

This brings me to another point. I sincerely hope the Commonwealth Government, together with the State Government, will reconsider the question of a broad gauge railway linking Fremantle with Kalgoorlie and that it will traverse the areas surrounding Corrigin and Southern Cross, along the lines which have been recommended by the Royal Commission which recently took evidence on this matter. Apart from its value in wartime, I consider that the construction of this railway line would, in peacetime, serve a useful purpose in opening up and developing the areas I have mentioned.

Referring to the tourist traffic for a moment, I sincerely hope the Government will, with the assistance of Commonwealth money, be able to develop it more than has been done in the past. It is an extremely profitable business, and I trust that the subsidy, which I understand has been granted to some local governing bodies, will be extended to all of them because I consider that the development of the tourist traffic is a matter that is far beyond the resources of any local governing body. I hope, therefore, that this money will be forthcoming to enable this tourist business to be properly developed to the advantage of the State in general.

I wish to express my appreciation for the bus service which has been provided by the Government to serve the Ravenshorpe, Hopetoun and Lake Grace areas. This is a commendable step by the Railway Department. I hope that it will prove to be all that the people have long desired in that part of the State. I would also like to commend the Honorary Minister for Agriculture for the manner in which he has dealt with the question of soil erosion, which presents another major problem in Western Australia. I trust that as a result of the efforts being made today, we shall be able to see the benefits in the near future which will, of course, be of great advantage to the agricultural areas.

In conclusion, I thank members for their patient hearing. I realise that they fully appreciate my feelings today because they have all experienced the ordeal of making a maiden speech in this House. I will terminate my remarks by saying that we live in a State which offers to its people and to all those migrants who are entering it, great opportunities. There are still many benefits which this State can confer on its people, and it is up to each and every one of us, in our own individual way, to work and strive for their achievement. This will require faith, perseverance and a will to work. By such means we shall achieve our rightful place in this, our Commonwealth of Australia. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

**HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (North)** [5.51]: In supporting the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply, I wish to refer briefly to some remarks made by Mr. Hearn regarding the North Province and which I wish to correct. I do not think the hon. member was quite conversant with his subject. For instance, he suggested that the Labour Government has never done anything for the North and to refute this statement I will quote an extract from the report on the North-West of Western Australia by a committee appointed by the Government to investigate measures necessary to promote the development of the North-West, which was published in 1945, wherein it says:—

#### Debt Adjustments.

Following on the recommendations made by the Royal Commission, the Government in 1941 appointed a Debt Adjustments Committee to carry out the agreement reached between the Stock and Wool-broking firms, one of the Associated Banks, the Pastoralists' Association, and the Government. A representative of each was appointed on the Committee which is known as the Pastoral Industry Debt Adjustment Advisory Committee. The whole of the adjustments made during the four years it has been in operation was made voluntarily.

Since 1936 the Government, on the recommendation of the Pastoral Appraisal Board, has granted relief from the payment of pastoral lease rents.

It was the Willcock Labour Government that achieved that. It goes on to say—

The figures for the first four years of this voluntary scheme, and the rent remissions, tell a remarkable story of assistance. They are as follows:—

Number of stations in respect of which assistance was given = 66.

	£
Amount written off by secured creditors .....	386,932
Relief granted under Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act .....	36,813
Rent on Leases remitted	94,051
Government contribution of interest .....	49,237
<b>Total Relief for 66 stations .....</b>	<b>567,033</b>

That is something at least, which the Labour Government, in those years, did do to assist the North-West.

Hon. L. Craig: The stock firms also wrote off some large amounts.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: That is correct, but here is one which the Government wrote off—

Rent on Leases remitted	£94,051
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Many pastoralists would not be in existence today had it not been for the remissions granted by the Willcock Government. There may have been others there, too, who obtained relief from the stock firms.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Look what the Commonwealth Labour Government did for the North-West, too.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I have quoted those figures in order to correct the misstatement made by Mr. Hearn. The hon. member also stated that there were 5,000 people in the North but the 1941 census showed that there were 7,600. Since then two towns have grown up and another one—Carnarvon—has increased its population. The number living at Wittenoom Gorge has now reached the 400 mark and it is expected that there will be 1,000 people there in the next 18 months.

Yampi Sound has grown also and the population has increased out of all reckoning. There are now 1,500 people on the Gascoyne roll which before had only about 900 recorded and in the Carnarvon district there are over 2,000 men, women and children. I do not wish to say anything further as to the hon. member's remarks on the North because obviously he is not aware of the conditions existing and, like many others, he has probably just flown over it. There are a few members in this House who know the district fairly well and Sir Charles Latham is one of them.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Members want to go over it on horseback.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It is worse if one walks.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I will take this opportunity of thanking you, Sir, and all of the members in this Chamber for the kind advice which has been tendered to me as a newcomer to this House. I will now endeavour to take members on a trip through the North Province and I hope the going will not be too rough. The boundaries of the North Province extend from the Murchison River in the south to the Northern Territory border in the north. It has an area of over 500,000 square miles; more than half of Western Australia. Although it comprises approximately one-sixth of Australia, which has a population, today, of about 8,000,000, the North Province contains only one-thousandth part of that total. This thinly populated area with its untapped resources and wealth, which do exist, might quite easily be, as the hon. member said, the envy of the densely populated countries lying to the north of this continent.

Hon. G. Bennetts: There are 200,000,000 people there awaiting to grab it.

Hon. W. R. Hall: What! Two hundred million!

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: There is one answer to this problem and although Mr. Hearn was bordering upon it he did not express it. The answer is: Populate the North. But the next question is: Where are we going to put the people? We must first have the land to populate and provide for those who are already there. The hon. member was certainly bordering on the question with the ideas he put forward but I do not know why he did not go further. Perhaps Mr. Heenan put him off his cue.

Hon. G. Bennetts: He did mention the Kimberleys.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: That was one reason put forward. How long are we to be permitted to carry on with this thinly populated country? It is not for us to say these days. How long will the rest of the world let us carry on? That is the question, and it is something which all of us should sleep on and think about. To my mind, inaccessibility is the barrier that has retarded and is still holding back the development of the North. I believe that the Great Northern-highway, which is the road which runs right up the coast serving all the ports—

Hon. R. M. Forrest: That is the coastal highway.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: —should be made a good all-weather road and, as a result, quite a lot of tourist traffic would follow. I believe that our 2,000 miles of coastline, which stretches right up round the North-West Cape and then north-eastwards to Cape Londonderry and Wyndham, would provide many attractions for tourists. The tourist trade is a profitable one for small businesses, but it has a more profitable side than that because it leads to the opening up of the country. Provide roads and people will follow. That has been the experience elsewhere, and the North would prove no exception. Under existing conditions, however, the North is shut off and is practically unknown.

When I speak of the natural resources and the wealth in that part of the State, I remind members that there are many minerals known to exist in the country between the Murchison and Hall's Creek and in the Kimberleys, and they have barely been scratched. Among these minerals are gold, copper, silver-lead, tantalite, beryllium and many others, and I believe that even diamonds have been found. Practically all known minerals exist there, but the trouble is that they cannot be worked economically. The gold-mining areas of Marble Bar and Nullagine have been worked, and prospectors have had their shows, but once any business fails to pay, the tendency is for those engaged in it to leave.

We know of the mineral resources in the shape of blue asbestos that are being exploited at Wittenoom Gorge, and there are various other sorts of asbestos in the

Pilbara district which are said to be the largest known deposits in the world. The provision of a mill at Roebourne, similar to a State battery, to mill the white asbestos raised by the smaller prospectors, would be a great help and would permit many of these men to operate economically. I should like to see the Government provide a mill of that sort. The iron-ore deposits at Yampi are of immense value. Their accessibility and the ability of ships to load alongside the cliffs and transport the ore to Whyalla or Port Kembla are advantageous features. Such a natural asset is of immense importance, as the Japanese obviously realised.

One might say, too, that commercial fishing along this coastline of more than 2,000 miles has not been touched. There are six or seven boats operating in those waters, boats with modern refrigeration for snap freezing, but they are hampered by the fact that they cannot get their fish to market. At this season of the year, when all the boats except the "Kybra" are busy bringing down frozen meat to maintain the metropolitan meat supply, the fishermen in the North cannot get space. The two seasons clash; the shortage of meat here is accompanied by a shortage of space on the boats. I travelled down on the "Kybra" last month, and the agent at Carnarvon told me he had 500 bags of fish each weighing about 120lb. for shipment, and the boat could not take them. One fisherman from Dirk Hartog's Island went to Carnarvon Jetty, and was told that the boat could take only one-third of his lot.

Fish is available in large quantities and at all times but the marketing difficulties prevent the expansion of the industry. If the northern highway were completed, refrigerated trucks could provide the requisite transport to bring the fish south. We have had experience of refrigerated trucks being used to transport fish from a point 80 miles south of Carnarvon to Albany. That seems hardly credible, but it has happened. I believe that great wealth could be obtained if the fishing industry in the North were developed. Apart from commercial fishing, we at last have Australians engaged in the whaling industry. Prior to the North-West Whaling Co. starting operations at Point Cloates, the owners were foreigners.

We also have the Commonwealth whaling concern—a big £6,000,000 concern which the present State Government nearly drove out of the North. I assert that because there is only one other site along the whole of the North-West coast where fresh water is available in sufficient quantities to cater for a whaling station, and that is at Point Cloates. The Chifley Government suggested the only other place. The people of the North want to see industries started there because they realise that the country must be populated. The Commonwealth station is not

yet being operated. There has been some messing about between the two Governments and delay has resulted, but the intention is to start operating this month, though not much can be expected by way of results as it is now too late in the season. Between the two concerns, the whaling industry certainly promises to bring dollars to Australia, which will be a very good thing.

We had a shark industry at Carnarvon. It was established by an experimental company which spent £100,000. Sir James Mitchell and Sir Charles Latham inspected the place in 1927. Sharks are to be had there in tons. Scientists who came from Europe told us they proposed to catch sharks weighing tons, and we laughed at them; but they were as good as their word, and some of the sharks weighed two tons. They were certainly enormous fish. The company treated everything; the only portions thrown away, so far as I can remember, were the jawbone and the teeth. I understand that the company considered that it could obtain 20 or more by-products from the shark. However, that venture was lost to the State because the company found that it could operate more economically on the South African coast, where cheaper labour was available. A proposal was put to the State Government of the day that indentured labour should be obtained to man the industry, just as it was used in the pearling industry, but we were told that this could not be done, and so that industry was lost to the State. The sharks are still there waiting to be picked up.

The seabed up there is swarming with crayfish and the tails exported to America are proving a good dollar-earner. I am glad to see that a departmental boat is in the North investigating the industry. Dealing with other resources of the North, there is every prospect of oil being found in the Kimberleys. Companies have been boring for a long time without success, but we have been informed that the North-West Cape prospects are promising.

Let me now speak of the Kimberleys and the fertile land there. To my way of thinking, the Kimberleys represent the most valuable spot of perhaps any part of this State, and I think experience will prove that. Progress with the Ord River venture is painfully slow; there is still a lot of experimenting to find out what can be done there. Unquestionably, soil and rainfall conditions are favourable, and the climate is good, but I think that before anything can be done in the way of closer settlement, it will be necessary to do what I expected Mr. Hearn to mention, namely, let private enterprise show what is possible by cutting up leases. That would be far better than leaving the land tied up as it is now, because that is what is happening. Only this year, an English com-

pany paid £250,000 for a station in the Kimberleys, and I am curious to know whether the Government intends to sink bores for a company that can afford to pay such a price for a property. We have read that so much money is to be spent on stock routes and bores, and I should like to know the reason why the Government has to provide it.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Before tea I was dealing with the huge leases in the eastern or northern Kimberleys in the Ord River section. I am curious to know if the taxpayers are, in effect, going to put down watering places on those huge areas owned by large companies which can pay £250,000 for them. What is to be the result if, for instance, there is a resumption of land on a big scale for closer settlement? Would the Government have to buy back its own improvements? Would it be repurchasing the land at an inflated value owing to its higher carrying capacity by paying for improvements which, after 70 years of settlement, the companies have not carried out? They have simply grazed their cattle and used the natural watering places, causing erosion there in consequence. That is admitted, and is that the reason why the Government proposes to provide these improvements?

I think it would be unworthy, after the country had been eroded, the goodness taken out of it and huge profits made from it, for the people of Australia to be asked then to put it into workable order again. I am curious to know just what is going to happen with respect to these big areas, because there are millions of acres—not just small leases—controlled by large companies. Despite the fact that some of them have had the advantage of free native labour, they have done very little in the way of improvements to ensure the carrying capacity of the properties. That poses this question: Are they really graziers, or are they investors? I am speaking now of the big companies that have bought up to £250,000 worth of leases. Do they know what the Government is going to spend? Or that there will be a re-sale value?

That is what I am interested to know. We are aware that there are huge areas of good land in the Kimberleys, along the rivers, which, no doubt, in the years to come will be turned into very profitable dairy and cattle-raising country. With closer settlement and irrigation the same could be done there as has been done with the South-West; in fact, more could be done because the soil is better and the tons and tons of super required in the southern part of the State are not needed in the North.

We read a lot about Air Beef. That is something new and revolutionary in regard to transport, and it is a very good thing,

for the inaccessible stations such as Glen Roy and the group there that are being served at the moment. The Kimberleys are very inaccessible, and perhaps only that type of transport could serve that group. But from a national point of view it is, in my opinion, uneconomical. I would prefer to see, rather than this Air Beef extended generally, the three Kimberley towns linked with roads whereby the graziers could move their stock, either alive or in refrigerated vans, as they desired. They could kill as they are doing now and move the carcasses by means of road transport. The roads would then open up other ventures in the country such as, perhaps, goldmining at Halls Creek, which was the first goldmining centre in Western Australia.

There are other minerals in the Kimberleys. There is plenty of asbestos. That area would also grow tropical fruits, which are being experimented with now. From an economic point of view, transport by air is not paying the taxpayers of Australia, at any rate. Air Beef is subsidised to the extent of 1d. per lb. by the Commonwealth Government. The average weight of the beasts last year was, in round figures, I understand, 660lb. delivered at the Wyndham meatworks. At 1d. per lb. that amounts to £2 15s. per beast. That is what the subsidy amounts to in order to shift a beast from Glen Roy aerodrome to Wyndham aerodrome, a distance of 180 miles. Who shifts it from the Wyndham aerodrome to Wyndham—another 7 miles—I do not know. That requires more expense because refrigerated vans pick it up there and take it to the meatworks.

Whether Air Beef pays for that cartage or not, I am not prepared to say because I have not investigated that matter. I presume the Government does. The Government also provides the abattoirs. Still, Air Beef is possibly something quite new and I am not attacking it from that angle, but drawing attention to the fact that it is not an economical proposition. We are told that by transporting the beef by air to Wyndham it is possible to land 100lb. more meat in the chillers than would be the case if the beasts were driven in. If we take the 1d. per lb. subsidy, which amounts to £2 15s. per beast, and work it out at the extra 100lb. of meat, we find that that amount of 100lb. costs about 6d. per lb.

Another thing against the extension of Air Beef rather than the development of roads—I have no objection to Air Beef being extended providing roads are built as well—is this, that an airline, generally speaking, constitutes a monopoly in its particular sphere. It needs a highly skilled and trained staff to operate aircraft. On the other hand, when I was at Wyndham in February I saw aborigines driving big diesel trucks over the so-called roads there. Another point is this, that with

Air Beef the producer has little choice. He has either to put his commodity on the plane or drive it in, whereas if roads were constructed there would be competition and, perhaps, a better service would be provided for him.

Air Beef, I claim, will not put one more person in the Kimberleys. It is something seasonal, the same as shearing. There would be a team of butchers moving around the same as a team of shearers travels around today. Those men are not residents but are only there for a few months of the year. If it is the ambition of the Government to populate the country with cattle, that is all right, but if it wants to put human beings there and populate it with people, I cannot see how that is going to fit in.

Moving to the West Kimberleys, I suppose the sheep stations there are the only ones—in my province anyway—that have reasonably held their own in numbers of sheep in the last half-century since they have been grazing sheep. The numbers on the Fitzroy sheep stations are not much lower today than they were 50 years ago. As against this, there is an improvement because in those days I think the average fleece was about 3½lb.—it was on some stations in the Kimberleys—whereas today, with improvements in breeding, the pastoralists have increased that by about 100 per cent. I would not be certain on that point, but I think that is so. Therefore with the sheep industry in the Kimberleys, if the losses are down, probably the tonnage of wool will be up.

I point out that the meatworks at Broome is the only stable industry there. It will be stable as long as cattle are sent there. The pearlshell industry, unfortunately, has declined to a great extent. Now there are only about a score of boats operating as against about 350 when I was there in 1920. That is due not to any shortage of shell in the seabed, but to the fact, evidently, that the buying of the shell has got into the hands of one man. There is only one buyer there, from what I can hear. In consequence, he just purchases what he wants and the market is more or less controlled by that one buyer—I think America is the buyer concerned. The people in the pearling industry sadly miss the Japanese divers at Broome. No-one has been able to replace the Jap as a diver even though many nationalities have been tried out. We must hand it to the Jap; he certainly is a first-class diver. Consequently, the pearlshellers in Broome are not receiving the return, from the labour they employ, that they did when employing Japanese divers.

I would like to see a road built from Broome into the cattle country of the Fitzroy to ensure the life of the Broome works. Passing on from there, we travel down to the sheep country. That is from Broome down to the Murchison which is

the north-west section of our North. I suppose that would be approximately 1,000 miles as the crow flies. There the rainfall cuts out and the sheep men—the pastoralists—all over that area suffer setbacks from drought, depressions and unstable markets. Today, the markets are good but who knows what they may be in five years time. These pastoralists suffer from the ravages of all sorts of vermin; foxes and dingoes are the worst offenders.

Generally speaking, throughout that area the pastoralists are doing as much as possible with the land they have under their stewardship. There are, of course, isolated little places such as Carnarvon where perhaps a few hundred acres are cultivated. But, that can only be done economically at Carnarvon, and this will be the case until such time as our population increases tremendously. A few of the pastoralists are disgruntled and have a dislike for paying taxes. I do not think there are many of them but there are some who do not stock the country to its full carrying capacity. But, as against that there is the fact that these people are spelling or resting the country and although some of them may be disgruntled they are doing the nation a good turn.

Moving on to the question of banana production, the area used for plantations in Carnarvon is termed the Gascoyne irrigation area. It is a remarkable piece of land and the industry has grown up on its own merits without any financial assistance from Governments. In the first place it started through the depression period; the drought followed and then the war. People everywhere condemned the scheme, but today it is an industry producing a considerable sum of money and is a credit to the pioneers who stuck it out. Consequently most of them are wealthy men today. The financial institutions in Carnarvon at the time were two private banks and three stockbroking firms. These financial institutions claim that they assist in opening up the country in Australia by their loans. However, they would not advance one penny to banana growers and they would not give any credit for stores. They had no faith in the banana industry and no value was placed on the land. It was not even possible to mortgage a block.

How bad was their judgment? This was proved only three weeks ago when nine blocks of land were sold by auction by the Government. They averaged over £60 per acre. There was no re-sale value in the land. They were only four-acre blocks, in my opinion not quite large enough for a banana plantation. But, they were put up for auction and they brought over £60 per acre. It is bare windswept land that has stood there for 50 years—land with an upset price of about 60s. an acre and nobody would have it. So that instead of writing off losses, as the Government

has done for wool and meat, it has had the benefit of showing a profit out of the trial and error of the men who formed this irrigation area.

I wish to quote some production figures. For the financial year just ended—1949-50—a total of 73,911 cases of bananas was marketed in Perth at a market value of £278,688. For the financial year before that the figures were slightly less and this year they may also be less because of the drought conditions prevailing. From the 16th June to the 24th October of the same year—that is only about five months—a total of 140 tons of beans was marketed for a return of £19,431, making a total market value for the two crops of £298,119. With private treaty sales the sum would exceed £300,000. There is also a wide distribution of these sums and they are as follows:—Freights from Carnarvon to Perth would be, in round figures, £37,000; fruit cases, £18,000, and auctioneers' selling commission £20,902. On top of that there is the expense of running the plantations.

The last figures I quoted were for banana crops alone and on top of all those expenses is that of labour. It is not possible to get even a native to work for under 20s. a day. However, they do work if the owner is there to supervise. Bean freights are £37 a ton by air and £20 by road. On a fifty-fifty basis that would be £4,480 for freight and the auctioneers received £1,470 for selling the beans. From that members can see that these growers have done a wonderful job. There are between 150 and 200 growers producing on that irrigation area with a total of no more than 600 acres under cultivation. That area under cultivation returns a gross figure of £500 per acre. That, on a small area, is very high production. The area is only six miles long by one mile wide—six miles up the river and half a mile each side—and there must be between 600 and 700 people living there. They include the owners, their families and the labour employed.

I do not think I would be optimistic in predicting that as our population increases we will see canneries at Carnarvon similar to the canneries at Leeton on the Murrumbidgee irrigation area. They have a dry climate over there, but the area has been turned into a most productive stone fruit district. That is one town in Australia where bananas are not permitted. A heavy fine is the penalty for taking a banana into the Murrumbidgee irrigation area. I do not know why, but there must be some disease in the Eastern States, whereas in Carnarvon it is disease-free.

The Great Northern-highway, which links Geraldton and Carnarvon, is the life-line of the industries in Carnarvon itself. I believe that this road should be metalled and made into an all-weather road. An industry such as this deserves some protection and security. The people engaged in the industries up there depend upon this road to market their products. It is

metalled as far as the Murchison River and then there is a gap of about 240 miles from there to Carnarvon that is merely graded, and will not carry heavy transport. The road crumbles when it is dry and bogs down when it is wet.

Members must realise that bananas are highly perishable and will not stand any delay in transport; especially in the hot weather. On a still day, when there is not any breeze, they become "boiled." They go soapy inside and never ripen. This section of road is the expensive part of the journey. It costs approximately 10s. a case to bring bananas from Carnarvon to the market in Perth. That is about 1½d. per lb. on fruit with an average of 90lb. in a case. Importers in Perth can buy Eastern States' bananas, when they are cheap on the Eastern States' markets and land them here at the same price—10s. a case—and they are trans-shipped two or three times coming across by rail. I maintain that supplying the local market is the inherent right of local industry and all consideration should be given to metalling this road and ensuring that the producers at Carnarvon can land their fruit here at an economical price and be able to compete with the growers in the Eastern States. I think that is only reasonable.

Coming next to the air services to the northern areas, their regular flights are doing much for the North. Daily papers are available by that means, and fresh vegetables are transported in consequence of the subsidy paid by the Government. I sincerely hope the subsidy will continue all the year round. In asking for that I am not suggesting something that would be abused because it would automatically adjust itself. People living in the Kimberleys will not consider paying 2s. and 2s. 6d. per lb. for vegetables air-freighted from the south if they can grow their own. I am positive that the position would automatically adjust itself if the subsidies were continued all the year round.

The Department of Civil Aviation has come in for a lot of criticism, mostly from people who do not fully understand the work carried out. It is a Commonwealth department that paves the way for the air services that follow. It is responsible for building aerodromes, servicing them and keeping them in safe repair. It supplies weather information and is in constant radio touch with planes flying on the north-western routes. The work of the department, plus the air services, have made life in the Kimberleys quite bearable. Not enough can be said about this work although, as I have remarked, it has come in for so much criticism. The department is just as vital to the safe running of the air services as are harbours to shipping. Each provides similar services in its respective sphere.

Then again the Flying Doctor service has rendered admirable and invaluable service to the people living in the far North, and by means of the pedal radio much helpful advice and information have been made available. As an instance of what happens, I read in the newspaper the other day that a child at the Comet mine at Marble Bar was found at 3 o'clock in the afternoon to be very ill. Those concerned got in touch with the Flying Doctor with the result that the child was in the Port Hedland hospital by nightfall, which entailed a journey of over 200 miles for the doctor.

By way of contrast, I would remark that I was on the Noonkanbah Station on the Fitzroy at shearing time years ago. The team consisted of 50 men and over 40 of them were stricken down with malaria. We were five days traversing the 140 miles from Noonkanbah to Derby by horse and mule. That was by the regular mail service in those days. That comparison serves to indicate beyond all doubt that the present-day air service with the Flying Doctor available has proved a great institution. Dealing next with the housing position in the North the shortage there is just as great as in the South or elsewhere. It grieves me when I sit here and hear members speaking about thousands of houses in their provinces. If we could get 50 erected in the North pretty well everyone would be satisfied.

To give due credit to the State Housing Commission I have to say that after all these years the first State rental home in Carnarvon has been occupied by the local medical officer. Of course, the house is just a beach shack, consisting of two rooms and a small verandah at each side. The kitchen is at one end of the building and the bathroom and other conveniences at the opposite end. The place is so small that the doctor cannot put all his furniture into the rooms. He had been houseless in Carnarvon for over two years, the previous medical quarters having been burnt down. In consequence, over all that period there was no house for the doctor nor was there any surgery where anyone could consult him. The practice was for everyone to line up on the verandah of the hospital and wait their turn for attention there.

It is just about 12 months since the Premier stated in "The West Australian" that the health of the people of Carnarvon was the Government's and his first concern. He said that, or words to that effect, when he was defending the Government's attitude in attempting to prevent the Federal Labour Government from embarking upon a £6,000,000 whaling venture at Carnarvon. What has happened about the health of those people? Let us see how really concerned the Premier is about

it. When the Government took office in 1947 plans were drawn up and the money was available for the construction of a new hospital at Carnarvon.

What has happened to them I do not know, but evidently they were cancelled, as I will show later on. The point is that nothing was heard about the matter until the 10th February of this year. The Minister for Health visited Carnarvon on a pre-election tour and she told a public meeting this—

I have come to Carnarvon especially to see the new school and the hospital and I am convinced that Carnarvon is in urgent need of a new hospital.

That statement was given a half-inch headline in the local paper, "The Northern Times" of the 16th February. The people were buoyed up in consequence of what the Minister had promised, but again nothing happened until the Premier came along a month later. On the 17th March he addressed a very large public meeting in the hall at Carnarvon. Mr. Forrest was there at the time. In the course of his speech the Premier said—

An amount of £7,000 has been allotted for improvements but a new hospital would be built as soon as possible.

The L.C.L. candidates were beaten at the election—and the hospital disappeared. The people are getting a bit worried about the hospital and are wondering what is going to happen. Are they to wait until just before the next election when the matter will be attended to and then the present Government will be able to say that they have made the necessary provision?

Is all this so much tomfoolery and mere political propaganda in the shape of repeated promises? The agitation continued on the part of everyone concerned at Carnarvon and in due course the member for Gascoyne again wrote to the Minister for Health and the reply received was dated the 22nd June, 1950, and read—

Dear Mr. Wise,—With reference to your letter of the 15th instant and your subsequent interview with the Under Secretary, I have to advise you that the Government is prepared to proceed with the theatre block—

That was what the £7,000 was for—

—of the Carnarvon hospital as soon as the plans and specifications are prepared and a contract let.

I remind members that the plans and specifications were already drawn up in 1947. The letter proceeds—

I hope, however, that it will be possible to proceed with more extensive work, but am unable to commit myself at this stage, pending the consideration of the many building projects which face the Government.

That is the position. Election time comes along and there is the promise of the hospital and everything else! Election day passes and the hospital and everything else is forgotten. That is the unfair part of it. Should anyone become sick and need special attention, there is no place in the North-West that can offer the necessary facilities. That means that the people in that part of the State are subjected to very heavy expenses, including aeroplane fares which were raised 25 per cent. this year. This was quite unfair. If the Government cannot provide the necessary services to deal with the health of the people it should at least refund the plane fares, provided that the patient is armed with the necessary doctor's certificate as to his condition of health, the necessity for x-ray treatment and consultation with specialists.

The present situation is very serious. Some 2,000 people are living within an eight-mile radius of the Carnarvon hospital. At that institution 16 beds are available apart from four in the maternity block which is in a separate building. In the hospital there are two wards with four beds each and the other eight beds are on the verandah. As I remarked earlier there is no consulting room and patients have to queue up on the verandah. The doctor there told me that he had 80 odd surgical cases waiting for treatment but he cannot attend to them. There is no provision for separating medical from surgical cases and patients are mixed up in the wards. In these circumstances it becomes necessary at times for patients to travel to Perth by plane, and that involves them in great expense.

Carnarvon is there to stay and the population at that centre will not fade away. The people have proved their bona fides and have surmounted every test including the depression period, droughts and so forth. They are certainly there to stay, providing the Government will co-operate particularly in maintaining the road from Carnarvon in a condition that will enable the growers to operate economically.

With regard to the shipping position, the State ships were put on the coast by a Labour Government to serve the people of the North-West, but they are not always operated with that end in view. In fact, that objective is not kept in mind for the most part and the people in the northern towns have suffered in consequence. The State ships were to provide a service for the North just as the railways were constructed to serve the people in southern portions of the State. We find, however, that the ships often by-pass North-West ports in order to cater for the requirements of the Darwin people, in consequence of which cargo for our northern ports is often left behind. That is not a fair thing.

Most of the Carnarvon cargo goes back overland with the banana trucks at a much higher freight than the ordinary shipping freight. So the boats are relieved of much of that cargo. But it is not fair that the northern ports should be by-passed and that the boats should travel to Darwin and then return with perishables. I have seen potatoes taken to Wyndham which had gone to Darwin first and the storekeeper receiving them would not have had 33 per cent. saleable potatoes out of a bag. Those potatoes are supposed to go out to the men in the bush and to the station staffs by air services—but there are none to be sent.

I was present when the manager of the Carlton station came across the river at the bend of the Ord, and the first thing he asked was, "Have you got the spuds on?" He was told by the carrier, "I am very sorry but the potatoes were all bad." It is hardly a fair thing that a service which is supposed to be provided for the people is becoming an interstate instead of a State service. There is another bad practice indulged in by the State Shipping Service in regard to booking tourists on its boats. There is only one passenger boat going to the far North. I refer to the "Koolinda." The "Kybra" can carry only twelve passengers. The practice of booking tourists months ahead and filling up the passenger list in Perth is detrimental to the interests of residents in the North. Those residents are allowed concession fares, but they are seldom able to get on the boat to take advantage of them.

Women living at Wyndham are permitted to make the return trip on the "Koolinda" for £20 but they are rarely able to obtain accommodation and they have to use the plane, which is the only other service available. The plane fare is £50 and members can realise that a working man cannot afford to shift his family about at £50 a time for his wife and half-fare for his children: it is altogether out of the question. The few days that these women could have on the water if accommodation were available might well be the first respite they had received from their housekeeping or other occupation. It might well be the only time that they really had a rest—a well-deserved rest for anybody who happens to live in that tropical climate. I hope that the Government will not be induced by Mr. Bennetts to take the "Kybra" off the North-West run. It is doing a wonderful job as far as Port Hedland.

Hon. G. Bennetts: It was taken away from us at Esperance.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: With its shallow draught, it is the only boat on the coast that can always negotiate the shallow channels at Port Hedland and Shark Bay and into Point Cloates these days, while the whaling station is open. It would be a tragedy for the people—especially those of Port Hedland, Marble



Bar and the Nullagine district—if the "Kybra" were taken off that run; and I hope it never will be.

Last month the "Kybra" was diverted from its course and ordered to call at Onslow, coming south from Port Hedland, to pick up 35 drums of dieseline and take them to the whaling station at Point Cloates. It was not originally scheduled to do that but the order was received while the vessel was on its way up the coast. As a result of that trip, the boat would earn £10 or £12 in freight; but it lost 16 hours, and that would cost somewhere about £150—in order to earn £10. I think that is leaning a little heavily on a public service.

The whaling people at Point Cloates have a weekly overland service and could have obtained dieseline from Carnarvon in that way. It would have cost them probably £30; whereas by having it carried on the boat, the cost was only £10 or £12. However, it cost the taxpayers about £150. On top of that, the vessel was one day behind in schedule as a result. One day does not seem very much down here, but it means a lot to the storekeepers in Carnarvon, Port Hedland, Onslow and Roebourne because they order goods from boat to boat. Commodities will not keep in the North as they do down here.

Such goods as cheese and bacon are carried as near to schedule as possible so that there will be no loss. On this occasion, however, the boat was turned aside and the people at Port Hedland and Marble Bar did not matter at all so long as the whaling station was saved some £20. Water supplies in the North are in fairly good condition for the most part, the exception being Port Hedland. The long-suffering people there have never yet had fresh water in which to wash except when they have carted it from the railway tank. I would like to see more vigour put into the installation of the water scheme for Port Hedland and more labour employed on the project.

I read in this morning's paper that it was unlikely the people at Port Hedland would have fresh water this coming summer. Anybody who has been there knows just what that means. I believe that the water rates in all North-West towns should be no higher than those in the metropolitan area. It is not fair that people who have to live in the discomfort of the North during the summer and who are trying to grow something to beautify their town a little should have to pay more for water than the people down here. If it were not for folk in the country towns and in the North there would be nobody enjoying the comforts of the city.

Hon. A. R. Jones: You will be able to support the Country Party in that.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I will support the Country Party in that and in many ways. I was pleased to hear Mr.

Cunningham extolling the Labour Party's depreciation of the pound. That has certainly been the means of boosting mining and all primary production and internal business as well. Perhaps the importers of motorcars have not benefited but it was a great thing for the mining industry and for primary producers. During the war the Labour Party also looked after the non-producers such as myself—I was a caterer—lawyers, doctors and businessmen of all kinds, when it brought taxation up to date. We always thought we were a year behind in taxation but instead of that we found that we were up to date. In fact, we received what one might term a year's let-off.

I have had quite a lot to say about the North and I hope I have not wearied members too much. I trust I have been of some assistance to the thoughtful ones, to whom Mr. Hearn referred and who may do something for the North. I agree with the Governor that the problem is one for both the national and the State Government. It is too huge a task to be handled by the State Government alone. Too much money is required for the State even to be able to put the facilities of the North back into first-class order. It is a huge problem requiring Commonwealth expenditure. It is the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government to provide roads sufficiently good to serve in the defence of the North.

Aerodromes alone are not sufficient defence. They are bases for attack. I think that strategists who imagine that an invader could not exist in our far North really cannot know that country. The dangers are more apparent today than ever before. Imagine the situation of our great national asset—the Yampi iron ore deposits—which, like the Snowy River Scheme, is a big project which is going to be valuable to the economy of Australia in the future. With such an enterprise to protect, what is the good of an empty North? We must put something there. We must have a network of roads to protect these huge undertakings. We must have some sort of network that will carry heavy transport in all weathers. Otherwise, if an invader got in there, how would we get him out if we could not get at him?

The theory was that no roads were a protection. It was said that the Japs could land there but what would be the use of that since they could not get down here? We might find the boot on the other foot. If somebody does land there, and we cannot get at him, how are we going to remove him? My idea is that he should not be allowed to get there and roads should be constructed. I think there should be a separate department established for the control of the North with either an administrator or a director in charge—somebody answerable direct to

the Treasury and not through a Minister who has charge of other departments and who cannot give his full attention to the North. We must look at it from a national angle.

That part of the State is not going to remain sheep and meat country forever and somebody must go into it; otherwise we may be faced with the problem of defending it. For such a position we require a man with a full knowledge of the problems, one who places the interests of his country above his personal gain, who is prepared to use some vision and foresight, a statesman and a man of courage who will tackle the job of lifting the North to its rightful place in our national affairs.

On motion by Hon. L. A. Logan, debate adjourned.

#### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

**THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT**  
(Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 22nd August.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 8.33 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 16th August, 1950.

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

### QUESTIONS.

#### ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

*As to South-West Scheme Charges.*

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Works:

(1) When will he be able to make public the policy of the State Electricity Commission with respect to rates and charges as applied to the South-West power scheme?

(2) Can he say what route the power line will follow to Boyup Brook?