause a lot of congestion.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: Having had it carted to that railhead they are told, "You, the isolated settler, have not got enough to put up with; you will put up with a little more inconvenience and pay for the loading of that produce on to our rail system where it will be handled once more." This is just the reverse of that factor which enabled modern road transport to be built up in the metropolitan area over a radius of 35 miles. Those are the conditions that the Government is trying to impose on the people of the outback, and they will not work.

This man behind the scenes, whom we cannot address personally, would have us believe that the farmers have no right to become hostile, and that it was the Farmers' Union that created all this hostility to what he considers a heaven-sent transport system concocted by himself. There is no realism behind this wonderful system of his which he has forced upon the community. I would like to echo the sentiments expressed by Sir Charles Latham and Mr. Simpson concerning the man who was responsible.

The Minister for Railways: I am responsible.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: In that case I am sorry for the Minister. Time and again we have heard the Minister and the Premier make a statement—and both my colleagues have referred to this, and it was also mentioned in the paper—and ultimately their assurances on different matters concerning the railways have been discounted and new arrangements have been made. If the Minister wishes to challenge that statement, I will give him documentary proof that what I say is correct. I will show him instances where the Premier has given assurances to deputations; and before the expiration of an assurance by the Premier, another statement has been made to the effect that the railway concerned will be closed at an earlier date than that mentioned by the Premier.

The Minister for Railways: It was extended.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: No. On several occasions there has not been an extension of the date, but rather the bringing of it forward.

The Minister for Railways: Which one?

Hon. L. C. DIVER: There have been occasions when the date has been extended but only two such occasions. Much play has been made about the disloyalty of the farmer to the railway services supplied to him. I would challenge the Minister for Railways to convey to the Minister for Transport a request that he give to this House the percentage figure of produce which it is estimated has been carried by farmers' trucks from the farms to the city and vice versa. I will wager that the percentage of produce so carried is infinitesimal as compared with the gross tonnage carried by the rail system in 12 months.

I would also like the Minister for Transport to ask the Transport Board to supply us with a table of persons, not engaged in agriculture, who have made application to transport goods to the country. I would be interested to see how much that tonnage comprises. I think even the Minister for Railways would be amazed if he saw those figures. I have also heard—and I have no doubt about this whatever—that persons not engaged in agriculture are proceeding to cart tonnages that would greatly exceed the aggregate carted by the farmers. Yet we never hear anything about that. Our newspapers do not report that aspect, because that appears to be in line with the Government's policy to build up a wonderful motor industry in the metropolitan area. That is the Government's idea of decentralisation.

Touching again on the newspaper angle, I would like to say that "The West Australian" has said, "Bravo! Good on you, you Labour men. You have done a wonderful thing. Closing these railways is a statesmanlike job. They are doing a wonderful job." That same paper suggested to the wheat producers not two years ago, "Take our advice and cut your sowings by 20 per cent. There is no future in wheat-growing. You take our advice and grow oats. Never mind about wheat."

What was the position within 12 months of "The West Australian" advocating a reduction in the production of wheat? The Railways Department carted vastly greater tonnages over the railway system than they contemplated. I mention this to show how reliable this news sheet is in its editorial when giving advice to the people of this fair country of ours.

There is another aspect that must be considered, and that relates to land values. The farmers in the areas in which these services have been discontinued are, after all, mortal like ourselves; they are on this

earth for only a short while, and from time to time they die! It is here that the State and the Commonwealth show their interest in the property of those farmers for probate purposes. We already have the spectacle of several properties having been valued at fictitious valuations, because these properties are being assessed for probate purposes and road boards are rating at fictitious values. As my colleagues have pointed out, these values have been destroyed.

On the one side we have the local authority and on the other the commissioner who operates probate where views cannot be heard. The local authority says it is dreadfully sorry, but it has to leave the values as they are at the present time. It says it has struck a rate to get the revenue to carry out maintenance and rebuild roads which the transport system is battering about. I do not think we could have had a worse year to demonstrate that.

When Sir Charles Latham was speaking, the Minister interjected regarding the Labour Party's policy in connection with the discontinuance of the rail system and asked what date it was. The Minister supplied the answer himself and said, "1953."

The Minister for Railways: The pamphlet, yes.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: If an undertaking were given in 1953 that there would be no discontinuance of services—

The Minister for Railways: Without reference to Parliament.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: I do not think that was mentioned. We have no assurance that in 1957, after the Government has discontinued the services of many hundreds of miles of railways, it will not close down a lot more of the rail system on the score of economy. The railways that have been discontinued in fact, and those to be discontinued in the future, have been treated in this way on the score of economy. What is this economy? How does it read?

Last year the railways lost in the vicinity of £5,000,000. So as to make certain they would be in a more healthy position this financial year, the railway services were discontinued, and the Treasurer now estimates they will lose £7,300,000. If this is the case, the sooner something drastic happens to those in charge of railway finances the better; for, surely to goodness it would appear that if the 2,000 miles of railway the committee recommended be closed were closed, we would have a loss of £10,000,000 or £12,000,000 a year on the remaining 2,000 miles of railway. To make matters worse, almost the same staff, within a few hundred, is employed.

It is sheer stupidity, to my mind, for the Government to carry on as it is doing at the present time. There should have

been retrenchments, taking as a ratio three men to the mile, of some 2,000 men. This would make a tremendous saving in our commitments. However, on the statement of the Minister, these men have not been retrenched. Therefore, where are we going? When we look at the amount of produce that was carted in the 1930's as compared with the tonnage carted today, and look at the difference in our wages and commitments in the railway system, they will not stand comparison.

It has been demonstrated in the course of a few months that the closing of railways is not the answer to our railway deficits. My forecast in December that the railways might be a little better off but that the Treasurer would be no better off at the end of the year, has been borne out. I never thought for a moment that we would be told we would be £2,000,000 worse off this financial year than last.

The Minister for Railways: We are not.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: For the Minister to say it was because two years' wheat was harvested last year in lieu of one will not bear examination. I grant that an exceptionally large tonnage was carried last year, but it was not two year's harvest. It is amazing to hear the Minister say that our produce is carted at a loss. They say wheat is a losing freight and yet it is put up that because they will not have that extra wheat, the deficit will be that much greater.

Already the suspension of the running of trains on certain lines has proved a retrograde step, and I do trust that members of this House will on this occasion agree to rescind this motion and let us tackle this problem as it should be tackled by a close inspection of the real position. As I have already said, there will be certain areas where no doubt produce can be carted more economically than by rail; but the settlers who are not in that position should not be penalised. They should not be put in the position where all their requirements have to be handled twice and, in some cases, three times. This is economically unsound. For that reason, I trust that this House will agree to rescind the resolution carried last year.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [9.25]: When I spoke on this motion last December I was one of the fortunate members of this House to speak in the earlier hours of the evening before the minds of many members became rather addled. I made certain observations during that speech which, unfortunately, have proved to be true. One particular reason why I support the motion for rescission, as introduced by Sir Charles Latham, is that, in my opinion, the Government acted upon a report which was incorrect and, in some cases, bordered on the ridiculous.

I believe many members in this House, because of the case presented by the Minister from that report, were also misled. I will refer to one item alone which was in the report presented to the Government. It was stated that the essential reconditioning to the Wokarina section of the line would cost £20,133 per mile. That is the figure put up by the committee appointed by the Government to give some reliable figures to work upon.

The Minister for Railways: Which section?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Wokarina to Yuna is the full length. The committee said the essential reconditioning would cost £20,000 per mile, yet a new railway can be built for £15,000. That information was obtained in reply to a question in another place. However, that is not the worst of it. For the previous two years, in 1954, when the committee was making its inquiries, essential reconditioning had already taken place and the line was better then than for the last 15 or 20 years. In a letter to the Minister, I mentioned this fact; and I also mentioned the fact that the district engineer in Geraldton stated, "You can run trains for another four years with purely ordinary maintenance, without further reconditioning."

The Minister for Railways: You said without further maintenance in your letter.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: That was actually the statement made by the engineer.

The Minister for Railways: He denied it.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I am tempering it by saying ordinary maintenance. Whether he denies it or not, he said it, and I stand here and say it. He said four years with just ordinary maintenance.

The Minister for Railways: Your letter said "with no further maintenance."

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: This is one of the lines which is going to cost £20,000 per mile to recondition, and the committee put up figures which the Government and members of this House accepted.

A public meeting was called in Geraldton—not by myself or any Country Party member—and the main speaker at that meeting was a railwayman, who put up the case for the railways not closing; and he put up a very good case. However, a week before the meeting, the Minister was requested to allow the officer in charge of the office in Geraldton to produce the figures of Geraldton for the tonnage and revenue for those two particular lines, so that the public could be given the truth of what the tonnage and revenue were.

A week before the meeting, a special letter was sent down to the Minister's office with that request by the Leader of the Party. He got the reply the day of the meeting. We got it by the grapevine that those figures were not to be used. I

appreciate that the officer in Geraldton did the right thing by refusing to divulge them, because it would have been a breach of trust. But what has the Government to hide when it will not produce the rail figures from the Geraldton office? They are totally different from what was in the report.

The Minister for Railways: Because they added the departmental figures.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: They were totally different from what was in the committee's report.

The Minister for Railways: One is paying freight and the other includes departmental freight.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: It all depends on what is called paying freight. I will give an example of the Meekatharra-Wiluna line. Here are the figures: Over 3,000 bales of wool; over 13,000 sheep; over 2,000 cattle; and 3,500 tons of copper. They were some of the commodities sent on the Wiluna-Meekatharra line and not one penny was credited to that end of the line. It was all paid down in Perth. Not one penny was credited to the Meekatharra-Wiluna line. How can we expect to get efficient and correct figures when this is done; and how can we expect any spur line to pay when we work on those figures? So I say this House has been misled by the figures put up by that committee and presented to the Government; and the Government was misled too.

The Minister for Railways: You state your figures so that we can check them.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: How can I give figures? The Minister would not let us use them.

The Minister for Railways: They are the official figures and they are all that can be used.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The ones the Minister gave us last year?

The Minister for Railways: They are the audited, official figures.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Yes; but they are not the correct figures. They are only the figures of what is paid in, in the district.

The Minister for Railways: They are sent down from the officers there.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: They have only the figures of what is paid in. It is the same with the Meekatharra-Wiluna line. Not one figure was allocated to that line from the figures I just gave.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: North Fremantle earns over £2,000,000. That is a wonderful station.

The Minister for Railways: Yet the line loses.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The two reasons given for the closing of the lines are that they were uneconomical and the tracks were unsafe.

The Minister for Railways: No.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Yes; those were the two reasons given by the Minister's Government.

The Minister for Railways: Uneconomical.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Yes; and the other, too. Look at some of the statements made! How can we prove anything on the economic side when we cannot get the correct figure? I have already proved that the condition of the track from Wokarina to Yuna was not in the state that it was made out to be; and that is not the only one. The Bonnie Rock-Burakin line was exactly the same; and to prove it, one of the engine drivers drove his train over it in excess of the permitted speed. He was fined for it, but he proved that the track was all right.

The same applies to almost all the other lines. The only one I cannot speak about, in regard to the line itself, is the Meekatharra-Wiluna line. I could not say what the condition of the track is; but I have given the figures in regard to the economics of it, and they prove again that the committee was wrong.

Talking about promises, it might be as well at this stage if I read a statement from a pamphlet issued in 1952 by Mr. Hawke. He signed his name under this one. It states—

No railway lines to cease operations or be pulled up without adequate on-the-spot discussions by Ministers with local governing authorities and other people concerned.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: He forgot the next day.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: He did bring the last portion of it to Cabinet and to Parliament, but he did not carry out the first part of it. Not one on-the-spot decision was made. This committee that sat and made recommendations to the Government never got off their chairs in offices in Perth.

The Chief Secretary: Be careful!

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I would like to say other things. How can any person make an investigation by sitting in an office in Perth? Why did not the members of this committee go out to the track and have a look for themselves to see the conditions? What did they know about the railway line outside when they were sitting here? And the Minister accepted their word! The Minister, I believe, made the statement also, if the paper correctly reported him, that the railways were not carrying as much as they were in 1928.

The Minister for Railways: Tonnage.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Yes. Sir Charles Latham has already given the figures which prove the Minister's statement is incorrect.

The Minister for Railways: My statement was that it took until 1956 to carry as much as was carried in 1928.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: That may be so.

The Minister for Railways: It took 28 years to reach the same tonnage.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Let me get back to the figure in regard to wheat, when it was stated that two seasons in one were carted. How did the Minister work that out, when 778,000 tons of wheat was carted the previous year and over 1,000,000 tons in 1955-56? There could not have been two years in one. It is because there was a record year; and that is why the Minister went back to 1928 when there was another record year.

The Minister for Railways: An amount of 1,500,000 tons was carried.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: That is the second biggest crop on record.

The Minister for Railways: It did not weigh 1,500,000 tons.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Over 50,000,000 bushels of wheat was produced. It was not because of two seasons in one as the Minister tried to make out.

The Minister for Railways: Most of it. There was a carry-over, you will admit.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Very little. It could not have been very much if we work out the weight of a 52,000,000-bushel crop.

The Minister for Railways: You will admit there was some.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The Minister gave these figures, and he will appreciate that from an agricultural point of view they have gone up considerably.

The Minister for Railways: They should have done so, too, because the area under production has gone up considerably.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Of course! But why say the farmers are not using the railways, when they are? These figures prove it. Let me say this: that it is the men out-back—whose railways are being taken away—who use the railways and always have done. But they are the ones whose right to use the railways, the Minister is denying. The men on the inner circle, I will admit—quite a few of them—have carted their stuff, and they will continue to cart their stuff. But the fellow who has played the game and used the railways is the one to whom the Minister is denying the railways. It is not his fault that the railways are not paying. Why should the Minister deny him the right to use them?

The costs will be so high that these men will have to walk off. The other day a road board conference passed a motion that the Taxation Department be asked not to revalue farming properties affected by the recent rail closures in the northern area. It is exactly what I said would

happen, and these men who have taken a lifetime to build up an equity in their properties find that they have lost a great deal overnight.

The Minister for Railways: But has it happened? The motion was moved in anticipation of that.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: No; the man who moved the motion says their values have gone down.

The Minister for Railways: Quote one instance.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I am simply telling the House what a responsible man in the district has said.

The Minister for Railways: Quote a case of where anyone has walked off.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: If I went around the country I would probably find one.

The Minister for Railways: No doubt you would find one if you could.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Does the Minister say the values have not fallen?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I also said that this would start a move towards centralisation, and I think I have been proved right. I believe something like 65 families have been shifted from the Geraldton district owing to the rail closures, and the majority of them have come to the metropolitan area. Admittedly some who have their homes there would not leave.

Now we have the spectacle of the Geraldton railway station—in the centre of one of the best areas in the State—being reduced in status until it cannot carry a station master. The combined job is now that of district traffic superintendent and station master, and the Geraldton station is, in effect, just a receiving siding for the Midland Railways. I suggest that the Midland Railway Co. be given the 19 miles of line between Walkaway and Geraldton as the Government could probably save a few pounds by that means, because all the railway employees at Geraldton are doing now is to act as receiving agents for the Midland Railway Co. Having closed the other lines, the Minister might just as well give that section to the Midland Railway Co.

The Minister for Railways: Why not introduce a Bill or move a motion to that effect?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: He could not introduce a Bill in that regard; and if he moved a motion, you would take no notice of it.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: In reply to a letter from me, the Minister—it was six weeks after I wrote to him before I received his reply—admitted that some farmers might be faced with additional costs, but said it would be a relatively small rise. In fact, they will be faced with increased costs on nearly everything.

The Minister for Railways: On super and wheat?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Yes.

The Minister for Railways: Mr. Ackland and C.B.H. have said they will not.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: If not yet, they will be within a short space of time, because a log of claims has been filed in the Arbitration Court in South Australia by the Transport Workers' Union. This is just the first move, and a similar log will eventually be filed in each of the States; and, knowing the Arbitration Court, I believe that although the union will not get all it asks for, it will get some of it, and then transport costs will go up terrifically.

The Minister for Railways: Do the Geraldton carriers belong to the Transport Workers' Union?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I am afraid the Minister does not realise that the owner-operator working a truck is prepared to work 15 or 16 hours a day and forgo meal hours, and it must not be forgotten that while the railways operate, there is the rail freight as a basis to work on in regard to charges. Once the railways are closed, the owner-operators will have to employ labour and up will go their costs—

The Minister for Railways: That has not worked out anywhere else.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: So far there has been the rail-freight basis to work on.

The Minister for Railways: But there are no railways in much of the North.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The log claims a £25 a week basic wage—

The Minister for Railways: Is that in South Australia?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Yes, but it will follow here.

The Minister for Railways: You are simply putting up an Aunt Sally.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: This is the Transport Workers' Union of Australia. Does it not cover Western Australia also?

The Minister for Railways: I asked whether it had any members in the Geraldton area, but you did not answer.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: They are claiming a basic wage of £25 a week and a 30-hour 5-day week. The margin sought for an ordinary driver is £3 5s. a ton for the first ton, plus 10s. a ton a day for each ton in excess of the first. A loading of 10s. a day in drawing a trailer. An industry loading of £2 10s. a week. Over-night expenses allowance of £4 a night. Allowance if in country away from home, £10 a week plus. An extra £10 a week if living in a tent or hut. Overtime, Saturdays double time and Sundays and holidays treble time. Meal money 15s. a meal for all meals on Saturdays, Sundays

and holidays and for each meal outside ordinary working times on week days. Annual leave of 28 days on full pay. Sick leave five weeks a year on full pay. That will give the House some idea of what the Transport Workers' Union of Australia is seeking in the Arbitration Court, and a similar claim will follow in this State.

Reverting to costs, I have a schedule from the Midland road service which has just taken over Peter Cooper's run from Geraldton to Yuna. Pound for pound from Geraldton to Yuna by rail as against road there is no difference; and, as a matter of fact, in some places I think the road rate is slightly cheaper. But that is not the story. A 14 lb. parcel used to cost 6s. 9d. from Perth to Nabawa but it now costs another 3s or 9s. 9d. and that applies to every parcel sent from here to either the Yuna or Ajana lines. It is anticipated that this will cost the Yuna co-operative store at least £200 a year, and that is the figure worked out by their accountant.

The Minister for Railways: They should use Wesfarmers' transport.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: They do not operate there.

The Minister for Railways: They run through Northampton.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I am talking about the Yuna co-operative store. There was a sheep sale at Geraldton the other day; but because the line had been closed, the sheep had to be driven 17 miles as the road transport cost was too high; and it must be remembered that not all stock that reach the saleyards are fit to travel 17 miles. People who put stock in for sale under those circumstances will get a heavily reduced return for them; and so it is not only a matter of the cost of transport, but of what the man on the land will receive for his goods. It is not only rail transport that we have to think about; there is everything else as well.

Dealing with stock, I would not be a bit surprised if the local sales at Nabawa, Yuna and Northampton were not transferred in the near future and all sales held at Narngulu. I say this because the majority of sheep sold in those areas go out of the district; and so they will be transported by road to Narngulu. But what about the poor farmer inside that area, who wants to buy, as many of them do, a certain percentage for his own use? He will have to pay road transport costs both ways; and so the cost of stock to the farmers in that area will go up—another added cost. Not many members have given these points any consideration.

The Minister for Railways: Do you know that over 60 per cent. of the stock goes to Midland Junction by road?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I know by these figures that we are carting more stock by rail than ever before.

The Minister for Railways: Yes.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: And quite a lot goes by road.

The Minister for Railways: Over 60 per cent. of the stock goes to Midland Junction by road.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I do not know the percentage, but I know that the railways are carting 170,000 tons to Midland Junction. But that does not have to go out again. Most of that stock does not have to be carted any great distance from Midland Junction for grazing purposes. Farmers do not have to buy in and pay the cartage both ways.

I have another instance of what happened at Northampton. A chap there wanted to send a parcel to Mullewa; and he went to the Midland Bus Co., which is running one of the services, and said that he wanted to send a parcel to Mullewa. He was promptly told that he could pay only the cost to Geraldton, because the man at Northampton did not know the cost for the railways from there on. If a person wants to send a parcel to Tenindewa, which is an unattended siding, he pays the Midland Railway Co. to take it to Geraldton, and then he has to pay a forwarding agent in Geraldton, which is an extra cost, because the freight must be paid before it leaves.

As regards the interjection of the Minister about Mr. Ackland saying that costs would be cheaper with the cartage of wheat, C.B.H. has never yet called tenders for the cartage of wheat. As a matter of fact, this Government never had any discussion with C.B.H. until after some of the railway lines were closed. Then the Government thought it had better do something about the matter and see what could be done about next year's wheat harvest.

The Minister for Railways: That is not quite correct.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: It is quite correct. There were no discussions before the lines were closed, or before the motion was passed in the House.

The Minister for Railways: That is better—not before the lines were closed.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Why was not something done beforehand?

The Minister for Railways: We did not know whether the House would agree to close them.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: But the Minister should have come to this House with some suggestions regarding alternative transport. Instead of that, the Minister left the whole position in the air. No tenders have been called, so no one knows what

the cost will be; the Government is only surmising, bearing in mind what happened two or three years ago.

Let us look at the attitude of the Premier, and the different treatment meted out to the outback man as compared with the city man as regards passenger fares. The Premier is very concerned that if he puts up passenger fares he will lose passengers. What a reaction after closing 842 miles of railway and leaving the people in those areas stranded! What if he does put up the fares 2d. or 3d. in the metropolitan area? What would he lose to the private passenger companies? There is one place that I know particularly well, where the bus leaves from a point within 100 yards of a siding, and the bus fare into town is 1s. 3d. while the railway fare is 10d., a difference of 5d. Surely the railway fare could be increased to 1s. 1d. or 1s. 2d. But no; the Government would lose too many votes if it put up city fares like that.

The Minister for Railways: No; I will answer that when I reply to the motion.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Has the Minister got an answer? The Government is too frightened to put the fares up.

The Minister for Railways: Surely you do not think you have all the clues in this country!

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I will go this far, as regards the metropolitan railway passenger service: I think it is an excellent service, and I cannot understand why more people do not use it. I think if really good publicity were given to the metropolitan service probably a lot more people would use it.

The Minister for Railways: The whole thing wants rationalising.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I do not know what it wants; but it wants a shot in the arm of some kind, because it is a good service.

The Minister for Railways: Can you suggest something?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I know that people stand out in the sun and rain, in queues a mile long, waiting for a bus; while at the same time they could go to any station and be out of the sun and rain, without having to wait in queues, and take advantage of a good service. They religiously wait in these queues day after day, and yet they could use the trains at less cost to themselves. I cannot understand the mentality of a lot of the metropolitan people; I cannot understand why they do not use their railways more. I appeal to the people of the metropolitan area to use the metropolitan service.

But there should not be a discrepancy of 5d. between rail and road transport for a five-mile run. I think people using the railways should pay a little more than they are doing to help cut some of the

losses on the metropolitan services. Those losses are a darned sight greater than the miserly £500,000 that has been mentioned. Those figures are not correct and the Minister must know they are not.

The Minister for Railways: Nothing is correct with you.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: They are not correct, and the Minister knows it. He was given some figures when he attended a meeting at Geraldton.

The Minister for Railways: I believe in the audited figures.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Why does not the Minister realise that the figures are not correct? If he works them out, he will realise what we are talking about.

The Minister for Railways: They have been checked.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Surely the Minister does not think they are correct when there is a tonnage being hauled over particular lines and that tonnage and revenue is not credited to the lines concerned.

The Minister for Railways: Present the figures to us and let us check them.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: How can I get them? They are private and confidential figures, and I cannot go to one of the Minister's men and ask him to commit a breach of contract. If he did so, he would be sacked immediately.

The Minister for Railways: You say you have them.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I have not got them, but I know they are a darned sight different from your figures.

The Minister for Railways: Get them and we will have them checked. I will give you authority to do that.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: They are confidential and the Minister knows that.

The Minister for Railways: They are mythical, if you ask me.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The officer had every right to withhold the figures. But I have already given the Minister certain details, and I have already told him of the amount of goods carted between Mee-katharra and Wiluna for which no credit was given to the line concerned. Surely that is sufficient to prove that the figures are not correct.

The Minister for Railways: I will check that.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The Minister will find that what I have said is correct.

The Minister for Railways: According to you, yes.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: If I am wrong I will apologise.

The Minister for Railways: I hope.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: If I am wrong, I am not frightened to admit it. This Government, as well as every member of Parliament, is perturbed at the colossal losses of our railways. But I had a look at the South Australian figures the other day, which were published in the Press, and they lost £18,200,000 in five years. Yet they have not closed any railways. They have not panicked, because they realise that their lines are necessary for the expansion of the State; and some of the lines that have been closed in this State are necessary for our expansion. The Minister would be surprised at the terrific development that has taken place in the Northampton-Yuna area over the last couple of years. I would say that the people there have cleared almost as much country in the last two or three years as was cleared in the previous 25 years.

The Minister for Railways: And yet the tonnage has dropped.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The total tonnage has not dropped. If the Minister could give me the correct figures concerning all the goods that have been carried over that line it would soon be realised that the tonnage in toto has not dropped.

So I ask the House to give serious consideration to what the closing of these lines means to the people of the outback—those people who have used the lines and yet who, through no fault of their own, are to be deprived of them. As one man from the Lakes district said to me the other day, "There is only one way to carry on; and that is, if you have a son willing to stay. But if he does not want to stay, or if you have no son, it is almost impossible to will it away, because we have not got a railway line." The Government is now trying to subject other farmers to the same fate. It is not only a question of the extra transport charges, but also the increased cost of everything else which, undoubtedly, will make it uneconomical for the people in the areas affected to carry on.

In the Governor's Speech it was stated that the figures for the first nine months of this year show that exports exceeded imports by £24,700,000 compared with an adverse trade balance of £14,500,000 for the same period of last year. The exports of wool and wheat contributed £34,000,000 to this improvement. Yet, by effecting these rail closures the Government is going to reduce that figure, and it will be found that we will finish up with an adverse trade balance. I therefore ask the House to give sympathetic consideration to the rescission of the motion previously passed by both Houses of Parliament.

HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [10.2]: Tonight I appeal to the House to reconsider the decision it made last December, and I appeal to members to rescind the

motion passed by both Houses of Parliament according to the terms of the motion that has been moved by Sir Charles Latham this evening. I make that appeal on the grounds that we were given wrong information when we were asked to make up our minds on the original motion placed before us last year. It has been proved conclusively that the information that was presented to us at that time was incorrect. In some instances the figures which were given to the committee on some lines, and which were presented to us through the Minister, were so incorrect—apart altogether from the figures concerning the tonnage of other goods carried—that it was shown that the bulk wheat at many sidings was more than the total tonnage of wheat carried by the railways in the 12 months.

It is not possible for us to obtain the figures in question; and I was surprised to hear the Minister say to Mr. Logan, "You give me the figures and I will check them", because he must know that that is impossible. The figures given to Mr. Logan are taken from what are known as ledger accounts. The firm or person consigning any goods would have the freight charge debited to their ledger account regardless of whether the goods were to be consigned to the North Fremantle area or any other siding. A great deal of the freight carried would be handled in that way, and would not be a credit to the particular length of line from which it came.

The railway accounting system is very difficult to follow. Often only as much as 60 miles of railway line on the end of a particular route is credited with a small amount of freight, although the goods may have been carried over the whole line. When all these factors are taken into consideration, the Minister told us that, overall, something over £500,000 was lost on those 842 miles of railway; and that, by subsidy and by various other payments that would be made to divert the goods traffic from these railway lines to road transport, there would be an overall saving of something like £250,000 in round figures.

I hold the view, as was pointed out by every Country Party member, that the figures presented were not true and could never be true, because of the bookkeeping system. It was probably a fact that the Railway Department would effect a saving, but overall it would prove to be a great loss to the community when the rail traffic was handed over to road transport, because the roads would have to be brought up to a greater standard of efficiency in order to carry the increased road traffic, and, as a result, the roads in other centres would be neglected and the progress of the centre would be impeded. If, for example, a road were scheduled to be sealed in the

next year or so, that work would probably be put off as a priority for a road running parallel to a railway line that was due for closure would have to be constructed or brought up to a higher state of efficiency. There is only a limited amount of money available to be spent on road construction and maintenance and naturally the cost would be greater in those areas where road transport was to take over traffic from the railways.

In the Minister's mind, apparently no consideration whatsoever was given to the added cost that will be imposed on the producer, or the once trusted customer of the railways, because Mr. Logan and Mr. Diver gave some striking examples of the increases that will be brought about in freight charges following on rail closures. The other day I asked the Minister some questions asking for figures which I wanted to use in this debate, and I am wondering now whether information was held from the Minister because of that, for he said the information was not available to him. I believe his departmental officers could have answered for they would know the amount of charges because the Transport Board would have to approve of them; that is, if the board is properly managed, which I very much doubt.

The other evening I heard it mentioned that I was the new member for Laverton. That was said jocularly, no doubt, but it so happened that I visited that centre to see how the people have fared since the rail service has ceased to operate. I returned with a very gloomy feeling because I learned that 38 people have left the Laverton district as a result of the rail closure; and, also, other people are so despondent that I feel unless something is done to have the rail service resumed they, too, will leave the district.

According to the list that was given to me regarding the freight charges between Leonora and Laverton, and Malcolm and Laverton—and I assume that the figures are as near as possible to what the additional freight charges would be—freight charges are up considerably. I will quote the figures regarding the freight charges on groceries and stores because everybody is affected by them. The freight charge per ton on the railways from Kalgoorlie to Laverton was 16ls. 11d. It has gone up to 217s. 4d. which is roughly a rise of nearly £3 per ton. Furniture which was railed at 215s. 5d. a ton has gone up to 296s. 2d. which constitutes a rise of £4 a ton. Explosives show a rise of 50s. a ton and, when we consider the cost of ralling ice-cream—which is one of the few luxuries which the children of Laverton were able to enjoy—we find that the cost is prohibitive. Under the old freight by rail the cost was 12s. per canister, and by road it now costs 32s., which is an increase of 171 per cent. in freight.

That is not the entire picture, either, because in the old days when it came up by train it was conveyed in a covered van and was protected from the sun; besides which it was delivered the same day as it was railed from Kalgoorlie. Under the present set-up it would be railed to Leonora and it is not until the following day, somewhere around 2 o'clock, that it arrives at Laverton. So members can imagine what a churn of ice-cream would look like after being subjected to a temperature of 135 to 140 degrees—even with a tarpaulin covering it would be stiflingly hot. Because of this the children of Laverton are not able to enjoy the ice-creams they could in the old days.

This might seem to be a comparatively minor matter; and I have only raised it because a short while ago one of the Labour members said, "You are going to interfere with the kiddies' ice-creams." The Health Act precludes any storekeeper from serving ice-cream once it has melted—even if it were possible for him to bring it back from the milky state into which it reverts because of the heat. If the purchaser of the ice-cream took the risk and placed it in his cold storage he would only be left with half the ice-cream anyway.

The Minister for Railways: In other words, half of it is air.

Hon. A. R. JONES: That is so. Reference has also been made to the condition of some of the railway lines. One of those mentioned was the Bonnie Rock line. I was told by a person—of whom I would take a good deal of notice because he is a responsible individual, and a worker in the railways—that while the Minister in this House, and the Minister in another place were telling us how bad the Bonnie Rock line was—the Minister for Transport said that in six weeks it would not carry any traffic at all—at that very time an inspector for the section had given his opinion to the effect that the line was in good order and that the 15 m.p.h. speed limit could be raised to 25 m.p.h.

Some figures were quoted with regard to the maintenance necessary on the Malcolm-Laverton section. I do not remember the figures off-hand but they were astronomical. We were led to believe that thousands upon thousands of pounds would have to be spent on this railway in order to bring it to a condition in which it would be safe to run. In another instance I was again told by a man on the railways—and he ought to know because he was helping to do the job of resleepering—that in the last four years resleepering was carried out to a large extent on the Malcolm-Laverton section. Without picking any particular section of line I stopped five times to have a look at that railway line, and I would say that it is in very good order indeed.

When going north on my last trip, I took the trouble to have a look at the Midland railway line which, I believe, comes under the jurisdiction of the State authorities who are responsible for seeing that it is maintained at a certain standard of efficiency and safety; and without hesitation I would say that the section which the Midland railways have not yet rehabilitated was in a far worse condition than any section of the Malcolm-Laverton line. I would go so far as to say that the best sleeper in the Midland railway line—with the exception of those that have been put in in recent months—was worse than any sleeper I saw in the Malcolm-Laverton line.

I admit that I did not walk miles along the line, but it seemed to me that at least half the sleepers had been renewed in the last couple of years. In the Laverton railway yard itself the oil was still wet on some of the work where oil had been used to facilitate the brace and bit in the boring of holes for the dogs to be driven in. The station master's house, which was recently occupied by the ganger, was renovated at a cost of £1,000 or more, which amount had been spent in the last six months—certainly since it was known that the railway service was to be discontinued.

Accordingly I feel that we in this House were grossly misled with the information and figures given us of the tonnages hauled, and the supposed losses sustained, on these lines, because none of it can be substantiated. Even the Minister's own figure—and I take it he quoted the figure supplied by his departmental head—indicates that £230,000 would be the saving made. Over 842 miles of line that is very small indeed; assuming of course that the figure is correct, which I doubt very much it is.

The Minister for Railways: It is too low.

Hon. A. R. JONES: It is a small sum to pay to serve people who live on the 800 miles of line; it should be paid, and they should not be left without that service. We must, of course, agree that the tonnage hauled over some of these lines is small, and that in the immediate future it has no chance of building up to any great extent. But we must also agree that even though that is happening today, there is the possibility that things will again improve in the mining districts.

For instance, if the Federal Government provided a subsidy of £2 an ounce there is no doubt that quite a number of shows which at present are closed would again come into operation. For example, the members for the district are well acquainted with the Lancefield mine. It appears that it is only necessary for somebody with sufficient money to prove that mine and for the price of gold to lift slightly, and Laverton could become quite a busy town and district again.

Apart from the mining aspect, concessions have been taken up, and new settlers are going out to pioneer the districts. One

man I heard of was going out 300 miles east of Laverton, and he will have to depend on Laverton for his railhead. He will now be forced back to Leonora which is another 70-odd miles as a railhead. When I asked a question of the Minister concerning the reason for the amount of additional freight being put on the people of Laverton, I also asked if he would consider placing an attendant at Malcolm so that the siding would be staffed for goods to be landed there. He replied that it was only 14 miles to Leonora. That may be; I will not argue about a couple of miles. Except in the case of heavy freight these people are having to consign to Leonora because Malcolm is not staffed and the goods are railed another 14 miles and a truck is sent, by-passing Malcolm, to Leonora to pick up those goods and bring them back, so that in total they are going 38 miles extra to what they would be doing if the siding had been allowed to remain an attended place.

Reference has been made by other members to the confusion brought about by the utterances of the two Ministers concerned—the Minister for Railways and the Minister for Transport—and by the Premier. It is a fact that when action was being taken and the Government was going ahead with its proposals, the Country Party called a conference in Perth of all interested parties. From that general meeting, a deputation was taken to the Premier. I shall not weary the House by stating everything that took place at that deputation, but the Premier did undertake to do certain things.

Nevertheless, within days, the Minister for Transport declared that the Yuna line and the Ajana line would be closed on the 29th May. Immediately I learned of that, I wrote to the Premier. That was a little more than a fortnight before the lines were to be closed. I reminded him of his promise and asked if he would take action to defer the closure because I claimed he had not carried out what he had promised.

It was rather surprising to me, and I cannot suggest the reason for it, that the Premier did not even have the courtesy to reply to my letter until after that rail service had been discontinued. When he did reply, he said that all he had promised had been taken care of and that investigations had been made. That was of course, a deliberate lie. They had not been taken care of and no investigation had been made at the level which the Premier promised the deputation a few weeks before would be made.

On those grounds, we have every justification in appealing to the members who voted for the suspension of railway services last December to change their minds. I feel that many of them had been misinformed and misguided, and, without a knowledge of the outback, considered that they were doing the right thing. After

hearing the opinions expressed and having seen the illustrations which we have been able to show, they will no doubt change their minds on the issue.

I had occasion to meet some of the Americans who visited the Chase Syndicate development at Esperance. In conversation with a couple of the young visitors, I was told that they were astounded to learn that in a State where so much development in agriculture and other pursuits was necessary—they had heard about the progress in mining and the discovery of valuable minerals in Western Australia—we had reached the stage of having to suspend railway services. They told me that they had seen enough from their point of view to justify the building of a railway line to Esperance, possibly coming from Albany, to open up that tract of country. Instead of this State closing sections of the railway line, they considered that more lines should be opened.

They also said, and I cannot disprove it, that the development of the U.S.A. was made possible by the establishment of railways; and that the railways in their country told the same story as the railways here. Their railways experienced losses for many, many years. Even though the railways in the U.S.A. were run by private enterprise, losses were sustained. Of course, concessions were made for the development of the country by the railways. That Government gave tracts of land to the railway companies or provided subsidies to enable the railways to be carried on until they reached the stage of being profitable ventures.

Many years could, and would elapse before this State, if it continues to run the railways, could hope to make a profit. We should not expect the railways to show a profit, not while the State is developing. That is a price we are expected to pay—at least to the extent of £1,000,000 or £2,000,000 in the overall—for the expansion and development of our industries. Surely we should not ask one section of the community to bear this added cost! But that is what is happening at the present time. The State would be contracting, not expanding, by the closing of the lines. Such a move would retard the development of the State and would invite the people to draw nearer to the city. That would get away from what all parties in this Parliament desire most—that is, decentralisation.

No doubt other speakers have views to express. Before resuming my seat, I would appeal to all members not to let down the people who went to the outback, as Sir Charles Latham did, to pioneer it. I can well recall as a very small boy when the railway line came to Pithara. We were then 42 miles from the railways. We were fortunate that the survey placed a siding near the top of the block. I recall the rejoicing and the benefits generally gained

when the line came through. I can well understand the bitterness and despair which must be present in the hearts of the people affected when they see their railway service taken away. This is a damnable thing. If the closures are proceeded with we will regret the move for the rest of our days. It will hinder the progress of Western Australia very considerably, until the time when we have the foresight again to reopen the lines. I support the motion.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [10.29]: At the end of last session we saw the most unusual spectacle of this Chamber agreeing to the resolution which we are again discussing tonight. For a Chamber such as this, the members of which in past years have fought to establish railway lines and to open up the State, to agree to that proposal for the closure of the lines concerned was a very poor show. Subsequent to the agreement by this Chamber, the Country Party was so concerned that a conference was called and a deputation was taken to the Premier. I should not go over the same grounds which were covered by Mr. Jones, as to the result of the deputation.

One of the most staggering events was that shortly after certain promises had been made to us by the Premier, the Minister for Transport announced the closure dates of the lines concerned. I believe that in a State like this, where we have a Minister for Railways handling a matter of this nature, we should not have another Minister of the Crown announce when the directions under this resolution would be put into operation. That is far from right.

The Minister for Railways: It is the law under the State Transport Co-ordination Act.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes, but after all is said and done, who controls the running of the trains on the lines? Does the Minister control only the lines and the road beds, or the whole of the railway system?

The Minister for Railways: I agree, but it is the law.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The Minister for Transport mentioned when the closures would take place. It seems to me to be a poor show that the matter is taken out of the hands of the Minister for Railways and placed in the hands of a Minister who does not care two hoots whether the country people exist or not.

The Minister for Railways: That is not right.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Under the transport Act, provision is made that before a railway is discontinued or closed, Parliament shall be advised of alternative transport. However that was never done in the case of this resolution. What is more, in many instances, no member of

the Transport Board went anywhere near the lines concerned prior to the time they were closed. I do not think the Minister can deny that.

The Minister for Railways: Transport officers did.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: No officer of the Transport Board, in some instances, went near the lines to make inquiries prior to those lines being closed.

The Minister for Railways: Which line?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Following upon the fact that they did not do anything in that regard, they advised members individually by letter of hotchpotch services. They could not be called anything else and they involved school buses, carriers, farmers themselves and anybody else available with transport. If that is an alternative transport system, it is a poor one, and I think the Minister will agree that such is the case. In addition, how long is this hotchpotch service to continue?

The next thing will be a squeal from the Education Department to the effect that school buses are carrying too much in the way of parcels and goods, and the children in the country will be returning from school, not sitting on seats, but on goods. Not so many months ago in my province the Education Department put its foot down on school buses carting bread and parcels, yet the Government proposes to do the same thing in the areas where lines are closed. These two points of view do not dovetail and I think the Minister will agree that that is a fact. Letters from the Transport Board bear it out.

In one particular section of line—the Mukinbudin-Bullfinch section—the people have been told, more or less, that they have to make their own cartage arrangements and no alternative service will be provided at all. They have just been left high and dry. Perhaps it is not a heavily settled area, but after having had a railway for so many years, they are told to make their own transport arrangements. In addition, the action of the Transport Board in closing the railways prior to providing alternative transport, has put the people in these districts at the mercy of road hauliers. Their costs may not increase this year, but once the opportunity presents itself the hauliers will make the best of things, and I think their prices will go up year after year. As prices go up, down goes the Government subsidy. I cannot understand the Minister when he says they will get a fair deal on transport costs.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: Would not they be private enterprise?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes, but the hon. member knows as well as I do, that once a monopoly comes into existence it is not decent private enterprise.

Quite a large number of meetings have been held in the country and people have travelled hundreds of miles in order to

make their protests. They would not do that if they did not think there was something wrong. Let us look at what has happened. I went to a meeting at Corrigin and another at Northam, both of which were largely attended. Several Ministers were invited to both of these meetings, but no Minister attended either. The Government declined to meet the farmers.

I made an approach to the Minister myself in regard to the Burakin-Bonnie Rock line. I invited the Minister or another member of the Government to go up, but the Government refused. I know the Minister approached Cabinet and it refused. What is wrong with the Government that it will not face the people? Have they no intestinal fortitude to face these people in the country? Did the Ministers in the depression years shirk it? No, they went out and met the people face to face.

The Minister for Railways: I went to a meeting.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes, one meeting.

The Minister for Railways: At that meeting they did not trust me, so I went to no more.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I would not say that. They were unfortunate circumstances which I did not engineer. I do not know who did.

The Minister for Railways: I am not ashamed of it.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Even if someone did put a tape recorder there, is the Minister ashamed of knowing what he said?

The Minister for Railways: No, but I do not associate with people who do not trust me.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: There was no suggestion that there would be a tape recorder at Corrigin or Northam and surely the Government should be willing to stand up to what was said at those meetings. The Minister was fortunate in having what he said recorded on a tape recorder. He was more fortunate than Sir Charles Latham was at Northam, as "The West Australian" printed something he did not say! What was recorded on the tape recorder was what the Minister actually said, therefore I see nothing objectionable in that. I have no objection to anything I say in this Chamber being recorded on a tape recorder.

I ask again: Why has the Government not the intestinal fortitude to meet these people in the country? After all is said and done, country people are fairminded enough and will give Ministers a fair go. I can assure the Minister that they are not half as hostile today as they were in the depression years, even though they are very incensed about what has happened to the railways.

The Minister for Railways: There is nothing wrong with the people themselves.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: If the Minister and the Government felt that they had such a good case for the action which has been taken, they should have put the case up to the people.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: Why did you not think of that when you amended the motion in the Assembly?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I did not amend the motion. I voted very much against the motion.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Some Government members, including the hon. lady, voted against it.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: I did, but I am not excusing myself.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I am saying what I said last session. The hon. member does not know what she is talking about when she says what she has just said.

There is another matter. The Government has accused the farmers of not using the railways. Well, we admit that a certain amount of goods has on occasions been carried under the lap. But at the same time the Transport Board has had its inspectors on the job and a large number of people have been caught. But what about the Government itself? Has it used the railways? What has it been doing at Wundowie? How does it cart its timber and pig iron? Does it use the railways? The railway runs right into Wundowie. No; it carts its product by road and thus deprives the railways of revenue.

In addition—and the Minister will bear me out in this—the road cartage has been responsible for the disappearance of some of the goods; and this would not have occurred on the railways. So there is another reason why rail cartage would have paid. Yet the Government has the effrontery to accuse the farmer of doing something that it is doing itself. On top of that, at the recent road board conference the Premier himself had the effrontery to ask how many members of the Road Board Association had travelled to the conference by train. I ask you, Mr. President!

Among those men are some who have come from country districts hundreds of miles away, and they do an honorary job year in and year out. But the Premier asked them whether they travelled by rail, which probably would have taken them five to six times as long to get to Perth. I would return this one to the Premier: How often does he travel by rail? When he does he travels on his gold pass, but mostly he travels by car. If it is good enough for farmers to travel by rail, why does not the Premier make his periodical journeys to Northam by rail?

The Minister for Railways: He told them that.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Why ask them if they had travelled by train? It is too ridiculous. In all fairness, I appeal to the

Chamber to rescind the resolution passed last session, in an endeavour to restore to this State those railways that have been discontinued. I assure members that in that way they will be doing for the country one of the greatest services which have ever been rendered to it by members of this Chamber.

HON. J. McI. THOMSON (South) [10.43]: It is a great pity that Parliament, and this House in particular, did not insist upon the amendment it moved to the motion that was before the House in December last. Had it done so, I am sure we would not be in the position that we are in today, and that the people throughout the country districts would not be suffering the disadvantages that they do. Instead of being misled in the amendments that came back to us from another place, we should have stood fast on our own. Our amendment was as follows:—

Until after the Government has brought forward definite separate proposals in respect of the area served by each railway of road transport and roads in lieu of the rail services.

I think we did a great disservice to the State and to the country districts in particular when we did not insist on our amendment instead of accepting what we did from the Legislative Assembly. The Government unhesitatingly accepted the amendment submitted, realising that it was a means whereby the Government was assured of the closure of the railways which it had submitted to Parliament in the original motion. Having once got the railways closed, it had achieved what it set out to do.

In effect, Parliament gave the Government the opportunity to let the horse out of the stable with the intention that it should nibble just close to the door and on the understanding that it did not go very far away. But, of course, once the horse was out of the stable, the door was open and the colt kicked up its heels and cleared out, so that we are now in the unenviable position we find ourselves in today of endeavouring to undo something which the House agreed to do. It was agreed to by an overwhelming majority on the 18th December last.

The increased cost has been mentioned by various members as it affects different areas. It is alarming to find that the freights that now have to be paid by people in the country areas have, in some instances, increased considerably. Goods consigned to Ongerup, for instance, are conveyed to Katanning where they are transhipped to a road freighter bus service. The freight on such goods that has to be borne by the people in the Borden-Ongerup area, has increased by 25 per cent. compared with what it was with the previous rail service. It is admitted that the Government has decided to retain one

rail service a week on this line, but the fact remains that if goods are conveyed to Ongerup from Katanning by being transhipped to the road bus service, the cost is 25 per cent. more.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Does that apply to the Jerramungup area as well?

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: Yes, it does.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: It is beyond the railhead.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: The freight to Jerramungup has increased by a similar amount. Another question I would like to bring before the House is that regarding the supply of wire netting to a farmer in the Pingrup area. The rail freight on a particular quantity of wire netting to Katanning—a distance of 230-odd miles—was £8. This netting was transhipped at Katanning to the road bus service and the additional freight from Katanning to Pingrup was £10, making a total of £18 to get the netting from Perth to Pingrup.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Is it because they have cut out the telescopic freight from Ongerup and Pingrup?

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I am dealing with the road service. There has been an increase of 38 per cent. on fruit to Pingrup. The railway cost to Katanning is 3s. 6d. and the road freight from there to Pingrup, 59 miles, is 7s. We are always endeavouring to keep down the cost of living and the cost of production, but the people in the metropolitan area will not suffer to the same extent as those in country districts who are paying the penalty through the increased freights which we foresaw when this question was being discussed in December last.

Reference has been made to the added cost of transporting grain and superphosphate, and it is obvious that when a farmer brings his grain to the silo at Kalgarin, for instance, and it is picked up from there and taken by road to Kondinin or Lake Grace where it is transhipped to rail, he must pay the added cost. That applies to both grain and superphosphate.

When we took a deputation to the Premier earlier in the year in regard to the question of rail closures, after hearing the evidence submitted to him he agreed that it was necessary for a further close investigation to be made into each of the lines approved by Parliament for closure. He said it was not intended that the carrying of the motion should be the last word. Even though he made that statement as the head of the Government, we find the Minister for Transport immediately contradicting that and proceeding with the closure of certain lines.

I repeat that the Premier said clearly that he agreed that an independent inquiry into the areas concerned should be made by a competent person, but that

was totally disregarded by the Government which said, in effect, "Parliament has approved and we will now go on our merry way, irrespective of the cost to the people in the country areas concerned." Although the economics of our railways is an important question, we must not lose our perspective in regard to the costs to country areas.

It has been said that the figures submitted by the committee have been misleading, to say the least of it, and as inquiries by independent people have proceeded from time to time, it has been proved that what the committee put up to the Government has not been in accordance with the facts. I feel sure that in many instances the committee has misled the Government and has done a great disservice to people in certain country areas. I would instance the estimated cost of reconditioning the Elleker-Nornalup line, where an anticipated saving of £557,750 which works out at £9,471 per mile, was mentioned. Then we find a person in the Railway Department being instructed to report on the condition of that line. His report, contained in a file on the Table in another place, indicated that half of the distance from Nornalup to Elleker, which is 61 miles, will be in excellent condition for the next 2½ years without further expenditure and that the other half will be in good condition for the next 7½ years providing there is a speed limit of 30 miles an hour.

I doubt whether that would be a drastic restriction as I believe many trains on country lines would not exceed that speed. That proves that the information which the Government acted on in bringing its motion before the House originally was entirely wrong, and even at this late juncture I feel we should do everything possible to ensure that the resolution carried by Parliament last December is rescinded.

Many rail services in country areas are unsatisfactory with regard to stock. It is common knowledge that farmers of the Katanning district and south of there are required to put their stock on trains for railing to Midland Junction no later than 7 a.m. That means that, particularly in winter time, it has to be done either in the dark in the morning or the previous evening. Even the stock trucked at 7 a.m. have to remain in the truck for from 19 to 24 hours before reaching the destination. When we compare that with bringing the stock to the market by road in a matter of six to eight hours, there is no questioning the fact that the farmers are justified in complaining of the lack of efficiency of the railway service. I hope the motion will be agreed to and I support it.

On motion by Hon. F. D. Willmott, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 11 p.m.