

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 18th November, 1925.

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The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, No dredging for a new harbour has been done, but dredging which cost £5,089 3s. 9d. was carried out to provide access to the proposed new jetty. 2 and 3, The matter of building a new jetty will be considered when the Loan Estimates are being framed. In the meantime the old jetty is being repaired.

QUESTION—SEAMEN'S DISPUTE.

Arming of Police.

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Justice: 1, Did the inspector in charge of police at Fremantle ask for rifles, bayonets, and ball cartridge to be sent to Fremantle on the 2nd November, 1925, to arm the civil police with? 2, If not, who was responsible for the sending of same to Fremantle?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE replied: 1, No. 2, The Commissioner of Police on arrival at Fremantle found that a number of his men had been injured, some seriously. In his view these casualties were altogether too high, and bearing in mind that the attackers outnumbered the police by eight or ten to one and that he had no reserve he deemed it necessary to take such action as would prevent the risk of further attack.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Why did he not take action on the first day? Then the men would not have been injured.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: We took action as soon as necessary, and whenever necessary.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You did not.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Richardson, leave of absence for one week granted to Mr. J. H. Smith (Nelson) on the ground of urgent private business.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Roads Closure.
- 2, Reserves.

Introduced by the Minister for Lands.

QUESTION—LAND FOR FARMERS' SONS.

Mr. STUBBS asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Is he aware that a large number of young men, sons of farmers who have made good in the Great Southern and other agricultural areas of the State, have been applying for land and have been advised that there is no land available? 2, Is he aware that a large tract of land, about 300,000 or 400,000 acres, lying south-east between Lake Grace and Newdegate and Ravensthorpe still remains unclassified, and that a considerable area of it is capable of closer settlement, as it contains rich mallee sandplain with clay subsoil equal to Victorian mallee country? 3, If so, will he take steps to have this land surveyed and thrown open for selection?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, No person has been advised that there is no land available. 2 and 3, No; a rough classification has already been made, but was disappointing, and a detailed classification is proceeding. Land suitable for settlement will be located and made available in due course. This area, if suitable, will require additional transport facilities.

QUESTION—HARBOUR, ROTTNEST ISLAND.

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Works: 1, What amount has been expended in dredging for a new harbour close to the settlement at Rottnest Island? 2, Do the Government intend to proceed with the work? 3, If not, why not?

BILL—BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

MOTION—NORTH-WEST DEVELOPMENT.

To inquire by Royal Commission.

MR. LAMOND (Pilbara) [4.38] : I move—

That in the opinion of this House a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire into the development and best means of administering the North and North-West portions of the State.

For many years have I been of the opinion that the North-West has never had fair and sympathetic treatment, that the Government of the day have never had a definite settled policy for developing the North-West. During the Scaddan regime the then Minister for Works (Hon. W. D. Johnson) visited the North-West with a view to making recommendations to the Government as to the best method of administering and developing that part of the State. He recommended that a Minister should be appointed for the North-West. That recommendation was not adopted. He then recommended that the Government should appoint an engineer for the North-West, and that the whole of the activities of that part of the State should come under that officer's supervision. This recommendation was adopted, and the system prevailed for a few years. Then, with a change of Government, Mr. Colebatch, a member of the Lefroy Government, visited the North-West with a view to changing the administration. He recommended that there should be a North-West Department under the control of a Minister, and that a commissioner should be appointed to take up the work of the engineer, but with much wider powers. This recommendation was adopted, and we have struggled under this administrative system for the last five or six years. So two Governments have attempted to put the administration of the North-West on a satisfactory basis, and I venture to say both of them have failed. A small commission of practical men should be appointed with a view to making recommendations, so that the development of the North-West may be carried out in a more efficient manner. It is very serious that the population of the North-West should be slowly but surely de-

creasing. Recently the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) told the House that in 1911 the population of the North-West was 6,546, whereas in 1924 it had dwindled to 5,422, or a decrease of 1,124. I believe the extension of the pastoral leases, due to the action of another Government, has been chiefly responsible for this decrease in population. It had been expected that the pastoral leases would expire in 1928 and, anticipating that there would then be a subdivision of those huge areas, people hung on in the North-West with a view to taking up smaller leases. With the existing leases extended to 1948, the question is whether we can wait till those leases expire before doing something to develop the North-West. We have heard much about the vast potentialities of the North, but what is the use of having that great country if we do not intend to develop it? When an attempt was made to exploit the dairying industry in the North, it got a severe setback. A few years ago a man started dairying in Broome. He was supplying Broome with fresh milk, butter and cream for a population of about 1,800 people. He had to pay 3s. per head per month for grazing his cattle on the common. That meant that a heifer, before she reached productivity, would cost him approximately £5, whereas at that time a dairy cow was worth only £4. He decided to extend his business. It was his intention to erect a cold storage chamber, with a refrigerating plant, at his own expense, his object being to export his produce. He applied to the Government for the resumption of 2,000 acres, being portion of a lease of about a million acres held by Streeter and Male. He wanted to extend the dairying business. The application was recommended by the district surveyor, who suggested that 50,000 acres should be resumed from this lease for dairying and agricultural purposes. He said that as the area was practically unimproved, and it was advisable to encourage settlement in the way of dairying and agriculture in such an important place as Broome, he recommended for favourable consideration the resumption of an area for general agricultural purposes. The Surveyor General approved of the resumption of 50,000 acres for dairying and agricultural purposes. The holders of the lease strongly objected to the resumption. To prevent it from going through they began to improve the land so that by the time the matter was brought to finality the improvements on the

land might be more than the value of the land, so that it would be of no use to the Government. We know from reports that this was the case. The local inspector reported that the improvements which had been effected were worth £3,280, and that practically all of them had been effected following upon the attempt to resume portion of the lease. It is impossible for anyone to launch out in an industry under those conditions. He is hampered by string pulling or the power of the land nabobs of the North-West. The Commissioner of the North-West wrote to the effect that it would be advisable to resume only a small area of 1,000 or 2,000 acres, of pindan, or plain country. There are thousands of acres of pindan available. It would not be necessary to resume that class of country if it were suitable for dairying; it was the plain country that was wanted. Following further protests from the holders of the lease the Minister for Lands decided in 1923 not to proceed any further with the proposed resumption. I met the applicant, Mr. King. When he first applied he had about 40 head of dairy cattle, but at the conclusion of the negotiations the herd had grown to 250. When he received the final notice there was nothing left to do but to overland his stock, which he did. Here was a genuine attempt to establish the dairying industry, but it received a severe setback from an unsympathetic Government. Had the application been favourably received, possibly we should have been buying our dairy cattle from the North-West for the group settlements instead of going to the other States. The finest cattle in Western Australia are bred in the North-West. The country has been proved to be suitable for the particular industry I have referred to. The mining industry has not received the assistance from the Government to which it is entitled to. The North-West has produced minerals to the value of £2,449,755. Pilbara alone produced minerals to the value of £1,497,906, made up as follows:—Black tin, 5,684.59 tons, valued at £515,189; tantalite, 98.55 tons valued at £13,464; copper ore 46.87 tons, valued at £866; asbestos, 856.94 tons valued at £37,885. The small population of the North-West has, therefore, achieved wonderful results. All their energies have not been focussed on mining, for wool growing is also a big industry there. With a little assistance numbers of payable shows could be developed in the

North-West. They are not being worked because they are beyond the purse of the average prospector. Most of these shows were abandoned by companies chiefly because the reefs were small or the lodes were small. It was impossible for smaller men to carry on because they got below water level. If pumping plants were made available to prospectors, these shows could be opened up and developed. As the result of the medical examination of miners on the eastern gold-fields, numbers of men will be placed out of employment there. The Government will be confronted with the problem of finding other employment for them. The climate of the North-West is conducive to good health, and is particularly fitted for persons suffering from chest complaints. These miners could be well and profitably placed in the North-West if they were given sufficient assistance to enable them to prospect the shows I have referred to. In many directions we can see the result of the unsympathetic treatment of the North-West. I could never understand why the operations of the Workers' Homes Board were not extended to that part of the State. It is little wonder that people in the North and other parts of the State flock to the metropolitan area when the conditions there for the worker are so much better than they are in the North. The matter should receive the immediate attention of the Government. Many workers in the North-West have asked me to make representations to the Government with a view to their being provided with homes for their families. There is no reason why the operations of the board should not be extended in the way I have suggested, for the security is as good as, if not better, than that in the metropolitan area. It is a young, a growing, and an undeveloped part of the State, and the valuation of the homes would increase. The Government would not be taking any greater risk in helping the workers there than they would take in helping them in the metropolitan area. The climate is excellent and no one could see finer children than in the North-West. There are thousands of tons of asbestos and hundreds of shows awaiting development. The report from Wemby on the asbestos of the North-West is most satisfactory. It has been referred to as being in many cases better than the Canadian. The report speaks of the number of uses to which this asbestos is put, and the advantage that it is to the trade. The opinion of the authorities there is worth something. During the

present year the Lionel asbestos field was deserted. Application was made to the Minister for Mines for a little assistance and this was granted. The assistance was small but it had the desired effect. To-day this field, that was deserted six months ago, is providing a good living for 12 men. There are many places where a little sympathetic treatment on the part of the Government would enable a good deal of development to be carried out, and it would support a fair population. I have some figures dealing with the number of sheep in the North and North-West portion of the State. In 1918 the number of sheep was 2,524,000; in 1919, 2,222,000; in 1920, 2,083,000; in 1921, 2,219,000; in 1922, 2,524,000 and in 1923, 2,571,000. With subdivision of suitable areas the number of sheep could be increased by fully 50 per cent. We have proof that in the North-West it is not the biggest area that produces the greatest number of sheep or the greatest quantity of wool. The improved area does that. On large areas improvements are frequently not too good. On small holdings the carrying capacity is frequently from 25 to 50 per cent. greater than on the large stations. That is due solely to the manner in which the small holdings have been developed. The quantity of wool produced in 1918 was 14,900,000 lbs., in 1919, 13,100,000 lbs. and in 1924, 12,200,000 lbs. The figures show a decrease as from 1914 of about 1,500,000 lbs. Undoubtedly the drought had something to do with that decrease. The value of the wool in 1918 was £882,000, in 1919 £805,000, in 1920 £731,000, in 1921 £803,000, and in 1924 £1,400,000. In spite of fewer sheep and less wool, the aggregate value of the clip has increased since 1918 by £600,000. I am sure that small holdings for wool-growing represent the safest and surest method of developing and populating the North-West. However, the extension of pastoral leases from 1928 to 1948 has made that programme impossible for at least another 24 years, except that the Government might not repudiate the arrangement, but negotiate with the holders of pastoral leases for the subdivision of large areas and throw them open for closer settlement. A small practical Royal Commission such as I have indicated would do much good. Its members would be able to secure the evidence that is essential before satisfactory recommendations can be made. I hold that the recommendations of such a Commission would be of great assistance to

the Government of the State, to the people of the North-West, and to Western Australia as a whole.

MR. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [5.6] : I shall not occupy much of the time of the House on this motion, as I trespassed on the generosity of hon. members a fortnight ago at some considerable length in endeavouring to point out the neglect which has been shown towards the north-western part of the State by previous Governments, and the absolute urgency of immediately taking up the development of that portion of this great State. There are, however, six questions hon. members should ask themselves with regard to the North-West: Firstly, has the North-West been neglected? Secondly, is it worth developing? Thirdly, is it safe to leave the North unpeopled? Fourthly, can the Government of Western Australia develop the North? Fifthly, if not, who should develop it? Sixthly, what are the best methods for peopling and developing the North? As regards the first question, whether the North has been neglected, the mover has referred to the serious decrease in the population of the North during the last decade or 13 years. From a population of 6,546 in 1911 there was a shrinkage to 5,422 last year. And not only in population is retrogression seen, but also in the numbers of stock of every kind, as shown by the statistical returns. In horses, cattle and sheep alike, there has been a decrease during the last 13 years. The decrease in sheep, I am sorry to say, during that period amounts to nearly a quarter of a million. We must remember, too, that these decreases in people and also in stock have taken place while there have been huge increases in population and stock throughout the southern third of Western Australia.

The Minister for Lands: Has there not been a drought in the North for the last two or three years?

Mr. ANGELO : But this decrease has been a steady one.

The Minister for Lands : I heard pastoralists say the other day that they had lost half their stock. They wanted reduction of rents on that account.

Mr. ANGELO : The decreases are steady. There is something wrong when not only human beings but also all lines of stock

show steady decreases. Therefore I consider the House should say that there is something rotten in the state of the North-West, and that the North-West has been neglected by past Governments. In reply to the question whether the North is worth developing, one might spend hours in quoting the opinions of the highest authorities as to the advisability of developing the North, and expressions to the effect that the development of the North would prove a highly payable proposition for the State of Western Australia. I shall content myself with quoting a few lines from the report of Mr. Hobler, Engineer of Ways and Means to the Federal Government. Mr. Hobler has lived not only in Australia, but has travelled a great deal in other parts of the world. He knows every part of this continent, including Queensland, which lies in somewhat the same latitude as our North-West. After an extensive tour of the North-West, where he was sent by the Federal Government to see whether the land was worth developing, Mr. Hobler made use of the following words:—

With proper development the country could carry a great population and support numbers of wealth-producing industries. A large extent of the country is suitable for closer settlement, and there is ample room in the country for settlers with small means and those with large means.

That is to say, Mr. Hobler considers the North-West not only a rich man's country, but also a country where a small man should be able to make a decent living. Mr. Hobler goes on to say—

Piecemeal settlement on a small scale is virtually an economic impossibility. The inevitable isolation would be an almost insuperable bar to success. To develop the country fully, harbours, railways, roads, telegraphs, telephones, water conservation, and Government experimental farms are a necessary requirement.

That is the opinion of, I should say, the highest authority on the subject in Australia to-day. If it were possible, in addition, to obtain the reports of some of our own experts, men like Mr. Crawford, Mr. Despeissis, Mr. Moody, and Mr. Hampshire, to mention only a few names, members would be greatly interested. Unfortunately, however, those reports have been filed away or pigeon-holed or somehow lost in the various departments, with the exception of Mr. Despeissis' book, which is still in print. These facts show the neglectful way in

which past Governments have treated reports on the development of the North-West emanating from their own experts. I assure members that all those reports were of the most highly satisfactory nature and urged the development of the North, besides attempting to show the best means of development. The third question I would submit is whether it is safe to leave the North-West unpeopled. I shall not dwell on that point, because of recent years we have had so much said on it by authorities who should know, and who have pointed out the urgent necessity for peopling our North so as to complete the chain of defence that is essential for the protection of Australia against the thousand millions of coloured people adjacent to our shores. The effective development and settlement of this great heritage of ours is a pressing and vital necessity. The fourth question I have to submit is, can the Government of Western Australia develop the North? Here we have divergence of opinion. Our own Premier, speaking some little time ago, considered that it was beyond the power of the Government of Western Australia to develop and people the North in a satisfactory way. He thought it was necessary for the Commonwealth Government and the British Government to come to our assistance. A further question which must be asked is whether Western Australia would lose if the North were separated from the southern portion. I claim that Western Australia would not lose if the North-West were handed over to the Commonwealth Government.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Would the North-West gain?

Mr. ANGELO: It would gain if the Commonwealth Government took it over and spent money to people it.

The Minister for Lands: The Commonwealth Government would do that as long as Western Australia would accept the responsibility.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What about the Northern Territory?

Mr. ANGELO: These are questions to be answered, not by me, but by the Royal Commission recommended by the member for Pilbara. The fifth question is, who should develop the North-West if Western Australia cannot do it? That, once more, is a question which should be left to the Royal Commission. The last question is,

what are the best methods to adopt for peopling and developing the North-West? The member for Pilbara has suggested the cutting up of pastoral leases. Once more, that is a question that neither he nor I nor any other member of the House can answer. It must be left to the Royal Commission, who would recommend after taking the necessary evidence.

Mr. Latham: But you say that you have all the information from experts who have visited the North!

Mr. ANGELO: That information is in connection with the possibilities of developing the North-West and making it a payable proposition. That does not refer to the questions I am putting.

Mr. Griffiths: Their reports deal with potentialities.

The Minister for Agriculture: What is your own opinion?

Mr. ANGELO: As there is a possibility of a Royal Commission being appointed, I am not likely to express my opinion until I have seen the report and considered the evidence.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But the Royal Commission will not know more than you know!

Mr. ANGELO: The first three questions that I have suggested might be answered by members of this House, but when it comes to the remaining three questions, the matters dealt with are beyond members of this House because of their very limited knowledge of the subject.

Hon. G. Taylor: What sort of a Royal Commission do you consider should undertake the inquiry?

Mr. ANGELO: I will deal with that directly. What do members, or even Ministers, know about the North-West?

Mr. Coverley: Nothing.

Mr. ANGELO: We know that it takes at least a month to go to Wyndham and return by boat, calling at a few ports en route.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But you have four members representing the North.

Mr. Coverley: What weight do we carry?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We are always willing to listen to you.

Mr. ANGELO: The Leader of the Opposition is quite right. The House listens to members from the North, but darned little is done as a result.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is not so.

Mr. ANGELO: We are like a voice crying in the wilderness and are in much the same position as are the five Western Australian members of the Federal House of Representatives. We suffer from the same disabilities in the North owing to the distance from the seat of government.

The Minister for Lands: That is hardly fair in view of what you have had at Carnarvon.

Mr. ANGELO: What have we had?

The Minister for Lands: The expenditure of hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Mr. ANGELO: I hope the Minister will have an opportunity of giving evidence before the Royal Commission and of being cross-examined.

The Minister for Lands: I will mention £50,000 spent on the meat works for a start.

Mr. ANGELO: And the Government have the meat works, while the money subscribed by different people has gone forever. Kipling once said, "What do they know of England, who only England know?" That is most applicable to the question before us now. What do the people of Western Australia know of Western Australia? What do the members of this House know about the two-thirds of Western Australia that is situated north of the 26th parallel?

Mr. Latham: We can't get people here quickly enough.

Mr. ANGELO: I do not suppose that five per cent of the members of this Chamber have been beyond Geraldton.

Mr. Clydesdale: What about engaging some aeroplanes?

Mr. ANGELO: How many Ministers have been north of the 26th parallel? Very few indeed.

Mr. Latham: Well, change the Government!

Mr. ANGELO: Past Governments have been equally as remiss as the present Government.

The Minister for Lands: Five of the present Ministry have been north of the 26th parallel.

Mr. ANGELO: On a joy ride to Singapore; you called in at a few ports.

The Minister for Lands: That is not so.

Mr. ANGELO: The Minister for Lands saw very little of the North-West.

The Minister for Lands: I saw Carnarvon but I did not see your plantation. You took good care not to show us that.

Mr. ANGELO: If members will look at the map of Western Australia, they will see that about two-thirds of the State is situated north of the 26th parallel, despite which we have there a population of only 5,000, as against 360,000 in the southern portion of the State. Throughout that two-thirds of Western Australia, about £2,500,000 has been spent, representing 5 per cent. of the total loan indebtedness of the State. How many members know, or have read, about the millions of acres of highly watered pastoral and agricultural country that we have in the North? I do not suppose many members appreciate the fact that we have large areas of country with a rainfall of 60in. per annum.

Mr. Lindsay: Then why has it not been settled?

Mr. ANGELO: Because of the unsympathetic interest taken in the North by previous Governments.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Not at all.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is all bosh!

Mr. ANGELO: It is not bosh and the hon. member, as a representative of a pastoral constituency, is aware of the fact.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Now suggest what should be done.

Mr. ANGELO: The member for Pilbara (Mr. Lamond) suggested the appointment of a Royal Commission to ascertain the best means of developing the North.

Mr. Lindsay: What, to tell us how crops will grow there?

Mr. ANGELO: What more could we suggest? When I refer to the unsympathetic treatment of past Governments, we must make allowances for the fact that we have been attempting to run a huge State like this with only six Ministers. It is a physical impossibility for so few Ministers to control and develop a State of such vast dimensions. If we take the eastern third of Australia, we find that in Queensland there are nine Ministers, in New South Wales twelve Ministers, and in Victoria nine Ministers. Thus, to attend to the development of the eastern third of Australia, 30 Ministers are doing the work that we ask six Ministers to do in Western Australia. In view of that, what else could we expect than what we have experienced in the past?

Hon. G. Taylor: There are three Honorary Ministers as well.

Mr. ANGELO: Quite so, now. But the present Government have hardly got into

their stride. I am glad to see that an attempt is now being made—I am sorry that the attempt has not been made from the Opposition side of the House—to suggest something that may have the result of causing the development of the North to be undertaken seriously.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Surely to God you can say what can be done! It is a simple matter.

Hon. G. Taylor: But he can't.

Mr. ANGELO: Mr. Hobler submitted a long report suggesting what should be done. Mr. Despeissis, in a pamphlet which the Leader of the Opposition must have read, also made suggestions, while Mr. Hampshire, the present dairy expert, Mr. Moody, Mr. Crawford and others have all submitted long reports making suggestions as well. For years Governments have been told what they should do.

Mr. Latham: Well, what will you gain by having a Royal Commission?

Hon. G. Taylor: Seeing that we know all about it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Tell us what you would do.

Mr. ANGELO: At any rate, if something is not done quickly, I am afraid the matter will be taken out of our hands by some other authority. I feel that the Commonwealth and Imperial Governments will not allow the present state of affairs to continue. Here we have a huge coastline of some 2,000 miles, with a population of only 5,000 people. It represents the greatest menace that the Empire has from a defence standpoint. It is the weakest link in the chain of Empire defence. Will the present position be put up with much longer? No.

The Minister for Lands: It is not for the State to provide for defence.

Mr. ANGELO: That is what I am contending. It is the duty, however, of the Government, either directly or by means of a Royal Commission, to point out to the Federal and Imperial Governments that Western Australia is incapable of looking after the North. We have not got the money. It is the duty of Australia to undertake this work, and the duty should be handed over to the Commonwealth.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We are doing just as we'll here as is the Administration of the Northern Territory.

Mr. Latham: Much better.

Mr. ANGELO: For the first time since I have been in the House a suggestion is made that means something tangible.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It does not mean anything of the sort.

The Premier: It will cost a good deal of money.

Mr. ANGELO: Perhaps some members will say, during the debate, that the Government should make the necessary investigations. How is it possible for a Government, whose time is wholly taken up in the administration of one-third of the State, to make adequate inquiries regarding the northern two-thirds of the State? Ministers have more than enough to do at present. They are endeavouring to cope with work that is done by four times as many Ministers in the Eastern States. If this is work that the Government could do, why was the Royal Commission on Prices, or any other Royal Commission, appointed? As a matter of fact, it is not humanly possible for Ministers to carry on their present work and at the same time make inquiries concerning a subject such as that now under discussion. It may be suggested that a select committee could be appointed, but, on the other hand, this is a most important question. What we are asking for is really the appointment of a North-West disabilities commission. It will be a long inquiry and a most arduous one. The report to be furnished will be a most important one and, in the circumstances, I consider that a select committee should not carry out the work. The report could not possibly be finalised before the House adjourned, after which the select committee could not carry on. In my opinion a Royal Commission is absolutely necessary. It is imperative that the Government should have such an inquiry made. The Commonwealth Government cannot permit one-fifth of Australia to remain idle, constituting a serious menace to the whole Empire; and something must be done at once. I hope the Government will agree to the motion in favour of the appointment of a Royal Commission and that subsequently they will take the report into serious consideration.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. (Hon. W. C. Angwin—North-East Fremantle) [5.27]: I did not intend to take part in the debate this afternoon, but after listening to the unfair remarks of the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo), I think it

wiser that something should be said in reply.

Hon. G. Taylor: Carnarvon is only a suburb in the North-West.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for Gascoyne should be the last to complain of the treatment of that part of the North-West. Western Australia has incurred very large expenditure in the Gascoyne district.

Mr. Angelo: Not as much as the pastoralists themselves. They put up £50,000.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If we take out the Wyndham Meat Works from the expenditure in the North, it will be found that more has been spent in the Carnarvon area than in the rest of the North put together. I remember hearing the member for Gascoyne speaking on several occasions of the great possibilities of the North-West. They have yet to be proved. I have visited the North-West and on one occasion accompanied the hon. member and the then Colonial Secretary (Mr. Broun). We had the pleasure of examining large areas that were thought to be suitable for intense culture and the production of such tropical products as peanuts, bananas, pineapples and so on, land to produce tropical products to supply Australia. The Government of the day decided to assist and to enter into arrangements to prove whether this could be done. We know the result. It was a disaster.

Mr. Angelo: You are quite wrong. You should go up there now and see.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Let me read a letter from a gentleman who knows a good deal about that part of the State, having lived there for a number of years.

Mr. Lamond: Are you going to condemn the whole of the North-West on that?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No. The letter reads—

I have yours of the 7th May, 1925; also your subsequent wire in reply to mine stating that I had inquirers for some of the plant. In your wire you stated that Mr. Singleton was making a proposition which you would prefer, could it be arranged, to selling the plant piecemeal. I have since received Mr. Singleton's letter and am replying to him by current mail to the effect that we cannot entertain it. We have spent a lot of money in the past on irrigation in endeavours to grow various things here without any adequate return, and cannot see our way to enter into anything of that kind again. In your letter of the 7th inst. you state that the Lands Department would wish to know for what purpose the land would be used, as they consider it suitable for intense cultivation. I am afraid

that if they will not consider a relaxation of the original conditions, the block will be no good to us. I was under the impression that in consideration of the amount of money the late company had spent on the land, and the heavy losses they had sustained, the Government were prepared to grant them an unconditional title so as to enable them by a sale to recoup themselves to some small extent. It would have been fair. Hampered with the original conditions or obligations anywhere approaching those entailed in same will make the blocks unsaleable, I am afraid, unless there are still some optimists who cling to banana growing.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is a bit pointed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The letter continues:—

For our own part we would not look at the proposal. Our idea was, thinking that an unconditional transfer could be made, to purchase the area chiefly as an adjunct to our dairying and butchering business. We would have sunk a well, perhaps two, installed windmills thereon, grown a little fodder such as lucerne, etc., by irrigation, and at the same time experimented with certain imported fodders when the season was favourable, with the object of increasing the carrying capacity of the land, looking to the agistment of our dairy and butchering stock for return. For these purposes the price suggested, coupled with the expense of installing water supply and repairing or practically re-erecting the fencing, would have been quite high enough, but if on top of this we had to undertake obligations of expenditure, either now or later on, to comply with intense cultivation conditions, we regret we must drop out. It is a matter we cannot be too careful about at the present stage, as if any offer we make now and on which the transfer were to be granted could, at a later date, be construed into an obligation to cultivate the land, we might find the blocks costing us far more than they were worth. We are already holding some blocks closer to the town on conditional purchase, and no doubt will have to honour the conditions, although others taken up at the same time are being dropped all round us in the light of experience gained by ourselves and others of the futility of trying to grow certain products in the face of severe local disabilities of climate. The obsession still exists that 30 to 50-acre blocks will prove a living for men under cultivation. Time will prove that lines such as bananas, which would return sufficient on such small areas if successful, are impossible here, and the only way to utilise the land for carrying more people is by giving them sufficient to make a success of the one proven industry, i.e., sheep raising in some form or other—breeding or fattening.

Mr. Stubbs: Who wrote that letter?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not think it wise to mention the name, but I am prepared to tell the hon. member privately, if he so desires.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: That refers to only one portion.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I shall deal with the other portion presently.

Mr. Angelo: That is quite true about the south side of the river.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I wish to refute the unfair charges of the member for Gascoyne. The letter continues—

For this purpose several hundred acres is the minimum possible, and this would be only possible to those who are prepared, by introducing some imported fodders superior to those indigenous to the district, to improve the carrying capacity of the land. Irrigation under local conditions is too expensive on a large scale for private enterprise. I fear it will take the authorities some time to realise this, and in the meantime I presume they will insist on their intense cultivation stunts.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Are you going to lay that letter on the Table?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No.

Mr. Angelo: Since that was written we have had successful settlement in the North.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am pointing out that the intense cultivation stunt was encouraged by the Government of the day at the instigation of and through the pressure brought to bear in this House by the member for Gascoyne.

Mr. Angelo: And it will be a success yet.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The letter I have quoted was written by a gentleman who spent years of his life and held official positions there, and for all I know he may still be there. He thoroughly understands the conditions.

Mr. Latham: I think we should have his name so that we may judge whether he is competent to express an opinion.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I had the pleasure of discussing the question of the North-West development at a conference in Melbourne. A proposition was placed before us for steps to open up and develop the northern portion of Australia. I realise, as does the member for Pilbara, that at present this is more than the State can accomplish. We have not the money to enable us to develop the North-West in the manner that we consider it should be done. We can proceed only little by little with the very small amount of money we have to prove whether it is possible to develop the North on a large scale. After the matter had been discussed at the Melbourne conference for some time, it was proposed that a commission should be appointed consisting

of three representatives of the Commonwealth, one representative of Queensland, and one of Western Australia. I asked how the commission would manage in Western Australia when there was no possibility of altering the tenure of the pastoral holdings, except for agricultural purposes. The other representatives at the conference were rather surprised to find that the pastoralists held their leases until 1948, but they said there might be some means to overcome that difficulty. Personally I do not see how the difficulty could be overcome, unless we violated the Act which, when it was being considered in this House, I said was wrong. The idea then was that the Commonwealth Government should present estimates for the development of the area, the estimates to be presented to the Parliaments of the Commonwealth, Western Australia and Queensland, and to be approved by each of them. Western Australia was to bear the responsibility for expenditure in Western Australia under the commission.

Mr. Teesdale: 'Twas ever thus.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The commission would not be able to expend money unless the Western Australian Parliament approved of it. That provision was inserted as a safeguard, but that spoilt the whole proposition as regards the commission having control of the development of the northern portion of Australia. Mr. Theodore then offered what I considered was the best suggestion put forward, and at the time the Prime Minister was thoroughly in accord with it, that there should be a provisional Government started in the North-West, and that the Commonwealth Government should find all the money for its development and for public works, etc. The Commonwealth was to be responsible for the payment of interest, but when the area had been developed to such an extent that the residents could carry on a Government of their own, the debt was to be transferred to the Government of the North-West, just as was done with Queensland when it first formed a colony. I thought that would be approved of, but another alteration has been made, and the Commonwealth authorities have returned to the commission proposal. The Federal Parliament has an Act on its statute-book providing for the appointment of a commission, on which Western Australian and Queensland can have representation if they think fit. There was a little

controversy about the proposal in the Press. I was surprised when I returned to Western Australia to find that the chairman of the Disabilities Commission had been bringing the matter before the public. I thought we had discussed it in confidence. Even today the Western Australian Government do not know on what terms and conditions the State, if it so desired, could join in the commission with the Federal and Queensland authorities. That would depend almost entirely upon the decision of Parliament, for the Government could not do anything in that direction without the consent of Parliament. I told the Commonwealth authorities that in my opinion neither the people of Western Australia nor the people of the North-West would agree to hand over to the Federal Government territory from this State to be dealt with in the same manner as they had dealt with the Northern Territory.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Of course they would not.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I pointed out that it was a question the people would have to decide; it would have to be decided under the Constitution whether they would favour a separate State for the northern portion of Western Australia. The first idea was that the State should carry on the schools, health, hospitals and police in the North-West, but all the revenue that was received was to be applied to the payment of interest on the public works carried out. Thus the cost to the State would continue; we would meet all the expenditure, but the whole of the revenue would be collected by the commission. I do not know what the upshot of the Federal measure will be, because it was passed only last session and there has not been time to discuss it with the Federal and Queensland Governments. In the "Financial News" the other day I noticed that Sir George Buchanan, the engineer, on his return to London, recommended that the means of transportation for the Northern Territory should be carried to the Eastern States and not to Western Australia. Whether that was a full statement of his opinion, I cannot say. It would mean, however, that this State would be burdened with very heavy expense to provide interest and sinking fund on the large outlay required to open up the North-West with railways and roads, particularly for defence purposes, and the State would have very little say regarding the expenditure of the money.

We cannot rush in like a bull at a gate; we must exercise care in the steps we take and know exactly what is wanted. Above all things what is required in the North-West is a proper classification of its lands. There is no officer in the department that can tell us anything about the North-West in that respect; no one can tell us whether it contains good land or bad land, or whether there is land that is suitable for tropical agriculture or for grazing. That is because no officer has ever had a proper opportunity of going through the country. It would pay the State to send two or three parties there, and keep them there at the continuous work of investigation.

Mr. Latham: And then you would send two or three other men afterwards and they would give you a different report.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Hon. members are aware that a company wanted 3,000,000 acres of land in the North, but they would not wait until we made a classification. The only report that the Government had, so far as a portion of the North-West is concerned, is one that has been made in respect of only a small portion of that territory.

Mr. Teesdale: And the officer who made it admitted that it was hurriedly done.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is a glowing report, and people reading it would come to the conclusion that the country it referred to was a paradise. Other departmental officers are loth to believe that the land, as it has been described in that report, actually exists. We should know precisely where all the good land is and for what purposes it can be used.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And you must have a knowledge of the rainfall.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There should be experimental plots. There are many places in Western Australia where it is necessary we should have population, and it should be farmed experimentally for the purpose of learning whether it would be possible to increase our wheat-growing areas. If we knew what the rainfall was in those places, we should probably know whether it would be safe to carry on farming operations there.

Mr. Latham: You want an experimental plot at Ravensthorpe.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, we know all about Ravensthorpe; we want to

know something about the country east of Ravensthorpe where there is 3,000,000 acres of land but where we know nothing about the rainfall. We have heard about the decrease in the number of stock in the North, but I do not think it is fair to make comparisons at this juncture because it is generally known, particularly regarding the Kimberleys, that there has been great mortality in respect of stock in the last few years owing to want of rain.

Mr. Angelo: There are very few sheep in the Kimberleys.

Mr. Coverley: It is a second year's drought there.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The North-West of our State is the weakest link in Australia and it is the duty of the Federal Government to come to our assistance and strengthen that link. We, with our small population, cannot possibly do anything. The Minister for Agriculture asked the Prime Minister straight out where the money was to come from, but we have not had a reply of any kind.

The Minister for Agriculture: He talked, just talked.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have no idea what Cabinet proposes to do with regard to the suggested Commission. I have not discussed the matter with the Premier, but I do say that the North must receive the attention of the people of Australia as a whole. It is not a question that 360,000 people can tackle. We have not the funds. The people of Western Australia have done all they possibly could to develop the North-West. If the Government had the money they would spend more in the North, but not having it, they cannot do so. The Government are at their wits' ends at the present time to find money to carry out works that are already in hand. It is the duty of the Federal Government to assist us to strengthen our North.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: All the coast line round Australia requires strengthening.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The North-Western part needs it most of all. I think Admiral Jellicoe pointed that out. That being so, it is in the interests of the whole of Australia and not Western Australia that the weak link should be strengthened.

MR. TEESDALE (Roebourne) [5.53]: I have never known the Minister for Lands say so much, in such a short time, and with which I have been able to agree. I defy anyone that knows anything about the North—not anyone who has slipped through it like some people have done in the space of about five minutes and then proceeded to talk about it—to take exception to a single word that has been uttered by the Minister for Lands. It is the most useless thing in the world to attempt to deal with any of the North-West problems by means of a Royal Commission. Such a thing would be jeered at, giped at and made a laughing stock.

Mr. Lamond: No more a laughing stock than you are.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. Lamond: You are a pretty sort of Charlie Chaplin, you are!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. TEESDALE: This beautiful member of ours from Pilbara gets into a state of excitement over the North. He represents only a part of the North and he dares to champion the whole of it. There is a small place called Roebourne, small but important, where he is not even known. I assure the House that any scheme for the development of the North-West is too big a proposition for the State Government to tackle. The longer I represent the North, and the more I know of it, the more I am convinced that that is so. I do not take second position to any two men in this House in respect of the knowledge I have of the North, and in respect of hard work, good old solid yacker. In this regard I will back myself against any two members in this House. Knowing that, I can unhesitatingly declare that we cannot tackle the North-West by way of any Royal Commission. We have in the past had what has been only a miserable and wretched pittance at the hands of the Government. I do not expect the present Government to do any more than was done by the previous Government or Governments before that. What those Governments did for the North-West was futile, no value whatever. It is hopeless, with the small amount that they can place at our disposal, to expect to be able to tackle this gigantic proposition. We must have a chartered company; we must have unlimited capital; we want at least a couple of millions of money to enable us to

gridiron our coast with railways. I know that as soon as I refer to railways for the North-West people will declare, "Do not mention railways." I admit that we have had a dreadful tragedy in the shape of a railway from Port Hedland to Marble Bar and I often wish to God that it had never been built. It is a dreadful sewer, a sink that sucks away good sovereigns every year, and it is always thrown up to me as a splendid illustration against having any more railways built in the North. I do not wonder at it. That railway is worked about three times a week, and what for? To-day shearers go about in motor bikes and in cars. They did not do that in times gone by and those are the days that I have in mind.

Mr. Panton: Ah! Those were the days.

Mr. TEESDALE: Yes, they were the days when you met solid, hard workers, men who did not indulge in cheap sneers like the member for Pilbara who is as yet a fledgling. His experience is like that of the fly that hops about from dandelion to dandelion engaged in one particular employment.

Mr. Lamond: I have done more legitimate work than you in the North.

Mr. TEESDALE: No, and I do not know that you have had much experience of the world either.

Mr. Lamond: I did not remain in the towns like you did.

Mr. TEESDALE: He comes along with a request for a Royal Commission! What shall we get from it? We did have a reputable member man in this House representing the North and God forbid that I should cast a reflection on him now. His absence is a great loss, and had I thought that he would have gone out, I would have readily gone out instead of him. He tramped it from Queensland to this State and we all had the greatest respect for him. He was a man, too, that roughed it on 30s. a week and finished up in a solid position after having put up with the life and hardship of the bush and the misery of tinned tucker that to-day would be thrown to the dogs. I always listened to him with the greatest respect. And the electors put another in his place! It would be a dreadful thing to have three fellows from St. George's-terrace to inquire into the North-West and the things that our friend from Pilbara has been talking about. He has been doing his best to try to explain to the House the wonderful potentialities—good old word that—of the North-west, and then pleading to please give

us one of those thrice-acursed institutions called Royal Commissions. Ugh! No, Mr. Speaker!

MR. COVERLEY (Kimberley) [6.0]: I intend to support the motion, because everybody who has lived for any length of time in the northern part of the State must realise the necessity for taking steps to develop that area. With all due respect to the previous Government, eulogised by the member for Roebourne (Mr. Teesdale), I say that practically nothing at all has been done. All that we have had done has been the general administration of the North carried on, the harbours, wharves, police and various other ordinary Government functions. What is all that in a vast province like the North?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You are not able to tell us what can be done.

Mr. COVERLEY: I am, and I will do so. I did so at my first attempt on the Address-in-reply.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You have never said it yet; not since you have been here.

Mr. COVERLEY: I have, but unfortunately the Leader of the Opposition was asleep.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: He would be but a poor specimen who was not more useful asleep than you are awake.

The Minister for Agriculture: Don't browbeat a young member.

Mr. COVERLEY: The chief grievance of the North is that the administrators of the North are southerners who know nothing whatever of the North, and who have to spend the best part of their time travelling about trying to obtain information. The rest of the year they spend down in Perth in a more congenial climate. I do not blame them for it while the Government allow them to do it. The whole of the North-West department is situated in Perth. That is not the place for the secretary of a big concern like the North-West, who has great influence on Governments. This, again, constitutes one of the chief grievances of the residents of the North. They are getting tired of waiting for some step to be taken. Since the coming of the Federal Disabilities Commission there has been an agitation amongst the quickly diminishing population of the North for some form of separation. There are various reasons why people leave the North for the more thickly populated areas of the south. From my own experience and knowledge I can definitely say that they leave

because they are not allowed to settle in the North. Such people go to the North, following seasonal occupations. Up there they quickly realise the chances that would be theirs if only they were permitted to select a decent bit of land on which to make a home and living for themselves. But they are denied that privilege. They get their first setback when they visit the local court house and ask for a map of the district. If they are lucky enough to be shown a map, it is found to be five or 10 years out of date. Then they have to write to Perth for a later map, and when it arrives they can get no information from it, for it is still years out of date. Usually they are told by the Lands Department in Perth that there are millions of acres up North to select from. However, on investigation they find that the eyes of the country have been picked out, leased to vested interests for pastoral purposes, and are tied up for the next 25 years. Although there is a regulation under which that country can be resumed for agricultural purposes, it is not sufficient; for persons desirous of settling in the North, or at all events in the Kimberleys require to combine agriculture with grazing, and the legislation does not permit of the resumption of the country to be re-leased for grazing. That is the drawback in Kimberley. Applicants have applied for a few hundred acres of land to be used purely for agricultural purposes. However, the applications have been turned down because the Government would not or could not afford to send up the necessary survey party to mark out the area applied for. It is understood that if a dozen or more applicants would agree to select agricultural lands in one locality, the Government would then be prepared to send up the necessary survey party. However, it is difficult to get a number of applicants all wishing to select land in the one locality, consequently the Kimberleys have lost many genuine settlers. Any person selecting agricultural land up there requires some of the good black soil country along the river frontages, where there are miles of it, all tied up for the next 25 years. I agree with the member for Pilbara (Mr. Lamond) that we cannot afford to wait until 1948 for that land. When a person finds that he cannot select any country up there, or only that which the Lands Department will pick for him, he clears out and goes somewhere else nearer civilisation; he drifts to more thickly populated areas,

where he can dodge the pin pricks of swivel-chair administration from Perth, and avoid being fined for delay in making his taxation returns.

Mr. Thomson: Who have been fined for that?

Mr. COVERLEY: The people of the North have been fined time and time again. Down south the taxpayers enjoy a bi-weekly, if not a daily mail.

Mr. Thomson: We get fined just the same.

Mr. COVERLEY: But the people of the North have only a monthly service, and sometimes it is three or four months before they receive their taxation assessments. I appreciate all that the past and present Governments have tried to do for the North, but they have only nibbled at what they call the problem of the North. I say there is no problem at all. The only thing that is required for the North is finance. Up to date we have not had a Government strong enough to stand up to the task of financing the North on right lines. Consequently the people have grown tired of waiting, and are looking for some drastic change. The North has never had much serious attention, as these facts will show. Take, for instance, the pearling industry, which exports thousands of tons of pearl shell, and thousands of pounds worth of pearls annually. For a little outlay we could establish a pearl shell factory in Western Australia, and thereby add to the wealth and secondary industries of the State. It is not for me to say where that factory should be erected, whether at Fremantle, Perth or Broome, but I do say that the Government ought to take steps to see that this wealth is prevented from drifting from the State.

Mr. Mann: A pearl button factory was started, but they could not go on with it.

Mr. COVERLEY: It was not started on right lines. Statistics prove that the estimated value of pearl and pearl shell is as great to-day as at any time during the past 16 or 20 years. In 1909 the estimated value of pearls exported was £49,294, whereas last year it was £58,700, or an increase of £9,406. The value of pearl shell also shows an increase, over the period, of £52,226. There, then, is one industry that has been and still is sadly neglected. I repeat that the Government should do their utmost to stop this drift of wealth from Western Australia to other countries. The same thing applies to the Kimberleys. The goldfields there re-

ceived a very hurried prospecting 40 odd years ago under the greatest possible disadvantages. In those days the men were a thousand miles from a telegraph line, while the necessities of life were practically unprocurable. With the crudest methods of transport and an imposed tax of 5s. per ounce on all gold won, naturally the prospectors left for a more congenial field further out. However, a few of the old prospectors have stayed on and doltied a living there for years. Recently one old prospector was rewarded by having a company floated.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. COVERLEY: I was referring to the neglected industries of the North and particularly the Kimberley goldfields. These particular goldfields were hurriedly prospected some forty years ago under the crudest methods of transport, when the necessities of life were unprocurable and there was an impost of 5s. on every ounce of gold. These conditions helped to cause the prospectors to leave for other fields that were more conveniently situated. The old prospectors who remained on the Kimberley fields have for years been dollying gold. One of the old-time prospectors was recently rewarded by the flotation of a company with a capital of some thousands of pounds. Machinery has now been taken to the North with the idea of developing the claim. There are also two other claims in the vicinity that are being tested. There is practically every known mineral in the north of Kimberley, but owing to the isolation and the costly and difficult transport, practically no development is being done. Apparently we are standing by while this wealth remains idle because of the lack of a definite policy. Something should be done if only from a defence point of view. Our coastline is 2,000 miles in extent and it is held by a handful of people. The Eastern countries that are within three days' sail of the coast will not permit this state of things to continue for any length of time. The cotton industry in the Kimberleys is not progressing rapidly enough. The Surveyor General has put in two reports upon it which are practically similar in character. We are told that land has been surveyed and cut up, but this work is going on too slowly. Several men in the Kimberleys are waiting to take up one of these blocks. People in the south may look upon

the cotton industry with disfavour on account of the temporary setback it had in Derby. No one who understands the position and knows the facts will be discouraged to any extent. The right class of country is required for cotton growing, such as the pioneers did not have in West Kimberley. Two returned soldiers who were fortunate enough to select some decent country in East Kimberley had 34 acres of cotton planted last year. It is estimated that the crop will yield 12 tons. On a 3½d. per lb. guarantee from the Government, this would bring in a sum of approximately £400. The money would enable them to pay their rent, buy fresh supplies and further develop their holding.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: They say returned soldiers are not good settlers.

Mr. COVERLEY: If members could have seen that area of 34 acres in full bloom, as I saw it, they would be with me in my desire to further that industry, and would wish success to the two returned soldiers who have worked so hard to make good.

Mr. Stubbs: Is there plenty of land like that up there?

Mr. COVERLEY: Miles and miles of it. Vestey's own 45,000 square miles of country in East Kimberley and the Northern Territory, most of it being in this State. They are running only 267,000 head of cattle. A commission should be appointed to ascertain if they are developing their holding as they should be doing. I am certain the country is not being put to its full use. Although there are thousands of acres of first class country in the North, we continue to import thousands of pounds worth of tropical fruits and tropical goods. I wish also to refer to the oil concessions. I have no doubt that in the future oil will be produced in payable quantities in the Kimberleys. One of the reasons for the holding up of the search for oil is that one company holds the lease of thousands of square miles of country. Although good prospects have been shown by other people, they are not allowed to work on the areas held under lease. If one company has a chance of finding oil, ten companies would have ten times the chance of finding it earlier. The sooner oil is found there the sooner will the Kimberleys go ahead. Many opinions are held as to how this huge territory is to be developed. I advocate the principle of small holdings combined with

tropical agriculture. Provided the right class of land is chosen and good roads are constructed for transport, it will not be long before we get the right class of settler who will make a success of the industries to which I have referred. These are some of the reasons why we are asking for a commission of inquiry. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [7.40]: I have been a member of this House since 1914. During that time members representing northern constituencies have stated that Governments have not paid sufficient attention to the development of that part of the State. After what has been said to-night I think there is justification for the appointment of a Commission of inquiry to ascertain why the North-West has not been properly developed. I was surprised at the remarks of the member for Roebourne (Mr. Teesdale). He said it would be useless to appoint a Royal Commission, that the North-West was too big for the Government, that we could never tackle it, that it was futile and a waste of time to make the effort, and that it was a matter for the Commonwealth Government. The hon. member is a Western Australian and a member of Parliament. Before I could consider the advisability of handing to the Commonwealth any portion of Western Australia, I would have to be satisfied that it was a desirable step in the interests of those who live there. The points put forward by the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) might well be submitted to the Commission, if it is appointed. The first was whether the North had been neglected; (2) Is it worth developing? (3) Is it safe to leave it unpeopled? (4) Could the Government of Western Australia develop it? (5) If not, who should? (6) What are the best methods to follow to people and develop it? The member for Kimberley (Mr. Coverley) has spoken of the wonderful possibilities of cotton growing and the future that lies before other industries. The member for Pilbara (Mr. Lamond) has also dealt with the subject. Ever since he has been a member of the House the member for Gascoyne has repeatedly urged that greater attention should be paid to the development of the North-West. Even the member for Roebourne, who has done a considerable amount of work with respect

to the establishment of the cotton industry, has said that it has not been developed as it should have been. The men in the North are public-spirited. A number of them banded together, and put their hands into their own pockets, to advance a scheme for the development of the North by railways. Mr. G. W. Miles visited the Eastern States and the Old Country in connection with that scheme. The Minister has said that one essential for the development of the North is a proper classification of our lands, and with that I agree. Further, the Minister said the development of the North was a matter for the Commonwealth, and that is one of my reasons for supporting the appointment of the suggested Royal Commission. We have now a new migration agreement. The old agreement restricted the operation of land settlement under it to the South-West. Not having been further north than Geraldton, I must bow to the better knowledge of members representing northern constituencies. With one dissentient voice, which however we can excuse, they declare that the North-West has been neglected. The same opinion has been expressed in another place. The member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) pertinently asked, is it safe to leave the North-West undeveloped? That phase unquestionably calls for consideration. A Commission of practical men—not St. George's-terrace men—may be able to put up a concrete scheme which would induce Britain to send her unemployed people to our North-West. We can appeal to Britain to assist us to maintain the North-West as British territory. The Imperial Government might take over part of the North-West and build railways there, subject to recoup by this State. Such a proposal might well be considered.

The Minister for Lands: We can consider it here, but it would not be considered in England.

Mr. THOMSON: People at Home will probably realise that it is in the interests of the British Empire to have a kind of "United States of Australia." The way to keep Australia white is to have it populated by our kinsmen from oversea. In any case, from the defence aspect it is essential that something should be done. No other country in the world has so long a coast line as Australia. Some years ago, it will be remembered, there were riots at Broome, and it took six weeks for the small training

sloop "Geranium" to reach Broome from the Eastern States. It is impossible for the Australian people to provide a navy adequate to safeguarding the whole coastline of Australia.

Mr. Latham: Air craft should be used.

Mr. THOMSON: Even with the help of air craft I fear we would not be able to hold Australia very long had we not the power of Imperial Britain at the back of us.

The Minister for Lands: Why not say we will throw the responsibility on the Commonwealth?

Mr. THOMSON: I do not say that. However, there is no denying that the fact of our being part and parcel of the British Empire maintains the integrity of Australia. In plain language, what the mover asks for is the appointment of a royal commission to inquire into the many disabilities which the people of the North consider they suffer at the hands of a Government located in Perth. The suggested appointment of the Federal Disabilities Royal Commission was at first laughed at, but on the insistence of Western Australian members it was eventually granted by the Federal Government. Then a committee was appointed here to put Western Australia's case before the Commission, and Mr. Keenan, the chairman of the committee, declared that one matter which the Commission could not take into consideration at all was the tariff. On that ground the member for Roebourne (Mr. Teesdale) resigned from the committee, by way of making his protest. Eventually an organisation with which I am connected submitted evidence of the disabilities of Western Australia by reason of the Customs Tariff. The findings of the Royal Commission were based chiefly upon evidence which the committee had rejected as inadmissible, and which was submitted by the organisation I have referred to. If the Royal Commission suggested by the present motion is appointed, it will have to inquire why the North has not prospered. I shall not touch on the possibilities of the pearling industry or cotton growing, or the many other activities which northern members declare could and should be in existence to-day. I will refer to the letter which was read by the Minister for Lands, and which I have discussed with the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo). That hon. member says that

the land referred to in the letter is situated on the south side of the river and subject to the strongest winds that blow in Australia. Indeed, the hon. member declares that Carnarvon is the second windiest city in the world, Chicago being the first, according to meteorological data. Mr. McCorkill planted his bananas on the south side of the river, and found that the wind simply blew them over. Since then Mr. Coe, an expert grower from Brisbane, has established himself on the north side of the river, where very tall trees afford protection from the wind. He now has 40 acres planted, and in the opinion of the Government engineer the plantation is looking splendid. Mr. McCorkill, in establishing himself on the south side, went directly against the advice of men who know. He got what he looked for—trouble.

The Minister for Lands: That is what is said now. I do not think it is exactly correct.

Hon. G. Taylor: All that country was good country at one time.

Mr. THOMSON: Mr. Coe considers it is ideal country, and he is perfectly satisfied with his prospects. He has put down a well and erected a pumping plant which pumps 45,000 gallons per hour. There was a trial run of the plant before the Government engineer.

Mr. Latham: It takes a pretty good man to make irrigation pay with water that is pumped.

Mr. THOMSON: On the one side we have the members for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo), Pilbara (Mr. Lamond), and Kimberley (Mr. Coverley) definitely and distinctly stating that these things can be done. On the other side we have the members for York (Mr. Latham) and Mt. Margaret (Hon. G. Taylor) who say that on the south side of the river—

Mr. Latham: Excuse me! I made no such statement as you suggest.

Mr. THOMSON: No, that statement was made by the member for Mt. Margaret.

Mr. Latham: Then do not attribute such things to me. Be more careful!

Mr. THOMSON: The member for York said that it was impossible for a man to successfully irrigate, because pumping was most costly.

Mr. Latham: So it is.

Mr. THOMSON: It was the member for Mt. Margaret (Hon. G. Taylor) who said it was because it was on the south side of the river. However, these are the very reasons

that provide justification for the members representing the North asking for the appointment of a Royal Commission. The report of that Commission will enable members to arrive at a decision as to the best means of opening up and developing the great northern portion of the State. Large sums of money have been expended in opening up and developing the South-West and every member sincerely desires that the scheme will be successful in the interests of the State, and more particularly in the interests of the settlers themselves. We also desire to see the North-West opened up and developed along similar lines, if that is possible. I entered the House at the same time as Mr. Gilchrist, a former representative of the Gascoyne electorate. He made most heated and impassioned speeches, some of the most eloquent that have been delivered in this House, pointing out how the North had been neglected. It is only reasonable and fair that we should afford the people of the North an opportunity to appear before a Royal Commission and indicate what, in their opinion, would be the best policy to adopt in opening up and developing that part of the State. More particularly should we take into consideration the fact that we have now a migration agreement under which money can be spent upon land settlement in any part of the State. I want to see the North get a fair share of that money if it can be proved, as the representatives of the North say, that that part of the State can be developed along lines somewhat similar to those adopted in the South-West. The members of the Country Party will do their utmost to see that the North receives its fair share. It is my intention to support the proposal to appoint the Royal Commission. We have a Royal Commission inquiring into the price of foodstuffs and prices generally. It may be possible that the Royal Commission will secure evidence that may be valuable to certain individuals. As far as we can judge from the published evidence, however, I do not think that Royal Commission will prove of much value to the State.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. THOMSON: I did not intend to cast any reflection upon the Royal Commission. When it comes to a consideration of the North, however, we have to face the position that although that part of the State has been held since the establishment of a Government here, and despite the fact that much money has been spent there, we have a de-

clining population. We want to ascertain the reason for that position and why the North has not progressed in the same way as has Queensland.

The Minister for Lands: It is because of the Act passed in 1917 regarding pastoral leases.

Mr. THOMSON: With all due respect to the Minister, if it can be shown that we can cut up the pastoral areas into blocks of from 1,000 to 3,000 acres each, enabling the settlers to carry sufficient stock to give them a reasonable chance of success, something might be done in that direction.

The Minister for Lands: You could not do that for pastoral purposes.

Mr. THOMSON: Perhaps we could resume the land for agricultural purposes and mixed farming. However, that would come within the province of the Royal Commission. Just as the Disabilities Royal Commission, appointed by the Federal Government proved conclusively to the rest of Australia that Western Australia has suffered disabilities owing to Federation, so the proposed Royal Commission may be able to show that the North has suffered disabilities owing to administration from Perth. If we have the recommendations of a Royal Commission, together with the reasons showing why the North should be handed over to the Commonwealth, or made a separate State, we will be able to cast an intelligent vote when the matter comes up for consideration.

On motion by Mr. Stubbs, debate adjourned.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1925-26.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 5th November; Mr. Lutey in the Chair.

Department of Public Health (Hon. J. M. Drew, Minister; Hon. S. W. Munsie, Honorary Minister, in charge of the Vote.)

Vote — Medical and Public Health, £196,855:

HON. S. W. MUNSIE (Honorary Minister) [8.8]: In introducing the Estimates for the Medical and Public Health Department, it is not my intention to elaborate to any extent on the general discussion. From a health point of view, I believe that Western Australia is making fair progress. While

we are not doing all I would like to see done, I recognise that we are doing as much as possible under existing circumstances. I have had some figures compiled relating to the last four years regarding the number of patients treated in our hospitals. In 1921 the number of patients treated totalled 4,206; in 1922, they totalled 3,877; in 1923, 4,817; and in 1924, 5,900. During the four years the number of patient-days was: 1921, 84,278; 1922, 75,820; 1923, 86,488; 1924, 101,217. The average number of beds occupied during those years was: 1921, 213; 1922, 207; 1923, 236; 1924, 276. The cost per patient per day was: 1921, 9s. 1d.; 1922, 10s. 4d.; 1923, 10s. 2½d.; 1924, 9s. 4½d. The percentage of the revenue to the cost was: 1921, 35.3 per cent.; 1922, 37.6 per cent.; 1923, 42.2 per cent.; 1924, 45.1 per cent. It will be seen that the cost of treating patients has been reduced, while the revenue collections have increased until they reached nearly half the expenditure. The increase in the number of patients treated and of beds occupied is largely accounted for by the opening up of four new hospitals and the taking over of the Busselton Hospital. The figures relating to those activities do not apply to the calendar year, so that the figures for 1925 will be still higher. The past two years have seen considerable extensions of hospital activities. With the increased settlement in the South-West and with the steady development throughout other portions of the agricultural areas, there have been demands for new hospitals in many districts, and altogether during the years 1923 and 1924, 18 new hospitals were opened.

Hon. G. Taylor: Were they partly Government hospitals?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Some were. For instance, those on the group settlements are wholly Government hospitals. There are other Government hospitals in course of erection.

Mr. Sampson: Is not the Margaret River hospital a committee hospital?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: That hospital is controlled by a committee who have charge of the funds, but it is a Government hospital. All the obligations rest with the Government. The secretary of the Health Department organised a fund amongst the group settlers who pay 1s. 4½d. per week, 1s. of which goes to the doctor and 4½d.

to the hospital. That fund, of course, goes towards the maintenance of the institution. But the Government provide any funds required over and above that fund, as well as making available the subsidy for the doctor. As I have already indicated, there are still many areas in Western Australia that are in need of hospitals and several are in course of erection at present. One is nearing completion and I hope to have the pleasure of declaring it open on Saturday week. Within the next month or six weeks, I hope to be able to announce that the hospital at the Peel Estate is ready for occupation. There has been a marked extension of the work performed by the large metropolitan hospitals, particularly the Perth Hospital. This has resulted in increased requests for assistance, but owing to the state of the Treasury those requests have been only partially met. Fortunately the Federal Government relinquished portion of its entertainment tax collections, and I am pleased that our Parliament agreed to the Bill to permit us to collect that tax, which will be devoted to hospitals.

Mr. Latham: Have you made provision for that?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: While the Estimates for medical and public health show an increase over last year of £498, there is an additional amount of £16,000 on the Estimates that we expect to collect from the entertainments tax this year.

Hon. G. Taylor: That represents eight months' collections.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Just about. The Government have not reduced their subsidy, but have slightly increased it, and on top of that the proceeds of the entertainments tax previously collected by the Federal Government will be available. While this additional money will assist, the amount available is not yet sufficient for our hospitals, and in the near future other means will have to be devised to get money for hospitals and charitable institutions.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You do not want a special tax now.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: I did not suggest that the extra money would be obtained by taxation, but we shall have to find more money for hospitals shortly. The population is growing and we are opening up new districts, and it is incumbent upon us to provide medical attention for the people. I do not expect to experience any difficulty in

getting the money. In the field of public health there are many needs. Provision continues to be made for a subsidy at the rate of £100 per annum for any infant welfare centre established under the conditions laid down by the Public Health Department and the Infant Welfare Association. This matter has been taken up enthusiastically in the metropolitan area and at Kalgoorlie, but unfortunately it has not been taken up in other large towns. I admit that in the smaller country towns it could not be undertaken, but many of the larger country towns could easily establish such a centre, and if this were done it would be in the interests of the people. The conditions are that the local authority finds one-fourth of the amount subscribed by the residents up to £25. If the local residents collect £75, the local authority must contribute £25. The Government then subsidise the movement pound for pound to the extent of £100. The experience of the metropolitan area is that an infant welfare centre can be run successfully on £200 a year, and Dr. Dale informs me that that will suffice for country districts. If other centres were started, I believe there would be no difficulty in getting fully qualified nurses. For years there were only three nurses in the whole of the State qualified in infant welfare work. We have now five infant welfare centres. The one at Kalgoorlie has not yet employed a fully qualified nurse, but I understand the lady who has been working there is being sent to Sydney for a three months' course of training so that she may qualify. The centre will then be able to take advantage of the £100 subsidy provided by the Government. So far the Kalgoorlie centre has collected the whole of the money required and paid the nurse for her services. While efforts are thus being made to care for the young children, the health authorities feel the responsibility for greater activity in the examination of children of school going age. Prior to this financial year only one school medical officer was employed. Recently the school medical inspection staff has been re-arranged so that Dr. Jull has gone on half-time duty, and a second school medical officer doing full time has commenced duty. These Estimates provide for a third full-time medical officer and also for the appointment of a school dentist.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: Will medical inspections be made in the country districts?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: One of the school medical officers will give the whole of his or

her time to country districts. When Dr. Jull returns, she will resume half-time duty and the other officer will work in the metropolitan area with her. When Dr. Jull was on full time last year, it was impossible for her to examine the whole of the children even in the metropolitan area, but with her on half-time and another officer on full time, we expect that they will be able to cope with the work in the metropolitan area, leaving the extra medical officer available to attend to the country districts. I doubt whether parents regard sufficiently seriously the importance of attending to children during school age. In many instances, Dr. Jull, after examining children, has sent reports to the parents and there have been no results. For some reason or other parents do not take the advice of the doctor to have the children attended to. Those who have been attended to represent a very small average but I am pleased to say that the average is gradually increasing.

Mr. Griffiths: You cannot compel them to comply.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: No. If the doctor sends a note to a parent, she gets a record from the school stating whether the child has been attended to, and if it has not been attended to in a given period, she again examines the child and sends a further note to the parent.

Mr. Griffiths: In some countries there is power to enforce compliance.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: We have not that power. It is a matter of educating parents to the necessity for complying with the doctor's notifications. The parents do not always realise what it means, and some of them are under the impression that they cannot get treatment for their children free of charge. So far it has been difficult to get all the work done free because the principal place of treatment has been the Children's Hospital. When I made inquiries at the Children's Hospital some time ago to ascertain the position regarding the treatment of school children, I was informed by the doctor that he was then booked ahead for three and a half months. This shows that the defects pointed out by the medical staff are fairly considerable. Of course some are not serious, but some are. If the children cannot be treated at the Children's Hospital, arrangements can be made for them to be treated elsewhere, and if the parent cannot

afford to pay, free treatment is provided. Circulars to that effect have been distributed to parents. I admit that one dentist cannot do very much, but we have to make a start. If the doctor visiting a school finds that a child's teeth require attention, treatment may be had at the Health Department clinic in Murray-street. If it is not possible to get the children to that clinic, no treatment is given. I hope that in the near future we shall be able to have one or two travelling dental clinics so that the dentists can do the job on the spot, without having first to report and then send the children somewhere else. In New Zealand the medical work for the children has been carried to a fine pitch; in fact, New Zealand is on its own in the matter of infantile mortality, thanks to the energy and foresight exhibited by Dr. Truby King. Recently I received a report from New Zealand, and I was surprised to find that last year Dr. Truby King had at his disposal for this purpose a sum of no less than £30,000. The Health authorities of New Zealand consider that of all Government expenditure, this money is the most wisely spent, and I consider that it is so. There can be no better aim than to strive to rear a healthy nation. Much can be done to educate the children in health matters. I believe that health lectures should be delivered to school children, who should be taught more hygiene than they are taught at present. If we could re-establish travelling dental clinics, I believe they would result in a handsome return to the State.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [8.30]: Members generally are interested in regard to matters of public health and it is well that that should be so. A subject concerning which the Honorary Minister did not give any information was the proposal to remove certain patients from the Woorloo Sanatorium. There is anxiety amongst some of the patients as to what is likely to be done. The object, I understand, is to enable the sanatorium to be re-established as a sanatorium and thus to serve the purpose for which it was originally created. It seems to have become a place where sufferers in the last stages of the disease are sent to end their days. I am informed that there are such patients there, but whether the position at the institution can be improved by removing those patients is of course a matter for the medical profession to say.

A definite statement from the Minister on this subject would be welcome. The expansion of hospital activities is a necessary corollary to the activity that is taking place in the South-West. The establishment of group settlements has meant the erection of a number of hospitals and maternity wards. Though hospitals have been established in the group centres, the accommodation is insufficient to provide the room required for midwifery cases. There is great need for hospitals in other directions. I am glad to know that the hospital at Kondinin is now established.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: I opened it four weeks ago.

Mr. SAMPSON: I envied the Honorary Minister the task. A hospital is the greatest benefit that can be given to any district. There can be no real progress, comfort or satisfaction on the part of the people until such an institution is established. Some two years ago a resolution was carried in this Chamber affirming the desirability of the provision of deep therapy equipment for the Perth hospital. I do not know how research work in that respect is progressing but I have heard of the satisfactory treatment of a malignant growth with the aid of such a plant. The case in question was treated in Melbourne. I believe that 70 per cent. of the cases, if not entirely successfully, can be treated with material benefit to the patient. It is gratifying to know that almost all the country hospitals have been provided with X-ray plants. We should acknowledge the valuable services of local boards of health, rendered in an honorary capacity in various parts of the State, and the prevailing good state of public health is largely due to the work performed by these boards. But more money is needed all the time. We should also acknowledge very fully the good work done by the committees of the various hospitals. I have had occasion to visit some of the hospitals and I have been impressed not only by the work performed by the matron and staff, but with the earnestness invariably displayed. I have always been convinced that it is unfair in certain cases for the Government to provide hospitals with all the money required, whilst other hospitals are obliged to depend upon the efforts of their committees to raise funds by way of entertainments and other means. In some of

the country hospitals the matron is not only the nurse but the cook as well, and occasionally has to chop the wood. On the gold-fields especially those who are in charge have heavy duties to perform. In New Zealand great progress has been made in regard to baby clinics and child welfare, but I understand that the Truby King method is not universally approved, and that there are experts in child welfare, even in this State, who do not endorse that method. I am glad to note that a dentist has been provided, but I fail to see how one can do all the work that it is necessary to carry out. Every school should be given the same privilege, not only the city schools but the schools in the outer suburbs as well as those in the country districts. I notice there is a decrease of £673 in the Wooroloo vote. That should be sufficient to provide for a second dentist, who will undoubtedly be needed.

HON. G. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret) [8.40]: The Minister will realise the difficulty that confronts the people in the Mt. Margaret electorate, which is a very large area, and where two hospitals have to be catered for. I congratulate the Minister on being able to tell us to-night that the vote for medical purposes will be increased by £16,000, a sum of money that will come, not from the Treasury, but from a different source.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: But it appears on the Estimates.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: The report of the Perth hospital shows that it will not be possible to conduct that institution this year under an expenditure of about £60,000. We have £30,000 on the Estimates but that will not go very far. During the period that I was a member of the board, the lowest amount granted by the Government in one year was £13,000. We never lived within our means, but we had to live pretty close to them. I instance this to show the growth of that institution during the last 17 or 18 years. But it will be necessary to collect a large amount in revenue or by public subscription to meet the expanding demands of the hospital. It would lead to relief if the Government were to keep a sharp eye on the lease, which has been in existence for some years, of the White City grounds. Much revenue could be raised for the hospitals if the Government

would reserve those grounds exclusively for charitable purposes and particularly for hospital purposes, instead of allowing any section of the community that wants to raise money to have the grounds. Before those grounds can be utilised for the raising of money for charitable purposes a rental of £250 per week has to be paid.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! We cannot have a discussion on the White City grounds.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I am merely trying to point out where revenue could be earned for hospitals. I am not discussing the merits or demerits of those grounds. They belong to the Government, and it is recognised that the care of the sick is an obligation on the Government. That is all I desire to say on the point. I shall be very pleased to learn from the Minister that he has a few pounds left for the assistance of the hospitals in my electorate. The buildings are falling into disrepair, but a sum of £100 would serve to put them in reasonable order.

MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [8.50]: I wish to emphasise what has been said in regard to the Minister and what he has done for child welfare and school inspection and the appointment of a school dentist. Only one dentist is to be appointed, but it is at least a start, and I hope that before long we shall see several other dentists appointed. At first glance school inspection may not appear to be so vital as it really is. New Zealand, of course, has led the way in this respect and has done very fine work. So, too, has New South Wales. In British Columbia a great deal has been done. Recently certain information was sent me from British Columbia. I was surprised to learn that an inspection of 17,000 children in the centre of British Columbia revealed that 2,000 were suffering from mal-nutrition. Only some 3,000 were perfectly free from defects of any kind. It was found that by remedying minor ailments in their early stages a wonderful improvement was noted generally. In that country the school authorities insist upon parents carrying out instructions given by the school doctor. I do not wish to say anything just now about country hospitals, for we have arranged a deputation to wait upon the Minister. However, I do hope that the Minister will not forget the necessity for the installation of an X-ray plant at Kellerberrin.

MR. STUBBS (Wagin) [8.52]: I congratulate the Minister on his lucid exposition of the Estimates. I notice that the estimated expenditure is a little more than the expenditure of last year. That is not to be wondered at, when one considers the numerous hospital activities going on all over the country. I may say that never yet have I gone to the Minister for a subsidy for the establishment of a small hospital in an outback district and been turned away empty. I have heard on undeniable authority that the long hours the hospital nurses have to work constitute a very serious drain on their vitality. I see that the vote for nurses has been increased by over £1,000. I am very glad of that. I only hope that some of it is to go in increased wages. The rotten wages paid to nurses during their early years of training would not buy them their stockings. I hope the Minister will see his way clear to increasing the wages of nurses and probationers. Nobody would object to increased expenditure for that purpose. Also I hope the Minister will go into the question of the hours the hospital nurses have to work. To ask a girl to work 12 hours in a shift is too much.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Certainly for a shift like that a girl ought to be paid wages that would buy more than her stockings.

Mr. STUBBS: I know that those girls have to work 12 hours in a shift, which is altogether too much to ask of a girl in any employment, let alone in so arduous a vocation as that of a hospital nurse. I commend the Minister for the sympathy he invariably extends to country hospitals and their needs.

MR. PANTON (Menzies) [8.55]: As one who for a considerable time has occupied a position on the board of management of the Perth Hospital, I wish to say a word or two in respect of that institution. It would require a very long speech to cover all the requirements of the Perth Hospital. However, realising the exigencies of finance, it is easily seen that it would not be of much use to enumerate the necessities of a big hospital like that of Perth. This is the first opportunity I have had of remarking upon a statement made by the Treasurer when introducing his Budget. He said he thought of reducing the subsidy to the Perth Hospital by £2,000 in view of the fact that the hospital had £2,000 invested in war bonds. I want to assure the Treasurer that that £2,000 is by no means a surplus that we

are hoarding. It was the balance left from the hospital appeal of 12 months ago, and it was put into war bonds because it there earns good interest and can be withdrawn at any time. It is essential that the board should have at least a margin of £2,000, for we are not allowed to carry any overdraft, and we are responsible for the purchase of everything that goes into the hospital. As much as £1,000 and £1,500 worth of linen and blankets are bought at one time, and if the board have no money to pay cash for these large orders they have to pay a good deal more for them. Frequently large quantities of stock necessary to the hospital are offered at favourable prices, but if we cannot pay cash at the moment we have to let the opportunity go. Further than that, we have now taken over Kalamunda as an auxiliary hospital, which means that if we are to work from month to month on our subsidy we shall be continually going to the Treasurer for £200 or £300. The £2,000 referred to by the Treasurer is practically earmarked for essential items at Kalamunda. We are paying £40 per month for water for the Perth Hospital, and we could save a considerable amount of money if we could afford to put in an engine and pump and so utilise the water from a good well we have in the hospital grounds. We are continually wanting things. A sum of £2,000 is a mere bagatelle when all the requirements of the hospital are considered. The Perth Hospital is growing every week, as indicated by the increase in the subsidy. It is not a Perth institution only.

Hon. G. Taylor: Costs have increased.

Mr. PANTON: And the work of the institution has also increased. At least 40 per cent. of the patients come in from outside the metropolitan area, some from as far as Youanmi. The serious operations are usually sent to the Perth Hospital, which is well equipped. Practically all the work done there is done in an honorary capacity. All the specialists in Perth work there for nothing. One of the disabilities from which we are suffering is the lack of up-to-date plant. Dr. Juett, one of our most experienced surgeons, sent in his resignation because of the lack of plant there, but the Red Cross Society provided about £400 for a plant that temporarily overcame the difficulty. The member for Wagin mentioned the hours of nurses and their salaries. I do not suppose nurses are working longer

hours in any part of the State than they do in the Perth Hospital. It was decided six or seven months ago to reduce their hours to not more than 50 per week if possible, but this meant increasing the staff by 34 nurses.

Mr. Stubbs: It cannot be helped.

Mr. PANTON: But we have no accommodation for them at present. They must live on the premises. Although plans and specifications have been approved by the board, and passed on by the Medical Department to the Public Works Department, we are still awaiting this extra accommodation. There has also been an increase in the junior medical staff. The resident junior staff receive £75 per annum for services rendered, and naturally expect reasonably good accommodation which we cannot give. It is because of the junior staff and the honorary medical staff that we are able to run the hospital. I hope if the Minister has any authority over the Public Works Department, he will endeavour to push along the work. It is a disgrace to have to ask girls to work from 52 to 62 hours a week. The fact that they work three months at night requires some explanation. It struck me that it was an awful thing for them to have to do this. The doctors, however, agree that it is better they should work three months on end at night than for two or three weeks at a time. They say that after the first fortnight or so of night work people are able to sleep in the day time, but if there is a continual break it is more harmful to them than if they do the three months on end. At the end of the three months these girls are just about at the end of their tether. The time has arrived when the Perth Hospital must be enlarged. The women's surgical ward provides for 30 beds. There are never less than 35 to 36 surgical cases in that ward, and there are always 10 or 12 women waiting to come in. It means that it is necessary to send women away a day or two before they are fit to go, in order to make room for others. That is one of the reasons why we have taken over the Kalamunda institution as a convalescent hospital. The sum on the Estimates appears to be large, but it is not so compared with the work done. The board are working in an honorary capacity and taking a keen interest in the institution. Every assistance should be rendered to it by the Government. If it were not for the board a Government

staff would have to carry on the work. I hope the Treasurer will bear that in mind.

The Minister for Lands: Do you think we made a mistake in not putting it under a Government staff?

The Premier: We are going to increase the salaries of members of the board.

Mr. PANTON: The work we do there is an argument for increasing our salaries here. I occupy 11 honorary positions, in some cases as representative of the Government. Whether the work is handed over to a Government staff or not is immaterial to the board. We are doing this for the love of the work. If the Government had their own staff, no better work would be done than is being done by the board.

Hon. G. Taylor: It is a good buffer.

Mr. PANTON: Yes. Few hospitals are worked more economically than this one.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [9.7]: Some steps should be taken to prevent the overcrowding of the Perth Public Hospital. Cases that are responsible for the overcrowding should be taken at their source. My first suggestion is that mosquitoes should be eradicated. That is a subject for State enterprise. The Government should exterminate mosquitoes in the metropolitan area. Although at present there is no reason to fear mosquitoes, it has been said that malaria may break out at any time, and that there are local types of mosquitoes with probosces that are capable of carrying malaria germs if an outbreak of that disease should occur. At present all that is done is being done by municipal councils who throw kerosene about and waste a lot of money. United action is necessary if mosquitoes are to be eradicated. This suggestion could well be taken up by the Health Department. A certain amount of money would be involved, but if malaria broke out we should all be in a sorry position.

Mr. Teesdale: It cost America a lot of money.

Mr. NORTH: Yes. My second suggestion is with regard to pneumonia and influenza and other cases of the kind, which are instrumental in crowding out the hospital. If the Commonwealth Insurance Bill is passed, which deals with sickness and unemployment, it should be possible for the Health Department to insist that all workers suffering from influenza, pneumonia,

etc., should be confined to their homes during the outbreak. As things are they take the risk and go to work. Those best qualified to speak say that this is one of the chief causes for the spread of the trouble and for the cost of getting rid of it. The spread of influenza is due not to one or two germs that may be floating about, but to sufferers going about their daily work and passing the illness round the community to the general discomfort and expense of many. The Bill will ensure that workers can be confined to their beds without loss of wages, so that these cases will be minimised to a large extent. My third suggestion is in regard to the removal of night-soil. It is a shocking thing that the Health Department should look with equanimity upon the number of conveyances that are a disgrace to the highways of the metropolitan area during the day and night. I cannot conceive of a body like that, which knows all about septic tanks, allowing so many suburbs to proceed as they do, imposing rates of £2 or £3 per head per pan, for work which could be done at smaller cost by bacteria in a septic tank. At a small capital cost all this could be done away with. The Claremont Municipal Council are now charging £2 5s. per pan in order to operate a day service of this kind. For the installation of a private septic tank system the cost would be about £25 per house. If we allow interest at 7 per cent. this would represent a smaller sum than £2 5s. per house, and each house would be equipped with a permanent service and the whole of the trouble would be removed. At present the department look on with apparent satisfaction at the continuance of this old system, which leads to the creation of flies and is responsible for many cases of typhoid in the Perth Hospital. Until night carts are removed and septic tanks are substituted there will be trouble in the metropolitan area. The Health Department should take a strong hand in the matter of advocating the total abolition of this old service. In two or three years' time every house could be converted to the septic tank system. The deep sewerage scheme is by no means a comprehensive one. I have been told that close to King's Park Road in the centre of West Perth night carts are still operating. The deep sewerage scheme is so limited that it affects only certain streets. If the house septic system that I have mentioned were adopted, it could be carried out without ex-

penue. It would merely mean transferring the income already received from the pan rates into a capital fund for the installation of the septic tank system.

The Minister for Lands: Where is the money to come from to pay for the tanks?

Mr. NORTH: The Claremont Council rate at £2 5s. per annum per pan. There we have 10 per cent. of the cost of septic tanks at £25 each. At 8 per cent. this would cover the capital cost, with 2 per cent. left over to cover a sinking fund.

MR. BROWN (Pingelly) [9.15]: The Medical Vote is of the highest importance to country people. The Honorary Minister said that 80 new hospitals had been opened since he took office. That must be an Australian record, having regard to the size of our population. In the part of Victoria from which I come, there is one central hospital for about 25,000 people. Several towns contribute towards its support, as well as the Government. In Western Australia the idea is to have a local hospital for every district at intervals of about 25 miles. This means that each hospital is supported by a limited population, who necessarily find the expense heavy. The Kondinin hospital committee find themselves £50 in arrears as the result of two months' working. One of their patients came from an outside district, probably because he thought it was a good hospital with a good doctor; and in that case no fees are recoverable. The Kondinin people find that attached to a hospital there are a good many expenses of which they were not aware. To raise £1,000 or £1,500 in a small community means many sacrifices. Moreover, the residents of small country towns have many other things to help towards. The Kondinin hospital committee are about to approach the Government for a small grant to tide them over their temporary difficulties. I sometimes think that we have too many little hospitals, and that a few large central hospitals would be preferable, especially in view of the facilities of railway and motor transport. Moreover, at large hospitals there would be the advantage of consultation among various doctors.

Hon. G. Taylor: Large numbers of country patients come to the Perth Hospital.

Mr. BROWN: Serious surgical cases in the country do undoubtedly come to Perth,

because the local doctor cannot cope with them.

Hon. G. Taylor: He cannot give an anaesthetic, in the first place.

Mr. BROWN: The Perth Hospital is a national institution, and should be well supported, and any shortage in its funds should be made up by the Government. However, our finances are not in too flourishing a condition and if the Treasurer were to accede to every request made to him I do not know where he would turn for money. The entertainments tax, estimated to return £25,000 annually, will mean only a very small contribution to each hospital. It would be a good thing if a small hospital tax could be collected by local governing bodies. Voluntary subscription falls on the willing horse every time: many people give nothing towards the hospitals. I do not think such a tax as I have suggested would be grumbled at. I was glad to hear the Honorary Minister say that there should be medical examination of all school children. In the small country schools a doctor comes along perhaps on one day and makes an examination, and the next day he is called away and is not seen again for 12 months. The result is that many country school children are never examined.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: That is the case in the metropolitan area too. Some schools had not been visited at all last year.

Mr. BROWN: Some of the little country schools are situated eight or 10 miles out of the country towns, and the children attending them are never examined, simply because a doctor never visits such schools. Mention has been made of the appointment of a travelling dentist. Such an appointment would be a splendid idea. The dentist could travel around the various schools and give attention to the teeth of the children.

Mr. Teesdale: We have not got that here in Perth. You cannot expect it unless it exists here.

Mr. BROWN: I understand from the Honorary Minister that such a system is to be introduced. Of course there are many things we ought to do, but it is a question of finding the money. If dentists are to travel around the schools, why should not doctors travel sometimes to examine school children in the country? Some parents when they find a child ailing take it to a doctor at once, but in the country parents are not in a position to run to a doctor every time a child feels ill. The ailment

may pass off, or it may result in something serious. The examination of a child by a doctor in such circumstances might prevent serious disease in years to come. A day could be fixed for the doctor to see the children at the school. It is true we have friendly societies, but in the country, generally speaking, doctors will not take on friendly society work. The result is that country parents often let their children go without the necessary medical examination. A healthy community represents a splendid economic asset, and I consider we should approach the Federal Parliament on this subject, since the Commonwealth handles invalid and old-age pensions. Many young men and young women are drawing invalid pensions. What a saving it would be if they could be cured! With the necessary medical attention the number of invalid pensions would be greatly reduced. I desire especially to congratulate the Honorary Minister on his administration of the Health Department. If only he had the necessary funds, the community would never go short of medical aid.

The Premier: He is extremely popular.

Mr. BROWN: Undoubtedly the Honorary Minister is doing excellent work. I hope he will live to see his ideals realised.

MISS HOLMAN (Forrest) [9.28]: I also would like to congratulate the Honorary Minister on his good work. In my opinion it is desirable that the Health Department should be given fuller powers as regards inspection in country districts. I hope the Honorary Minister will remedy a few things I have pointed out to him. In the timber districts especially, water supplies and other facilities are not by any means what they should be. From one centre I received a report that the butcher's offal was buried on the banks of the dam, and that horses, cattle and goats were allowed to walk into the water, and that dead fish were in the dam. Under such conditions one cannot wonder at the occurrence of sickness. In some parts of my electorate sanitary conditions are distressingly primitive. I hope the Honorary Minister will be able to help in that respect. When an inspector is sent to a centre in response to a complaint, he should go to the source of complaint and find out the grounds for it. In some cases the inspector rushes down to the place and wants to catch the next train

back, and therefore does not go to see the complainant at all. The result is that the inspector does not see all he should see, but sees only what those in authority allow him to see.

The Minister for Lands: Are there no local health inspectors?

Miss HOLMAN: The trouble is that these centres are under the control of the road board, and that in many cases the road board secretary is also the health inspector. I have here a letter from the Harvey road board showing what they regard as the qualifications of a health inspector. I wrote to the board asking for information with regard to the appointment of the secretary. In reply they quoted to me a copy of a letter they had sent to the Medical Department:—

When the board made this appointment they took into consideration the main factor which in their opinion is essential to the appointment, that is, the engineering capabilities of those who applied. It was the unanimous decision of the board that Mr. Eckersley's credentials were, in this respect, far ahead of any other applicant. Whilst admitting that the health inspector's duties are also to be seriously considered, the board are of the opinion that Mr. Eckersley can and will conscientiously carry out this work both to the satisfaction of your department and the board, if given the opportunity. As I stated in my previous letter, Mr. Eckersley is willing to study and sit for examination to obtain the necessary certificate required by your department.

It will be seen that the main factor was the engineering capabilities of the man who applied.

Mr. Lindsay: And that is most important.

Miss HOLMAN: The next factor to be taken into consideration was book-keeping, and secretarial capacity. Apparently the last matter to be taken into consideration by the board was that relating to health inspection. I would like to see power given to local boards to appoint honorary inspectors. I know of many men in the timber centres who, from a sense of what is right, would be only too willing to accept such positions if they knew that their requests or recommendations would have any weight if sent to the Health Department. If they knew that their recommendations would be enforced they would be willing to act, but without power it would be useless. Throughout the timber centres typhoid fever is endemic. During 1922 there were over 100 cases of typhoid fever that came from Nanga Brook and

Hotham Valley. Of those about 30 per cent. of the patients died. In one small camp of 40 men at Nanga Brook landing there were six deaths. A serious outbreak of typhoid fever took place at Worsley this year. Typhoid fever is rampant throughout the year in the timber areas.

Hon. G. Taylor: Is that owing to bad sanitation?

Miss HOLMAN: Yes, mainly.

Hon. G. Taylor: I think the water supply had a lot to do with it.

Miss HOLMAN: The health inspectors assure me that the water supply has not much to do with it. I do not know whether that is right but I think that the water supply has a good deal to do with it. I am assured, however, that it is more a question of bad sanitation, bad housing and pollution of food supplies. I was told that at one centre there is no proper place for disposing of the rubbish and it is merely deposited in the bush. It is not put into a pit at all. At one centre the married men have no conveniences at all and the single men are merely provided with a pit. Hon. members can imagine how the flies will carry infection in such circumstances. I would like to see something done regarding inoculation against typhoid fever throughout the timber areas. The milk supplies require better supervision, as well as the water supplies. Dealing with hospital matters the Honorary Minister will remember that I asked him some questions regarding the King Edward Memorial Hospital. I was informed that the cost of upkeep of that institution to the State was £980 last year. It is a very fine institution and compares favourably with any similar institution throughout Australia. The cost of upkeep is not very great, but the conditions at the hospital are not such as will allow nurses to secure their training. The Minister informed me that the question of doing away with the premium of £15 that has to be paid by nurses before they can enter the institution for training, was under consideration. I would be glad to hear from him as to whether anything has been done in that direction. It should be remembered that nurses, while undergoing their training in another hospital, are only paid a small salary and have no opportunity to save money.

Mr. Thomson: They get hardly enough to clothe themselves decently.

Miss HOLMAN: I mentioned the saving aspect because it is necessary to have money

in order that the nurses may pay the premium necessary if they desire to undergo the midwifery course at the King Edward Memorial Hospital. If a trained nurse desires to do that, she has to pay not only the premium but has to keep herself for six months during which she gets no salary. If she is an untrained nurse, she has to be prepared to keep herself for 12 months. Something should be done to remedy that position.

Mr. Teesdale: But they get very valuable experience.

Mr. Corboy: And they give very valuable services during that period.

Mr. Teesdale: They must get their experience somewhere.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Forrest has the floor.

Miss HOLMAN: While they gain valuable experience, it is not possible for all nurses to have that advantage. Only a few of them can afford to pay the premium and maintain themselves for the necessary period in order to undergo the course of training. It is most valuable to the State to see that children are brought into the world under the best conditions.

Mr. Corboy: And as many nurses as possible should have that training.

Miss HOLMAN: The Minister informed me that since the institution was established nine years ago £1,800 odd had been spent on upkeep and repairs. I know that £10,000 was allocated to the institution by the British Red Cross Society, but I am in doubt as to whether that amount was spent on new buildings and new wards, or whether some was spent on repairs to the existing wards. I do not think the money should have been expended in the latter direction. As to the hours that the nurses have to work, they are supposed to be on duty 10½ hours. I am informed that they sign on at 6.30 a.m. and sign off at 6.30 p.m., presumably 1½ hours being allowed for meals. Nevertheless there is a spread of 12 hours and not 10½. No salary is paid to the nurses. Last year 900 cases were attended at the hospital, of which 861 were without actual medical assistance. Only one mother died during confinement. That is a fine record. I am informed that at Sydney, where they have ante-natal treatment, out of 1,000 cases treated there was only one death. Here, without any ante-natal treatment, there was only one death out of 900 cases. I think it can be reasonably assumed that in view of this record the King Edward

Memorial Hospital is a very fine institution indeed. The matron was recently sent to the Eastern States to undergo a special training course. The Infant Health Association here, which is subsidised by the Government to the extent of £200, is importing nurses from the Eastern States to do work that we could do if we had an ante-natal ward at the King Edward Memorial Hospital. In the East they have both ante-natal and post-natal wards and if we had that advantage we would be able to train our own nurses without importing any from Sydney. I believe the cost of such a ward would be about £2,700 and that £500 has already been raised by the women of Perth.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: It would cost more than that.

Miss HOLMAN: Even if it did cost more, it would be worth while. Expectant mothers have to be taken into the ward at the King Edward Memorial Hospital where they have to be treated amongst others who are already in labour. While the newly arrived expectant mothers cannot see the other patients, they can hear what is going on. This is unnerving to the expectant mothers and is not in their best interests. An ante-natal ward would, therefore, be of great assistance.

The Minister for Lands: In the country some mothers have to be taken to hospitals by means of a horse and dray.

Mr. Thomson: But you would not advocate that sort of thing.

The Minister for Lands: No, but I would advocate more hospitals in the country and not so many improvements in the city.

Miss HOLMAN: That reminds me that the Railway Department has granted a concession to women travelling for a distance of more than 50 miles from their residence to a hospital. Women in the country may possibly take advantage of that concession, but I am aware that the conditions in the country are not all they should be. Any improvements that can be made will be worth while.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [9.41]: I congratulate the member for Forrest (Miss Holman) on the manner in which she has dealt with this question. Some members have advocated the establishment of larger central hospitals, thus cutting out the small ones. I do not agree with that contention but rather with the

interjection of the Minister for Lands. Those who live in the country districts know of many cases as were suggested by the Minister for Lands. For that reason the bulk of the people in the smaller centres are anxious to have their little hospitals. I have been fortunate in my electorate. The Katanning district is under a debt of gratitude to the present Administration for having provided us with such an excellent hospital at a cost of over £10,000. The people of the district have rated themselves to provide interest and sinking fund on half that cost.

Hon. G. Taylor: A wealthy place like Katanning should have built its own hospital.

Mr. THOMSON: The member for Mt. Margaret (Hon. G. Taylor) was Chairman of the Perth Hospital Board for some time. We recognise that that institution is to a great extent a national hospital, but it would be interesting to know how much the people of Perth have contributed towards the erection and upkeep of the Perth Hospital.

Hon. G. Taylor: I do not think they have contributed anything towards the upkeep.

Mr. THOMSON: We in Katanning have shown an example to the metropolitan area of what should be done.

Mr. Sampson: All the country districts do that.

Mr. THOMSON: That is so.

The Minister for Lands: Perth raised £10,000 last year.

Hon. G. Taylor: And £7,000 the year before that.

Mr. THOMSON: But what I have mentioned regarding Katanning was a voluntary act. When we take into consideration the larger population in the metropolitan area and the wealth that is congregated there, I think it will be admitted that we in Katanning stand head and shoulders over the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Lands: You mean in wealth.

Mr. THOMSON: I wish that were true; I mean in the matter of attending to our own requirements. We have rated ourselves to raise half the capital cost of erecting the Katanning Hospital, a sum of £5,000, and we have a committee who have raised £1,250 and provided for the hospital the most up-to-date operating table in Australia. The necessary requisites have also been provided to obviate the need for people having to go

to the metropolitan area to receive proper treatment. We also have an X-ray plant, one-half of the cost of which the people subscribed. The country hospital committees have done splendid work, and their efforts should be recognised. It is regrettable that in some districts the citizens take no interest in the Government hospitals provided there. But even where there are Government Hospitals the formation of a committee should be authorised, somewhat on the lines of the Parents and Citizens' Associations connected with the State schools, so that the people would feel they had a real interest in the local hospital.

Mr. Withers: What control would you give them?

Mr. THOMSON: They could raise funds locally, and see that the grounds of the hospital did not get into the deplorable condition that has been a feature of many Government hospitals. I think the Government would do well to subsidise the maintenance of country hospitals. This would mean increasing the vote, but I must say that the present Minister and the previous Minister have given all possible consideration to the requests of country districts so far as funds would permit. The Government have provided for the Perth Public Hospital £37,850; for the Children's Hospital £6,500, and for the Fremantle Hospital £6,500. I do not suggest that those amounts should be reduced. From the statement of the member for Menzies (Mr. Pantou) we realise the difficulties confronting the Perth Hospital Board, but country hospitals are up against similar difficulties. Some districts have a Government hospital, and the maintenance of it costs the residents not a penny piece. The whole of the financial responsibility is borne by the Government and the patients. I am pleased to say that the Katanning hospital is fulfilling its important function. At present it is practically full of patients. One hospital in my district was so overcrowded that the operating room had to be used as a maternity ward, and the doctor stated that if any more male patients were admitted, the morgue would have to be used as a ward. One patient had to be carried on another 26 miles to Katanning because the hospital to which he was first taken could not accommodate him. The Perth Hospital has not arrived at the stage of being so pressed for room as to have to

utilise the morgue for live patients. I hope the Government will decide that the small hospitals which are doing such good work will be placed on the same basis as the Perth Hospital. The big hospitals are situated in the centre of population, whereas patients in the country districts have often to travel 30 or 40 miles to reach a doctor or a hospital. In some districts patients, after travelling that distance to a doctor, have had to be sent further on because the doctor had not the facilities to treat them. Recently I was in the Toodyay district and the medical officer stated that owing to the lack of X-ray plant, he often had to send patients on to the hospitals at Northam and Perth, because he had not the facilities to treat them. I hope that when the Minister replies, he will indicate the policy of the Government. I was struck by a statement made by the member for Menzies, who is a member of the Perth Hospital Board, that plans had been prepared for accommodation for the nurses and approved by the Medical Department, and he wanted to know whether the Medical Department had not authority over the Works Department to get the matter finalised. When I was speaking on the Estimates of the Works Department a few nights ago, I stated that each department should have its money allocated to it. Here we have a concrete case submitted by the member for Menzies showing that the Medical Department have approved of plans for much needed accommodation for nurses, and yet they have to wait on the doorstep of the Works Department to find out when it will be provided.

Hon. G. Taylor: That obtains in all the departments.

Mr. THOMSON: It does not follow that that is right.

The Minister for Lands: The drawing of plans does not provide the money. The Works Department draw the plans.

Mr. THOMSON: We know that the Medical Department had approved of the expenditure.

The Minister for Lands: No; they had approved of the plans.

Mr. THOMSON: I jotted down the remarks of the member for Menzies.

Hon. G. Taylor: I have been dealing with similar matters for years, and you are wrong.

Mr. THOMSON: The member for Mt. Margaret has not dealt with this particular case. The member for Menzies said that the additional accommodation for the nurses had been approved by the Medical Department, and he wanted to know whether they had not authority over the Works Department to get it provided. Who authorised the preparation of the plans in the first instance?

The Minister for Lands: But the Public Works Department cannot take action until the Treasurer finds the money.

The Premier: If we had everybody deciding for himself, we would want millions more.

Mr. THOMSON: The Education Department put up to the Treasury the amount of money they estimate they will require for the erection of new buildings during the year, and the amount they estimate they will need for maintenance and additions to existing buildings. When those amounts have been approved, they come before Parliament. My point is that the Minister in charge of the Health Department knows of the estimated requirements being submitted to Parliament. He can then allocate the expenditure. He can tell one member, "I can give you a hospital," and he will say to another member, "I cannot grant you what you want."

[Mr. Panton took the Chair.]

The Premier: You would have everyone controlling the Treasury! Everybody cannot be Treasurer.

Mr. THOMSON: I am not suggesting anything of the kind.

The Premier: Suppose the Treasurer finds his revenue not coming up to expectations by hundreds of thousands of pounds; will he not try to cut down expenditure?

Mr. THOMSON: The Minister in charge of a department has absolute control of that department.

Hon. G. Taylor: You do not know the procedure in the Government.

Mr. THOMSON: I know that the present procedure is extremely cumbersome. Various country hospital committees are up against a heavy task, and must raise large sums of money. As the committees work in a voluntary capacity, the Government should assist them to the fullest extent, consistently with due regard for the finances.

Committee hospitals should be placed on the same basis as the Perth Hospital, the Children's Hospital, and the Fremantle Hospital, and should as far as possible receive a pound for pound subsidy from the Government. I should be pleased if the Honorary Minister, when replying, could give an intimation to that effect. My district has received from the Medical Department every reasonable consideration. We have not been granted everything we would like, but we have been treated with every courtesy. I greatly regret that last session's Bill to authorise lotteries in aid of charities was not passed. It would have materially assisted the finances, and no one in the State would have been one penny the worse. I am glad the Honorary Minister will get about £16,000 from the entertainments tax, as he is in charge of departments which are purely spending and in no way revenue-earning.

MR. COVERLEY (Kimberley) [10.10]: I wish to remind the Honorary Minister that the people at Hall's Creek are still awaiting the appointment of a Government doctor. Hall's Creek has a population of about 250, who are over 240 miles away from a qualified medical practitioner. The occupation of a pastoral employee involves constant liability to serious accident, and the people of the district are also subject to fever outbreaks. Something ought to be done for people situated so far away and so awkwardly from the aspect of medical care. We have an efficient Inland Mission nursing station, which is highly appreciated; but the need for the services of a medical man is urgent. In the event of a serious accident the injured man would have to be conveyed by the crudest method of transport over some 240 miles. I hope the Honorary Minister will give the matter his serious consideration and induce the Treasurer to produce the necessary money for the appointment. Then my constituents will not be slow to shower bouquets upon the Minister.

MR. WITHERS (Bunbury) [10.12]: In view of the funds at the Honorary Minister's disposal, I sympathise with him in his difficulties. He is up against a tough proposition. I desire to bring under his notice the conditions prevailing at the Bunbury Hospital, a Government hospital, the conduct of which does not compare favourably with private hospitals running in opposition.

The Bunbury Hospital has two doctors who take it turn about, month by month, to act as residential medical officer. There is no definite resident medical officer. The position would not be so bad were it not that these two doctors have a certain amount of control over and some interest in private hospitals. When injured people who are entitled to compensation come in from the country, they are recommended to go into a private hospital, the doctors knowing that there is money coming and that the hospital will get its fees. It is true that such patients do not get any better treatment at the private hospital than they would at the Bunbury hospital. Indigent cases are all sent to the Government hospital, and the State has to stand the loss. I know the Honorary Minister realises the position, because I have been rather a pest to him as the results of requests made to some people who are indigent and not in a position to pay their hospital dues. The Minister has been good enough to write off about £50 of such dues in all.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: In cases where it has been absolutely impossible to collect.

Mr. Lambert: That is the only reason which would prompt you to write an amount off.

Mr. WITHERS: A petition is being circulated now, asking that the Bunbury Hospital should be placed under the control of a board. I realise how difficult it is for a Minister to be in charge of a hospital 120 miles away from Perth. I have had complaints from patients in the Bunbury Hospital regarding the food supplied. They are patients in fairly good health, but suffering from injury. The matron informed me that the provision was according to the departmental dietary scale. By the time one comes to Perth to lodge the complaint with the department and somebody is sent to Bunbury to investigate the matter, the patient in all probability has taken his departure. If a local board were appointed, these complaints could be investigated on the spot and remedied straight away. The same thing applies regarding fees. The Minister for Health causes inquiries to be made when applications are made for a remission of dues. At the same time, I do not think the Minister has at his disposal the same facilities as would be available to a local board, because the local people would know the conduct of the patient and could investigate the mat-

ter more advantageously. Again the Minister has my sympathy in that regard. The surroundings of the Bunbury Hospital are anything but what they should be. The local municipal council has taken over the grounds with a view to beautifying them.

Mr. Sampson: Is the honour drive to be proceeded with?

Mr. WITHERS: Yes, but the municipality is a poorer institution than even the Public Health Department and is up against the financial problem. However, if a local board of control were appointed, more interest would be taken in the institution.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: There is no objection to handing it over if you can get the board.

Mr. WITHERS: I am endeavouring to bring that about, for I believe it would be much better for us. The amount provided for Government and public hospitals is inadequate, but I trust that arrangements will be made to enable patients to be properly catered for and not necessitate them being sent to private hospitals for treatment.

MR. TEESDALE (Roebourne) [10.18]: I have nothing to compliment the Honorary Minister about because I have not had anything from him. I am rather inclined to support the member for Kimberley (Mr. Coverley). We seldom make complaints, unless we hear these very self-satisfied members from the rural districts. It makes one, to speak figuratively, sweat blood when one hears the remarks of some of these members. The flood of adulation causes the Honorary Minister to get behind the Speaker's dais to hide his blushes. It makes one bewildered to hear that the member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) is able to get £5,000 for his hospital without the slightest advertising. It takes a long time to get £5,000. I seem to start three years ahead, at the end of which time a small amount that I may be seeking is just about landed.

Mr. Thomson: It took me over 10 years.

Mr. TEESDALE: It seems as though all some members have to do is to inveigle the Minister down to the Great Southern or somewhere in the Midland districts and the next thing we know is that £5,000 is made available for some local hospital. No wonder it makes the member for Kimberley a little unsettled. There is no doubt about it, the position at Hall's Creek is perfectly dreadful. The member for Kimberley was not exaggerating when he referred to what obtains up North. He was not exaggerating

when he talked about the unfortunate man, with a shattered limb, pushing along in an old tin Lizzie for a distance of 250 miles or more. If that were done down here in the metropolitan area or in the country districts, what a howl there would be! We would have scare headings in the "Daily News" and half a column in the "West," and something scathing in the "Sunday Times." If such a thing happened down south, we would have indignation meetings at Katanning and elsewhere and deputations would wait upon the Minister for Public Health protesting against such a scandalous affair. We have been putting up with these things for 40 years in the North. In Roebourne there was only one poor unfortunate woman struggling with the maternity cases requiring attention there. I did not see any sympathetic letters, nor did I hear any objection taken to the that sort of thing. That was just up North and I suppose it was good enough for them. It makes one feel pained when we hear members talking about their beautiful airy wards, wide spacious verandahs and all the other advantages that are enjoyed down here. It seems to me that down here the people are getting a good deal of what we would like a little up North. I cannot get the Honorary Minister to visit our part of the State and certainly I cannot get the Premier. We shall have to organise an expedition led by the member for Kimberley, backed up by myself and assisted by the member for Pilbara (Mr. Lamond).

Mr. Withers: The Royal Commission will fix that up.

Mr. TEESDALE: I would like to take members up North and show them what our people have to put up with. It is only once a year that I inflict this sort of complaint upon hon. members, but the fact remains that these disabilities exist. It is rotten that we should be subject to southern laws and southern regulations. It is iniquitous. Even if there is a small deficit in connection with the Medical and Health Department, it should not be forgotten that there are such places as Hall's Creek and other hospitals where they could do with a little more medical assistance. Just imagine what happens up there. A man may have to race to Marble Bar, 120 miles away, in order to attend a case there. Before the doctor gets properly going, a serious case is reported from Hedland and the doctor has to duck over to see what can be done. Before he gets there,

there is a report of a serious accident at the De Grey. It is a dreadful position, because someone must suffer. If one receives attention, the others have to be neglected in the meantime.

The Premier: What a dreadful place it is for accidents!

Mr. TEESDALE: I referred to only one accident and two cases of illness. I know the Premier realises that I am not exaggerating. When we consider the thousands of windmills that are used in the North, it is little wonder that serious accidents occur. Yet I do not know of any other part that is so destitute of medical attention. Still, the people put up with the conditions and possibly will continue to do so. Some of the doctors have a hard existence, but I do not know that I need say much about that. I think there is one old chap who has been up there too long. I do not think he gives the crowd a chance to-day. He is apt to adopt too drastic methods. He is the sort of man who says to himself: "This is my chance to get home on this chap for all time." And he does so. That sort of thing should not be allowed. The Government should see that an alteration is made. The member for Kimberley has to stand the racket regarding this particular matter.

The Premier: But we get considerable revenue from his fines.

Mr. TEESDALE: And thank God I was instrumental in getting some of it back. I do not think we are too friendly since that time. I would plead with the Minister, should he have a few pounds that he can make available at any time; to send up a medical man to work through the district.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: By aeroplane?

Mr. TEESDALE: I do not know that I need complain too much. Our hospital is without a lot of the windows and the floor boards are broken here and there, so that the people have to walk carefully from plank to plank. However, we do not complain so long as things do not get too serious.

HON. S. W. MUNSIE (Honorary Minister—Hannans—in reply) [10.25]: The member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) said that I had not referred to the Wooroloo Sanatorium. I did not do so in my opening remarks. Some considerable time ago a departmental committee was appointed consisting of three doctors, the secretary of the Health Department and the Under Secretary

to the Chief Secretary. The committee made a thorough investigation and submitted a very fine report. The Government have agreed to adopt the recommendations, but I cannot say definitely when the alterations at Wooroloo will actually take place. An expenditure of between £500 and £600 is necessary at West Subiaco to carry out alterations before we can transfer some of the patients from Wooroloo to the West Subiaco institution. Nothing can be done until that work is completed. The present sanatorium at Wooroloo is not a sanatorium at all. The conditions that obtain there do not give the doctors a fair chance and certainly the patients who are suffering from tuberculosis are not given a fair chance. I hope that the committee's recommendations will be carried out as soon as possible. With regard to the deep-therapy treatment at the Perth Hospital, the position there is similar to that regarding other matters. The necessary money cannot be obtained yet. While I have been in charge of the department I have made arrangements regarding that treatment and I understand that to date five people have received deep-therapy treatment for growths, principally for cancer.

Mr. Richardson: Successfully?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: I cannot say. I know that in two instances the treatment was unsuccessful, but in one instance the doctor tells me that he believes the treatment will be wholly successful. I trust that he is right. We have entered into an agreement with the two doctors who have deep-therapy plants and we get a concession for the people we send to them for treatment. The member for Swan also mentioned that great credit should be given to the local boards of health. I do not wish to detract from the work they are doing, but the position throughout Western Australia regarding health inspection is not what it should be. I can reply to the statements for both the member for Forrest (Miss Holman) and the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) in the one explanation. The member for Forrest referred to country inspections and the letter she read was not the only one of that description received by the department. There are two or three other country districts where secretaries have been appointed for the road boards. In some instances the secretaries are also the health inspectors if such officers are appointed. They say that first of all his qualifications must be those of an engineer, and secondly those of a clerical man, while

his qualifications as a health inspector take only third place.

Mr. North: That used to be so even in Cottesloe.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: There is a scheme afoot at present. The Health Department are circularising the various health authorities to see if it can be put into operation without cost to the State. Dr. Atkinson informs me that he believes it can be made workable. The idea is to map out the State into districts and get one inspector to cover as many as six of them. Dr. Atkinson says that in closely settled districts one man could do more than six. Under this system the amount that each local authority would have to pay towards the inspector's salary would be very small indeed.

Mr. Heron: In some districts the local authorities are compelled to have qualified health inspectors, whilst in others it is not insisted upon. Why the difference?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Simply because we have not the power to enforce it in all districts. At every seaport we have the power.

Mr. Heron: But ours is not a seaport.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: The matter did not come before me for consideration. We have power to compel a municipality to appoint a fully qualified health inspector, but I know it is not done in all instances. Where the local authority does appoint a health inspector, I contend that that inspector should have the highest qualifications.

Mr. Latham: You mean for the money available.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: He should have at least the qualifications of a health inspector. In many places those appointed health inspectors do not know as much about the work as I do.

Mr. Sampson: Still they are diligent in carrying out instructions.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: That is not the point. If such a man is not fully qualified, he is not fit for the job. The member for Wagin (Mr. Stubbs) asked whether any part of the increase in the Vote was due to increased salaries for nurses. I may tell him that £80 is for annual grade increases, while £800 is for increased salaries to nurses. The member for Claremont (Mr. North) said he thought the Health Department was not taking sufficiently drastic action to compel people to have their places sewered or, alternatively, to go in for septic tanks. In a municipality having a qualified health in-

spector and a local health board, the Health Department has no power, except in respect of public buildings. I have had some conversations with the Principal Medical Officer and with Dr. Dale on the subject of septic tanks, and I am not satisfied that the system adopted in many places in Claremont is the best possible. The Health Department is not enamoured of the system. It may be all right in isolated cases, but if it were generally adopted it would lead to trouble.

Mr. North. It is compulsory in Adelaide.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: The member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) raised a point in respect of the work being done at the Katanning hospital by the local Comforts Fund Committee. Whilst I give that committee every credit for the good work they are doing, I must say that there is at the Perth Hospital a similar committee doing three times the amount of work. The member for Kimberley (Mr. Coverley) stressed the necessity for appointing a doctor for Hall's Creek. I took up the request when previously he made it. I went fully into it and got the Principal Medical Officer to consider it. Dr. Atkinson says it would not be possible to get any doctor to go there for less than £1,000 per annum, and it is doubtful if even at that salary any medical man would stop there for 12 months. Already we are subsidising the institution there, with its two nurses, and while I sympathise very much with the hon. member's request, still if we have to spend up to £1,000 to provide a medical practitioner for every similarly small community—of which we have many—the Treasurer will not have a shilling left for anything else. The member for Bunbury (Mr. Withers) brought up the question of allowing the local hospital to revert to a local committee. If he can get a committee to take it over, he is welcome to it. We have no objection to the hospital going back to a local committee.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: Does that apply to Albany also?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Yes, certainly. We do not want to run a hospital if the local people will take it over and run it for themselves. As to the point mentioned by the member for Bunbury in respect of accident cases and the private hospitals, I have heard that from other places. Since the new Workers' Compensation Act has come into operation and people meeting with

accidents are entitled to expenses up to £100, there is no doubt that in some districts the doctors are making a welter of it. I do not know how we can overcome the difficulty. As to the point raised by the member for Roebourne (Mr. Teesdale), I admit that he has not had any extra assistance for his constituency from the Medical Department during the past year and a half. On these Estimates he has had a fair deal. The Government are spending a considerable amount of money up there in another direction, even though it is not being spent by the Health Department.

Item—Wooroloo Sanatorium, £14,232:

Mr. SAMPSON: I should like to hear from the Honorary Minister what has been done concerning the installation of an X-ray plant at this institution.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: It was decided that if the committee's recommendation were put into effect, and X-ray plant would be supplied. That has been done. We believe even with that we are saving £300 this year.

Item—School hygiene, school dentist, £500:

Mr. SLEEMAN: Will this officer operate in one particular area, or all over the State?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: When the Estimates are passed, applications will be invited for the position of school dentist. He will work in the metropolitan area to begin with.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.43 p.m.