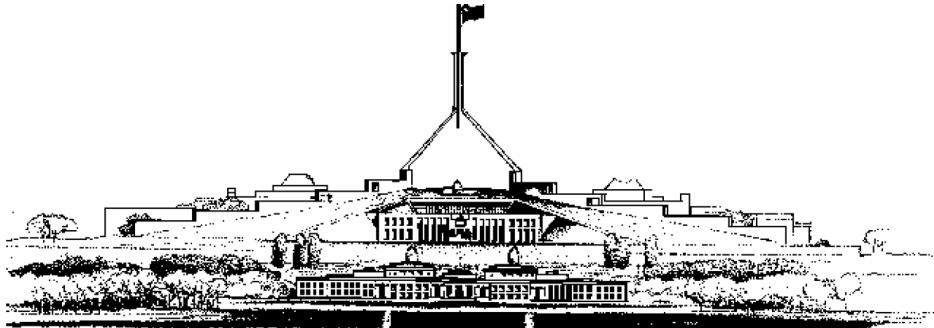




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



House of Representatives

Official Hansard

No. 41, 1956
Wednesday, 10 October 1956

TWENTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SECOND PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH.

TWENTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION: SECOND PERIOD.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

His Excellency Field Marshal Sir William Joseph Slim, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honorable Order of the Bath, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, Companion of the Distinguished Service Order, upon whom has been conferred the Decoration of the Military Cross, Knight of the Venerable Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Commonwealth of Australia, from 8th May, 1953.

ADMINISTRATOR.

His Excellency General Sir John Northcott, Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order, Companion of the Most Honorable Order of the Bath, was appointed on 30th July, 1956, under Dormant Commission dated 13th March, 1950, to Administer the Government of the Commonwealth during the absence from Australia of His Excellency the Governor-General.

His Excellency returned to Australia on 22nd October, 1956.

SIXTH MENZIES GOVERNMENT.

(Assumed Office 12th January, 1956.)

(Portfolios to 24th October, 1956.)

Prime Minister	The Right Honorable Robert Gordon Menzies, C.H., Q.C.
Treasurer	The Right Honorable Sir Arthur William Fadden, K.C.M.G.
(¹)Vice-President of the Executive Council; and Minister for Defence Production	The Right Honorable Sir Eric John Harrison, K.C.V.O.
Minister for Labour and National Service; and Minister for Immigration	The Right Honorable Harold Edward Holt.
Minister for Trade	The Right Honorable John McEwen.
Minister for External Affairs	The Right Honorable Richard Gardiner Casey, C.H., D.S.O., M.C.
Minister for Defence	The Honorable Sir Philip Albert Martin McBride, K.C.M.G.
Minister for the Navy	Senator the Honorable Neil O'Sullivan
Attorney-General	Senator the Honorable John Armstrong Spicer, Q.C.
Minister for National Development	Senator the Honorable William Henry Spooner, M.M.
Minister for Air; and Minister for Civil Aviation	The Honorable Athol Gordon Townley
Minister for Territories	The Honorable Paul Meernaa Caedwalla Hasluck. (The above Ministers constituted the Cabinet.)
Minister for Repatriation	Senator the Honorable Walter Jackson Cooper, M.B.E.
Minister for Supply	The Honorable Howard Beale, Q.C.
(¹)Minister for Primary Industry	The Honorable William McMahon.
Minister for Shipping and Transport	Senator the Honorable Shane Dunne Paltridge.
Minister for Health	The Honorable Donald Alastair Cameron, O.B.E.
Postmaster-General	The Honorable Charles William Davidson, O.B.E.
Minister for Customs and Excise	The Honorable Frederick Meares Osborne, D.S.C.
Minister for the Interior; and Minister for Works	The Honorable Allen Fairhall.
(¹)Minister for the Army	The Honorable John Oscar Cramer.
(¹)Minister for Social Services	The Honorable Hugh Stevenson Robertson.

(¹) Designation altered, 28th February, 1956.

(¹) Appointed, 28th February, 1956.

PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH—*continued.*

(PORTFOLIOS AS FROM 24TH OCTOBER, 1956.)

Prime Minister	The Right Honorable Robert Gordon Menzies, C.H., Q.C.
Treasurer	The Right Honorable Sir Arthur William Fadden, K.C.M.G.
Minister for Labour and National Service	..			The Right Honorable Harold Edward Holt.
Minister for Trade	The Right Honorable John McEwen.
Minister for External Affairs and Minister in Charge Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization				The Right Honorable Richard Gardiner Casey, C.H., D.S.O., M.C.
Minister for Defence	The Honorable Sir Philip Albert Martin McBride, K.C.M.G.
Vice-President of the Executive Council; and Attorney-General				Senator the Honorable Neil O'Sullivan.
Minister for National Development	Senator the Honorable William Henry Spooner, M.M.
Minister for Immigration	The Honorable Athol Gordon Townley.
Minister for Territories	The Honorable Paul Meernaa Caedwalla Hasluck.
Minister for Supply; and Minister for Defence Production				The Honorable Howard Beale, Q.C.
Minister for Primary Industry	The Honorable William McMahon.

(The above Ministers constitute the Cabinet.)

Minister for Repatriation	Senator the Honorable Walter Jackson Cooper, M.B.E.
Minister for Shipping and Transport; and Minister for Civil Aviation				Senator the Honorable Shane Dunne Paltridge.
Minister for Health	The Honorable Donald Alastair Cameron, O.B.E.
Minister for the Army	The Honorable John Oscar Cramer.
Postmaster-General; and Minister for the Navy				The Honorable Charles William Davidson, O.B.E.
Minister for Air	The Honorable Frederick Meares Osborne, D.S.C.
Minister for the Interior; and Minister for Works				The Honorable Allen Fairhall.
Minister for Social Services	The Honorable Hugh Stevenson Robertson.
Minister for Customs and Excise	Senator the Honorable Norman Henry Denham Henty.

THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

TWENTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT—FRIST SESSION: SECOND PERIOD.

Speaker—The Honorable John McLeay, M.M.

Chairman of Committees—Charles Frederick Adermann.

Temporary Chairmen of Committees—George James Bowden, M.C., Joseph James Clark, Charles William Jackson Falkinder, D.S.O., D.F.C., Gordon Freeth, William Robert Lawrence, Philip Ernest Lucock, Hon. Norman John Oswald Makin, Edward William Peters, Thomas Frank Timson, M.B.E., and Charles Harry Webb.

Leader of the Opposition—The Right Honorable Herbert Vere Evatt, Q.C., LL.D., D.Litt.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition—The Honorable Arthur Augustus Calwell.

Leader of the Australian Country Party—The Right Honorable Sir Arthur William Fadden, K.C.M.G.

Deputy Leader of the Australian Country Party—The Right Honorable John McEwen.

Adermann, Charles Frederick	Fisher (Q.)
Allan, Archibald Ian	Gwydir (N.S.W.)
Anderson, Charles Groves Wright, V.C., M.C.	Hume (N.S.W.)
Anthony, Hon. Hubert Lawrence	Richmond (N.S.W.)
Aston, William John	Phillip (N.S.W.)
Barnard, Lance Herbert	Bass (T.)
Bate, Henry Jefferson	Macarthur (N.S.W.)
Beale, Hon. Howard, Q.C.	Parramatta (N.S.W.)
Beazley, Kim Edward	Fremantle (W.A.)
Bird, Alan Charles	Batman (V.)
Bland, Francis Armand	Warringah (N.S.W.)
Bostock, William Dowling, C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E.	Indi (V.)
Bowden, George James, M.C.	Gippsland (V.)
Brand, William Alfred	Wide Bay (Q.)
Brimblecombe, Wilfred John	Maranoa (Q.)
Bruce, Hon. Henry Adam	Leichhardt (Q.)
Bryant, Gordon Munro	Wills (V.)
Buchanan, Alexander Andrew	McMillan (V.)
Cairns, James Ford	Yarra (V.)
Calwell, Hon. Arthur Augustus	Melbourne (V.)
(*)Cameron, Hon. Archie Galbraith	Barker (S.A.)
Cameron, Clyde Robert	Hindmarsh (S.A.)
Cameron, Hon. Donald Alastair, O.B.E.	Oxley (Q.)
Casey, Rt. Hon. Richard Gardiner, C.H., D.S.O., M.C.	La Trobe (V.)
Chambers, Hon. Cyril	Adelaide (S.A.)
Chaney, Frederick Charles, A.F.C.	Perth (W.A.)
Clarey, Hon. Percy James	Bendigo (V.)
Clark, Joseph James	Darling (N.S.W.)
Cleaver, Richard	Swan (W.A.)
Cope, James Francis	Watson (N.S.W.)
Costa, Dominic Eric	Banks (N.S.W.)
Coutts, Wilfred Charles	Griffith (Q.)
Cramer, Hon. John Oscar	Bennelong (N.S.W.)
Crean, Frank	Melbourne Ports (V.)
Curtin, Daniel James	Kingsford-Smith (N.S.W.)
Daly, Frederick Michael	Grayndler (N.S.W.)
Davidson, Hon. Charles William, O.B.E.	Dawson (Q.)
(*)Davies, William	Cunningham (N.S.W.)
Davis, Francis John	Deakin (V.)
Dean, Roger Levinge	Robertson (N.S.W.)
Downer, Alexander Russell	Angas (S.A.)
Drummond, Hon. David Henry	New England (N.S.W.)
Drury, Edward Nigel	Ryan (Q.)
Duthie, Gilbert William Arthur	Wilmet (T.)
Edmonds, William Frederick	Herbert (Q.)
Erwin, George Dudley	Ballaarat (V.)
Evatt, Rt. Hon. Herbert Vere, Q.C., LL.D., D.Litt.	Barton (N.S.W.)
Fadden, Rt. Hon. Sir Arthur William, K.C.M.G.	McPherson (Q.)
Failes, Laurence John	Lawson (N.S.W.)
Fairbairn, David Eric, D.F.C.	Farrer (N.S.W.)
Fairhall, Hon. Allen	Paterson (N.S.W.)
Falkinder, Charles William Jackson, D.S.O., D.F.C.	Franklin (T.)
(*)Forbes, Alexander James	Barker (S.A.)
Fox, Edmund Maxwell Cameron	Henty (V.)
Fraser, Allan Duncan	Eden-Monaro (N.S.W.)
Fraser, James Reay	(A.C.T.)
Fraser, John Malcolm	Wannon (V.)

Freeth, Gordon	Forrest (W.A.)
Galvin, Patrick	Kingston (S.A.)
Graham, Bruce William	St. George (N.S.W.)
Griffiths, Charles Edward	Shortland (N.S.W.)
Hamilton, Leonard William	Canning (W.A.)
Harrison, Eli James	Blaxland (N.S.W.)
(*)Harrison, Rt. Hon. Sir Eric John, K.C.V.O.	Wentworth (N.S.W.)
Hasluck, Hon. Paul Meernaa Caedwalla	Curtin (W.A.)
Haworth, Hon. William Crawford	Isaacs (V.)
Haylen, Leslie Clement	Parkes (N.S.W.)
Holt, Rt. Hon. Harold Edward	Higgins (V.)
Holt, Hon. Robert Wilfred	Darebin (V.)
Howse, John Brooke	Calare (N.S.W.)
Howson, Peter	Fawkner (V.)
Hulme, Alan Shallcross	Petrie (Q.)
Jack, William Mathers	North Sydney (N.S.W.)
James, Rowland	Hunter (N.S.W.)
Johnson, Hon. Herbert Victor	Kalgoorlie (W.A.)
Johnson, Leslie Royston	Hughes (N.S.W.)
Joske, Percy Ernest, Q.C.	Balaclava (V.)
(*)Kearney, Victor Dennis	Cunningham (N.S.W.)
Kent Hughes, Hon. Wilfred Selwyn, M.V.O., O.B.E., M.C., E.D.	Chisholm (V.)
Killen, Denis James	Moreton (Q.)
Lawrence, William Robert	Wimmera (V.)
Lawson, Hon. George	Brisbane (Q.)
Leslie, Hugh Alan	Moore (W.A.)
Lindsay, Robert William Ludovic	Flinders (V.)
Luchetti, Anthony Sylvester	Macquarie (N.S.W.)
Luck, Aubrey William George	Braddon (T.)
Lucock, Philip Ernest	Lyne (N.S.W.)
Mackinnon, Ewen Daniel	Corangamite (V.)
Makin, Hon. Norman John Oswald	Bonython (S.A.)
McBride, Hon. Sir Philip Albert Martin, K.C.M.G.	Wakefield (S.A.)
McColl, Malcolm Llewellyn	Bowman (Q.)
McEwen, Rt. Hon. John	Murray (V.)
McIvor, Hector James	Gellibrand (V.)
McLeay, Hon. John M.M.	Boothby (S.A.)
McMahon, Hon. William	Lowc (N.S.W.)
Menzies, Rt. Hon. Robert Gordon, C.H., Q.C.	Kooyong (V.)
Minogue, Daniel	West Sydney (N.S.W.)
Morgan, Charles Albert Aaron	Reid (N.S.W.)
Nelson, John Norman	(N.T.)
O'Connor, William Paul	Dalley (N.S.W.)
Opperman, Hubert Ferdinand, O.B.E.	Corio (V.)
Osborne, Frederick Meares, D.S.C.	Evans (N.S.W.)
Page, Rt. Hon. Sir Earle Christmas Grafton, G.C.M.G., C.H.	Cowper (N.S.W.)
Pearce, Henry George	Capricornia (Q.)
Peters, Edward William	Scullin (V.)
Pollard, Hon. Reginald Thomas	Lalor (V.)
Riordan, Hon. William James Frederick	Kennedy (Q.)
Roberton, Hon. Hugh Stevenson	Riverina (N.S.W.)
Russell, Edgar Hughes Deg	Grey (S.A.)
Snedden, Billy Mackie	Bruce (V.)
Stewart, Francis Eugene	Lang (N.S.W.)
Stokes, Philip William Clifford, E.D.	Maribyrnong (V.)
Swart, Reginald William Colin, M.B.E., E.D.	Darling Downs (Q.)
Thompson, Albert Victor	Port Adelaide (S.A.)
Timson, Thomas Frank, M.B.E.	Higinbotham (V.)
Townley, Hon. Athol Gordon	Denison (T.)
Turnbull, Winton George	Mallee (V.)
Turner, Henry Basil	Bradfield (N.S.W.)
Ward, Hon. Edward John	East Sydney (N.S.W.)
Watkins, David Oliver	Newcastle (N.S.W.)
Webb, Charles Harry	Stirling (W.A.)
Wentworth, William Charles	Mackellar (N.S.W.)
Wheeler, Roy Crawford	Mitchell (N.S.W.)
Whitlam, Edward Gough	Werriwa (N.S.W.)
Wight, Bruce McDonald	Lilley (Q.)
Wilson, Keith Cameron	Sturt (S.A.)

(¹) Death reported, 21st February, 1956.
 (²) Elected, 11th April, 1956.

(³) Resigned, 17th October, 1956.

(⁴) Death reported, 29th August, 1956.

THE COMMITTEES OF THE SESSION.

JOINT.

CONSTITUTION REVIEW.—Senator Spicer (Chairman to 14th August, 1956), Senator O'Sullivan (Chairman from 24th October, 1956), the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Representatives, Senator Kennelly, Senator McKenna, Senator Wright, Mr. Calwell, Mr. Downer, Mr. Drummond, Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Joske, Mr. Pollard, Mr. Ward, and Mr. Whitlam.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS.—Mr. Kent Hughes (Chairman), Senator Cole, Senator Gorton, Senator Maher, Senator Pearson, Senator Robertson, Senator Vincent, Senator Wordsworth, Mr. Chaney, Mr. Downer, Mr. Drummond, Mr. Failes, Mr. Joske, Mr. Lucock, Mr. Mackinnon, Mr. Timson, Mr. Turner, Mr. Wentworth, Mr. Wheeler, and Mr. Wight.

HOUSE.—The President (Chairman), Senator Amour, Senator Marriott, Senator O'Flaherty, Senator Ryan, Senator Wade, Senator Wordsworth, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Failes, Mr. R. J. Fraser, Mr. Hulme, Mr. Morgan, Mr. Opperman, and Mr. Webb.

LIBRARY.—Mr. Speaker (Chairman), the President, Senator Arnold, Senator Kendall, Senator McCallum, Senator Robertson, Senator Sheehan, Senator Tangney, Mr. Bryant, Mr. Downer, Mr. Drummond, Mr. R. W. Holt, Mr. O'Connor, and Mr. Wentworth.

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS BROADCASTING.—The President (Chairman), Senator Arnold, Senator Marriott, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Costa, Mr. Falkinder, Mr. Allan Fraser, Mr. Opperman, and Mr. Turnbull.

PRINTING.—Senator Benn, Senator Buttfield, Senator Hannaford, Senator Robertson, Senator Scott, Senator Tangney, Senator Toohey, Mr. Dean, Mr. Drury, Mr. Freeth, Mr. E. James Harrison, Mr. Leslie, Mr. McIvor, and Mr. Stewart.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS.—Mr. Bland (Chairman), Senator Benn, Senator Seward, Senator Wedgwood, Mr. Barnard, Mr. Cope, Mr. Davis, Mr. Hulme, Mr. Leslie, and Mr. Thompson.

PUBLIC WORKS.—Senator Henty (Chairman to 19th October, 1956), Mr. Lawrence (Chairman from 24th October, 1956), Senator Anderson (from 25th October, 1956), Senator Maher, Senator O'Byrne, Mr. Bird, Mr. Bowden, Mr. Dean, Mr. O'Connor, and Mr. Watkins.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

PRIVILEGES.—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Clark, Mr. Allan Fraser, Mr. Freeth, Mr. Galvin, Mr. Joske, Mr. Morgan, Mr. Swartz, and Mr. Turnbull.

STANDING ORDERS.—Mr. Speaker (Chairman), the Prime Minister, the Chairman of Committees, the Leader of the House, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Clark, Mr. Costa, Mr. E. James Harrison, Mr. Joske, Mr. Makin, and Sir Earle Page.

PARLIAMENTARY DEPARTMENTS.

SENATE.

Clerk.—R. H. C. Loof.

Clerk-Assistant.—J. R. Odgers.

Usher of the Black Rod.—R. E. Bullock.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

Clerk.—A. A. Tregear.

Clerk-Assistant.—A. G. Turner.

Second Clerk-Assistant.—N. J. Parkes.

Third Clerk-Assistant.—J. A. Pettifer.

Sergeant-at-Arms.—G. S. Reid.

PARLIAMENTARY REPORTING STAFF.

Principal Parliamentary Reporter.—W. J. M. Campbell.

Second Reporter.—L. D. O'Donnell.

Third Reporter.—W. E. Dale.

LIBRARY.

Librarian.—H. L. White.

Assistant Librarian.—L. C. Key.

JOINT HOUSE.

Secretary.—W. I. Emerton.

THE ACTS OF THE SESSION.

(FIRST SESSION: SECOND PERIOD.)

AIR FORCE ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 73 OF 1956)—

An Act to amend the *Air Force Act* 1923–1952.

ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 106 OF 1956)—

An Act to amend the *Aluminium Industry Act* 1944–1954 in relation to the Employment of Persons by the Australian Aluminium Production Commission.

APPROPRIATION ACT 1956–57 (ACT NO. 70 OF 1956)—

An Act to grant and apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund a sum for the service of the year ending the thirtieth day of June, One thousand nine hundred and fifty-seven, and to appropriate the Supplies granted by the Parliament for that year.

APPROPRIATION (WORKS AND SERVICES) ACT 1956–57 (ACT NO. 71 OF 1956)—

An Act to grant and apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund a sum for the service of the year ending the thirtieth day of June, One thousand nine hundred and fifty-seven, for the purposes of Additions, New Works and other Services involving Capital Expenditure and to appropriate the Supplies granted by the Parliament for that year.

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL AIRLINES ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 105 OF 1956)—

An Act to amend the *Australian National Airlines Act* 1945–1952 in relation to the Employment of Persons by the Australian National Airlines Commission.

AUSTRALIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 113 OF 1956)—

An Act relating to the Australian Security Intelligence Organization.

BROADCASTING AND TELEVISION ACT (NO. 2) 1956 (ACT NO. 65 OF 1956)—

An Act to amend the *Broadcasting Act* 1942–1954, as amended by the *Broadcasting and Television Act* 1956, and for other purposes.

BROADCASTING AND TELEVISION ACT (NO. 3) 1956 (ACT NO. 92 OF 1956)—

An Act to amend the Law relating to Broadcasting and Television in consequence of the enactment of the *Repatriation (Far East Strategic Reserve) Act* 1956.

CANNED FRUITS EXPORT CONTROL ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 64 OF 1956)—

An Act to amend the *Canned Fruits Export Control Act* 1926–1953.

COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 89 OF 1956)—

An Act to amend the *Cocos (Keeling) Islands Act* 1955.

COMMONWEALTH EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 93 OF 1956)—

An Act to amend section four a of the *Commonwealth Employees' Compensation Act* 1930–1954 in consequence of the enactment of the *Repatriation (Far East Strategic Reserve) Act* 1956.

COMMONWEALTH RAILWAYS ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 99 OF 1956)—

An Act to amend the *Commonwealth Railways Act* 1917–1955.

CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT (NO. 2) 1956 (ACT NO. 103 OF 1956)—

An Act to amend the Law relating to Conciliation and Arbitration.

CUSTOMS TARIFF (NO. 2) 1956 (ACT NO. 58 OF 1956)—

An Act relating to Duties of Customs.

CUSTOMS TARIFF (NO. 3) 1956 (ACT NO. 62 OF 1956)—

An Act relating to Duties of Customs.

CUSTOMS TARIFF (NO. 4) 1956 (ACT NO. 86 OF 1956)—

An Act relating to Duties of Customs.

CUSTOMS TARIFF (CANADIAN PREFERENCE) 1956 (ACT NO. 60 OF 1956)—

An Act to amend the *Customs Tariff (Canadian Preference)* 1934–1954.

CUSTOMS ACT (FEDERATION OF RHODESIAN AND NYASALAND PREFERENCE) 1956 (ACT NO. 61 OF 1956)—

An Act relating to Duties of Customs on Goods the Produce or Manufacture of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

CUSTSMS TARIFF (INDUSTRIES PRESERVATION) ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 111 OF 1956)—

An Act to amend the *Customs Tariff (Industries Preservation) Act* 1921–1936.

CUSTOMS TARIFF (PAPUA AND NEW GUINEA PREFERENCE) 1956 (ACT NO. 63 OF 1956)—

An Act to amend the *Customs Tariff (Papua and New Guinea Preference)* 1936–1950.

CUSTOMS TARIFF VALIDATION ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 88 OF 1956)—

An Act to provide for the Validation of Collections of Duties of Customs under Customs Tariff Proposals.

DEFENCE ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 72 OF 1956)—

An Act to amend the *Defence Act* 1903–1953.

DISTILLATION ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 74 OF 1956)—

An Act to amend the *Distillation Act* 1901–1954.

- ESTATE DUTY ASSESSMENT ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 94 OF 1956)—**
An Act to amend section nine of the *Estate Duty Assessment Act 1914–1953* in consequence of the enactment of the *Repatriation (Far East Strategic Reserve) Act 1956*.
- EXCISE TARIFF (NO. 2) 1956 (ACT NO. 59 OF 1956)—**
An Act relating to Duties of Excise.
- EXCISE TARIFF (NO. 3) 1956 (ACT NO. 87 OF 1956)—**
An Act relating to Duties of Excise.
- HOME NURSING SUBSIDY ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 84 OF 1956)—**
An Act to provide for the Grant of Subsidies to Home Nursing Organizations.
- INCOME TAX AND SOCIAL SERVICES CONTRIBUTION ASSESSMENT ACT (NO. 3) 1956 (ACT NO. 101 OF 1956)—**
An Act to amend the Law relating to Income Tax.
- INCOME TAX AND SOCIAL SERVICES CONTRIBUTION (INDIVIDUALS) ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 102 OF 1956)—**
An Act to impose a Tax, payable by Persons other than Companies and by Companies in the capacity of trustee, by the name of Income Tax and Social Services Contribution.
- INTERNATIONAL WHEAT AGREEMENT ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 80 OF 1956)—**
An Act to approve Acceptance by Australia of the International Wheat Agreement, 1956, and for other purposes.
- LAND TAX ABOLITION ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 85 OF 1956)—**
An Act to amend the *Land Tax Abolition Act 1953*.
- LOAN (HOUSING) ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 76 OF 1956)—**
An Act to authorize the Raising and Expending of Moneys for the purposes of Housing.
- LOAN (WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT) ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 81 OF 1956)—**
An Act to approve the Borrowing of Moneys for a Defence Purpose, namely Financial Assistance to the States in connexion with War Service Land Settlement, and to authorize the expending of those Moneys.
- LOANS SECURITIES ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 82 OF 1956)—**
An Act to amend the *Loans Securities Act 1919*.
- MOUNT STROMLO OBSERVATORY ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 79 OF 1956)—**
An Act to provide for the Transfer of the Administration of the Observatory at Mount Stromlo in the Australian Capital Territory to The Australian National University, and for other purposes.
- NATIONAL HEALTH ACT (NO. 2) 1956 (ACT NO. 95 OF 1956)—**
An Act to amend section twenty of the *National Health Act 1953–1955*, as amended by the *National Health Act 1956*, in consequence of the enactment of the *Repatriation (Far East Strategic Reserve) Act 1956*.
- NORTHERN TERRITORY (ADMINISTRATION) ACT (NO. 2) 1956 (ACT NO. 110 OF 1956)—**
An Act to amend the *Northern Territory (Administration) Act 1910–1955*, as amended by the *Northern Territory (Administration) Act 1956*.
- POST AND TELEGRAPH RATES ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 66 OF 1956)—**
An Act to amend the *Post and Telegraph Rates Act 1902–1951*.
- PUBLIC SERVICE ARBITRATION ACT (NO. 2) 1956 (ACT NO. 104 OF 1956)—**
An Act to amend the Law relating to Public Service Arbitration.
- RE-ESTABLISHMENT AND EMPLOYMENT ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 96 OF 1956)—**
An Act to amend section one hundred and one of the *Re-establishment and Employment Act 1945–1955* in consequence of the enactment of the *Repatriation (Far East Strategic Reserve) Act 1956*.
- REPATRIATION ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 68 OF 1956)—**
An Act to amend the *Repatriation Act 1920–1955*, and for other purposes.
- REPATRIATION ACT (NO. 2) 1956 (ACT NO. 97 OF 1956)—**
An Act to amend the *Repatriation Act 1920–1955*, as amended by the *Repatriation Act 1956*, in consequence of the enactment of the *Repatriation (Far East Strategic Reserve) Act 1956*.
- REPATRIATION (FAR EAST STRATEGIC RESERVE) ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 91 OF 1956)—**
An Act to provide Benefits for certain Members of the Defence Force who have served in Malaya with, or in connexion with, the British Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve, and for purposes connected therewith.
- SOCIAL SERVICES ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 67 OF 1956)—**
An Act to amend the *Social Services Act 1947–1955*.
- SOCIAL SERVICES ACT (NO. 2) 1956 (ACT NO. 98 OF 1956)—**
An Act to amend the *Social Services Act 1947–1955*, as amended by the *Social Services Act 1956*, in consequence of the enactment of the *Repatriation (Far East Strategic Reserve) Act 1956*.
- STATES GRANTS ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 107 OF 1956)—**
An Act to grant and apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund sums for the purpose of Financial Assistance to the States of South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania.

THE ACTS OF THE SESSION—*continued.*

- STATES GRANTS (SPECIAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE) ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 108 OF 1956)—**
An Act to grant and apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund sums for the purpose of Financial Assistance to the States.
- STEVEDORING INDUSTRY CHARGE ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 83 OF 1956)—**
An Act to amend the *Stevedoring Industry Charge Act 1947–1954*.
- SUGAR AGREEMENT ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 109 OF 1956)—**
An Act to approve an Agreement relating to Sugar made between the Commonwealth and the State of Queensland, and for other purposes.
- SUPERANNUATION ACT (NO. 2) 1956 (ACT NO. 112 OF 1956)—**
An Act to amend the *Superannuation Act 1922–1955*, as amended by the *Superannuation Act 1956*, and for other purposes.
- SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT 1955–56 (ACT NO. 77 OF 1956)—**
An Act to appropriate a further sum out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the service of the year ended the thirtieth day of June, One thousand nine hundred and fifty-six.
- SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (WORKS AND SERVICES) ACT 1955–56 (ACT NO. 78 OF 1956)—**
An Act to appropriate a further sum out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the service of the year ended the thirtieth day of June, One thousand nine hundred and fifty-six, for the purposes of Additions, New Works and Other Services involving Capital Expenditure.
- TRACTOR BOUNTY ACT (NO. 2) 1956 (ACT NO. 90 OF 1956)—**
An Act to amend the *Tractor Bounty Act 1939–1953*, as amended by the *Tractor Bounty Act 1956*.
- WAR PENSIONS APPROPRIATION ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 69 OF 1956)—**
An Act to grant and apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund a sum for War Pensions.
- WAR SERVICE HOMES ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 100 OF 1956)—**
An Act to amend the *War Service Homes Act 1918–1955*.
- WOOL PRODUCTS BOUNTY ACT REPEAL ACT 1956 (ACT NO. 75 OF 1956)—**
An Act to repeal the *Wool Products Bounty Act 1950*.

BILLS OF THE SESSION.

- BANKRUPTCY BILL 1956.** Initiated in the House of Representatives. Second Reading.
COMMONWEALTH ELECTORAL BILL 1956. Initiated in the Senate. Second Reading.
-

CONTENTS

WEDNESDAY, 10 OCTOBER 1956

CHAMBER

Question	AIRCRAFT PRODUCTION	1295
Question	UNIFORM TAXATION	1295
Question	TELEPHONE SERVICES	1296
Question	SUEZ CANAL	1296
Question	TELEPHONE SERVICES	1297
Question	WHEAT	1297
Question	SHIPPING FREIGHT RATES	1297
Question	PAPUA AND NEW GUINEA	1298
Question	EUROPEAN FREE-TRADE BLOC	1298
Question	OLYMPIC GAMES	1298
Question	FILM CENSORSHIP	1299
Question	SUBSIDIES FOR PRIMARY PRODUCTS	1299
Northern Territory Legislative Council	1300	
Question	RADIO AUSTRALIA	1300
Question	CONSTITUTION REVIEW COMMITTEE	1300
Question	UNIFORM TAXATION	1300
Question	AIRCRAFT PRODUCTION	1301
Question	AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES	1301
Question	OIL FROM COAL	1302
Question	CREDIT FACILITIES FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRY	1302
Question	ALLEGED ILLEGAL ENTRY OF IMMIGRANTS	1302
Assent To Bills	1303	
International Wheat Agreement Bill 1956		
Second Reading	1304	
Home Nursing Subsidy Bill 1956		
Second Reading	1306	
Estimates 1956-57		
Department of Supply	1309	
Proposed Vote, £15,132,000	1309	
Department of Defence Production	1309	
Proposed Vote, £163;19,891,000	1309	
Other Services	1309	
Miscellaneous Services	1337	
Refunds of Revenue	1337	
Bounties and Subsidies	1337	
War and Repatriation Services	1337	
Commonwealth Railways	1337	
Postmaster-General's Department	1337	
Broadcasting and Television Services	1337	

QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Army Public Relations Staff.....	1363
Air Mail Payments	1364
Telephone Services	1365
Greenacre Post Office	1366

Wednesday, 10th October, 1956.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. John McLeay) took the chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

AIRCRAFT PRODUCTION.

Mr. CLAREY.—Is the Prime Minister aware of the serious position developing in the aircraft industry, particularly in the establishments of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation, because of the lack of announced plans about future aircraft construction following the completion of the Sabre jet programme? Will the right honorable gentleman have this matter discussed at the defence conference which commenced to-day, and will he, in conjunction with the Ministers for Air, Supply and Defence Production, receive a deputation of Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation employees which will arrive in Canberra to-morrow?

Mr. MENZIES.—The problem of the aircraft construction programme is one which has already engaged the very close consideration of the Government. There are many aspects of it, but the important ones concern overall defence policy and decisions. I, myself, would not think that it would be extremely useful to have a deputation on one aspect of this matter, but, knowing the interest of the honorable member in the whole matter, I would be prepared to set aside what he will understand would be a limited amount of time to-morrow, so that he may bring his deputation to see me. I say that because the deputation has already been organized, and I know there are certain difficulties; and, in the second place, I realize that the honorable member is not raising this matter in any contentious spirit at all.

Mr. Clarey.—That is so.

UNIFORM TAXATION.

Mr. WILSON.—My question is directed to the Prime Minister. In view of the statement of the Premier of New South Wales that he is now willing to join the Premier of Victoria in challenging the uniform tax act, and in view of the fact that the Premier of South Australia has consistently asked for the return of taxing powers to his State and, further, in view of the statement of the Prime Minister and

the Treasurer that the Commonwealth is willing to return the taxing powers to the States, will the Government now introduce legislation to repeal the uniform tax act in order to give the States the responsibility of collecting the revenues that they spend?

Mr. MENZIES.—The abolition of the uniform tax law is something which ought not to be undertaken except on a broad basis of agreement with the State Premiers. In other words, uniform tax cannot be abolished in one State and not in another, and we must have a co-operative approach to this matter. The simple truth is that the interests of the taxpayers, of whom there are many hundreds of thousands in Australia, must be considered. We do not want a multiplicity of tax laws, if we can avoid them. We want a good, sensible system that will work. We have repeatedly stated our views on this matter at conferences with the State Premiers. I do not think that the attitude of any one of the Premiers should be over-simplified. We stand by the statements that I have made in the past. If and when the Premiers are prepared to agree to a return of their taxing powers on terms which meet the various conditions that I have stated, this Government will be delighted to take the necessary steps. Perhaps I ought to take advantage of this opportunity to point out to honorable members that the question of policy as to whether there should be a return of taxing powers to the States is quite different from the legal question—which is now being approached, I gather—as to whether this Parliament has the power to pass a uniform taxation law. I want to keep those two matters in separate compartments. We cannot interpret the Commonwealth Constitution by consent. No doubt the High Court will give its view on the legal issue in due course. On the matter of policy, I have nothing to state in modification of the views which I have expressed on behalf of this Government to Premiers conferences more than once, but I suggest to my friend, the honorable member for Sturt, that we cannot operate on the basis of one, two, or three of the Premiers being in that mood. Indeed, I venture to suggest that, inadvertently, he has rather over-simplified the view of my friend, the Premier of South Australia. His view has never seemed to me to be quite so simple as that.

TELEPHONE SERVICES.

Mr. COSTA.—In answer to a question last week, the Postmaster-General stated that 85,000 applications for telephone services in Australia were outstanding. Will he inform the House now whether the amendment of the regulations has been made which will have the effect of inflicting a £10 installation fee on all new applicants for telephones? Will the Minister say how many of the 85,000 outstanding applications are regarded as new applications? I understand that most of the applicants have been waiting for several years for a telephone service. In answer to a previous question on this matter, the Minister said that if a proposal had already been made to an applicant regarding the installation of a telephone, the installation fee would not be charged. Will the Minister state what he means by "a proposal"?

Mr. DAVIDSON.—The regulations that will vary telephone charges and other charges made by the Postal Department have been promulgated. There were 86,000 outstanding applications at that time. I do not quite know what the honorable member means when he asks me to say how many of them are regarded as new applications. With regard to the £10 installation fee, the position is as I have stated it previously to the House. In all cases where an application has been processed by the department to the extent that the department has made a proposal to the prospective subscriber indicating what the rental of the telephone will be, and has received from him a notification of acceptance of the department's terms, and where the prospective subscriber has paid the first year's rental before 1st October, the installation fee of £10 will not be charged. We found during the last week or two weeks that some applicants who had had telephones installed did not know whether an installation fee of £10 was payable. I have found one or two instances of the fees having been asked for, really inadvertently, and I have issued instructions that the statement I made in this House stands. If there has been any case in the last week or two of the fee of £10 having been asked for and paid when the rental has been paid before 1st October, each such payment would be refunded. I want to make clear that what I have said

in the House about the date from which this fee applies will stand, and that there will be no departure from it.

SUEZ CANAL.

Mr. KENT HUGHES.—I direct a question to the Minister for External Affairs. Is there any later information he can give to the House with respect to the discussions in the United Nations on the Suez question, additional to what has been published in the press?

Mr. CASEY.—Yes, in the last 24 hours a number of countries have expressed themselves in the Security Council in respect of the Suez matter, and I would expect that just about now the Security Council is going into secret session. During yesterday, Australian time, a number of countries expressed themselves on the matter. Iran said, in effect, that the draft resolution—that is, the British-French resolution—deserved support in principle as a possible basis for peaceful negotiation. Belgium said, in brief, that Egypt's disregard of the 1951 resolution of the council regarding the blockade against Israel made it clear that the canal should not be left solely under Egyptian control. The seizure of the canal, it said, was a clear violation of the 1888 convention. Nationalist China said that the users of the canal could have some measure and form of participation in its operation without violating Egypt's sovereignty. Peru said that there should be negotiations based on the principles of the United Nations Charter. Dr. Ronald Walker, speaking for Australia, said that Egypt's repudiation of the Suez Canal concession, without consultation or agreement, was a breach of international law which, if condoned, could lead to the encouragement of further acts of lawlessness, and that Egypt's record in the Security Council was not good—for example, Egypt had disregarded the 1951 and 1954 Security Council resolutions against the Egyptian blockade directed against Israel. He said that the canal was of great importance to Australia, and that Egypt's action in seizing the canal, unless remedied, was likely to have wide repercussions on the international flow of capital to under-developed countries, and might result in a serious setback to the whole process of co-operative world economic development. Dr. Walker

also said that Australia was ready to participate constructively in whatever negotiations might be possible. He said that Australia would, of course, support the draft resolution proposed by the United Kingdom and France. We have not yet received any news of what the representatives of Yugoslavia and the United States of America said yesterday, although presumably they would have stated their views by this time. However, as I informed the House previously, the United States announced its support for the United Kingdom-French draft resolution last week. That is all of a positive nature that I am able to report in respect of developments in the last three or four hours.

TELEPHONE SERVICES.

Mr. R. W. HOLT.—In view of the fact that there are at least 1,700 applications for telephone connexions for which spare wires are not available in the underground cables within the electorate of Darebin, will the Postmaster-General say, first, what action is being taken to overcome this lag; secondly, what is the limiting factor on this work; and, thirdly, whether he will expedite these connexions to meet the special demands of this rapidly expanding area?

Mr. DAVIDSON.—The area to which the honorable member has referred is suffering from some of the difficulties which many other areas in Australia are also facing. The department is attempting to meet such difficulties as rapidly as possible. The main limiting factor in completing installations is availability of finance. As to the honorable member's question about when the position in Darebin is likely to be remedied, I shall make further inquiries and advise him of the result.

WHEAT.

Mr. HAMILTON.—Can the Minister for Primary Industry give the House any information about immediate or future payments for wheat in No. 18 and No. 18A pools, and can he also state the total amounts that may be involved?

Mr. McMAHON.—The Australian Wheat Board has just approved of extra payments for both No. 18 and No. 18A pools, in the case of bagged wheat at 7½d. a bushel, and in the case of bulk wheat at

4½d. a bushel. This brings the payment for No. 18 pool to something like 12s. 3½d. a bushel for bagged wheat, and about £3,500,000 will be paid to the growers in the latest advances in respect of both pools. I think the House would like to know that these payments will bring the total amount paid to growers in respect of these two pools to nearly £91,000,000.

SHIPPING FREIGHT RATES.

Mr. COPE.—I direct a question to the Minister for Trade. What action is the right honorable gentleman taking or proposing to take to prevent overseas and coastal shipping owners from proceeding to impose the additional savage increases of freight rates that they recently announced their intention to impose? Does the Minister agree that the shipowners are justified in further exploiting Australian primary and secondary industries and the Australian public generally in the way they propose?

Mr. McEWEN.—The Department of Trade has no status in respect of coastal shipping freight rates. With respect to overseas freight rates, the relationship between the people who pay the freight charges—the shippers, as they are known in the jargon of the trade—and the shipowners, is recognized in statute law. An organization known as the Australian Overseas Transport Association exists to arrange the relationship on freight matters and to stand between the shippers and the shipowners. That association has already been in contact with the shipowners, and arrangements have been made for representatives of the organization and of the shipper interests to go to London to argue their views with the shipowners there. I think it is well known to the House and to the country that the Government is very much concerned to ensure that no additional burdens on our export trade shall arise from any cause, including higher freight rates, and that last year the Government, without specific authority, but nevertheless acting in the interests of Australia, successfully intervened and induced the shipowners to impose freight rates substantially lower than those they had intended to impose. The Government will certainly watch events in the present instance very carefully, and will be prepared to give the benefit of its advice,

and, within the limits of its status and authority, of its aid to the Australian exporting interests.

PAPUA AND NEW GUINEA.

Mr. DRURY.—I ask the Minister for Territories, first, whether he can inform the House of the approximate annual value of the production of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, and, secondly, what steps are being taken to enable the Territory itself to contribute more towards meeting the cost of services provided there.

Mr. HASLUCK.—It would be very difficult, indeed, to give an exact answer to the honorable member's question regarding the value of production of the Territory. A great deal of the production is devoted solely to feeding about 1,750,000 people; it goes direct from the people who grew it to the people who eat it, and does not enter into calculations of any kind. That feature of the economy of the Territory is, of course, accompanied by the fact that the standard of living is rising continuously, so that even if production is increased, it does not follow that any of it will be surplus. For example, if the area devoted to rice growing is increased from 100 acres to about 3,000 acres, and the people who grow the rice eat it, obviously it is not marketed. Their standard of living has risen but the increased production does not enter into anything that can be calculated as the value of the production of the Territory. The clearest indication we have of the value of production is the export trade. In the trading year 1955-56, the value of exports was approximately £13,250,000, which represents about a three-fold increase in the last five years. It has been the aim of the Government to increase steadily the contribution from local production to the cost of administering the Territory and providing services.

In the current year, out of a total public expenditure of about £13,500,000, £4,250,000 will be raised from local revenue. Of course, it is quite plain, I think, that when one has regard to the enormous tasks associated with the health and education of the large and increasing population, a considerable contribution will have to be made by the people of Australia for many years to come. But steadily over the years, we have maintained a rising rate of local contribution to public expenditure and, at

the present time, the people of the Territory contribute about one-third of the cost of the public expenditure they enjoy.

EUROPEAN FREE-TRADE BLOC.

Mr. McIVOR.—Will the Minister for Trade inform the House whether the Australian Government has been consulted by the British Government on the question of Great Britain joining an economic union consisting of Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, Holland and Luxemburg, and if so, what attitude Australia has adopted in relation to this very important matter, which has many far-reaching possibilities?

Mr. McEWEN.—Both the United Kingdom Government and the Australian Government are aware of the proposal to which the honorable member has referred, which may be briefly described as one for a free-trade area in Europe. This Government has been kept advised of the details of the proposal, and made aware of the United Kingdom's thinking in respect of its own interests. This has been done in correspondence and cables, and, more recently, by personal contacts during a certain conference at Washington at which the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, the President of the Board of Trade, and Australian representatives were present. Contact is still being maintained in London. Seeing that, under the proposal, it is intended to exclude foodstuffs altogether, there is very little of Australian trade to the United Kingdom or to the sponsor countries which would be affected directly. Insofar as there are indirect implications in relation to the Australian interest, I can assure the honorable member that this is being closely watched. As a matter of fact, only last night I conferred with officials of my department on this very important matter.

OLYMPIC GAMES.

Mr. STOKES.—My question refers to a recent report that an air travel bottleneck had developed at Manila, which is likely to prevent 268 athletes, representing nine countries, from reaching Melbourne in time for the forthcoming Olympic Games. Can the Minister for Civil Aviation give the House an assurance that he will immediately take whatever steps are available to him to ensure that those athletes will be able to

participate in the games? It has been stated that at present their chances of so doing are very remote.

Mr. TOWNLEY.—In reply to the honorable member, I must confess that I do not know much about the particular problem to which he has referred. I have been informed that in the press to-day appears a report of an alleged bottleneck at Manila. I have been in touch with Qantas, Australia's overseas airline, and have been told that Qantas is aware of the position and is doing everything possible to remedy the position so far as its own service is concerned. Qantas will keep in touch with me and I shall let the honorable member know how the matter turns out.

FILM CENSORSHIP.

Mr. KEARNEY.—Is the Minister for Trade and Customs aware that many films shown at children's matinees throughout Australia are, in their theme, oversexed, sadistic, and generally unsuitable to be displayed to young children, and also that, included among these films are those classified by the censor as "G", indicating that they are suitable for general exhibition? Will the Minister consider the desirability of introducing a new classification "C" to indicate that films so classified are completely suitable for children? I make this recommendation in the hope that the Minister will accept it as a further effort towards the control of films to be shown to children and towards the minimizing of child delinquency.

Mr. OSBORNE.—The honorable member raises in his question issues which are far too wide to be dealt with adequately at question time. In the first place, I do not think it is true that films of a sadistic nature are being shown in Australia, because, after all, any film shown here has been passed by the Commonwealth Film Censorship Board as being fit at least to be shown to adults. In the second place, like so many things in our federal system, the authority to deal with films is divided between the Commonwealth and State Governments. The Commonwealth Government is responsible for censoring imported films, and in the course of so doing, for the convenience of State authorities, people interested in films, and parents,

it classifies them in three groups: "Suitable for general exhibition", "suitable for adults", or "suitable for adults only". The authority to determine whether children shall be allowed into cinemas showing films classified as not suitable for children rests entirely with the State governments. I cannot emphasize too strongly that this Government has no authority at all to prevent any child from entering into a cinema showing a classified film.

Mr. J. R. Fraser.—Except in its own territories.

Mr. OSBORNE.—I accept the honorable member's qualification. The only other comment I can usefully make at this stage is in answer to the honorable member's suggestion that an additional classification should be introduced, namely, "suitable for children". I will certainly have that suggestion examined. I believe that an objection to this course has been raised before. If children themselves are aware that a film has been classified as being suitable for children they develop a disinclination to go and see it. That is only one aspect of the problem, but I shall have the suggestions carefully examined.

SUBSIDIES FOR PRIMARY PRODUCTS.

Mr. LUCOCK.—I preface my question to the Minister for Primary Industry by pointing out that it is acknowledged that the main answer to our balance of payments problem is increased exports. While I think all would agree that subsidies are not a complete answer, I ask the Minister whether he will consider investigating the possibility of increasing subsidies, at least as a temporary expedient, on certain of our primary products, thus enabling those primary industries to compete more favorably on the overseas markets and thus increase our export income.

Mr. McMAHON.—The suggestion made by the honorable member for Lyne is not a novel one. I agree with him that one of the answers to Australia's export or overseas balance of payments problem is to increase our exports, particularly exports of our primary industries. However, as to subsidies, I do not think the Government could give very much more consideration to this matter and hope to come out with a favorable reply. In the case of a country

like Australia, which is perhaps the greatest trading country in the world per head of population, two things could happen: First, we might embark on a trade war with competitors who are much stronger than we, and therefore our prospects of success would be remote; and second, we could grant subsidies, but I cannot think at the present time that subsidies would be the answer to this question, particularly when we are complaining so bitterly about subsidies being given by other countries to their export industries. I assure the honorable gentleman that this problem has received very careful consideration by the Government, but it has been decided that it would not be in our best interests to follow the course of action that he suggests.

NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Mr. NELSON.—Earlier in the session I asked the Minister for Territories whether it was the intention of the Government to dissolve the Legislative Council of the Northern Territory and hold a general election, instead of having a by-election to fill a vacancy that exists owing to the resignation from the Council of an elected member. The Minister informed me then that the matter was under consideration. I now ask him whether a decision has been made on that matter.

Mr. HASLUCK.—The only answer I can give is the same as the answer I gave before—the matter is still under consideration.

RADIO AUSTRALIA.

Mr. WENTWORTH.—Can the Minister for External Affairs tell the House whether any progress has been made with the broadcasting of programmes in Mandarin Chinese from Radio Australia?

Mr. CASEY.—I should think that this question, perhaps, should be more properly directed to my friend and colleague, the Postmaster-General, or, even, possibly, to both of us. The Postmaster-General and the Postal Department have what might be called executive charge of the running of Radio Australia, but since the Department of External Affairs is very interested, as indeed I am, too, in Radio Australia, perhaps I might be allowed to answer

the question. For just over three months, a programme in Mandarin Chinese has been broadcast over Radio Australia. It is additional to the programmes in English, French, Thai and Indonesian. It is a new service and lasts for an hour a day every day. It is done entirely in Mandarin Chinese, which is, I understand, the principal language of educated overseas Chinese, particularly in South-East Asia. The popularity of the broadcast has been reflected in the fact that a substantial "fan" mail of considerably more than 1,500 letters has been received since this service started. As I said, the broadcast lasts for one hour a day. Of that time, about twelve minutes is devoted to news, about five minutes to comments on news and the remainder to a series of commentaries generally on the Australian way of life and on matters of possible interest between overseas Chinese in South-East Asia and ourselves. I think the service has been well justified and I hope that it will not remain static in its present form, but will progress and expand.

CONSTITUTION REVIEW COMMITTEE.

Mr. GALVIN.—I desire to ask the Prime Minister a question similar to one that I put to the Treasurer during the absence of the Prime Minister abroad. Will the right honorable gentleman inform the House when it is intended to fill the vacancy on the all-party Constitution Review Committee caused by the resignation of the chairman of the committee, Senator—now Mr. Justice—Spicer? Will he assure the House that there will be no undue delay in filling the vacancy, thus allowing the committee to deal with its very important task of recommending constitutional reform?

Mr. MENZIES.—I appreciate the point made by the honorable member, and I can assure him that the vacancy will be filled in the next ten days or fortnight at the latest.

UNIFORM TAXATION.

Mr. FREETH.—I wish to ask the Prime Minister a question on the subject of uniform taxation which is supplementary to that asked by the honorable member for Sturt. Has the right honorable gentleman seen a proposal that the Commonwealth

should return some limited taxing rights to the States instead of making a tax reimbursement supplementary to the reimbursement under the formula, and allowing the States, if they think fit, to raise, by means of such transferred taxing powers, the extra amount of money that they require over and above the amount received by way of formula reimbursement provided they use the Commonwealth assessment legislation? Will the right honorable gentleman consider this proposal, which, I think, was first outlined in an article that appeared in the "Economic Record" of May last? The suggestion seems to me to have some merit. If the Prime Minister considers that it has, will he discuss it with the State Premiers?

Mr. MENZIES.—In spite of my advanced years I have a lively recollection of 1934, when, as Acting Premier of Victoria, I advanced a similar proposal, at a Premiers conference, to that outlined by the honorable member. My clear recollection is that it was not very well received, and I am very interested to hear that the proposal has been resuscitated. I am prepared, of course, to consider to-day what I advocated 22 years ago, but the honorable member will, of course, realize that the problem is a pretty complex one. I and my colleagues have, from first to last, wished to devise a system under which the restoration of taxing authority to the States would be accompanied by as great a degree of uniformity as possible, so that there would not be a duplication of returns or a multiplicity of conflicting laws. We stand ready at all times to consider any suggestion along those lines. No State has, in what are termed modern times, put forward a suggestion that it should be given some form of taxing power now exclusive to the Commonwealth. As the honorable member clearly understands, of course, any proposal that a particular kind of tax now exclusive to the Commonwealth should be made available to the States would involve a constitutional amendment, to which the people would have to agree, and experience does not suggest that people vote very heartily in favour of proposals that some one else should have a chance to tax them. That seems to me to be one of the facts of life, but hope springs eternal, and I am always prepared to try anything.

AIRCRAFT PRODUCTION.

Mr. BRYANT.—Is the Minister for Defence Production aware that airline operators are reported to be finding difficulty in obtaining aircraft overseas? In view of the present concern within the industry at the threat of unemployment and the collapse of aircraft manufacturing generally in this country, will the Minister consider arranging for the manufacture in the Government factories of aircraft suitable for civilian and defence purposes, such as, for example, a modern equivalent of the DC3?

Sir ERIC HARRISON.—This question has, quite obviously, been wrongly directed, and as it relates to a matter of Government policy I cannot give the honorable member an answer.

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.

Mr. DRUMMOND.—I direct a question to the Minister for the Army, and preface it by saying that about four years ago Army authorities approached the pastoral and agricultural association of Glen Innes with a view to securing a lease of the showground in that town for army training purposes, when it was not being used for show purposes. This lease they obtained. I ask the Minister whether it is a fact that since then the association has not been able to make a fixed arrangement with the Army. Is it also a fact that within the last eighteen months the association has endeavoured to obtain army assistance to repair the road leading into the showground, which had been damaged by army transport? As preparations are now being made for the annual show, will the Minister agree to the request of the association that a senior officer of the Department of the Army be sent to Glen Innes so that the four-year-old negotiations may be concluded? In considering this matter, will he bear in mind the possibility that public opinion may be influenced by the fact that negotiations have been in progress for this length of time, and that people may conclude that a department which takes four years to settle a simple question is hardly to be trusted with the proper mobilization of Australia's defences?

Mr. CRAMER.—My great regret is that the honorable member has not mentioned this matter to me before to-day. I should

have been very pleased to look into it, and I am confident that it could have been satisfactorily explained. As it has its origin in the past, I have no knowledge of it. I may say that, in my experience, the Army has always been co-operative in matters of this kind, and I am sure that there must be some other aspect that the honorable member has not mentioned. I shall certainly investigate it to see what can be done, and can promise the honorable member an early reply.

OIL FROM COAL.

Mr. JAMES.—Has the Minister for Labour and National Service seen the report that has been submitted to the Joint Coal Board, and to the New South Wales Mines Department, by German and English experts on the better utilization of coal and the possibility of introducing, in the northern districts in New South Wales, a system similar to that which obtains in the German Ruhr? I do not think that the Minister was in the chamber during the debate on the Estimates, when I mentioned this matter. We, in the northern districts, are very concerned about the importation of diesel oil. I have not seen the report in question, but I understand that it suggests that merely by using coal that is not now in demand for any other purpose, Australia could obtain a substantial supply of both diesel oil and petrol.

Mr. HAROLD HOLT.—I assure the honorable member that I was present in the chamber when he raised this matter during the debate on the Estimates. I have no doubt that my colleague, the Minister for National Development, who is the appropriate Minister, has been giving consideration to the honorable member's remarks on that occasion. The honorable member will be aware, because I have mentioned it on many occasions, of the existence of a very active committee, comprising representatives of the Commonwealth and State governments, the miners' federation, the Joint Coal Board and the Department of Labour and National Service, which investigates the various problems of the coal industry. Though I have not read the report, I have no doubt that it has been considered by the committee, which would seem the appropriate body to examine the possibility of using these methods in Australia.

CREDIT FACILITIES FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRY.

Mr. JEFF BATE.—My question to the Minister for Primary Industry is supplementary to that asked by the honorable member for Lyne. Is it a fact that bank returns show a fall in the funds available for agricultural purposes? Is it also a fact that funds flowing into hire-purchase companies have resulted in farm equipment being readily available under hire purchase at interest rates of not 5½ per cent., but up to 20 per cent.? Is it further a fact that the shortage of credit is forcing farmers to fall back upon their own resources, and causing consequent hardship to their families? I ask the Minister whether, instead of reducing costs, this has the opposite effect of raising them, at a time when Australia's produce must be able to compete with that of other countries in overseas markets.

Mr. McMAHON.—This is an incredibly difficult question to answer on the spur of the moment, and I am afraid that it is well beyond my capacity to do so. Nevertheless, I will have a detailed answer prepared for the honorable member. I would like to make one comment on the question of credit for rural industries: Though there was a fall of something like £30,000,000 in the total amount of credit available throughout Australia last year, the percentage obtained by the primary industries was as great at 30th June, 1956, as it was at the preceding 30th June. The primary industries, therefore, are keeping their normal proportion of general credit facilities.

ALLEGED ILLEGAL ENTRY OF IMMIGRANTS.

Mr. HAROLD HOLT (Higgins—Minister for Labour and National Service and Minister for Immigration).—by leave—Yesterday, the honorable member for Scullin (Mr. Peters) asked me a question on a newspaper allegation that immigrants were being illegally admitted into Australia. I said that I would make a report to the Parliament on the matter raised by him at the first opportunity.

Allegations have been published in a number of newspapers that there is a widespread smuggling ring to get migrants illegally into Australia. These allegations

have been based upon newspaper interviews with an Italian woman described by the newspapers as "Carla", as interpreted by a Mr. Petronius Kuff. When the charges were brought to my notice, I stated that the Department of Immigration would make an immediate inquiry into the charges and report to me. I have now received this report. It shows that the allegations are without foundation. I table for the information of honorable members and for the public, the full text of the report.

Since the report was prepared, I have considered the case of the woman, called "Carla" in the newspaper article. As will be clear from the report, she is an illegal entrant to Australia, as she deserted the ship on which she was employed. She has a husband and three children in Italy. In all the circumstances, I have decided that she should be required to leave Australia.

The woman had been issued with a certificate of exemption, valid for a period of six months. This is a normal procedure which does not necessarily imply that the person concerned is to be allowed to stay for the full period stated in the certificate. I feel it necessary to emphasize this, as prominence has been given by at least one newspaper to the fact of the issue of an exemption certificate for that period, and it has been taken as signifying that she will be permitted to remain in Australia for at least that time. This does not follow.

I am empowered by the Immigration Act to cancel the certificate of exemption at any time, and, upon doing so, to issue a deportation order. If certificates were issued for much shorter periods, for example, a week or a month, the necessity would arise in some cases for extension while a passage is being arranged for the person concerned, or while inquiries are in progress. It is important that certificates should not be allowed to expire because power to deport under the section of the Immigration Act by which they are issued can disappear if the exemption is not kept current. The appropriate action will now be taken to cancel the exemption and to arrange for deportation.

It will be evident to honorable members when they read the report of the Department of Immigration that not only is there no substance in the allegations, but they

have been based on information supplied by what can only be regarded on the facts as now known as very unreliable sources.

It is to be hoped that the same prominence will be given by the press to the facts as they now appear as was given in the first instance to allegations which reflected on the conduct of members of the Victorian Police Force and officers of the Department of Immigration. Justice demands that it be made abundantly clear that no irregularity of any kind can be attributed to any one of them, nor is there any evidence of an organized racket of migrant smuggling into this country. We, in Australia, can expect attempts to enter this country illegally. Other countries of attraction to migrants, such as Canada and the United States, experience these difficulties also, but the department has its own methods of checking illegal entry and dealing promptly and effectively with such cases as occur.

I lay on the table the following paper:—

Migrants—Alleged Illegal Entry—Departmental Report.

Dr. Evatt.—Will the Minister move that the paper be printed?

Mr. HAROLD HOLT.—I have no objection if an opportunity for discussion is desired.

Dr. Evatt.—It is quite clear that what the Minister has tabled is a portion of more extensive documents, and there may be some occasion for comment on it later.

Mr. HAROLD HOLT.—In the circumstances, I move—

That the paper be printed.

Debate (on motion by Dr. Evatt) adjourned.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Assent to the following bills reported:—

Social Services Bill 1956.

Repatriation Bill 1956.

INTERNATIONAL WHEAT AGREEMENT BILL 1956.

Motion (by Mr. McMahon)—by leave agreed to—

That leave be given to bring in a bill to approve acceptance by Australia of the International Wheat Agreement 1956, and for other purposes.

Bill presented, and read a first time.

Second Reading.

Mr. McMAHON (Lowe—Minister for Primary Industry) [3.23].—by leave—I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to seek the approval of Parliament for the ratification by Australia of the International Wheat Agreement 1956. Honorable members will recall that the first post-war International Wheat Agreement came into force in 1949, and covered a four-year period up to 31st July, 1953. That agreement was renewed, with certain modifications, by the three-year International Wheat Agreement of 1953, which expired on 31st July of this year. The 1956 agreement, to which this bill relates, provides for a further three-year extension, with some amendments, of the arrangements covered by the two earlier agreements. Copies of the new agreement have been distributed to honorable members for their information and reference.

The text of this agreement was negotiated at a special United Nations Wheat Conference, which met in October-November, 1955, and again during February-April, 1956. The entry into force of the agreement was made conditional upon it being signed and ratified by governments of countries responsible for a prescribed proportion of the volume of wheat covered by its provisions concerning guaranteed purchases and sales. Following the negotiations, Australia became a signatory to the new agreement, as did also 39 other countries. However, signature did not in any final manner commit Australia or any other country to adherence to the agreement, which is dependent upon the deposit before 1st December, 1956, of a formal instrument of acceptance, or ratification, in accordance with the constitutional or legislative requirements of each individual country. In conformity with the practice followed in respect of the two earlier agreements, the Government is now seeking parliamentary approval for the lodgment of an instrument of acceptance to permit Australia's participation in the agreement.

In principle, the new agreement is identical with its predecessors, which have operated for seven years. As the arrangement is well known to honorable members,

and to Australian wheat-growers, it is, I believe, unnecessary for me to elaborate on the general nature of the agreement and its historical background. The basic objectives are defined in article I. as being “to assure supplies of wheat to importing countries and markets for wheat to exporting countries at equitable and stable prices”. They must be regarded as very worthy objectives in relation to a commodity which, in times when no international scheme operated, was notorious for the violent manner in which its prices fluctuated. The agreement attempts to achieve its objectives by provisions governing both prices and quantities. Maximum and minimum prices are stated, and transactions under the agreement must be within the prescribed price range. For each importing member country there is a quota, or “guaranteed quantity”, which it may be required to purchase at the minimum price, or which exporting countries may be required to sell to it at the maximum price. Similarly, for each exporting member country there is a quota which it may be required to sell at the maximum price, or which importing countries may be required to purchase from it at the minimum price. The experience of the last seven years demonstrates that these arrangements work satisfactorily in practice, and go a long way towards providing a reasonable degree of stability in the international wheat trade.

Although similar to the 1953 agreement in principle, the new agreement differs from it in two important points of detail. The first concerns the basic maximum and minimum prices which, in the new agreement, are 2 dollars and 1.50 dollars respectively, on the basis of No. 1 Manitoba Northern wheat in bulk in store Fort William/Port Arthur, the main shipping points for Canadian wheat. These basic prices are 5 cents lower, in each case, than the prices specified in the 1953 agreement, reflecting to some extent, but by no means wholly, the decline which has occurred in wheat prices since the last agreement was negotiated. The new agreement includes the same formulas as did the 1953 International Wheat Agreement for determining the equivalent maximum and minimum prices for wheat shipped from other exporting countries. These formulas take into account differences in transportation costs, the relative qualities of various types of

wheat, and different currencies. The underlying principle is that wheat sold at the maximum or minimum prices in the different exporting countries should be competitive, one with another, in the various markets, thereby conforming to commercial practice. In the case of Australian f.a.q. wheat, the new maximum price is equivalent to 18s. a bushel, f.o.b. Australian ports. The equivalent minimum price for Australian wheat will vary from time to time in accordance with movements in transportation costs, but on the basis of current freights is about 12s. a bushel, f.o.b. eastern Australian ports. The figures I have quoted as the equivalent maximum and minimum prices for Australian wheat are, in each case, subject to such allowance as may be agreed between Australia and the importing country concerned to take account of differences in wheat quality.

The second point on which the new agreement differs from the last is in respect of membership and guaranteed quantities. In the 1953 International Wheat Agreement, 44 importing countries participated, and the volume of wheat covered by the importers' quotas amounted to 395,000,000 bushels. In the new agreement, as negotiated, 44 importing countries again submitted figures for inclusion, but, in many cases, the quotas which they were willing to subscribe were substantially less than their commitments under the 1953 agreement. In consequence, the total quantity covered by the importers' side of the agreement has been reduced by almost a quarter, to 303,000,000 bushels. To some extent, those reductions reflect a growing dependence upon domestic production, often stimulated by high support prices. In some cases, too, the quantities for which particular countries were prepared to subscribe were undoubtedly influenced by their hopes or expectations of securing wheat outside the agreement under one or another of the United States programmes for the disposal of accumulated wheat stocks.

On the exporting side, the new agreement is significantly different. In the first two International Wheat Agreements, the main exporting member countries were the United States, Canada, and Australia, whilst France, though a member, had only a nominal quota. On this occasion, Argentina and Sweden have joined as exporting members, and France, which since

1953 has emerged as a substantial wheat exporter in normal seasons, is included with a significant quota. The effect of these two changes—the reduction in a total quantity subscribed by importing countries and the participation of France, Argentina and Sweden—has been a steep reduction in the quotas available for Australia, Canada and the United States. In Australia's case, our quota has been reduced from 45,000,000 bushels under the 1953 agreement to 30,000,000 bushels in the new agreement.

The figures I have just quoted are those which appear in the text of the agreement which was negotiated, copies of which have been distributed. I should add that some minor variations from those figures are possible when the agreement is fully in force. I mentioned earlier that each country which has signed the agreement has until 1st December, 1956, to declare its adherence to the agreement by the deposit of a formal instrument of acceptance. Accordingly, the final position regarding membership will not be known until that date, but on the information currently available it is likely that the changes, if any, which will be necessary will be relatively small. Although Australia and a number of other countries which have indicated that they intend adhering to the agreement have not yet formally ratified it, the operative provisions concerning prices and quantities came into force on 1st August, 1956, and transactions are now taking place within the terms of the new agreement.

The Government regards the existence of an effective International Wheat Agreement as being of very great value to the Australian wheat industry, and to the economy generally. This is particularly the case in times like the present, when stocks of unsold wheat are at record levels and anything in the nature of "panic selling" could bring widespread distress to wheat-growers and sharply reduced export earnings for Australia. The Government, therefore, through its delegation to the recent conference, pursued every means of obtaining the best possible agreement under which some measure of stability might be given to the export marketing of Australian wheat. The Government is convinced that, in the present circumstances, the new agreement is the best obtainable. The new

price range cannot be regarded as other than satisfactory, in the light of current price levels. The quantity of wheat covered by the new agreement is, admittedly, disappointing, as it represents only about one-third of the wheat entering world trade. The Government would have liked to have seen an agreement with a very much wider coverage, as the effectiveness of an arrangement of this type is, to some extent at least, influenced by the relationship it bears to total world trade in the particular commodity.

But in considering the alternatives of having no agreement at all, or of staying out of an agreement which other countries—our competitors and our markets—were prepared to implement, the new agreement undoubtedly offers advantages to Australia which far outweigh any reservations associated with the reduction in quantities. For example, the formal adherence by such a large and representative group of countries to the basic objective of the agreement offers some prospects that fundamental wheat problems, such as the stimulation of uneconomic production, will be kept within limits. Again, with accumulated wheat stocks so great it is imperative that some degree of orderliness in export marketing should prevail. An international wheat agreement provides the only convenient and effective way of introducing any degree of orderliness. In connexion with this point, I attach considerable importance to the entry into the agreement of Argentina and Sweden, and the participation of France on a substantial basis. And finally, whilst the agreement is kept in existence, particularly with Argentina, France and Sweden participating, there is always the possibility that a more satisfactory agreement, embracing wider membership and large quotas, might be negotiated. A complete breakdown now would put back the clock by twenty years, to the time of the chaotic marketing conditions of the early 1930's, when efforts to find a solution to international wheat marketing problems had their origin.

It is for these reasons that the Government is convinced that participation in the new agreement, which is sought by this bill, would be of undoubted benefit to Australian wheat-growers and to the economy of this country. I wish to make it clear

that in reaching its decision in regard to ratification of the agreement, the Government has had the advice and the views of the wheat industry. Indeed, the chairman of the Australian Wheat Board, and the general president and general secretary of the Australian Wheat Growers Federation, served as members of the Australian delegation to the negotiating conference. Those gentlemen are in full accord with the Government's views on the desirability of ratification by Australia. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Mr. Calwell) adjourned.

HOME NURSING SUBSIDY BILL 1956.

Motion (by Dr. Donald Cameron)—by leave—agreed to—

That leave be given to bring in a bill to provide for the grant of subsidies to Home Nursing Organizations.

Bill presented, and read a first time.

Second Reading.

Dr. DONALD CAMERON (Oxley—Minister for Health) [3.37].—by leave—I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The object of this bill is to authorize financial assistance by the Commonwealth to approved organizations engaged in the conduct of home-nursing services. The national health service is based on certain principles. One of the most important is the idea of a partnership—of co-operation between patient and doctor. Implicit in this is the realization that a powerful factor in recovery from illness and restoration to health is the sense of personal responsibility of the patient for what happens to him.

This means that the foundation of a national health scheme should be an efficient and competent general practitioner service. The importance of domiciliary medicine can hardly be over-estimated. A hospital service can never be a true substitute for the family doctor, whose role is becoming more, instead of less, important with the recent developments in medical knowledge. The modern general practitioner has powerful weapons in his hands, such things, for example, as the sulphonamides and the antibiotics, and if his own standard of work and knowledge is high, can undertake in

the home, and in full and proper collaboration with the specialist, a great deal of treatment to the great benefit of his patients in particular, and the country in general.

Much is said nowadays about the question of medical and hospital benefits, and all sorts of claims are made that these should be higher or more extensive. Whether this is so or not, the thing of fundamental importance is the quality of medical care, and it is essential that there must be not only no deterioration of the standard of family and general practice from the high level at which it has existed in the past, but that this standard should be maintained and, if possible, raised.

If this is so, then several things are necessary. Not only is there need for good training of general practitioners, but the conditions of general practice must be such as to give scope to men who possess good training, and ability, and be designed to allow their patients to benefit from it to the full. This means in modern medical practice that trained assistance, by a complementary service, namely the nursing profession, should be available.

For more than 50 years home nursing care has been provided for the poor and needy throughout Australia by district and bush nursing associations and religious organizations. Honorable members will be familiar with the charitable and public-spirited work of these bodies whose efforts have brought relief to the sick and aged, particularly in the poorer areas of the cities. The nurses employed by these home-nursing organizations are generally known in Australia as "district" nurses. The special feature of their work is that it is carried out by visits to the homes of the patients as distinct from hospital, clinic, or institutional care, or the services rendered by a nurse engaged privately by the patient.

The district nurses are generally referred to the patients, in the first instance, by a hospital or by a local doctor. The majority of patients nursed are those with long-term illnesses such as patients suffering from cardiac disease, arthritis, incurable carcinoma, and so on. Many of these patients are very ill and would be transferred to hospitals or other institutions but for the serious shortage of hospital beds. The nursing these patients require is mainly general care, sponging, supervision, and

general nursing treatment which is always arduous and time-consuming, though there are many cases which do not require more than a daily visit, or perhaps a visit several times a week.

Although chronic illnesses are prevalent among all age groups, they mainly affect people over 60 years of age. It is these people that make up the majority of the district nurses' patients. It is estimated that approximately three-quarters of the patients of each district nursing association are chronically ill and over the age of 60 years. A considerable amount of home-nursing work is also done for patients who cannot be classified as chronically ill, but who require prolonged care, such as those requiring after-care for unhealed wounds following operations. At the same time, under modern conditions, an increasing number of acute cases is becoming suitable for treatment at home.

Since the war, it has been impossible for hospital construction to be maintained at a rate in any way commensurate with the growth in population. Consequently, it has become necessary for surgical and acutely ill cases to be discharged from hospital at the earliest possible time, whilst the chronically and less acutely ill have found it progressively more difficult to obtain hospital accommodation at all. Many of these chronically ill people, who in other days would have been hospital cases, cannot now receive the nursing attention they require unless they are visited by the district nurses. Because of this oppressive shortage of hospital beds, the need for adequate properly equipped home-nursing services has greatly intensified in recent years.

At the present time, some 150 district nurses are employed by home-nursing associations. A work analysis recently made indicates that each of these 150 nurses is at present saving the provision of six hospital beds; that is, the home-nursing services are saving 900 hospital beds throughout Australia. The capital cost of providing new hospital accommodation has risen to extraordinary heights. In the case of hospitals recently completed, the cost is reckoned at at least £7,000 a bed. The cost of maintaining a hospital bed has also reached a new and very high level. It is now rarely, if ever, less than £3 a day, and in the case of many individual hospitals

is considerably more than that. By way of contrast, the cost of a visit to a home by a district nurse averages something like 7s.

These figures give some indication of the savings of very great significance to the community that are to be made by encouraging home-nursing for the sick, instead of hospitalization, whenever it is possible. It has been reliably estimated that the maintenance of 150 nurses in district nursing work keeps hospital running costs down by at least £1,000,000 a year. The total cost of keeping these 150 nurses in the field is less than one-fifth of that sum.

Can I give the House a further example? If in a few years' time home-nursing were to expand to four times its present level there would be, on these considerations, a saving of 3,600 beds, resulting in the following financial savings:—

	£
Annual maintenance expenditure relating to these beds	4,000,000
A capital expenditure, assuming they were all provided, of well over	20,000,000

The cost of home-nursing services to produce such a result would be very small indeed. These are, of course, theoretical figures, but they indicate the magnitude of the financial relief which could be afforded to the general problem of hospital costs, in an expanding population.

These, in brief, are the financial and practical considerations in favour of the development of home-nursing services. At the same time it is realized that many patients, particularly old people, will be much happier and perhaps will be better, if they can be nursed at home, and modern medical thought favours this practice. Furthermore, it is now realized that the visiting nurse can do much effective work in the field of preventive medicine, giving instruction in general health, nutrition, food habits, &c. It is advantages of this kind which Australian and overseas authorities are now coming to recognize in the practice of sending the nurse into the home, instead of sending the patient into hospital. In view of these developments, the Government recently decided that the building up of numerically stronger and better equipped organizations of district nurses should be encouraged, so far as it is practicable for the Commonwealth to do so. The voluntary organizations already in the field have

done splendid work. They have kept their services going when times were difficult and have accepted heavy financial burdens in an effort to expand their services in recent times to keep pace with growing public demands. We, therefore, believe that the most promising approach to the expansion of home-nursing services is to provide financial assistance for public and religious organizations qualified to perform this work. As the Commonwealth is entering this field for the first time, we felt it inadvisable to specify in this bill precise terms and conditions on which Commonwealth financial assistance will be made available. These matters will be determined according to circumstances affecting particular organizations and, perhaps, varied from time to time in the light of experience.

In general terms, the Commonwealth's policy will be to grant to non-profit making home-nursing organizations now in the field subsidies approximating the salaries paid to nursing sisters employed by them over and above the number ordinarily employed during the year prior to the commencement of the act. Thus, if an organization has ordinarily employed, say, ten nurses during the past year and increases its staff to twelve nurses when this scheme commences, it will receive a subsidy approximating the salary of the two additional nurses; if it increases its staff to fifteen nurses it will receive a subsidy approximating the salary of the five additional nurses. This basis for calculating the subsidy will be applied in relation to the organizations which are conducting home-nursing services at the present time. It is possible, of course, that new organizations will enter the field. It will be evident to honorable members that it will not be practicable to subsidize these "new" organizations on exactly the same basis as that proposed for the existing organizations, because that would involve the payment of a Commonwealth subsidy equal to the full salary of every nurse employed by each "new" organization. This would put "new" organizations on a much more favorable basis than those that have pioneered this field. It is proposed, therefore, that the organizations which commence home-nursing services after this act comes into operation will be entitled to apply for a subsidy equal to approximately half the salary paid to each

nurse employed on home-nursing duty. This, I think, is a fair and equitable basis for handling this problem.

Up to the present, finance for the district nursing associations' work has come mainly from State government subsidies, collections from patients, and donations by the public. We think it right that money should continue to be supplied to the associations from these sources. The work of the district nurses results in a significant saving in State hospital expenditure, and the States, as I have pointed out already, support organizations engaged in this work. This bill provides that the subsidy to be paid by the Commonwealth is not in any case to exceed the State government subsidy. Naturally it is proposed to consult with the State governments about the effective carrying out of the provisions of the bill. The Minister's approval will be required before an organization is granted a subsidy under this scheme. The organizations which are granted subsidies will, of course, have to supply the Director-General of Health with adequate information and properly audited accounts and reports. For example, the Director-General of Health will in all cases have to be satisfied that the nurses on account of whom the subsidy is claimed are properly qualified. At the same time, I assure the House that the department will not be seeking to impose conditions or restrictions which will hamper the organizations in their conduct of their work. There will be no attempt by the Government to interfere with the organizations' management and control of their affairs, except insofar as is consistent with the proper expenditure of public funds. I believe that this measure will prove to be of very great importance and value in the field of public health. I, therefore, hope that all members will be sympathetic to its objectives and will accord it their full support.

Debate (on motion by Mr. Chambers) adjourned.

ESTIMATES 1956-57.

In Committee of Supply: Consideration resumed from 9th October (vide page 1288).

Department of Supply.

Proposed Vote, £15,132,000.

Department of Defence Production.

Proposed Vote, £19,891,000.

Other Services.

Proposed Vote, £988,000.

(Ordered to be considered together.)

Mr. JEFF BATE (Macarthur) [3.51].—

When considering the proposed vote for the Department of Defence Production, one thinks of the making of ammunition, and one may be forgiven for recalling those days in 1944 and 1945 when Australian troops, already emerging into an atomic age because an atomic bomb was used in 1945 to end the war, were in the jungle wrestling with the problems relating to the supply of ammunition for their weapons. I can remember, and I suppose many other honorable members can remember, too, endeavouring to get ammunition through the jungle up to the troops in the front line.

Mr. Dean.—Dry.

Mr. JEFF BATE.—And to get it there dry, as the honorable member for Robertson says. The .303 ammunition was still being packed in a steel container of a type which was introduced, I suppose, in World War I., 30 years earlier. The containers held 1,248 rounds, and it was impossible to carry them on the jungle trails. The containers had to be opened and the ammunition transferred in small quantities to sandbags, which became wet, and so the troops were forced to carry with them wet rounds which they could not trust. Further, they carried not only .303 ammunition but also 9-mm. and 7-mm. ammunition, rounds for the various machine guns, belts for the Vickers, magazines for the Brens, mortar bombs of all types, rounds for artillery pieces, and so on. This situation led to a lowering of morale in the troops, and great difficulties in the supply lines both for ourselves and for the Americans at whose side and on whose side we were fighting. All sorts of difficulties were encountered in bringing the ammunition to the islands, and taking it from the ports or beaches into the jungle and from the jungle bases to the front line. The problems encountered were almost incredibly difficult. From this state of affairs the ideal of having one size of ammunition to suit all the western nations was conceived. We now have an

agreement, I believe, that the FN .30 rifle, which is a semi-automatic carbine similar, I think, to the American carbine, will be standard equipment and that all armies at the side of which we are likely to fight will use common ammunition. If we are forced to fight on the side of other troops or alone, it will be a boon indeed to have the .30 rifle in use. The agreement to which I have referred was made some years ago. The need for it was apparent many years ago, when the honorable member for Adelaide (Mr. Chambers) was Minister for the Army. It was apparent to me as a very lowly officer, and I made a report about it. I do not know whether the report ever reached the honorable gentleman; probably it was stopped at some low level. The report referred to the dangers of having old types of ammunition packages. Whereas the Japanese were carrying light packages wrapped in tarred paper, which enabled mortar bombs and other ammunition to be kept dry and in good condition for years, we were still being supplied with steel packages of ammunition which were not suitable for that type of warfare. The point I am making is that, in spite of the need which then existed and which now exists, we have not yet reached the stage of manufacturing .30 ammunition. Perhaps the Minister for Defence Production (Sir Eric Harrison) will correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that we are still making .303 ammunition for the .303 rifles that are used for training and rifle practice. Stocks of such ammunition have to be maintained for use in this rifle which, I think, was used 40 years ago in World War I. I make that observation because I want to refer to a term that is being commonly used to-day—the inflexibility of defence preparations. Although this Parliament has been thinking in terms of nuclear warfare, radar, and guided missiles, which seek out enemy aircraft, we still go on with the inflexible preparations which are a legacy to us from previous military régimes. The defence chiefs are still forced to make recommendations which carry on the manufacture of the kind of ammunition that is being produced at Maribyrnong.

We are not concerned merely with the manufacture of practice rounds, or even with the manufacture of rounds for the FN .30 rifle, with which, I understand, the

Australian Army will soon be equipped. Because the use of infantry is essential to the defence of this country, we must continue to manufacture rounds for small arms, but whilst we carry on with these inflexible defence preparations, we also are obliged to find ammunition for new weapons, such as those used in aircraft, tank guns and mortars. Under the Seato treaty we have obligations to the other member nations. We have obligations, too, to Great Britain, which some of us thought we might have to honour in connexion with the Suez Canal situation. Then, we have obligations to America. This Government has made defence arrangements with other nations which I think those who sit on the other side of the Parliament also would have made had they been in power. The Government has embarked on defence preparations in accordance with the arrangements made with Australia's allies for mutual security. We have spent £190,000,000 a year on defence. We have all kinds of military weapons, and we must have ammunition for those weapons.

The Minister for the Army (Mr. Cramer) referred to the use of Centurion tanks. Suppose that we had Centurion tanks but no ammunition for them. Think what would happen if there were no hand grenades, no mortar bombs, no bombs for aircraft and no means of providing war heads, propellant charges, fuses, and so on. All of those things are essential to defence preparations. For that reason, the factory at Salisbury is being used by the long-range weapons organization, and the factory at Maribyrnong is producing small arms, but because we had no factories which could supply us with the other very necessary items of military equipment, such as bombs, mines, shells, propellant charges, war heads for shells and fuses, it became imperative, in order that we might be capable of honouring our obligations to our allies, to construct the ammunition filling factory at St. Mary's. It has been argued that there is no need for that factory, but, obviously, if we are to have defence preparations, we must have ammunition. Not only must ammunition be in the storage magazines, but also we must have a plant which is capable of producing newly developed munitions at short notice, and by the most modern processes, including automation. If, at any moment, we are attacked and have

to defend ourselves, we shall be able to depend upon the factory at St. Mary's to the ammunition that is needed.

Many of us found ourselves, in the early part of the war, in the situation where we had arms but no ammunition. I remember an episode that occurred after Mr. Churchill had sent practically all of his war materiel to the Middle East. England was under threat of attack across the channel, and a tank colonel ordered the mobilization of his tanks to try to save England from invasion. The quartermaster reported to him that there were no rounds available, to which the colonel replied, "Get the rounds"! The quartermaster thereupon produced wooden rounds for the defence of Great Britain! There are, in this Parliament, people who never want to see a recurrence of those events, nor do they want to see thousands of young Australian men offering to defend their country but having no ammunition with which to do it. It is the duty of this Parliament to make sure that there are adequate supplies of munitions.

Because the Minister for Defence Production may not speak again in the Parliament after to-day, I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate him on his determination to give Australia and its defence forces adequate supplies of ammunition, although in doing so he has been attacked. I publicly congratulate him for his part in the establishment of the factory at St. Mary's. There was a need for the factory; the Minister knew that the need existed, and he went ahead with the project. In my opinion, the need for the St. Mary's plant has already been established, and I think that the Parliament and the country should acknowledge the fact, although to do so may not be popular with certain sections of the press which have attacked the project with utter irresponsibility.

Since the need for the factory at St. Mary's has been established, let us look at the methods used to establish it, which, perhaps, have been, in part, the reason for the attack. The factory was to be constructed on a new method known as a cost plus fixed fee contract, or a negotiated contract. A firm named Stephenson and Turner was selected as the supervising architects, which was a most unusual course. I had an opportunity, some time ago, to

see some of the staff of this firm, and I must say that I have never seen a better group of men. The designing and supervision of the factory, therefore, was placed in the hands of a very fine organization. In addition, Utah Australia Limited and Concrete Constructions Proprietary Limited, which obtained the fixed fee contract, have made a great difference to construction methods in this country. If honorable members care to go to St. Mary's, they will see that the work is not being carried out by the government stroke. I have never seen men work so hard. Naturally, some criticism will arise in connexion with such a vast and complex organization, and, of course, extraordinary things are happening, but the men are working hard and are very proud of the organization for which they are working. They are also proud of the modern machinery that they have been given.

I remind the committee that work on the Eildon weir project in Victoria, which was being constructed by government day-labour, at one stage went dead slow and then stopped. Utah Australia Limited came on the scene and did the job that the government stroke had failed to do. The company was paid a management fee of £10,000 a day to complete the job within a certain time. It did the job in three months less than the specified time and lost the fee of £10,000 a day for that period. It believes that honesty pays, which is unusual in contracts of this kind, and thought that it might get more work in Australia by such a policy. I am delighted to see the St. Mary's project going ahead. The construction methods are proving themselves. I do not wish to anticipate the Minister's remarks, but I think it is fair to say that reports indicate that the job will be finished on time, and that, in December, 1957, we shall have, at St. Mary's, a modern and splendid plant of which every Australian may be proud.

Mr. E. JAMES HARRISON (Blaxland) [4.5].—In addition to the section of the Estimates just dealt with by the honorable member for Macarthur (Mr. Jeff Bate), the committee has before it a section dealing with funds for the Department of Supply, and it is to this section that I wish to direct my remarks. Members of the

Opposition feel that in these days, when nuclear weapons such as hydrogen and cobalt bombs are being manufactured, a pertinent question is: "How long will the mad rush for world power and destruction continue, and where will it end?". Members of the Opposition recognize that nuclear energy is a great gift to mankind, and that it is now being investigated by the scientists. Undeniably, advantage is to be gained from nuclear power for this nation, mainly because of the high cost of producing power from coal and the limits of hydro-electric power in Australia.

On 6th August last, honorable members were astonished to read in the daily press, particularly in the "Sydney Morning Herald", a report of severe cuts in federal expenditure on nuclear weapons. It was obvious that such a cut must have a severe effect on a nation seeking means of using nuclear energy to assist in its development. I shall first read the report that appeared in the "Daily Telegraph" on 6th August under the headings, "Big money cuts—Almost all nuclear works stops". It is as follows:—

Severe cuts in federal expenditure have almost stopped work on Australia's atomic energy programme.

The Nuclear Research Foundation's chairman (Mr. R. G. C. Parry-Oakden) last night said he understood that the cuts had stopped work.

The report adds—

Nucleus, the journal of the Atomic Energy Commission, refers editorially, in its current issue to the effects of the cuts—"The Australian atomic energy programmes have suffered a further setback—in fact, it has practically drawn to a stop. Funds for the project, which are voted on a yearly basis, have been cut, with the consequent closing down of most of the building programme".

The report further states—

This tragic turn of affairs is difficult to understand in face of ever-increasing activity in this field by all other forward-looking nations.

A later paragraph reads—

It is widely felt that many responsible Australians have not taken the trouble to acquaint themselves—as their counterparts in England, America, Canada and other countries have—with even the rudiments of the peaceful application of nuclear energy. Only Australia can be the loser in this instance.

The "Daily Telegraph" report went on—

The "Daily Telegraph" telephoned Mr. Beale at 9.30 p.m.

We presume, from the report, that that is the Minister for Supply (Mr. Beale). It continued—

A woman who answered the telephone said Mr. Beale was asleep and she would not awaken him.

Mr. Beale.—That woman happened to be my wife.

Mr. E. JAMES HARRISON.—I am not saying anything detrimental about the Minister's wife. I am only reading what the report contains—that she said the Minister was asleep and she would not wake him. My only comment is that the Minister for Supply is still asleep, particularly with regard to nuclear development.

Mr. Beale.—I rise to order. I do not like to interrupt the honorable member for Blaxland, who has dragged in the "Daily Telegraph", a newspaper that has been conducting a campaign against me on this matter for a long time. However, the honorable member will have to deal with this matter at another time, because the committee is now discussing the Estimates for the Department of Supply. These do not relate to the Atomic Energy Commission, which was discussed last week. I suggest that the honorable member might bring this matter up at some other time, but not to-day.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. Adermann).—Order! There is some substance in the point taken by the Minister, but I have been listening carefully to the honorable member. What he has been saying is associated with defence services and I am prepared to allow him to continue, but he must keep to the point.

Mr. E. JAMES HARRISON.—I have no intention of going outside the proper bounds of this discussion. As a consequence of the Minister still being asleep, danger is developing in Australia as a result of atomic tests at the Woomera Rocket Range and elsewhere. I direct the attention of honorable members again to the statement contained in the editorial of "Nucleus" which points out that we are still concerned—and unless the Minister is still asleep he should be also concerned—with the development of atomic power in Australia for peaceful purposes more than for any other purpose.

Mr. Beale.—Rubbish! The Estimates for the Atomic Energy Commission have been doubled this year.

Mr. E. JAMES HARRISON.—The Minister will have his opportunity to reply. In May last, a nuclear weapon was tested at Monte Bello. I assume that the Minister was not asleep on that occasion, but was interested in what was happening. Consequently, I direct his attention to press reports of the event, and I will not quote the "Daily Telegraph", since the Minister has the impression that that newspaper is antagonistic to him. Possibly all the press of Australia will be against him if he goes to sleep over this matter. On 25th May, the "Sydney Morning Herald" published the following report of what happened after the Monte Bello tests:—

Scientists went ashore on Tremerville Island, in the Monte Bellos, a few hours after Britain's latest atomic device was exploded there last Wednesday, Professor L. H. Martin said yesterday.

It goes on to say something about Professor Martin, and then reports the remarks of another member of the committee, the chief of the Commonwealth Meteorological Bureau, Mr. L. J. Dwyer, in these terms—

The whole of the radio-active cloud was dissipated over the Indian Ocean.

"None of it drifted anywhere near the mainland", he said. There was no cause to fear that cattle or other animals on the mainland would be affected by radio-activity.

Mr. Dwyer said also—

The meteorologists in the party checked and re-checked the weather conditions up to the last possible moment during the morning of the tests. Their forecasts of 36 hours previously were extremely accurate.

Dealing with radio-active cloud, he said that it was dissipated over the Indian Ocean. In the same report one further comment was made. It is this—

The higher an atomic weapon is exploded from the ground the less debris is sucked up by the explosion, thus minimizing the radio-active fallout.

On Thursday, 27th September last, another atomic test was made. Honorable members will recall that it was intended to make this test on about 11th September, but day after day the winds were not in the right direction and the press began to make comments which may have irked the Minister. Newspapers began to ask what kind of wind the scientists responsible for these tests really wanted. That was understandable, in view of the great care that was taken in connexion with the Monte Bello tests last May.

The scientists and all those concerned were so sure that if the wind was in the right direction all the radio-active material would be carried harmlessly away, and that if the bomb were exploded at a great height from the ground no radio-active fallout would settle on the land and everything would be right, as it was at Monte Bello. But what are the facts?

Mr. Beale.—The honorable member does not know.

Mr. E. JAMES HARRISON.—That is because the Minister has not made a report to Parliament about this test. On the day that the test was made no instruction was issued about the grounding of aeroplanes in the area, and the bomb was exploded at 5 o'clock in the afternoon—not in the morning, as was originally intended. Immediately afterwards—and these facts must surely be known to the Minister—a cloud came directly over New South Wales and southern Queensland at 10,000 feet. On the following day, 28th September, instructions were issued for the grounding of all aeroplanes in a vast area bounded by a line running from just north of Dubbo to Cunnamulla, in Queensland, and over into South Australia.

Mr. Beale.—Not a single aeroplane was grounded in Australia following the last test.

Mr. E. JAMES HARRISON.—Instructions were issued that aircraft were not to fly over the area.

Mr. Anderson.—Read the instruction.

Mr. E. JAMES HARRISON.—That is what we are asking for. The Minister has to answer to the people of Australia for this. The point I am making is that in May we were told it was necessary that the test should be conducted in such a way that all the fallout would go over the sea. I know many of the western parts of New South Wales, and I am entitled to know why, if such precautions were necessary in May, the people who live north of Dubbo were not accorded the same precautions that were observed at Monte Bello. Was it because some of the organizations under the control of the Minister got a bit ruffled or, shall we say, a bit panicky following press criticism of the delay in conducting the test?

Mr. Beale.—Does the honorable member realize that Monte Bello is 2,000 or 3,000 miles from Maralinga?

Mr. E. JAMES HARRISON.—I realize that, but if there was need for care in keeping the fallout away from the mainland on the occasion of the Monte Bello test, there is greater need for keeping it away from the people who live in Dubbo and just north of that town. If the testing of atom bombs in central Australia is to continue, we want to know what is to be the policy of the Government, the Minister, or the persons who are in charge of these tests. We want to know whether, irrespective of the fact that the wind might take the fallout across New South Wales, future tests are to be conducted at 5 p.m. or at some other selected time as late as sixteen days after the original time set. It is possible that the kind of wind that was blowing on the evening of 27th September was also blowing on more than one occasion between 11th September and that date.

This committee and the country are entitled to know from the Minister for Supply during this debate all the facts of the matter. We are entitled to know why aircraft were prevented from flying over this vast area on the following day, all the instructions that were issued, and why the fallout from this test was different from that of the Monte Bello test when it was ensured that the fallout would not pass over the mainland. We know the Minister is in the "second eleven"; but it might be that he would only get the job of tallying the scores. However, the question of this fallout over Australia should be treated in a different manner from that in which the Minister is treating it.

Sir ERIC HARRISON (Wentworth—Vice-President of the Executive Council and Minister for Defence Production) [4.20].—I am sorry that I am cutting across the debate that has developed, but I feel that the Minister for Supply (Mr. Beale), when he rises in his place, will be able to deal adequately with the honorable member for Blaxland (Mr. E. James Harrison). Perhaps the delay will make the position much better, because it will enable the Minister to cool down following the unwarranted charges and foolish statements that were

made by the honorable member for Blaxland and which were enough to rouse the ire of any man.

The Estimates for the Department of Defence Production have been increased this year. In 1955-56, the department's expenditure was approximately £12,300,000. The proposed vote for 1956-57 has risen by approximately £7,500,000, of which £6,500,000 will be expended on the new ammunition filling factory at St. Mary's. I do not wish to deal with the St. Mary's factory this afternoon, but to refer to the achievement of the Department of Defence Production. However, I should like to say in passing, as the honorable member for Macarthur (Mr. Jeff Bate) has said, that there would be no defence programme in this country if we did not make arrangements for the production of the wherewithal to give effect to such a programme. Associated with every war as far back as history can be traced, and in which arms and ammunition have been held and used, there has been a scandal over a shortage of munitions. When I assumed the portfolio of Defence Production I made up my mind that, if I were to continue to occupy it, I must ensure that Australia would not be faced with a shortage of munitions in a time of crisis. The factory at St. Mary's has been designed for that purpose.

Mr. Curtin.—The Minister could not run a message.

The CHAIRMAN.—Order! The honorable member for Kingsford-Smith had better run back to his place.

Sir ERIC HARRISON.—It will one of the most up-to-date filling factories in the world, and will include automatic filling machinery from Meissner of Germany and also of the British Department of Supply research establishment. We combed the world in order to obtain the most up-to-date automatic filling machinery. Recently the "Sydney Morning Herald" sent a reporter to report on the St. Mary's project because there had been criticism of it and that organization wanted to assure itself that things were running smoothly. It will be remembered that there had been criticism of the number of houses that had been built at St. Mary's to house the staff. The department, in

the first instance, and later the Auditor-General, directed the attention of the contractors to the cost of those buildings. The construction of these houses forms part of the complete scheme, so, if they have cost a little more at the beginning, what we lose on the swings we will pick up later on the roundabout. The fact that this plant will be completed within the scheduled time and for the estimated cost is an indication of the progress that is being made. The reporter who went to St. Mary's concluded his article, which appeared in the "Sydney Morning Herald" of 9th September, by saying—

It seemed that if we really need a new munitions filling factory at St. Mary's we are getting one in a hurry and the rapidity of its completion might make its cost compare favourably with other big projects notwithstanding the £6,000-£8,500 staff cottages.

So, the reporter who went out to criticize remained to praise, and he was firmly convinced that we were going really well with the establishment of this factory. I have spoken about St. Mary's at great length in this chamber in the past, and I do not intend to say anything more about it now.

Because of the general criticism that has been levelled against the defence Estimates by Opposition members and by persons outside this chamber, the picture that has already been painted by the Minister for Defence (Sir Philip McBride) and the Ministers in charge of the various defence services would not be complete if I, as Minister for Defence Production, did not place before this committee and the country what has been achieved by the Department of Defence Production over the last five years. Therefore, I wish to set out the functions of the department and what it stands for, and also to deal with the various factories that come within the administration of the department, such as ordnance, aircraft, munitions, filling, explosives and the like. The main production functions of the department cover munitions, explosives, ordnance, aircraft and small arms. It is also responsible for arranging production in industry generally in annexes and by major and general contractors.

The committee will realize that the functions of this department are many, and that the department itself has very, very wide ramifications indeed. The department has

an employment figure of some 13,000 persons in four States of the Commonwealth—11,000 in the government factories and 2,000 engaged on general administrative work, stores, &c. It recruits and trains its own apprentices and professional cadets, and thereby establishes a nucleus of highly skilled production executives capable of expansion and integration in any emergency. It controls assets with a replacement cost of more than £100,000,000. I ask the committee just to consider that particular matter for a moment, because this department is really big business. Last year it was responsible for production valued at £34,000,000, which together with the department's own votes accounts for approximately one-quarter of the total defence allocation. It operates twelve factories as well as ancillary services such as the flight test airfield at Avalon, central stores, drawing offices, maintenance units and synthetic ammonia plants. It produces equipment varying from clockwork fuse mechanisms to 3,600 horse-power marine diesel engines. If honorable members have ever studied the intricacies of the fuse systems and compared the fine tolerances involved with the tolerances associated with a 3,600 horse-power marine diesel engine, they will get some idea of the great range of skilled technical knowledge, technicians and skilled artisans that we have in our employ. We can produce articles from aircraft to munitions and we can produce and maintain ordnance varying from the infantryman's rifle to the biggest guns in use in the Royal Australian Navy.

The department co-operates with industry in production, and naturally we establish industrial annexes and provide industry with know-how so that we can call upon industry and expand rapidly in case of crisis. Last year, we arranged for the manufacture of goods in industry to a value of £17,000,000. Let me now give the committee some idea of the typical production of the department in the last five years, because it is over that period that we have been subjected to criticism, and over that period that the Opposition and the press have stated that we have spent large sums of money but have got very little in return for that expenditure. Let us have a look at the production of munitions and explosives for a start.

We have produced approximately 100,000,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, more than 3,000,000 shell cases of various calibres, approximately 1,250,000 percussion, time, mechanical, and electronic fuses and primers—produced to the exceptional standards of accuracy and tolerance that I mentioned before. We have produced more than 100,000 3-in. rockets, manufactured or reconditioned for the Royal Australian Air Force and the Royal Australian Navy. We have produced almost 2,000,000 20-mm. cartridges, filled and packed. We have also produced 500,000 40-mm. cartridges, 34,000 4-in. cartridges, 28,000 4.5-in. cartridges and manufactured 6,000 25-pounder cartridges.

We have manufactured 78,000 bodies of hand grenades and assembled and filled them. We have manufactured special propellants for rockets and boosts made for the long-range weapons research establishment, including filling for more than 2,000 5-in. rockets. We have produced 200,000 aircraft engine starting cartridges and approximately 1,250,000 cartridges for use with 3-in. rockets. We have made nearly 200,000 rounds of military pyrotechnic and signal stores of various types. Apart from rockets and cordite, we have produced approximately 850 tons of cordite propellant, and more than 2,800 short tons of cannon and rifle powder for the Australian services and Nato—I remind honorable members that we are required to supply certain items to Nato.

May I now turn to aircraft, because when we take into consideration that we have the De Haviland factory and the establishments of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Proprietary Limited, which require contractual obligations to be carried out by us with capital equipment and materials supplied by us, it will give an indication that the Department of Defence Production comes into the picture of these other aircraft establishments outside the Government aircraft factories in a very big way. Bearing all that in mind, I inform honorable members that we have, in this period, produced twelve Lincoln four-engine heavy bombers at the Government aircraft factory, 52 Vampire jet fighters at De Haviland Aircraft Company Proprietary Limited, 41 Vampire jet trainers at the same company, 29 Winjeel propellor trainers at the

Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Proprietary Limited. Ninety-one radio-controlled target aircraft have been designed and produced by the Government aircraft factory, and 34 Canberra jet bombers turned out at the same establishment. Forty-four Sabre jet fighters have been delivered by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Proprietary Limited to the Royal Australian Air Force. There are fourteen Sabre jets at present at Avalon and two at the factory of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Proprietary Limited ready to go to Avalon. Those at Avalon are awaiting test flights so that it may be said that there are fourteen at Avalon and two with the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Proprietary Limited, making a total of 60 Sabre jet aircraft so far produced.

We have also produced 70 Nene jet engines for the Vampire fighters, and 78 Avon jet engines for the Canberra bombers and for fighters. These have been produced by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Proprietary Limited. In the five-year period we have overhauled and serviced a total of 742 airframes, 2,088 engines and 155,000 ancillary aircraft equipment units. Also in that five-year period we have delivered to the services 123,100 different items of aircraft spare parts, as they have been required.

Now I shall turn to ordnance, because we heard the honorable member for Bendigo (Mr. Clarey) make some observations about that matter last night. We have produced ten 4.5-in. naval gun mountings on revolving platforms, and there are nine under construction. These units weigh approximately 80 tons each, so the committee will have some idea of the extraordinary size of the undertakings of our ordnance factories. There are 170 120-mm. recoilless anti-tank guns in the course of production, and initial deliveries have commenced. Four main gearing sets for anti-submarine frigates and destroyers have been completed, and seven more are under construction. A gear case weighs about 40 tons. Fourteen 40-mm. naval anti-aircraft guns with predictors have been completed, and five are in the course of production. Five 21-in. torpedo tubes and mountings have been completed and two are under construction, as well as other secret types of naval armaments. We have converted 121 40-mm.

naval anti-aircraft guns from manual operation to power operation. Ordnance equipment for 25-lb. and 3.7-in. guns has been repaired in industry to a value of £122,500.

Let me turn to small arms. The honorable member for Macquarie (Mr. Luchetti) will be interested in the figures showing the activities of the Small Arms Factory at Lithgow. In recent years, the factory has been mainly occupied with the repair and reconditioning of small arms weapons rather than with new production. As the committee knows, the factory is tooling up for production of the FN rifle. Recent operations include the repair and conditioning of 102,000 .303-in. rifles, 32,220 light machine guns and sub-machine guns of various types, 23,250 pistols and 60,000 bayonets and scabbards, as well as anti-tank infantry weapons, mortars and spare parts for weapons.

In addition, we have gone in for what can be called miscellaneous production. It is interesting to note that the production of Duxford-type marine engines has been developed for the first time in Australia at the marine engine works at Port Melbourne. Seven of these engines, each of which develops over 3,000 horse-power and weighs 270 tons, have been completed for the Australian Shipbuilding Board, for installation in bulk cargo carriers, and four more are in the course of production. Over 1,250,000 ball bearings have been produced at Echuca in the last five years. At the department's synthetic ammonia plants, reserve capacity has been occupied in producing 220,000 tons of ammonium sulphate for fertilizers—representing approximately 40 per cent. of Australian production; over 18,000 tons of methanol for the plastics industry—the total Australian production; and over 11,000 tons of ammonium nitrate for both fertilizers and civil explosives. Approximately 2,000 spherical naval buoys and 2,500 marine markers have been produced in industry through the department. Boom defence equipment, including anti-submarine and anti-torpedo nets, to the value of £160,000 has been produced in industry. Over 1,200 mobile transceivers have been made in industry for the Army, as well as approximately 500 walkie-talkie sets for personal use in the field. Pontoons have been repaired in industry to the value of £93,000.

In addition to these examples, which are by no means exhaustive, the department has consistently followed a policy of developing or adding to production capacity with a view to meeting the requirements of the nation in an emergency. It recognizes that in such an emergency we should need to rely on the developing structure of Australian secondary industry. Therefore, it places developmental orders and works in close harmony with industry advisory committees. Almost one-half of the £34,000,000 worth of production arranged by the department in 1955-56 was undertaken in industry—mainly the aircraft industry.

Let me turn to capital facilities. As I have mentioned previously, there have been developments also in the establishment of such facilities. During the period from 1951 to 1955 moneys available to the department for new capital expenditure averaged approximately £2,800,000 a year. With those financial resources, new facilities have been developed. They include a new test airfield at Avalon. This is essential for the testing of jet aircraft. The largest jet aircraft at present in production can take off from and land at Avalon airfield. We have established Avon engine production capacity in Australia. We have established a plant for the production of picrite, the new flashless propellant that is so necessary in modern warfare. Other new facilities include a plant for the manufacture of RDX, a powerful high explosive entirely new to conventional warfare; a specialized plant for tool room use; production capacity for new type fuses; and additions and modifications to existing government munitions and aircraft establishments.

It might be as well if I told the committee that the department, in addition to supplying the wants of the Australian services, has been seeking orders from overseas. We are in consultation with New Zealand in connexion with aircraft, and we are arranging to sell to Sweden a number of Jindiviks. The Jindivik, as honorable members know, is a pilotless aircraft—almost a guided missile. Earlier this year, a delegation from the Royal Swedish Air Board visited Australia and examined the Jindivik then in production at the government aircraft factories, with a view

to purchase. The department has now received a telecablegram from its London representative to the effect that he, in turn, has received a telegram from the Royal Swedish Air Board stating that the Swedes are prepared to order ten Jindiviks, and that a detailed letter will follow. Major Silven, who was a member of the Swedish mission to Australia, and who is now in London, has informed the departmental representative there that the purchase order, with a detailed letter, will be issued before 16th October. Major Silven has also informed the departmental representative that a public announcement has been made in Sweden that the Swedish Government is proposing to order Australian Jindiviks. The total value of the order, including ground equipment, supply and technical data, camera pods, &c., is approximately £500,000, of which the British content is approximately £190,000. This is a magnificent tribute to the design engineers at the government aircraft factories, as well as to the production team which has been responsible for the manufacture of the aircraft and the installation of complex guidance equipment.

From time to time, members of the Opposition seek a reduction of the votes for the defence departments. They say that the Government is spending too much money on defence and that we are not getting value for our money. They urge that defence expenditure be reduced. But, apparently, they fail to realize that if the vote for a service department is reduced, that department will reduce the number of orders that it places with government defence factories, with the result that some of the men employed in those factories will be dismissed, because there is no work available for them. When that happens, there is a tremendous howl from the members of the Opposition. They say that we must keep the men in employment, but they seek to deny to us the money necessary to do so. They cannot have it both ways. If they want us to reduce expenditure on defence, they must accept the consequences of such a reduction. Therefore, I want to say something about employment. Total employment in government defence factories has risen from 8,000 persons between 1946 and 1949, to 11,000 persons now. That is a very high peace-time employment figure for such factories. However, the

work load on munitions and aircraft factories is of a cyclical nature. The manufacture of the Canberra bomber, the 4.5-in. twin mountings, the S.T.A.A.G. mountings and the torpedo tube mountings for destroyers, the modification of Lincoln aircraft, the servicing of Merlin engines, the manufacture of .303 rifles, are typical manufacturing projects coming to an end. In some instances replacement projects have been selected, for example the F.N. rifle. In other cases, for example the new types of naval ordnance, the replacement project is, for the time being, somewhat uncertain. The so-called sophisticated weapons—guided weapons—are in advanced experimental and design stages but, in the main, they are not ready for operational use. The Government and the services are exercising caution before embarking on new production programmes in the ordnance and aircraft factories. Consequently, there must be some immediate retrenchment in the various government munitions and aircraft establishments. This is a period of consolidation. The work force in the Government defence production establishments will, therefore, for the time being, be cut back roughly to the level that obtained when the Government took office. The first batch of notices of dismissals will be given next Friday. I want only to say, in conclusion, that these men who will be given their notices of dismissal are not necessarily going to remain out of employment. As the Minister for Labour and National Service (Mr. Harold Holt) has pointed out, this is a transfer of labour from government munitions factories to private industry, which wants these men. We have already had recently, in our ordnance factories, cases of approximately 80 men who have handed in their resignations and obtained new jobs.

Mr. Chambers.—How many will be dismissed?

Sir ERIC HARRISON.—I cannot give the honorable gentleman the actual figure at present, because we are still working on it, but I have given an approximate figure showing an eventual decrease in employment from 11,000, to 8,000. We will eventually bring the figure back, unless something very unforeseen happens, to approximately the figure when we took office, but that will be over a period.

Dr. EVATT.—Will the figure go below 8,000?

Sir ERIC HARRISON.—No, it will not go below 8,000, and the reduction will be spread over a period of years, and will not be made immediately. I want to make it perfectly clear to the committee that unless we can get orders, which presupposes that unless money is available to the services, we cannot continue to keep this extraordinarily large peace-time work force in operation. The Government's term of office has been an exceptional period in which we have had to remedy all the deficiencies and shortages with which we were faced as a result of the Labour Government's neglect during its period of office. We had to bring the government factories back to a productive level, and bring back the services to a proper equipment standard, because Labour had failed to do the job when it was in power. That fact necessitated our stepping up our work force to the extent to which we did step it up. Now we have established the desired position and we have given the services the equipment they want. They have their reserves, and we are now in a position in which we can consolidate that which we have started. I think that the committee will certainly come to the conclusion, if it looks at these figures and digests the facts about the great work done, the skilled work done, that the Department of Defence Production has given a £1's value for every £1 spent, and has honorably discharged the responsibility placed on it, and done its duty, during the whole term of office of this Government.

Dr. EVATT (Barton—Leader of the Opposition) [4.50].—I wish to refer to the subject of nuclear experiments, but, before I do so, I must advert to the statements made by the Minister for Defence Production (Sir Eric Harrison). Once again the right honorable gentleman seeks to blame Labour. I think that the best test to apply to him is the test invited by the Minister for Defence (Sir Philip McBride) who, the other night, said that Mr. Curtin was quite aware of the defence position prior to the assumption of office of the Curtin Government. In answer to the remarks of the Minister for Defence Production about Labour's alleged responsibility for deficiencies when the present Government took office, I shall quote from a speech

made by Mr. Curtin on 26th July, 1943, and I should like the attention of the Minister for Defence Production, who is leaving us in the very near future.

Sir Eric Harrison.—I am not leaving the chamber. I am waiting to hear what the Leader of the Opposition has to say.

Dr. EVATT.—In the speech from which I am about to read Mr. Curtin was referring to the anti-Labour governments of which the present Minister for Defence Production was a member. This is how Mr. Curtin characterized those governments—

Blind to the dangers in the Pacific, the Menzies and Fadden Governments had left Australia very much unprepared.

He was referring to the anti-Labour governments that had been in office up to the end of 1941, when anti-Labour governments had been in office for ten years, with majorities in both Houses of the Parliament, and had had complete responsibility for the defence of this country. Mr. Curtin continued—

Australia's resources were spread over many far-flung battle fronts. The men of the three services fought with fine efficiency and made conspicuous contributions, but at home the then government had left the country almost undefended. Australia was a sector as menaced, and as helpless, as the Philippines.

Then he goes into the details. When I heard the statements made this afternoon by the Minister for Defence Production I was reminded of the facts. Mr. Curtin gave the figures regarding the actual defence equipment available when the Labour government came into office at the end of 1941. I am sure that the Minister for Defence Production will be interested in this. The equipment to which Mr. Curtin was referring was the total initial equipment. He said that Army equipment related to initial requirements was available in Australia in the following percentages:—Rifles, 20 per cent.; sub-machine guns, 28 per cent.; light machine guns, 41 per cent.; anti-tank rifles, 15 per cent.; anti-tank guns, 21 per cent.; anti-aircraft guns, 9 per cent.; field guns, 56 per cent. He said also that there was then in Australia not one fighter aircraft. Australia had only trainer aircraft available at that time. He said that Air Force strength in 1941 was only 44 per cent. of what it was at the time he was making his speech in July, 1943. He also

said that, when Labour took office, Australia had only ten light tanks available for its defence, but that at the time he was speaking light and medium tanks were a four figure total.

I shall not go into the details of Mr. Curtin's devastating criticism of the preceding anti-Labour governments, but I am surprised that members of the government immediately preceding the Curtin Labour Government can hold their heads up and dare to criticize Labour. Do not forget that the period, to which the Minister for Defence Production has referred was the three-year period beginning in 1946, the first post-war year. That was the period of rehabilitation of returned servicemen. Certainly, there was a reduction in the strength of the services in that year, because the war had been successfully concluded, but there were 8,000 people in employment in those government defence factories even then. What the Government proposes to do now is to go back to that employment level of 8,000, the level, I stress, in the first year after the successful conclusion of the war, despite the fact that the Minister himself said, in 1951, that we faced war within twelve months. The Prime Minister (Mr. Menzies) had been satisfied with predicting war in three years, but the Minister, who had been for some time in London, prophesied war in twelve months.

Sir Eric Harrison.—I did not say that.

Dr. EVATT.—You did make such a statement.

I apologize to the committee for having taken up its time in making these statements, but I was forced to reply to the accusations made by the Minister. I desire now to turn, briefly, to the main subject that I wish to discuss, which is our position in relation to nuclear experiments. I shall conclude my remarks on that matter by moving that the first item in the group of departments before the committee, namely, the proposed vote for the Department of Supply, be reduced by £1. The Opposition's view of nuclear weapons has been expressed by the decisions reached at the Hobart conference of the party. That view aims at high-level political talks to achieve effective prevention of the use of atomic and hydrogen bombs by any nation, whether

for purposes of war or experimental purposes. Nearly every proposal made at that conference has since been given effect, including those concerned with making membership of the United Nations practically universal, making arrangements for better relationships with Asian countries, and matters of that kind. Our proposals in relation to nuclear weapons also are coming to pass. We advocated their immediate suspension approximately two years ago, and it is now advocated by the British Labour movement.

Mr. Beale.—The British Labour party did not say that.

Dr. EVATT.—Yes, it did.

Mr. Beale.—It did not. I have before me the motion that was put to the conference.

Dr. EVATT.—The Minister will have the opportunity to speak later. The British Labour movement favours the suspension of atomic experiments.

Mr. Beale.—Not unilaterally.

Dr. EVATT.—I am not dealing with the matter from the unilateral stand-point. I am dealing with it from the stand-point of our proposal for immediate high-level talks for the purpose of suspending atomic experiments.

Mr. Wilkie, a very well-known writer on this subject for one of the Melbourne newspapers, takes very much the same view as Dr. Russo. He points out that we are near the point "at which the peoples of the world will insist on putting an end to further nuclear test explosions—A-bomb and H-bomb". He points out also that to say that two years ago would have been regarded as equivalent to heresy. But that has now been taken up by the British Labour movement. It is also the policy of the Democratic party in the United States of America. Mr. Wilkie points out that last November Russia indicated its readiness to ban all further atomic tests by agreement between the Big Three, and on 17th July last the Russian Foreign Minister repeated that offer. The United Kingdom Prime Minister said very much the same thing after the summit talks. That is the policy of Mr. Adlai Stevenson, the leader of the Democratic party in the United States, and also of the President of the United States, provided that security against breaches of an arrangement can be obtained. I think

it is obvious—and this, too, is pointed out by Mr. Wilkie—that no nation can set off a nuclear explosion in any part of the world which cannot be detected elsewhere by appropriate instruments. So whatever happens in Russia is immediately known in the United States, and, I suppose, vice versa.

We feel that the time has come for Australia to act. Russia says it is willing to enter into a firm agreement. The United Kingdom Government apparently takes the same view, and, subject to the same safeguards, so does the United States of America. But nothing is happening. The experiments are continuing. When will they end? Will they end of their own accord, or will they end, as they should, by agreement? I think the duty of the Australian Government is to take the initiative in these matters. Australian territory is being used as the experiment ground for other countries. Therefore it is in our interests to expedite an arrangement to end atomic tests, and we should take the initiative. All the countries I have mentioned say they are willing to sign an agreement. I should have thought it would be quite easy to make an agreement with respect to experimental explosions secure in the sense that it could not be broken by any of the countries concerned, and I think that Australia, being in a key position, should take the initiative in this matter as we have suggested.

I shall not go into the pros and cons of the alleged effects of atomic experiments upon the weather, and of the alleged effects of radiation. I do not accept the dogmatic statements made either way. I think it is an unscientific approach to have people always criticizing or defending the governments concerned in these matters. That is pointed out in Mr. Wilkie's article, which mentions that there are always some professors who say that there is no danger at all. There will be no danger until it eventuates. As we know, there is danger to Japan from the Russian experiments, and I think similar dangers may appear in Australia.

I hope to have an opportunity to address the committee again later, but, so that a test vote may be taken on this matter, I now move—

That the amount of the vote—"Department of Supply, £15,132,000"—be reduced by £1.

as an instruction to the Government—

That it should take the initiative in bringing together the nations mentioned for the purpose of making an agreement immediately to suspend atomic tests with a view to obtaining a firmer agreement under which they can be banned altogether.

That is a perfectly feasible proposition. Australia is in a position in which it is entitled to take that action, because Australian territory and the Australian people are to some extent, admittedly, being subjected to danger. We are admittedly subjected to danger, because if an experiment must be postponed sixteen times owing to weather conditions grave risk would eventuate if a mistake were made and an explosion were set off at the wrong moment. That is the sense in which I use the word "risk". That is what it means in this context.

Mr. Beale.—The right honorable gentleman misunderstands what happened.

Dr. EVATT.—I am not concerned with what happened. I rely on the fact that tests must be postponed repeatedly because weather conditions present an element of danger. Had the first Maralinga explosion been set off when weather conditions were unfavorable some Australians would have been exposed to danger. That immediately follows. The Government's case is that there was no risk, because great care was taken to ensure that weather conditions were favorable. I am putting the same thing from the obverse viewpoint, and that is the viewpoint I am asking the committee to consider. We are talking about the same coin. What is wrong with attempting to bring nations together when each is waiting on the other to ban atomic experiments? Australia should not always wait for other countries to act. It should now take the initiative in these matters. That is the view of the Australian Labour party, and I submit that it is the view of the great majority of the people of Australia, as public opinion polls have demonstrated.

Mr. HAMILTON (Canning) [5.2].—It is very obvious that the Leader of the Opposition (Dr. Evatt) has taken part in the consideration of this group of Estimates at this juncture in an endeavour to give to Labour's ideas on atomic tests a slant different from that expressed in the words of his colleagues who have participated in the debate so far. You, Mr. Temporary Chairman, will recall

that the right honorable gentleman moved the amendment as an instruction to the Government that it should initiate top level talks with a view to having nuclear tests abolished. But if we cast our minds back to what was said last week by the honorable member for East Sydney (Mr. Ward), and by other Opposition members yesterday and to-day, we shall realize that the amendment is not in keeping with the expressed views of the Opposition.

Mr. Aston.—They all are out of step except the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. HAMILTON.—The right honorable gentleman is trying to retrieve the situation, because he has seen that his followers have put the Australian Labour party in a rather awkward position. The theme of their expressions of opinion was that Great Britain and the United States should cease these nuclear tests, but not one word was said about what the Soviet Union should do. One can take it from that, and from the events at the Hobart conference, that Labour wants to see that Great Britain and the United States do these things, but is not worried about what other countries will do. No one who subscribes to those views can truthfully claim to be a responsible person, because so long as the Soviet Union continues these tests and refuses to come to the party to discuss the matter, as the Leader of the Opposition said it was prepared to do, we should be absolutely foolish to curtail our atomic experiments.

What methods are employed by Opposition members in criticizing this Government's activities in relation to atomic experiments? Last evening that benign gentleman, the honorable member for Bonython (Mr. Makin), attacked the Government over its attitude to the aborigines. I have great respect for the honorable member's humanitarian outlook, but I have very little respect for the manner in which he expressed his views last evening. It was as plain as daylight that he was trying to shoot down not only this Government—as a member of Her Majesty's Opposition he was entitled to do that—but also our own scientists, the men who had given of their all in order to ensure that these tests would be carried out in the safest possible manner, and to gather information that could be applied towards the protection of our civilian population. The

honorable member, and, indeed, all other members of the Opposition, know very well that everybody concerned in these tests has done everything possible to protect both the white people and the natives. In addition to that, every precaution was taken to protect stock, buildings and various other assets. I should like to ask the honorable member for Bonython (Mr. Makin) whether, since the atomic tests have been carried out in Australia, he has received any complaints from missionaries, or other people who are associated with the native population, that any natives have suffered as a result of the tests right from the time of the original test on the Monte Bello Islands. I feel certain that he has not received any such complaints.

The Minister for Supply (Mr. Beale), who is sitting at the table, told the honorable member for Blaxland (Mr. E. James Harrison) that no instructions had been issued for the grounding of aircraft, but the honorable member persisted in the line that he had been following, which was in keeping with the story that was published by certain newspapers that the carcasses of cattle that had been slaughtered at Alice Springs for human consumption after the last test were found to be radio-active.

I think that all credit is due to the scientists and other responsible people who delayed exploding the first atomic bomb at Maralinga until weather conditions were suitable. Those of us who have had the privilege of observing the set-up at Maralinga to ensure the success of the experiment were greatly impressed by the meticulous care that was taken by all concerned to ensure that, while no harm would befall the Australian population—both white and coloured people—the desired results would be obtained. Yet the honorable member for Blaxland criticized our meteorologists. Those of us who went to Maralinga were very favorably impressed by the manner in which the meteorological officers had prepared graphs and charts for the purpose of obviating any possibility that a change of wind direction would cause the fallout to blow over certain portions of this country and cause damage. Despite all of those precautions, we have heard very critical statements made by some honorable members opposite during the last few hours of this debate.

Last night, the honorable member for Darebin (Mr. R. W. Holt) also criticized the atomic tests, and referred to the fact that the Hobart conference of the Australian Labour party had opposed the holding of them. I could appreciate the Labour party adopting that attitude if the Russians had ceased testing atomic devices, but I do not like innuendoes being made, while our proceedings are being broadcast, that Great Britain and the United States of America are the culprits in this connexion. I agree with the statement by the honorable member for Mackellar (Mr. Wentworth) last night that, until Russia is prepared to come to the party, as it were, we would be very foolish to curtail our tests, which are designed to provide us with the knowledge we need. We do not want to be aggressors, but it is important for us to learn all we possibly can from the atomic tests, not only so that we may retaliate if we are attacked, but also so that we may apply atomic power to peace-time purposes.

It amazes me to hear members of the Opposition criticizing the atomic tests in Australia. As has been rightly pointed out by the Minister, and the scientists associated with him in this venture, the last test was held in order to obtain information on how best to protect the civilian population from the effects of an atomic bomb explosion. It is no secret whatever that, on the occasion of the particular test that the Opposition has criticized, in the area likely to be affected by the fall-out there were sheep, goats and other animals and herbage for them to eat. There was also more herbage farther away from the centre of the blast which could be fed subsequently to the animals in order to observe whether any degree of radio-activity was present which would render them unfit for human consumption. In addition, scientific experiments were carried out in relation to various kinds of clothing and other material, as well as buildings, for the purpose of obtaining information that would enable us to protect the civilian population from an atomic attack.

I was particularly interested in one aspect of the experiment. I produce citrus fruit at an orchard which is situated about 16 miles from Perth, and I wanted to learn the period of time that should elapse after an atomic explosion before fruit that was exposed to radiation would be fit for human

consumption. If we had not taken all necessary precautions in connexion with the recent atomic tests, the Labour party would have every right to kick the Government from one end of the country to the other. But I think that it is an absolute disgrace for honorable members opposite to criticize our scientists as they have done. I am ashamed of the tactics that the Opposition is employing.

The Opposition has submitted a motion to reduce the proposed vote by £1. Last night, during the debate on another group of the Estimates, I referred to the value of the experiments that are being conducted at the Woomera Rocket Range. It must be realized that these tests cannot be conducted without a considerable expenditure if we are to obtain the knowledge we need. As far as I am concerned, if an expenditure of £60,000,000 is needed in order to obtain information that might result in the saving of the lives of 1,000,000 people, I am satisfied. As those honorable members who had the privilege of visiting Maralinga and Woomera saw, many miles of electric wires and telephone cables have been installed, as well as airstrips and water-supply services. At Maralinga, it was necessary to provide a water-supply service, so that the men who were getting on with the job could enjoy some amenities, because the water from the bores was saltier than the sea. It is necessary to incur expenditure on such items. When we were at Woomera the other day, we saw firing contraptions similar to what one sees on a battleship. Underneath a flat piece of concrete on the ground were the innards of a battleship, which we had the privilege of inspecting. To instal such equipment under some feet of concrete involves a large expenditure; yet honorable members opposite continue to ask the Government to cut down the expenditure on defence. They are putting up a sham fight. Only a few minutes ago, the Minister for Defence Production (Sir Eric Harrison) threw back in the teeth of honorable members opposite their assertions in relation to the employment situation in the various defence factories. I advise honorable members opposite to study the facts of this subject, by first-hand inspection and reading, before putting over the air stupid and nonsensical remarks about our defence preparations, and creating panic in the minds of the Australian people.

Mr. LUCHETTI (Macquarie) [5.15].—The committee is considering the Estimates for the Department of Supply, the Department of Defence Production and other services. I ask at the outset: What is the use of considering these items in view of the attitude to-day of the Minister for Defence Production (Sir Eric Harrison) and other Ministers, who have indicated that the policy of the Government is undergoing a change with respect to these matters? Just how much can we believe of what is contained in these proposed votes? Does the information portray a correct picture of these departments' activities, or are we to understand that some new figures and some new basis for consideration will be arrived at, that employees are to be sacked from various departments and that the amount of money to be voted under these Estimates will be considerably in excess of the amount required?

Before dealing with those matters, I join with the Leader of the Opposition (Dr. Evatt) in making a plea to the members of the committee, to the people of Australia, and to mankind generally, that we should view the matter of atomic war in an entirely different light. Surely the time has arrived when we, as responsible people elected to serve the people of Australia, should get into harmony with the thinkers and humanitarian people throughout the world who feel that some action ought to be taken in regard to this matter. Are we, the elected representatives of the people, such arrant cowards that we are not prepared to say that nuclear warfare is horrible and will bring destruction to mankind, and that all sane people ought to play their part in seeing that it is overcome once and for all? I join with all honorable members who say that the policies of the Soviet Union, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and, for that matter, Australia's contribution too, should be reviewed. But where can we start in dealing with a question of this kind? Do we agree with the other nations, or do we indicate to the world by our own actions what we think is right? If we really believe that what we are doing is right, if we want to save generations of the future from the most agonizing and terrible death, then it is our responsibility now, in the National Parliament of Australia, during a time of

peace, to say to the world, "Now is the time to review this matter; and Australia, as one of the countries which has led the world in all sorts of reforms, will make its contribution and indicate just where we stand in relation to it". Consequently, I am pleased to support the Leader of the Opposition, who, in a clear and definite manner, highlights the importance of this matter.

I desire, however, to speak upon another subject related to the Department of Defence Production. I should like to take the minds of the committee back not to the statement made by the Minister for Defence Production in this place a few minutes ago but to a statement which he made in this Parliament approximately two years ago. I should like the Minister himself and the people of Australia who are concerned with the defence of this country to take notice of that statement. Two years ago, he said that the Government was proceeding with its programme and, in reply to remarks I was in the course of making, he indicated that the Commonwealth Government was proceeding with the manufacture of the new FN.30 rifle at the Commonwealth Small Arms Factory at Lithgow. His exact words were—

In order to obviate the necessity to rise later to reply to the honorable gentleman in respect of the one matter, I now inform him that we have already placed orders for the new standard service rifles, which will be manufactured at Lithgow.

The date of that statement was 16th September, 1954. Two years have elapsed since that time. Yet, the Minister for Defence Production made a very important statement this afternoon in which he said that it will be two years before the Government will obtain the sealed drawings for this weapon. Two years have elapsed since that previous promise was made to the people of Australia. Not only did the Minister make that statement to this Parliament, but he also went on record in the press. In the "Daily Telegraph" of 17th September, 1954, appears an article in which the Minister sought to bolster up his own status as a most progressive Minister by declaring that this service rifle was to be manufactured. Inter alia, the article reads—

The Government had placed orders for the new standard service rifle. Sir Eric Harrison said today.

Sir Eric is Minister for Defence Production. He told the House of Representatives that the Commonwealth Small Arms Factory at Lithgow would manufacture the rifle.

The rifle is self-loading.

The article then deals with other aspects. Yet, the Minister now says that a further two years will elapse before the sealed drawings will be available to proceed with the manufacture of this weapon. I suggest that if the Minister had considered the planning of this service rifle with the same meticulous care and detail that he has planned his departure from Australia to take a job in Mayfair, the rifle would have been much further advanced than it is at the present time.

I have sought information on this matter from the Minister for Defence Production and have asked him to go to Lithgow to make an inspection of the factory. He gave me a promise that he would visit Lithgow, but he has not yet visited the small arms factory. I do not blame the executive of the small arms factory at Lithgow. I join with the Minister in paying a very fine tribute to those engaged in the factory. I pay a compliment to those engaged on the Munitions Board generally, but I emphasize that the Minister ought to set about to see what is wrong and take positive action to deal with this problem. It is of little use dealing with all the other matters relating to defence if this Government cannot produce a service rifle, or cannot even reach a decision in regard to the matter.

The Minister should, without equivocation, now say what has caused the hold-up in the production of the new service rifle. All the Minister has said in the past must be rejected because it is not in accord with the facts. The facts speak for themselves and I say that the Minister had a duty to-day to tell the committee just how many people are to be dismissed from the various factories. He should have told the committee this afternoon how many people are to be dismissed from the Commonwealth Small Arms Factory at Lithgow. It has been reported in the "Sydney Morning Herald" that dismissals will occur in that factory and I should like to know from the Minister whether the number will be 500, 700, 250 or any other figure. He has had the opportunity to tell the committee what the position is.

The bitter pill in regard to this matter came from the Minister himself this afternoon when he indicated that a number of dismissals will take place at the small arms factory at Lithgow. When one considers the proposed vote for this department, one sees that adequate funds are available to produce this rifle. What is wrong? Is the Army to blame; does confusion and indecision exist in regard to the manufacture of the rifle from the military standpoint? If that is the case, this committee should know and the Minister should say so. If the Colonel Blimps in the United Kingdom War Office are to blame, that should also be stated. Plainly, the Minister should say whether the new rifle is to be accepted. If it is not, why have definite promises been made over a period of time?

It is pertinent to ask whether the rifle has actually been accepted at this stage, and whether agreement has been reached between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Commonwealth of Australia. I very much doubt whether agreement has been reached. Indeed, I should say that, if agreement has been reached, the Australian Government has been treated as the poor relation. Indeed, the Government is deserving of censure for its failure to send overseas until quite recently responsible officers of the Department of Defence Production in connexion with this matter. That action should have been taken two years ago.

It is not much use dealing with this matter in this fashion now. It is not much use the Minister telling us what he intends to do at St. Mary's unless we know the type of weapon to be used. So much time has elapsed—two years to this stage—and a further two years will pass before the sealed drawings are received. The Minister for Defence Production made the magnificent statement that the drawings had to be translated from the metric system to an Anglicized version. One could steal plans from an opponent in a war and go into production much speedier than this.

Sir Eric Harrison.—Tell that to Canada or to the United Kingdom.

Mr. LUCHETTI.—I remind the Minister, who is a champion of private enterprise, that General Motors-Holden's Limited, when it decided to change the type of car it was making, continued production of the

existing model and produced a new model within a year without altering a scale or making any changeover at all. If General Motors-Holden's Limited could do that, certainly the Commonwealth should be able to do much better.

It is a reflection upon this Commonwealth that Canada was obliged to step in and say, "We will pioneer this work because it is not being done in the United Kingdom and because Australia has not been invited into the councils of Nato to play its part in the development of this weapon". It is a most serious matter. It goes beyond the city and district of Lithgow. The question is whether we are to produce in this country the weapons we need or whether we, like the Arab nations, shall become dependent upon the gun-runners of the world for the weapons that we require for our security. We can have all the new weapons of destruction, chaos and suppression, but in the end the areas that we take over must be policed. The only way in which any area can be policed is for the occupation forces to have rifles or weapons of that nature. I suggest that it is time the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the various members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization finally determined this question one way or the other. It is utterly absurd that we can get plans from Belgium but cannot proceed immediately with the production of this rifle. I ask the committee to consider this as a most important matter. These things warrant a considered statement from the Minister. He has tried to emphasize certain difficulties. The change over to the manufacture of a new rifle should certainly not require four years before tooling-up commences. Any statement made by the Minister for Defence Production in the past has begged the question.

I pay a tribute to the men who have the capacity, the ingenuity and the skill to do this work. The men at the small arms factory at Lithgow have produced all the weapons that the Administration has asked them to produce. In addition, they have produced Westinghouse talking apparatus and sealed units for refrigerators and fulfilled many other peace-time orders. Surely the skilled operatives should be kept in that factory so that their services and skill can

be called upon in the future. It is most unfortunate that their services will be lost to the nation.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bowden).—Order! The honorable member's time has expired.

Mr. BOSTOCK (Indi) [5.30].—The proposition of the Leader of the Opposition (Dr. Evatt) that we should cease atomic weapon tests reflects, I believe, the wishes of all sensible people in the world. But we will not achieve that position merely by talking about it. To forego essential tests whilst atomic weapons are not completely banned and controlled would be to forego the race to keep pace with our potential enemies in the development of this modern, disastrous weapon of mass-destruction.

Already the United Nations has a Disarmament Committee which is constantly examining the question of banning and properly controlling atomic weapons. It has been unable to reach any satisfactory arrangement which would ensure the proper policing of such a system. Until that situation is arrived at, it would be nothing less than suicidal for the western democracies to relax their efforts to develop atomic weapons.

As was pointed out by the honorable member for Canning (Mr. Hamilton), in this atomic race we have to consider very carefully not only the attack side but also the defence side of atomic weapons. I notice in the Estimates that last year the provision for civil defence was £234,000, of which only £88,782 was spent, and that this year the provision is only £70,000. That does not seem to me to reflect an energetic policy for the promotion of civil defence in this country. Quite recently, Lord Montgomery said that unless civil defence is effective in any future atomic war, it is doubtful whether any nation could survive. In other words, unless an effective civil defence organization is established, the attack organization is likely to fail because the morale of the people will be destroyed. I know that civil defence is a very difficult matter and that a great number of people say that the probability of attack is remote. But the result of an atomic explosion on one of our major centres of population would be such a catastrophe—such a horrible affair—that we

should take reasonable precautions even if the possibility of attack is not strong.

We could do certain things which, I believe, would help but which perhaps would not cost a great deal of money. I think we could do three things. Firstly, we could promulgate information about personal survival. I do not think that there are many people in this country who know what to do, in the event of an atomic attack, to preserve their own welfare. It would not be very expensive to promulgate throughout the Commonwealth, and particularly in our more populous centres, information on some of the simple things that a person can do to preserve his life. To give an example of the sort of thing that I have in mind, I shall read a paragraph from a publication by the Home Office of the United Kingdom Government. The paragraph reads—

People in the open might receive second degree burns . . . on exposed skin at a range of 16 miles from a 10 megaton ground burst bomb.

If, however, they should take cover in a few seconds they would escape this damage. Moreover, at this range the blast wave would not arrive for another minute and a half so that any effects due to the blast in the open . . . could be completely avoided.

That is a very simple instruction, but I am prepared to wager that if one asked the first half-dozen people one met whether, in the event of an atomic explosion, they would be better inside a building or outside it, they would not know. There are a number of other steps of this kind that we could take. They would not cost a great deal, and an education campaign of this nature would pay good dividends.

The second matter that we should attend to, and which would not involve very much expenditure, is the establishment of some sort of radiation warning network, using existing communication systems in conjunction with the meteorological organizations, so that if an atomic blast did take place our warning organization could tell people within the radius of radioactive danger that they should do something about it quickly. That is merely a matter of organization and planning, and would cost virtually nothing.

Thirdly, we should increase very greatly the number of people who are trained in matters of civil defence. The Government has established a school and has turned out

four or five classes of trained civil defence instructors. That is not nearly sufficient. We want large numbers of trained people dispersed throughout the Commonwealth, and particularly throughout the major centres of population. The way in which this might be done, I suggest, is to transfer Commonwealth responsibility for civil defence from the Department of the Interior to the Department of the Army. That responsibility should, logically, rest with the Department of the Army, because, in modern times, civil defence is definitely a military responsibility. If an atomic bomb fell on Sydney or Melbourne, martial law would be inevitable. The military authorities would have to take over, and it seems only logical and reasonable that civil defence functions should be allocated to the Army. If that were done, and if the Army included civil defence as a major subject in the curriculum of national service trainees, every year we would turn out thousands of young men trained, to a significant degree, in civil defence duties. Furthermore, they would be dispersed throughout the Commonwealth.

While I do not advocate the expenditure of large amounts of money on shelters or things of that kind at this stage, I do believe that there are a few simple matters, which would not cost very much, that we could attend to. We should disseminate widely information about personal survival. We should tell the people of the action that they should take, on their own initiative. We should establish a warning organization, so that people may be informed whether they are in the path of resultant radioactive fall out from an atomic explosion. Thirdly, we should considerably increase the numbers of persons trained in civil defence matters, by transferring that function from the Department of the Interior to the Department of the Army, and including it as a major subject in the training of national service trainees.

Mr. WENTWORTH (Mackellar) [5.40].—I support the views put forward by the honorable member for Indi (Mr. Bostock). The three practical courses of action that he has suggested are well worth while. I add to them only one suggestion: The people should be trained in survival procedure in the event of their being in an area of radioactive fallout. The lethal area of fall-out can be very much greater than the

area directly affected by bomb damage, but fallout need not be lethal if we know how to deal with it. Therefore, in comparatively large areas those who have been trained will survive an atomic explosion, while those who have not been trained will die.

It is with great regret that I notice the meagre provisions made in these Estimates for civil defence. Indeed, the whole position with regard to civil defence is regrettable. The Government has not faced up to its responsibilities, and it is sadly neglecting this vital matter. I do not suggest that civil defence will ever be anything more than part of a complete defence plan, but I am reminded by the honorable member for Indi of the words of Field Marshal Montgomery, who said that without adequate civil defence all other defence preparations are likely to be brought to nothing.

What is the position in this country with regard to civil defence? Last year, the Government allocated for this purpose the miserably inadequate sum of £234,000, and of that amount it spent barely one-third. On civil defence last year we spent only £88,000, and this year the allocation is even less than that amount, being a mere £70,000. I suggest to the Government that it is nonsense to restrict our expenditure to this amount. Something is wrong. This, surely, cannot be the considered plan of any person who looks at the situation sensibly. In other parts of the world very much more has been done in the field of civil defence, but even in other countries, such as the United States of America and Great Britain, it is admitted that what is being done is still inadequate.

We have been told that the Government is following an appreciation of the situation made by its military advisers, and that there is no danger. I do not know whether the appreciation that is spoken of is to that effect or not. All I can say about it is that the enemy will not consider himself bound by even the most intelligent appreciation of our Chiefs of Staff. There is a risk, there is a possibility, and, as the honorable member for Indi said, while that risk and possibility exist we should do something about them. Some people say that Australian cities are not targets of a sufficiently high priority to warrant anxiety on our part. That kind of argument portrays

complete ignorance of what is happening in the world to-day. The present situation is this: The enemy is not short of nuclear resources. By attacking targets of lower priority he will not in any substantial way diminish his power to attack targets of higher priority. Indeed, the targets of lower priority are, perhaps, the more likely to be attacked, for reasons that Sir Winston Churchill has given. He has suggested that the great powers, the present possessors of nuclear weapons, are not likely to embark on a metropolitan war involving the destruction of their own cities. Fringe wars, however, are not ruled out by this concept of the situation, and the nations that have no nuclear resources may find themselves exposed to the danger of these fringe wars, and even to the use of nuclear weapons against their territories by their enemies, simply because they are without the power to retaliate. The very fact that it is unthinkable for the Great Powers to embark on courses which mean metropolitan war for them, means that they limit their power to come to the aid of those countries on the fringe that may be attacked. Therefore, looking at the thing reasonably and logically, one would say that the cities of Australia are in at least as great danger of nuclear attack as are the cities of Great Britain or America—perhaps even greater danger, because we are a fringe nation and have not that power of atomic retaliation which alone is likely to deter an enemy from attacking.

It is therefore, I think, a matter of very grave negligence that the Government is leaving this aspect of our defence preparations entirely untouched. The honorable member for Indi said a moment ago that the Department of the Interior was not the right place from which to provide this defence service. There, again, I agree with him. He is doing no more than echoing the most responsible opinion overseas. It is wrong to consider this purely as a subsidiary function of a department and put it in a place in the budget—even in this slightly contemptuous form—to which it does not belong. Though it is defence expenditure it is put under the control of the Department of the Interior.

We have done nothing of any consequence as yet. The fact that we spent only £88,000 last year shows how little we

have done. It is true that at Mount Macedon the Commonwealth Government has set up a defence school. Of its kind it is an excellent and efficient establishment. I was privileged to be present at the opening ceremony. I know some of the instructors and I have had the privilege of seeing the courses which are being given to the trainees. There is nothing wrong with the school or the way in which it is administered, but it is miserably inadequate for the kind of emergency with which we might be faced. The school is training a few people, but it is not a few people that one needs in an emergency such as may—we hope it will not—come upon us.

The honorable member for Indi has been quite right in stressing that we should train masses of people in the measures essential for their own personal survival. This cannot be done by conducting two or three classes a quarter, each graduating from one small, single school. This school has, however, one very valuable aspect. Its indoctrination courses may allow other people to learn of the problem and thus spread an awareness of it throughout the community. In this way the school, although not directly of very much consequence, may have the excellent, indirect effect of generating public opinion of the kind that will force upon the Government a proper, more comprehensive and more adequate policy for the present situation.

I was very pleased to hear the Minister remark some weeks ago that he would be glad if, at some later time, honorable members of this House could undergo a short indoctrination course at the school. They would learn the facts of nuclear warfare in their most authentic form—one which they could not query—and realize the political implications of the physical facts which they face.

Honorable members will recall that for some time now I have tried to press this matter by every means in my power. I am afraid that when it was before the Parliament last year the Government misled the House by telling it of the great plans that allegedly were being made; that it was not necessary to mobilize the States or to have liaison with them and that, as everything was in hand, all we had to do was to leave it to the Government.

It has not turned out that way nor, as honorable members can see by the miserable allocation of £70,000, is anything of the kind projected for next year. It is true that one State—my own State of New South Wales—has endeavoured to set up a rudimentary organization. It is, however, no more than rudimentary, though the officers concerned are doing an excellent job within the resources allocated to them.

But the crisis, if there is to be a crisis—and we all hope that there will not be—may come upon us quite suddenly. Who could have told us even a few months ago that the Suez affair would boil up as it did? Who could have told us, a few weeks ago, that the Suez affair would pass off without resort to force of any kind? Who can tell us that now? It may be that, if this organization is to be needed, it will be needed at quite short notice.

I wish to say quite clearly and definitely that the implementation of a proper civil defence policy cannot be achieved quickly. It could not be achieved quickly even in a country where there were no constitutional difficulties, but in this country, where the constitutional division of powers between this Parliament and the State Parliaments is an extra impediment to quick and efficient organization, even more time is needed. I appeal to the Government once again to get the States together and try to iron out these constitutional difficulties; not to repeat the eyewash which it tried to put over this House when the subject was last being debated, but to get on and do the job.

I am not suggesting that even the most efficient civil defence is enough. Nor am I suggesting that the defence programme has not to include a great deal more than civil defence. This is only one small corner of defence, but for lack of this the whole programme might fail. For lack of this the lives of our people are in danger. We all hope sincerely that the world-wide plan for effective nuclear control will become a reality. We know that civil defence, at its best, can be only a temporary expediency, but until we can induce Russia to join us in a system of nuclear control which would remove the fears of mankind we must take these other precautions. Survival is part of defence.

Dr. EVATT (Barton—Leader of the Opposition) [5.55].—I wish to refer to the speeches of the honorable member for Indi

(Mr. Bostock) and the honorable member for Mackellar (Mr. Wentworth). The nub of the question is to be found in the concluding sentences of the speech of the honorable member for Mackellar. I believe that the true inference to be drawn from the minute, almost contemptuous vote for civil defence which has been referred to, is that the Government does not envisage the possibility of war, especially nuclear warfare, reaching our shores. Apparently, the Government believes that it has some justification for its belief. Otherwise, it would be a most recreant act not to make provision against nuclear warfare.

Equally—and I think that this is implied also in the speech of the honorable member for Mackellar—if we are to have so contemptuous a vote for civil defence, there must be an all-out effort by the Government to ensure that a firm and binding agreement is reached in relation to nuclear weapons and nuclear experiments. My complaint against the Government is that it is doing nothing in this direction.

The honorable member for Mackellar, in referring to Russia in this chamber, called the Russians "the enemy". I do not think that he should do that. I am not saying that merely as a point of order. Surely the situation has eased to a substantial extent since the summit talks. They were delayed long enough. Sir Winston Churchill suggested them in 1953. That was the new hope of the world. They were not held until two years later but, undoubtedly, the general climate has greatly improved. It is in that connexion that I want to urge again activity by this Government. Unless some initiative is taken by Australia, I do not believe that the great Powers—Russia, Great Britain and the United States of America—will take the initiative soon enough. They have all expressed willingness to ban experiments with nuclear weapons, but an agreement to that effect must be entered into by all of them. All have expressed their willingness. The Russian Foreign Minister did so twice. The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Sir Anthony Eden, as recently as 24th July last, when speaking of the multiplication of experiments, said—

We would have preferred to deal with this in the context of a disarmament convention, but we are quite ready now to discuss that matter separately from a disarmament convention.

Yet it has been said, in this debate and elsewhere, that we cannot deal with nuclear experiments unless we have a firm, binding agreement covering all nuclear weapons, and their use in war as well as conventional weapons. I believe that is the approach that should be made. I do not believe that the United States of America requires anything more than some firm, binding assurance that if it gives up nuclear weapons, Russia will do so as well. That is evident from statements that have been made on behalf of the United States of America. Could that not be made certain? Is it not a fact—as I believe it to be—that no nuclear experiment of any significance can be conducted in any one of the three major countries without the other two knowing about it immediately. If such an experiment is made, it is readily detectable. Therefore, in a sense, we could get to the situation quickly if there were any breach of the primary undertaking.

Sitting suspended from 5.59 to 8 p.m.

Dr. EVATT.—During the time remaining to me, I should like to summarize as quickly as I can what seem to us to be the salient points in this great controversy over experiments with the atomic and hydrogen bombs, experiments conducted, of course, on the assumption that in some circumstances they will be utilized in warfare. The Opposition has sought to reduce the proposed vote in order to demand of the Government that it take some action other than that which it is taking in connexion with these experiments. We demand of the Government that it bring the matter before the three great powers which are the sole possessors of atomic and hydrogen bombs; and I remind the Government that the leaders of each of those countries have expressed their willingness to agree to the banning of the experiments subject to reasonable safeguards for the protection of them all. I have referred to the statement by Sir Anthony Eden that he was quite willing to separate the experimental use of these bombs from the general problem of disarmament and to treat that as the first step towards major disarmament. The same offer has been made twice by the Foreign Minister of Russia and by the authorities in the United States of America, again subject to certain safeguards. I point out that it is a

vital part of our case that we have a safeguard in the fact that, because of the marvellous instruments available to scientists, it is possible to detect from a great distance whether a bomb has been exploded. By this means, any of the three powers can detect whether the agreement has been breached or honoured.

One object, of course, in banning the use of bombs for experimental purposes is the banning of their use altogether for purposes of war, and in this connexion I desire to make a short reference to a statement appearing in the "Christian Science Monitor" of 29th June, as published in the United States of America. It sets out that official army estimates showed that a full-scale nuclear attack on the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics could kill several hundred millions of people, including probably millions of America's own allies outside the Soviet Union, depending on which way the wind was blowing. That is an official statement that was published despite censorship in the United States of America. Senator Duff asked this question of General Gavin—

If we got into a nuclear war and our strategic Air Force made an assault in force against Russia with nuclear weapons so that the weapons exploded in a way where the prevailing winds would carry them south east over Russia, what would be the effect in the way of death?

General Gavin said he would answer, but he added that the question should be directed to the Air Force. He then gave this reply—

Current planning estimates run on the order of several hundred million deaths. That would be either way, depending on which way the wind blew.

That is surely ample evidence to support the assertion that the winds have a definite effect upon the area in which the greatest amount of damage and destruction and the greatest number of deaths occur. It is also supported by the Maralinga tests. We know that those tests were postponed because the wind was not blowing in the direction for which provision had been made. The weapon was not released until the signal was given that the wind was blowing in the required direction. I repeat that it supports the statement in the "Christian Science Monitor" that the direction of the wind does affect the area contaminated from radiation. In those

circumstances, it is obvious that there is an element of peril, and it is only probably because great scientific achievement has been favoured by chance that the experiments have been conducted so far without great damage and loss of life. We all know that loss and injury did result from the Bikini experiment, but in that case an H-bomb, not an atom bomb, was exploded. Actually, I think it caused the deaths of a number of Japanese fishermen who were in the affected area.

That New Zealander, Lord Rutherford, the great mathematician and nuclear physicist, first saw the way in which this field of science could lead to inventions which, properly controlled, would bring comfort, happiness and power to thousands of millions of people throughout the world. What we want from the leaders of nations is a spirit of determination and humanity, without which these weapons must become the curse of mankind, because, if they are used for mass destruction during a war, there is no doubt that they could destroy the very fabric of the earth itself. We of the Opposition, therefore, ask what is being done in this connexion. Nearly two years ago, at the federal conference of the Australian Labour party, this matter was discussed and, among other things, this was said—

The development of atomic weapons has reached such dimensions that the peoples of the world are now faced with the stark and terrifying spectacle of a possible atomic world war causing a danger to the very fabric of the earth, its atmosphere and all its inhabitants, which is so real that distinguished scientists refer to the prospect with a sense of desperation.

Those were the words used by that great scientist Einstein and his seven colleagues who signed the declaration published immediately after his death. The declaration of the Australian Labour movement, to which I have referred, continues—

This desperation is partly due to the vacillation and delay in arranging high-level political talks aiming at the effective prevention of the use of atomic and hydrogen bombs by any nation, whether for purposes of war or experimental purposes.

That declaration was criticized, but it pointed the way to a solution, because, at the great meetings held after that time, the leaders of the three nations to which I have referred made to each other, and to the world, the offers to which I have alluded.

Nobody will deny that the Minister for Supply (Mr. Beale) is very energetic in carrying out his duties, but the real responsibility lies not with him, but with the Government. It should point out that our country is being used as the place for conducting these experiments. We all realize that, originally, Woomera was never intended for atomic or hydrogen experiments; it was arranged between the Chifley Government and the Labour government of Great Britain that it should be used for experiments seeking to obtain an answer to the V-1 and V-2 guided missiles which nearly turned the tide of war against us in 1944 and 1945. It is now being used for these other purposes.

Mr. Beale.—Maralinga had nothing to do with that.

Dr. EVATT.—I am not speaking about Maralinga; I am referring to the original purpose for which that great space at Woomera was to be used. What is being done about it now? In to-day's issue of the "Sun Pictorial", Douglas Wilkie, who, like Russo of the "Argus", is one of the best informed of any commentators in Australia on international affairs, said—

We're near to that point at which the peoples of the world will insist on putting an end to further nuclear test-explosions—A-bomb and H-bomb.

Let the Government take the initiative. It will get 100 per cent. support from the Opposition and, I believe, from those countries which are concerned with this question. Certainly, it will get support from suffering humanity.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. Adermann).—Order! The honorable gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. BEALE (Parramatta—Minister for Supply) [8.10].—I have only a few minutes in which to address the committee. Before I deal specifically with what the Leader of the Opposition (Dr. Evatt) said, may I mention one or two matters which were raised earlier in the debate? The honorable member for Blaxland (Mr. E. James Harrison) read a passage from the recent report of the Nuclear Research Foundation, uttering a criticism of the allocation for the Lucas Heights reactor. Since the honorable member has done that, perhaps I might

be permitted to read a letter which I received from Mr. Parry-Okeden, the chairman of the foundation, in which he said—

The foregoing criticisms are not intended in any way to reflect on the Atomic Energy Commission itself or on you, sir, as the Minister responsible for the work of the Commission and for the provision of adequate finance for its proper requirements.

All of us want as much money as possible to be spent on the Lucas Heights project, but a lot of other projects in Australia also require money. If there is to be any suggestion that the Government has not done its duty in regard to this item on the Estimates, I point out that we have practically doubled the vote for the Lucas Heights project this year. An extra £1,000,000 has been provided.

Mr. Chambers.—The honorable member for Blaxland did not mention Lucas Heights.

Mr. BEALE.—If he did not mention Lucas Heights, heaven only knows what he was talking about! That is what he was supposed to be talking about. The proposed vote for this project for this financial year is £2,436,000, compared with a vote of £1,416,000 which was placed on the Estimates last year. That seems to me a pretty handsome recognition of the fact that this Government realizes that the project is an important project and that in a time of financial stringency, the Government is prepared to allocate a big increase in funds to bring that project to completion.

The honorable member for Blaxland also took the trouble to make some slighting remark which was based on a report in the "Daily Telegraph". If the honorable member gets any pleasure out of the fact that a newspaper reporter rings up a Minister's wife, is rude to her, and publishes a snarling report next morning that "a woman who answered the telephone said he was asleep", the honorable member is not as decent a fellow as I thought. I take it very hard that a man like himself should bother to quote a newspaper on a paltry matter of that sort.

I should also like to answer something that was said by the honorable member for Bonython (Mr. Makin), who very rightly expressed some anxiety about the natives in connexion with atomic tests. I have said, in the House, in general terms, that the most elaborate precautions have been taken

to safeguard the safety of the natives entirely. I shall not attempt to deal with the matter in detail now, but perhaps the committee will permit me to refer to a letter which I wrote on 20th September to the appropriate Minister in the Labour Government in Western Australia, Mr. Brady, M.L.A., who had made inquiries about this matter. It is a long letter which indicates with some precision the care that we take, and with the concurrence of honorable members I shall incorporate it in "Hansard". The letter reads as follows:—

I have now had an opportunity of reading the speech made by Mr. W. Grayden, M.L.A., in the Legislative Assembly on 15th August, and appreciate your courtesy in forwarding this with your letter of 21st August.

At the outset let me say that I share your anxiety that nothing should be done to jeopardize the welfare and precarious living of the native. This has always been in the forefront of our minds in planning operations both in respect of the rocket range at Woomera and of the atomic weapons proving ground at Maralinga.

We have tried not only to protect the natives from any hazard associated with the operation of these ranges, but also to disturb their normal mode of living as little as possible, and to impose no unnecessary restriction on their movements.

My Department has worked in close co-operation with the Department of Native Welfare both in South and Western Australia, and the helpful attitude of both States has been appreciated.

You might like to have a brief outline of the measures which have been put into operation for looking after native welfare in the area nearer to Maralinga, and this I have set out below—

1. Two or three mobile ground patrols operate between Tarcoola and Ernabella to keep a check on the location and movement of all natives in this area.
2. There are also scientific teams operating east towards Mabel Creek and up to 120 miles to the north-west of our base on the Emu claypan. These teams, while not specifically for native patrol, are briefed to report any indication that natives are in this area.
3. These patrols are in daily contact with each other, with Natives Affairs Officer Macaulay at the Meteorological Station in the Rawlinsons, and with the Maralinga and Woomera Ranges.
4. While there is not the slightest danger to the health of natives in and around the station properties in central South Australia arising from the tests at Maralinga, it is considered politic to keep regular checks on the radio-active "background" in these areas, and in addition to the large number of air sampling stations distributed throughout the Australian continent, there are sampling devices located at each of the station properties referred to above.

Not only do these supplement the data obtained from the main continental sampling system, but they provide specific confirmation that no significant radioactive material has fallen on the nearby inhabited areas.

5. Before any major test is conducted at Maralinga, extensive low level aerial reconnaissance over a wide sector centred on Maralinga and extending out about 200 miles from the firing area is made with meticulous care. This will detect the presence of any natives not previously accounted for. In the event of any natives being discovered in locations which might give rise to public anxiety, the tests would be held up until the natives were clear of these areas.
6. The only area in which the radio-active contamination following a test might reach a level prejudicial to health, is in the near vicinity of the firing sites, and this area will be constantly supervised by the Range authorities.

Although radio-active material will fall outside this area, it will be of such low intensity as not to be a health hazard. Further, it will decay rapidly with time and could not possibly be a danger to any natives who might subsequently move into the area.

7. As part of the scientific plan to assess the effectiveness of the nuclear devices tested at Maralinga, extensive aerial and ground survey of the radio-active "fallout" are made with highly sensitive measuring instruments to distances of more than 100 miles from the firing sites. These measurements provide additional confirmation that the scientific predictions were realized and that no harmful radioactive material was deposited on areas used by human beings or live-stock.

The initiation and direction of the above measures is the direct responsibility of the Atomic Weapons Tests Safety Committee, which consists of eminent Australian scientists and which is present in person at each of the major trials at Maralinga.

I trust the foregoing information will not only inform you of the extreme care with which we are planning all these operations, but will enable you to reply to any uninformed criticism that these highly important and essential British Commonwealth defence operations are prejudicing native life and welfare in Australia.

Mr. Chambers.—What about the contaminated cattle?

Mr. BEALE.—The story about the contaminated cattle is simply that there were no contaminated cattle. The day after this report appeared, the "Adelaide Advertiser" published a complete and flat denial by the gentleman who was supposed to have given the report to it.

The honorable member for Darebin (Mr. R. W. Holt) made, if I may say so, an earnest and well-intentioned speech on what I acknowledge is a serious subject. I regret to say that, in trying to make his case, he misquoted the effect of the Medical Research Council's report in Great Britain and the effect of the report of the United States Academy of Science. He certainly misquoted the intent and effect of the British Labour party's resolution which was passed at Blackpool a few weeks ago. I have the resolution here, and it is quite clear that the British Labour party did not intend to pass a resolution advocating a unilateral discontinuance of atomic tests. Yet that is precisely what the honorable gentleman suggested.

Obviously, the honorable member, along with everybody else, including the members of this Government, is anxious to see these tests brought under control and, in due course, discontinued. But to suggest that the Labour party of Great Britain, like the very foolish Labour party in this chamber, passed a resolution advocating a unilateral discontinuance of tests is to insult the intelligence of the British Labour party. A resolution was passed by the Australian Labour party caucus, by a narrow majority, advocating the unilateral abolition of atomic bomb tests. I suggest that if the proposal were put up to the caucus again, it would not go through; but it is on record. Therefore, it is interesting to find the honorable member for Darebin so misguided as to advocate in this committee that line of approach.

Mr. R. W. Holt.—Does the Minister oppose the churches?

Mr. BEALE.—I do not oppose the churches. The churches, in common with most thinking people, are anxious to see an end to this atomic armaments race. This Government, as I shall show, is doing its utmost, along with the governments of the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, to get some sort of workable and enforceable agreement on the subject. But until we can get something which will protect us, we will not expose this country and our allies to being overwhelmed, as by an avalanche, by the forces of Russia, a country which is completely superior in other forms of armaments.

The honorable member misquoted the statement of Mr. Adlai Stevenson. Mr. Adlai Stevenson did not advocate the unilateral banning of the hydrogen bomb. The words that he used were—

... the United States should take the lead in working out a ban on hydrogen bomb tests. That does not mean that the United States should abandon its testing of the bomb unless Russia gave some sort of promise or undertaking, or America had some sort of working arrangement with Russia, to do the same thing.

I now turn to the real nub of this matter, and that is the statement by the Leader of the Opposition. The honorable member for Darebin and some of his misguided friends are prepared to say, "Let Australia discontinue these tests. Let Great Britain discontinue these tests. Let America discontinue these tests. But let Russia go on and on and on"—

Mr. Chambers.—He did not say that.

Mr. BEALE.—That is the effect of the resolution that the Labour party caucus adopted the other day.

Mr. Chambers.—The Leader of the Opposition advocated bringing the leaders of nations together.

Mr. BEALE.—That is what the Leader of the Opposition said in the chamber, but it is not what he said in caucus.

The CHAIRMAN.—Order! Members of the Opposition must keep quiet.

Mr. R. W. Holt.—I rise to order. I ask for an unqualified withdrawal of the statement that we are in favour of letting Russia go ahead with the development of the atom bomb.

The CHAIRMAN.—Order! The honorable member is out of order. If he considers that he has been misrepresented, he may make a personal explanation.

Mr. BEALE.—These boys do not like the truth. They run away from it every day of the week. To-night, the Leader of the Opposition did not go as far as he went in caucus. He has submitted an amendment, the purpose of which is to reduce the proposed vote for the Department of Supply by £1—a sort of motion of censure, I suppose—as a direction to the Government to get the powers together to ensure the banning of tests by agreement. That is a somewhat different thing.

Mr. Chambers.—It is different from what the Minister said.

Mr. BEALE.—No. I said that the caucus had previously passed a resolution in favour of Australia abandoning tests. But to-night the right honorable gentleman is not prepared to go that far. I am not surprised that he is not prepared to go that far because on 22nd February last, in answer to an interjection by myself, he said, in this chamber, that no one seriously advocated the cessation of experimental explosions except by international regulation and by consent. That is why he cannot now genuinely advocate unilateral abandonment. But he does want to have the proposed vote for the Department of Supply reduced as a direction to the Government to get the powers together. It all sounds very nice.

I suggest that it might be a good idea if the committee had the opportunity to run its mind over the history of this matter and realize what has been done by the great democracies to try to bring about some sort of agreement on this subject already. For Australia now to mount its white charger like a paladin, come into the arena, strike an attitude, and say, "We shall get the great powers together to achieve this thing which Great Britain and America have been struggling for since 1954", is just childish nonsense, and everybody knows it. In 1954, at the United Nations General Assembly, a motion was put forward by India for what it called a standstill of atomic explosion. It is significant that Russia did not open its mouth at that session, did not advocate this course, and did not raise the matter in any form at all.

Mr. Chambers.—There was a later meeting in 1954.

Mr. BEALE.—I am coming to that. In 1955 Russia did bring forth, before a sub-committee on disarmament, a somewhat elaborate proposal for a cessation of thermo-nuclear tests, which in that context mean both hydrogen and atomic explosions, coupled with a freeze of conventional arms—which was very nice because Russia had 50 per cent. more conventional arms than all the rest of the free world put together—the liquidation of all foreign bases, and the acceptance of a solemn obligation not to use nuclear weapons. No enforcement, no

sanctions, no control! It is little wonder that that proposal went by default and was not even raised by anybody at the meeting. It is worth mentioning that at about that time President Eisenhower came forward with his open skies proposal, which was a fair and honest proposal for inspection of all forms of armament, and that was turned down by Russia. So do not let us say that the democracies have not been putting up a struggle to try to bring this thing under control.

Mr. Chambers.—That proposal was for an aerial inspection.

Mr. BEALE.—It was for an open skies aerial inspection of armaments.

Mr. Chambers.—They did not agree to it.

Mr. BEALE.—Of course they did not. In December, 1955, Sir Anthony Eden said that the United Kingdom could not agree to the stopping of nuclear tests unless there were some sort of international supervision and control. He went on to say, "But my Government is prepared at any time and at any place to have discussions on the control and abolition of atomic bomb tests". There never was a reply by Russia to that open offer. Between March and May, 1956, the disarmament sub-committees of the United Nations again had this matter under discussion, and again proposals were put forward. This time they were Anglo-French proposals for comprehensive disarmament, but they also included the abolition of the atomic tests. The Soviet replied with a proposal of its own, somewhat similar to its previous proposal, but again without any sort of supervision or control. For the democracies to agree to any proposal which does not, somewhere or other, have a hope in it that the agreement could be supervised and controlled would be, of course, just folly. Russia entered that particular discussion with no better proposal than that there should be a solemn obligation on the part of all powers that they would make a solemn promise. It would be, if you like, one of those forms of words, but nothing more than that, with no sanctions to back it, no inspection of any sort, and it is little wonder that that proposal lapsed and went by the wayside.

Quite recently, Sir Anthony Eden's Government, like this Government, and like every other government, including, I believe,

the Russian Government, has become concerned with the implications of the thermonuclear explosion, that is to say, a hydrogen bomb explosion, as distinct from an atomic explosion. This is a distinction which members on the Opposition benches do not seem to understand. I have heard three speeches this afternoon by Labour members. Two of the speakers obviously did not know the difference between an atomic bomb explosion and a hydrogen bomb explosion. Sir Anthony Eden said that although his Government would prefer to deal with the question of controlling atomic explosions in the context of a disarmament convention, nevertheless the question had become so technical, so bogged down in offer and counter-offer, in political and international diplomatic manœuvre, that he now made an open offer that his Government stood immediately ready, at any time and at any place, to discuss a limitation of tests, separately or in any disarmament context whatsoever.

Dr. Evatt.—That is a big step forward.

Mr. BEALE.—I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that that is a big step forward, and it is one with which we heartily agree, because the hydrogen bomb offers sinister possibilities for the world unless mankind does something about it. I remind this committee that the Government will not permit such a bomb to be tested in Australia, but that is another matter altogether. The only reply by Russia to that proposal was the letting off of another series of hydrogen bombs in Russia. And there the matter stands. All I say to the Parliament is that this Government will not yield to any one in its belief that the time must come when the nations will be compelled to agree among themselves to control and, if possible, to ban the holding of these tests. We have played our part in every discussion abroad on this matter. Our views are well known and we shall continue to assert them. If it is any consolation to the Leader of the Opposition, quite apart from the motion he proposed to-night, this Government will take as foremost a part as it can take in future discussions, but that does not mean getting up on a post and bawling at the top of our voices and making fools of ourselves.

Mr. Curtin.—No wonder they call you “Paddles”.

The CHAIRMAN.—Order! The honorable member for Kingsford-Smith is entirely out of order in many ways, and he knows it. He will be out of the chamber if he does not behave.

Mr. BEALE.—I have spoken a little warmly on this subject, because I feel warmly about it. It is a matter of great significance to all of us. I think that most honorable members of the Australian Labour party, excluding the gentleman who just interjected, think just as seriously about this matter as we do, but the one thing that seems to divide the Government on the one hand and some members of the Australian Labour party on the other hand—I know it is not so with all of them—is whether in the meantime, struggling and doing our utmost with our friends to get some sort of workable, enforceable agreement, which will diminish and finally bring to a termination the holding of these tests, we should go on with these very small atomic tests in Australia, helping Great Britain and helping ourselves. Does the Australian Labour party, or that little group of it to which I have referred, say that if a Labour government had been in power a year or two ago it would have said “No” if Great Britain had said, “We offer you all of the guarantees of complete safety in this matter. Yours is the only country in our world that has the vacant space in which these bombs can be tested. Will you help us by allowing these small tests to take place?” I do not believe that Labour supporters would have been so craven as to adopt that attitude. I do not believe that they have so little regard for Great Britain, for the Empire, or for themselves, ever to have done that. I do not believe they would do it.

Mr. Davis.—Their leader would have done so.

Mr. BEALE.—Maybe he would. I say in conclusion that we will do our utmost and play our part to the limit of Australia’s capacity to bring about some sort of proper working agreement in the matter of thermonuclear and nuclear tests, but that in the meantime we intend to go ahead and, subject to complete safety for the Australian people, which we have achieved and will continue to achieve, assist Great Britain, ourselves, and our allies in the conducting of these tests.

The CHAIRMAN.—Order! The time allotted for the consideration of the proposed votes for the Department of Supply, Department of Defence Production and Other Services, has expired.

Question put—

That the vote proposed to be reduced (Dr. Evatt's amendment) be so reduced.

The committee divided.

(The Chairman—Mr. C. F. Adermann.)

Ayes	29
Noes	55
		—	
Majority	26

AYES.

Bird, A. C.	Griffiths, C. E.
Bryant, G. M.	Harrison, E. James
Cairns, J. F.	Holt, R. W.
Calwell, A. A.	Johnson, H. V.
Chambers, C.	Johnson, L. R.
Clarey, P. J.	Kearney, V. D.
Clark, J. J.	Lawson, George
Cope, J. F.	McIvor, H. J.
Costa, D. E.	Minogue, D.
Coutts, W. C.	Morgan, C. A. A.
Crean, F.	O'Connor, W. P.
Curtin, D. J.	Peters, E. W.
Daly, F. M.	Tellers:
Edmonds, W. F.	Lucetti, A. S.
Galvin, P.	Stewart, F. E.

NOES.

Allan, Ian	Howse, J. B.
Anderson, C. G. W.	Howsom, P.
Aston, W. J.	Hulme, A. S.
Boyle, Howard	Jack, W. M.
Blond, F. A.	Joske, P. E.
Bowden, G. J.	Kent Hughes, W. S.
Gumblecombe, W. J.	Killen, D. J.
Buchanan, A. A.	Lindsay, R. W. L.
Cameron, Dr. Donald	Lucok, P. E.
Casey, R. G.	Mackinnon, E. D.
Cleaver, R.	McBride, Sir Philip
Cramer, J. O.	McColl, M. L.
Davidson, C. W.	McEwen, J.
Davis, F. J.	Osborne, F. M.
Dean, R. L.	Pearce, H. G.
Drummond, D. H.	Robertson, H. S.
Drury, E. N.	Sneddon, B. M.
Erwin, G. D.	Stokes, P. W. C.
Fairchild, A.	Timson, T. F.
Fox, B. M.	Townley, A. G.
Fraser, Malcolm	Turner, H. B.
Freeth, G.	Wentworth, W. G.
Graham, B. W.	Wheeler, R. C.
Hamilton, L. W.	Wight, B. M.
Harrison, Sir Eric	Wilson, K. C.
Hasluck, P. M.	Tellers:
Haworth, W. C.	Opperman, H. F.
Holt, Harold	Turnbull, W. G.

PAIRS.

Evatt, Dr. H. V.	Menzies, R. G.
Riordan, W. J. F.	Fairbairn, D. E.
Barnard, L. H.	Falkinder, C. W. J.
Benzley, K. E.	Swartz, R. W. C.
Haylen, L. C.	Anthony, H. L.
Russell, E. H. D.	Brand, W. A.
Thompson, A. V.	Failes, L. J.
Pollard, R. T.	Lawrence, W. R.
Cameron, Clyde	Chaney, F. C.
Duthie, G. W. A.	Luck, A. W. G.
Webb, C. H.	Page Sir Earle
Watkins, D. O.	Downer, A. R.

Question so resolved in the negative.

Proposed votes agreed to.

Miscellaneous Services.

Proposed Vote, £23,381,000.

Refunds of Revenue.

Proposed Vote, £22,000,000.

Advance to the Treasurer.

Proposed Vote, £16,000,000.

Bounties and Subsidies.

Proposed Vote, £13,500,000.

War and Repatriation Services.

Proposed Vote, £17,306,000.

Commonwealth Railways.

Proposed Vote, £3,697,000.

Postmaster-General's Department.

Proposed Vote, £87,123,000.

Broadcasting and Television Services.

Proposed Vote, £6,802,000.

(Ordered to be considered together.)

Mr. LESLIE (Moore) [8.38].—It would take too much of the time at my disposal. Mr. Chairman, if I were to repeat the votes which are now before the committee, but I want to say that although we have been discussing some very important votes, each of those now before us warrants a considerable degree of thought and discussion.

The CHAIRMAN.—Order! There is too much audible conversation. I can hardly hear the honorable member for Moore.

Mr. Bryant.—We do not want to hear him.

The CHAIRMAN.—Order! The honorable member for Wills (Mr. Bryant) had better be quiet, or he will find himself outside the chamber, where he will not be able to interject while I am speaking.

Mr. LESLIE.—In relation to the proposed vote for Miscellaneous Services alone, there are many matters that I should like to discuss and which I think the committee should consider. Most of the proposed votes in this group refer to grants and assistance to be given by the Government in respect of activities both inside and outside Australia, including the very important measure of assistance which the Government has undertaken to give to our Asian friends under the Colombo plan. I wish to devote a few minutes to discussion of assistance within Australia, because I am one of those peculiar people who believe that

charity begins at home and that, whilst it is proper to have a charitable and kindly attitude to people outside Australia who require assistance, we should make sure that the fullest possible measure of assistance is given in deserving cases at home.

In Division 214 of the Estimates for the Prime Minister's Department, under the heading of Miscellaneous Services, a long list of organizations and subjects appears for which money is to be made available. Some of these appear to receive their grants almost automatically each year, and it is not often that a new organization or subject appears in the list. However, this year, I notice that a new organization is included, the Australian Humanities Research Council. Although, as in the case of the other items in this division, the title of this organization is given, no information is provided to enable the committee to understand what this organization is and what it does. Having regard to its title, I have no doubt that it devotes its attention to humanitarian activities, and is a deserving body. However, I should appreciate some information as to its objectives.

Another item is, "Cultural matters, exhibitions", and the grant for this is £1,500. A similar vote was included in last year's Estimates, but it was not spent. Evidently, the exhibitions did not take place, but it is assumed that they will be held this year. Although the causes listed in this division may merit financial help, I could mention many others which are equally, if not more, deserving of government assistance.

I direct particular attention to the work that is being carried on by voluntary organizations in every State of the Commonwealth to provide medical and educational facilities for spastic children. These children are afflicted with cerebral palsy, and the efforts of these organizations are devoted to the improvement of their physical condition, and to the provision of means of education so that they may be able to enjoy their lives as much as possible and to engage in useful occupations as far as they are able. The demands that have been made for the services of these organizations, even in the short time that they have been in existence, have been overwhelming, and they will not be able to carry on without some assistance from the Commonwealth Government.

The organizations have formed a federal association, and at a recent meeting in Melbourne, after a very careful study of the position, it was found that in order to provide adequately the services necessary to assist spastic children both now and in later life a sum of £400,000 would be required to supplement the funds raised from the public and voted by State governments. Last year an appeal for assistance was made to the Treasurer (Sir Arthur Fadden), but although he gave a sympathetic hearing he gave no substantial help. The organizations had hoped to receive some assistance in this year's budget, but such has not been the case. The time is fast approaching when the Commonwealth will not be able to keep out of this matter, if only for economic reasons, which is a most inhumane way of considering it. But if the Commonwealth does not give financial assistance in the work of helping spastic children, it will be obliged, under its social services legislation, to pay them the invalid pension when they are old enough to qualify for it.

Mr. Ian Allan.—What are the State governments doing?

Mr. LESLIE.—The State governments are giving financial assistance in accordance with their constitutional responsibilities. They provide educational facilities, and the State of Queensland subsidizes the spastic centre in that State on a £1-for-£1 basis. Nevertheless, the financial assistance from the State governments is inadequate, and the organizations have to depend upon money raised from the public to enable them to carry on. In Western Australia, where it costs £60,000 a year to run the spastic centre, the organization has received generous support from the State government. The difference between the government grant and the actual cost is contributed, voluntarily, by the public. The Australian council of the spastic organizations is fearful that the sympathetic and generous response by the public to the frequent appeals will not be maintained, so that it will not be possible to provide the services that the spastic children need. Already, it is impossible to provide anything like the services asked for.

Although this need has been ignored through the years by governments, the service now being given by the spastic organizations is being sought by increasing numbers of parents whose children are afflicted.

I say again that charity begins at home, and this is a case in which the Government should assist. If children can receive treatment in their early years it is possible to do much more for them than in later years. From a humanitarian point of view the need of the spastic children constitutes a demand for government assistance that far transcends the claims of many of the organizations listed in this division to which grants have been made. I hope that, as a result of my appeal, some consideration will be given to the help of spastic organizations, and that when they approach the Treasurer later this year he will give them substance as well as sympathy, and grant them a fair proportion of the £16,000,000 that is set aside for him to spend at his discretion.

I now turn to a matter under the control of the Postmaster-General—the operations of the Australian Broadcasting Commission. On previous occasions, I have severely criticized a recent departure in the programmes of the Australian Broadcasting Commission by providing only one service in the children's hour, that is, the relay from the eastern States to Western Australia of the Argonauts session. When I discussed this matter with Mr. Moses, the general manager of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, he gave me quite a long story, but to me it was unconvincing and left me cold. I am still of the opinion that Western Australia is not being provided with an adequate programme for children, and it seems that requests to the Australian Broadcasting Commission from Western Australia will not receive favorable consideration.

As proof of that statement I point to the fact that the Royal Show is now taking place at Perth, and the Australian Broadcasting Commission is conspicuous by its absence. At the Royal Show held in each of the capital cities of the eastern States the team which presents the Argonauts session appears in person at the specially provided Australian Broadcasting Commission studio in one of the pavilions. Many Western Australian children who listen to the broadcast of the Argonauts session were keenly looking forward to the appearance of these artists at the Perth Royal Show this year, but they were bitterly disappointed. Why should Western Australia be deprived of a personal visit from these artists? Obviously, it is a case of a distant State being forgotten and neglected.

Mr. DALY.—Where is Western Australia?

Mr. LESLIE.—I suggest that the honorable member for Grayndler (Mr. Daly) should go back to the kindergarten and learn where Western Australia is. The treatment that has been meted out by the Australian Broadcasting Commission to Western Australia is wholly unsatisfactory. I suggest that the commission should again look at the matter. If the idea behind the relaying of a single session all over the Commonwealth is that it is to prepare the way for television, I remind the commission that we will not have television in Western Australia for another two or perhaps three years.

Mr. Luchetti.—But you are paying taxes.

Mr. LESLIE.—Of course, we will be taxed. If the children at the eastern end of the Commonwealth are to have the benefits of television and there is to be another programme for Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland, which States will not have television for a considerable time, each State might as well be given its own broadcast children's session at the present time. When the Argonauts session was run by each State, it was not possible for the stations to cope with the mail that came from the children. The interest of the children in their local affairs, and in the flora and fauna of their country, was such that the stations could not deal with the mail. How in the world those who are responsible are able to deal with the mail since the session was placed on a nationwide basis I do not know. The discontinuance of the session in Western Australia has been very disappointing to the children. I know that the Postmaster-General will tell me that he has no control over the programmes of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, but he should investigate this matter. I suggest that the Argonauts session, even if it costs three times as much, is worth a jolly sight more than is the broadcast of the proceedings of this Parliament. I remind honorable members—and I include myself—that as I stand here and speak the broadcast of these proceedings is costing the taxpayers of Australia £2 5s. a minute. I believe that, as far as I am concerned, they get value for their money, but I am not so sure that that applies to a number of other honorable members.

The CHAIRMAN.—Order! The honorable member's time has expired.

Mr. COSTA (Banks) [8.53].—I desire to comment upon the Estimates for the Postmaster-General's Department, and to refer to the proposal to instal what is known as the teleprinter reperforator electric switching system, the abbreviated name of which is Tress. The installation of this equipment would mean a reorganization of the telegraph branches in Australia. The Postmaster-General (Mr. Davidson), in reply to a question that I asked him, stated that installation of the system would improve the grade of service and effect substantial economies in telegraph operating costs. The estimated cost of Tress, which would serve 568 offices in Australia, is £720,000.

Representatives of the telegraphists and the supervisory officers' organization have conferred with the Postmaster-General on this matter and have also placed some of their views before me. The unions concerned are opposed to the installation of this system. They doubt its efficiency and also its ability to effect economies within the service. That opinion is shared by all the operatives in the telegraph branches, including the supervisory officers and the supervising technicians. The department is basing its argument for the installation of Tress on the experience of the Western Union Telegraph Co., in the United States of America. As honorable members know, the postal service in America is conducted by private enterprise and is not run by the government. The reported cost of the installation of this system in the United States was 70,000,000 dollars, or approximately £A30,000,000. Moreover, there have been additional heavy annual appropriations for the maintenance of the original equipment and for extension of the service. The department's estimate of approximately £720,000 is relatively low in comparison with the cost to the Western Union Telegraph Company of America. I feel that the cost of installing co-axial cables has not been taken into account in the department's estimate, and also that the system would not work satisfactorily in Australia without superior circuits such as would be provided by the use of co-axial cable.

The Postmaster-General, in reply to another question of mine, has stated that the new system would require 400 fewer telegraphists, which means that it would be necessary to effect a retrenchment of telegraphists. On the other hand, because of the vast amount of mechanization that is associated with it, introduction of the system would lead to a greatly increased engineering staff. Because of the fear of the retrenchment of telegraphists, the unions are asking for the exercise of caution in the installation of this system. The argument that Tress is the answer to telegraph service economy difficulties is not strengthened by the fact that, apart from America, where the system has been in operation for years, no other country, large or small, has adopted the Tress system. If it had been proved to be efficient, such countries as England, Germany and France undoubtedly would have adopted it. Those countries use what is called the magic eye system, and the Australian postal unions regard that system as being more suitable to Australian conditions. They believe it would be more efficient and more economic. The Postal Department owes it to the taxpayers to be careful in its investigations before it spends a lot of money on a new-fangled system which is of doubtful quality.

In the past, experimenting engineers have introduced other systems that have proved to be a failure. For example, they installed the Hunter Valley multiplex system. Twenty-three towns in the Hunter Valley area of New South Wales, including the Maitland and Cessnock districts, which previously were grouped on a four or five manual circuit, were changed over to the mechanized multiplex system. Many technical breakdowns and a heavy annual maintenance cost of about £6,000 convinced the department that the system was inefficient and was a costly failure. Consequently, it reverted to the old morse system. The introduction of Tress could lead to the same result. Multiplex, Tress and such highly mechanized systems are suitable only for densely populated areas. They are suitable for big cities or towns that are comparatively close together. In those circumstances, the laying of co-axial cable would not be so expensive. Let us take Queensland as an example. During monsoonal and bad weather periods the carrier wave frequency circuits react in a manner that is known as bumping, which

is like the static faults that we hear in our wireless sets. This so-called technical bumping fault could last for days, and in that case the present system would have to be resorted to. The same criticism applies to communications in the southern States in summer, especially during stormy weather when there is a contraction of lines due to varying temperatures.

The high speed and intricate system of Tress will be unreliable unless a costly reorganization of circuits is carried out. In respect of efficiency, which is one of the aims of the Postal Department and which its experts claim Tress will achieve, the unions dispute the claim that efficiency will be improved. The essence of a telegram is speed and accuracy. A telegram is usually an urgent message sent from one point to another, that is from the dispatching office to the receiving office. Telegrams are at present transmitted by the teletype or by the hand Morse system, and it takes no more than about a minute to send the average message. The installation of a new and costly system to increase that speed will not be of much value because the transmission of a telegram at present is almost instantaneous. What is necessary, however, is that the message should be speeded up from the office of destination to the addressee, and that is a matter of speeding up delivery. What is the value of transmitting a cable from London to Sydney, or to Canberra, at a fast speed if that cable is going to lie about in an office for one or two hours waiting to be delivered by a messenger? And that sort of thing does happen. My advice to the Postmaster-General is that he should forget about Tress and concentrate on speeding up the delivery of telegrams.

Another matter that is causing some concern to the telegraphists union is whether the new system is to be operated by males or females. The Postmaster-General has stated that the positions have not yet been classified and that the system can be operated by either males or females. I do not dispute the rights of females to get a job anywhere, but the unions object to the employment of females on the grounds that they are not paid the full male rate. In fact, they receive only 75 per cent. of the male wage. The union has no objection to their employment at male rates of pay, but it fears that the introduction of this new system may threaten male employment.

The Postal Department is apparently relying on reports of savings made by the Western Union Telegraph Company in the United States of America. It is understood that that company has saved 17,000,000 dollars a year since it introduced Tress. However, as I said in my opening remarks, these economies are doubted. The "A.C.A. News", published in the United States, has reported about the system as follows:—

From 1943 to 1953, that is in ten years, the Western Union closed 1,012 main and telegraph branch offices, 3,202 agency offices, and 3,666 railroad offices were also closed for telegraph traffic.

The "A.C.A. News" quoted those figures as they were given in evidence before the United States Federal Communications Commission. The figures were used to expose the fantastic scandal in which thousands of communities throughout the United States have been deprived of direct telegraph services in direct violation of firm pledges made to the American Government by the Western Union company. Savings at the expense of the public service should not be tolerated, and that is apparently what occurred under this system in the United States. Perhaps, it will occur here. The morse system has proved itself, and our other systems have proved themselves and are still very useful. Therefore, the Postal Department should concentrate not on the introduction of a new system but on the speeding up of the delivery of telegrams. The department may have the development of television in mind when considering this system and may intend laying co-axial cables to retransmit television programmes beyond the 25-mile radius. If it has that in mind in connexion with Tress there may be some substance in its arguments, but these cables are very expensive and I am sure that the Postmaster-General has not taken the expense into account.

The unions oppose the introduction of this system on several grounds, the grounds being the high cost of installation, unsuitability under Australian conditions, lack of justification from a traffic viewpoint, desirability of further investigation with a view to a more suitable system, lack of convincing argument that any appreciable improvement in service or saving of costs will result, no saving of time in delivery of telegrams, the departmental assertion that

400 telegraphists will be retrenched, the lack of departmental assurance that the proposed system will be operated by males and the general departmental tendency towards panic mechanization at any cost. The departmental attitude in this matter is completely wrong and it may involve the department in the installation of a system which will fail to achieve the results expected of it.

Mr. ERWIN (Ballarat) [9.7].—I desire to direct my remarks to-night to the Commonwealth railways. I congratulate the Minister for Shipping and Transport (Senator Paltridge) and the Commonwealth Commissioner for Railways, Mr. Hannaberry, on the very fine job of work they have done in bringing the Commonwealth railways to their present high standard of efficiency, which is as high a standard as any to be found in the world. This year the Commonwealth railways made a profit of about £1,500,000, and that was achieved because of the introduction of diesel-electric locomotives. The first of these locomotives was brought into service about four years ago, and during the last four years we have had to re-adjust our thinking about railway systems as a fast, efficient and economical means of transport.

Diesel-electric trains are able to operate at less than one-third the cost of the old steam trains, and, at the same time, give a faster service. Let us now look at the map of Australia and trace out where Commonwealth services operate. They operate from Port Pirie north to Port Augusta, thence to Kalgoorlie, a distance of approximately 1,100 miles. That service is known as the "trans" service. Our central railway line commences at Port Augusta and runs north to Alice Springs. Then there is a large gap across the centre of Australia to Birdum; and from Birdum to Darwin there is a 3 ft. 6 in. gauge railway. The present Government has commenced the conversion of the line from 3 ft. 6 in. to 4 ft. 8½ in.—which is the world standard gauge—from Port Augusta for about 200 miles north; and as our economic conditions permit, we shall eventually have a world standard gauge line of 4 ft. 8½ in. through to Darwin. In view of the comparatively small volume of goods carried and the unbalance of the goods traffic—there being a greater volume of goods taken west than is carried east—

the profit made by the Commonwealth railways is remarkable. If the timber industry of Western Australia could be developed, that profit could be increased considerably, because a good deal of timber would be carried from the west to the east. So much for the Commonwealth railways.

Let us glance at the States' railway systems to see whether they could be greatly improved, to the advantage of the economy of the country. From Brisbane, in the north, there is a standard gauge line to Albury, via Sydney. Another standard gauge line runs from Sydney to Broken Hill, where there is a break of gauge. From Broken Hill to Port Pirie, a distance of approximately 240 miles, there is a 3-ft. 6-in. gauge line. But for that gap of 240 miles, we could operate a through railway service from Sydney to Kalgoorlie. If the line between Broken Hill and Port Pirie were converted to the standard gauge, goods could be carried by rail from Brisbane to Kalgoorlie, without being unloaded at any intermediate point. If the line from Kalgoorlie to Perth were converted to the standard gauge, we should have a true trans-Australia railway.

Let us consider for a few minutes a railway service which, I am sure, would return a handsome profit after gauge standardization. I refer to the service between Melbourne and Sydney. The line from Albury to Melbourne could be converted to the standard gauge and modern central traffic control systems could be introduced at a total cost of £9,000,000. I understand that the conversion could be done without interfering in any way with the operations of the railway system of Victoria. The scheme proposed in the Clapp report would have cost something like £76,000,000 at the time the report was published, and to-day it would cost about £200,000,000. That was a scheme for the standardization of all the railway systems of the Commonwealth, but I feel that at this stage it would not be necessary to go so far. We must crawl before we walk. This is a young country, and we must make do with what we can afford. I believe that the cost of converting the line from Albury to Melbourne to standard gauge would have to be borne by the Commonwealth, owing to the financial difficulties of Victoria. The job could not be completed in less than three years.

so a nominal sum of £3,000,000 a year could be allocated for the purpose. If there are any men unemployed in Australia, their services could be used usefully on the construction of such a railway line.

The question that we must ask ourselves is: Can our railways be brought to such a standard of efficiency as to alleviate the severity of some of our road problems? I say most definitely that that can be done. The Hume Highway between Melbourne and Sydney, to take one example, is a quagmire in places. Millions of pounds have been spent on the construction and maintenance of that road, but the money spent on it in the last financial year at any rate has been spent unwisely. At present, 300 vehicles each carrying an average load of 12 tons travel over the road each day. So 24,000 tons of goods are carried over it each week. Those figures show that our bituminized roads, in their present form, cannot possibly stand up to the great volume of traffic that uses them. Many of us believe that if there were a standard-gauge railway between Sydney and Melbourne, a great portion of the volume of goods now being carried by road between those two cities would be diverted to the railway, but the loss of time and the expense caused by the break of gauge at Albury is such that the railways are unable to compete effectively with the road-hauliers. Although almost 80 per cent. of the goods carried between Melbourne and Adelaide is carried by the railways and only 20 per cent. goes by road, road-hauliers are carrying almost 60 per cent. of the goods traffic between Melbourne and Sydney. The success of the railway between Adelaide and Melbourne is an indication of what would happen if we built a standard-gauge line from Melbourne to Albury. The cost of carrying goods between Melbourne and Sydney by rail would be less than 1½d. a ton-mile. Compare that with the charge of 4d. a ton-mile made at present by road-hauliers.

I believe that our population now is sufficiently large to warrant the establishment of three more States. Two of our main problems at present are roads and decentralization. If a deep-sea port were established at Portland to serve a new State consisting of a part of the west of Victoria and a part of South Australia, if another deep-sea port were established at Eden to serve

another new State taking in the surrounding area, and if another deep-sea port were established at Iluka to serve another new State consisting of the New England district, many of our transport difficulties would be alleviated. With an efficient railway system, less money would be spent on main highways and more money would be available to town, borough and shire councils.

Mr. H. V. JOHNSON (Kalgoorlie) [9.19].—In the limited time at my disposal, I shall confine my remarks to one or two matters of great importance to my electorate. First, I wish to congratulate the honorable member for Ballarat (Mr. Erwin), because it is refreshing to hear members of the Commonwealth Parliament give credit where it is due by eulogizing the work of the Commonwealth railways, which have done a magnificent job for this country, particularly under the present commissioner, Mr. Hannaberry, whose services to the nation have won him the admiration of people of all political opinions. In the few years in which he has been in charge of the Commonwealth railways he has done such a magnificent job that the deficiencies of the past have vanished, and it is now a thorough pleasure to travel by those railways. I am very happy, therefore, that the honorable member for Ballarat saw fit to praise the great services of Mr. Hannaberry. If I had time I could deal with the Commonwealth railways much more fully, but because there are other matters of great import that I wish to deal with I am unable to give the time that I would like to give to a discussion of those railway services. I refer to the increased postal, telephone and telegraph charges which have operated from 1st October.

These increases impose a great additional burden on the people who form the pioneering section of our great community. They are the people who live far from the cities, and who do not enjoy the advantage of the amenities available to city people. These outback dwellers are greatly victimized by the new impositions. People who live in the far-out parts of Australia have to do the major portion of their business dealings by either telephone or telegram. Consequently, increases of telephone and telegraph charges have a more direct effect on them than they have on other members of the public. I refer particularly to people

who live in the north-west of Western Australia and in the Murchison and Murchison East gold-fields districts. I appeal to the Postmaster-General (Mr. Davidson) on their behalf but, while doing so, I realize quite well that, although the Minister may be sympathetic in the matter, he is just one member of a government which makes decisions such as that to increase postal and other charges and that, as a result, irrespective of what kind of a case I may be able to put to him to-night, he is not in a position to vary the charges as they affect people who live in isolated areas. I feel, therefore, that the whole thing is hardly fair, because when a worthwhile case that merits thorough attention by the Government is put forward, it is the Government's job to give that case the serious attention that it deserves.

As I have already said, the greater part of the business transacted by people in outback areas is transacted by means of telephone or telegram. That is a circumstance that is peculiar to the conditions under which those people live and work. The shipping service for people living on the isolated sections of the Western Australian coastline is irregular, and when people in those areas want to make arrangements for the transport of goods such arrangements are made by telephone or telegram. The business in these areas is not conducted in the regular fashion adopted in areas where there is assured and regular transport, but is done irregularly because of the lack of regular transport services. Because so much business is done on the telephone people in those areas sometimes have to wait on the line while decisions are being made. This is an exceedingly costly business normally, but now that the charges for trunk-line telephone calls have been increased it will be even more so. I stress that it is only by the use of telephones and telegram that people in those isolated areas can readily make contact with others. So I regret very much that the Government has found it necessary to place further imposts on these outback people, who already face many difficulties quite unknown to people who live in the cities and larger towns of Australia.

Not only are the people outback victimized in connexion with increased postal and other charges, but they are also victimized in respect of broadcasting recep-

tion and the rate of listener's licence fee. In some of the outback areas a listener gets very little return for the money he spends on a broadcast listener's licence, because good reception is possible for only two or three hours a day. Yet those people who do not get the advantage of a 24-hour broadcasting service such as is enjoyed by metropolitan listeners are asked to pay exactly the same listener's licence fee as is paid by people who can use their radios at any time of the day or night. That is another injustice suffered by those people. Some time ago, I asked the Postmaster-General whether he would reduce the listener's licence fee payable by such people in isolated areas, on the ground of their not receiving the same standard of service as is received by people who live within effective range of numerous broadcasting stations.

Now I turn to a matter that is of great importance—the question of the erection of a new post office at Geraldton, in Western Australia. The proposed votes we are now considering make no provision for that work. I might mention that the building which serves Geraldton as a post office at present was erected in the early 1890's, when the population of Geraldton was about 1,000. To-day, when Geraldton's population is above 10,000, and with the population of surrounding districts increasing rapidly, this same post office which was built in the early 1890's is still being called on to serve that much larger community. In 1947, after a thorough inspection by officials of the Postmaster-General's Department, the then Postmaster-General told the people of Geraldton that they would get a new post office. The plans were drawn up and submitted to the local authorities in Geraldton. A draft of the proposed building was also submitted. In 1949, preparations were being made for the construction of the new post office but, unfortunately, the Labour Government of that day was defeated in the general election in December, 1949. This Government then took office, and the incoming Postmaster-General, the honorable member for Richmond (Mr. Anthony), voiced his sympathy with the people of Geraldton in respect of their poor post office facilities. But that is as far as we got. Correspondence has flowed backwards and forwards through the

years, and numerous representations have been made to the Postmaster-General who preceded the present occupant of that honorable office. But in no way have we been able to get this Government to provide the money necessary for the erection of the new building. The result is that a building that is about 60 years old, erected to serve a community of 1,000 persons, is still attempting to serve a community that has since grown tenfold. The building is congested. It has not sufficient accommodation for the postal officials who work in it. In fact, some of the officials of that post office have had to be accommodated in State buildings because of the lack of room in the post office. For instance, one of the most important postal officers of the district, the postal inspector, has had to occupy accommodation in a State building. The State is now pressing for that accommodation to be returned to it. So we have this completely inadequate post office in one of the most important towns in Western Australia—a very important town which is growing in population every day, and whose activities in agriculture and secondary industry are continually expanding. Yet over the years this Government has failed to give the people of Geraldton and the surrounding districts the adequate service that they so rightly deserve. I have discussed this matter with the present Postmaster-General, and he too has expressed his sympathy for the people of Geraldton in respect of this matter. He has said that he would like to see Geraldton have a new post office, but has also said that the only thing preventing the provision of that new post office is sufficient money to do the job. The Estimates provide for the expenditure of more than £310,000 on new buildings and works in Western Australia that were not mentioned in the Estimates three or four years ago. The new Geraldton post office was supposed to have priority over other works, but it has been discarded and £310,000 is to be spent mainly in the Perth metropolitan area and the south-west of the State.

Only a few weeks ago I was deputed by the Postmaster-General to open a new post office at Morawa. When I undertook to perform the ceremony of officially opening that very valuable post office, I did not know that it would coincide with a visit to Western Australia by the Postmaster-

General and the Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs, Sir Giles Chippindall. Had I known that, I should have thought it would be the Postmaster-General's job to open the new Morawa post office. It would have done him good to get out into the back country and see the conditions in which people in the country work. I think that, had we got the Minister to Morawa, which is fairly close to Geraldton, we should have had every chance of getting him to visit that town. I am sure he would have met with a very good reception had he attended a civic function at Morawa, and that the local people would have had something pertinent to say to him. I was very disappointed to find, when I was at Morawa, that the Postmaster-General and the Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs were en route to the southern part of the State around Perth, the famed beauty of which attracts many tourists from the eastern States, most of whom go to Perth. I do not wish to be parochial, but, having examined the Estimates, I think it is significant that all of this £310,000 will be spent on buildings and works in electorates that that are represented by Government supporters. I do not like that.

The Estimates also provide approximately £1,500,000 more than last year for broadcasting and television services. It is safe to say that most of this amount will be spent on television, which will be of no benefit to people who live outside the metropolitan areas. It will not benefit country people, but they will pay just as heavily for it in taxation as will people who live within a short distance of television broadcasting stations and are able to derive great advantage from it. I am disappointed at this, and I appeal to the Postmaster-General to acknowledge the justice of the case that I have put before him this evening. I appeal to him to give consideration to people who are deserving of it and who will pay heavily to meet the increased charges to be levied on them. This Government has talked of decentralization.

The CHAIRMAN.—Order! The honorable member's time has expired.

Mr. PEARCE (Capricornia) [9.34].—I wish to discuss two subjects which are covered by the group of estimates now under consideration. The first relates to the Postmaster-General's Department. I

want to take a somewhat unusual course—at least, it appears to be unusual this evening—and congratulate the Postmaster-General (Mr. Davidson) on the work he has done since he took over his portfolio. He has experienced a rather difficult period, but I am sure that the time immediately ahead will be a time of great advancement for the postal services. Perhaps that will be some encouragement to the honorable member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. H. V. Johnson). I want to congratulate the Minister particularly upon the recognition he has already given to Australia's amateur radio broadcasters, or hams as they are called. He has extended them considerable sympathy and has recognized their problems and difficulties. His sympathetic consideration of their problems is a very fine tribute to them. The Minister has allowed them to continue with television experiments, and to extend their work with mobile equipment, and has tried to get the co-operation of the public and the State governments in a campaign to have suppressors fitted to appliances and machinery to prevent interference to radio and television broadcasts. This will be of considerable help to ham radio operators in Australia, and they thank the Postmaster-General for his sympathy and understanding.

I feel that we pay too little tribute to Australia's amateur radio operators. Although their work may be classed as a hobby, and a very interesting one, which keeps them deeply engrossed, we should, nevertheless, acknowledge the vital part they play. We too often pass lightly over the valuable work done by them, particularly in time of emergency. Disastrous though the recent floods have been, they would have been much worse had it not been for the work of the amateur radio operators, who struggled against great obstacles to maintain vital communications between the flooded areas and other parts of the country. Fine work was done not only by the operators in the devastated areas, but also by those in Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and elsewhere who picked up messages and transmitted them by telephone to the authorities. It is on record that many of the operators of amateur radio stations gave up their normal work, at considerable personal expense, and devoted themselves solely to the task they felt they had to do for their fellow men in time of disaster.

We have the comforting assurance that they are ready to serve the community at all times should cyclones, fires, floods, or disaster in any other form occur.

I do not think the Government can properly measure the valuable service that Australia's radio hams have given the country by promoting international goodwill. Their operations are not confined to Australia. Their transmissions go far abroad and carry messages of goodwill from Australia wherever they are received. Australia's amateur broadcasters are doing a splendid job for their country in spreading the spirit of understanding, friendship and comradeship among the fraternity of ham operators throughout the world, and this work must pay Australia great dividends in the long run. We are indebted to our amateur broadcasters for their work in war-time also. It is greatly to the credit of the hams who were operating just prior to World War II. that, on the outbreak of war, those in the military age-group who were fit joined up in a body and served in the signals branches of the three services. Amateur operators are ready to serve again if a war emergency arises. If we could measure completely the value of the work done by Australia's ham radio broadcasters, I think we could say that the experience gained by them in signals work, radar, electronics, and the manufacture of radio equipment, is so important that without it Australia's defence programme would be six months behind the present stage. I think the valuable work these men are doing in pursuing their hobby deserves due recognition from the Government. There are many ways in which it could give them perhaps greater recognition than they have received in the past.

Earlier, I mentioned that the Postmaster-General had given a sympathetic hearing to representations for the more extensive fitting of suppressors to household appliances and motor cars to prevent radio-interference. I mentioned this matter in relation to television on a previous occasion. Interference can cause great distortion of the image on a television screen. Also, if appliances such as electric razors and washing machines are not fitted with suppressors they might, because of the low power on which hams are forced to operate in Australia, cause interference with their signals. Even an electric razor being used

in one house can put the ham, who is operating in an adjoining house, off the air until the fellow using the razor has finished shaving. I ask the Postmaster-General (Mr. Davidson) to endeavour to persuade the State governments to enforce the fitting of suppressors to all household electric appliances and motor cars, and also to inform the general public of the interference that can be caused, not only to television, but also to ham operators, by the use of faulty electrical equipment.

Mr. Wheeler.—What cost is involved in the fitting of suppressors?

Mr. PEARCE.—I understand that a suppressor can be fitted to any electrical appliance for about 2s., so that no great outlay of cash would be involved. There is one other matter that causes me some concern in regard to ham operators; that is, the restriction placed on the power under which they may operate in Australia. In New Zealand, hams are allowed to operate up to a maximum wattage of 250, whilst in America, the limit is 1,000 watts. But here in Australia, we keep them down to 100 watts. As Australia is a large country, I think that consideration should be given to increasing the maximum wattage at which hams can operate at least to the limit of 250 watts that is observed in New Zealand. By the use of additional power, the hams could get their signals through more clearly than under the present limit of 100 watts.

There is one other way in which we could help them, and it would not cost anything at all. We could allow them complete freedom in the importation of equipment that has been developed as a result of experiments overseas, particularly in the United States of America, which seems to lead the world in the radio field. It would be very little for us to do for a band of devoted people who have served Australia well, and who are ready to serve again, if need be, should we experience either external or internal trouble, to give them ready access to import licences to enable them to bring into this country, duty free, any material that they need for experimental purposes, and to exempt from sales tax any such material that is manufactured in Australia.

As I mentioned earlier, the radio operators circulate throughout the world. They

plan to meet, probably in Geneva, in 1959. That may sound a long way off, but it is not so far ahead in terms of planning, and when they meet they will discuss their problems and establish standards to operate until the next conference is held, probably four or five years later. I think that it is essential for Australia to be well represented at the proposed conference. However, at the moment, it appears that it will be left to the Wireless Institute of Australia to provide the necessary money to send its representatives to the conference. As we subsidize rifle clubs, because of their defence value to the community, I think that it would not be unreasonable for us to say to the institute, "If you pick the men you want to go to the conference, we will pay their fares, or subsidize by 50 per cent. the cost involved", so that Australia can be adequately represented. I am sure that such a gesture by the Government would pay valuable dividends in the long run. Before hastening to the next subject to which I want to address myself, I should like to emphasize that we cannot pay too high a tribute to these men who are serving Australia so well to-day, and who have done a grand job for us in times of emergency and peril. By helping them in the way I have suggested we would, at least to a small degree, compensate them for their good work.

The other matter that I want to bring before the committee concerns the bounty that is payable under the Sulphuric Acid Bounty Act. With all the goodwill in the world, the Government placed that measure on the statute-book as an incentive to Australian acid manufacturers to use indigenous material, such as iron pyrites, for the manufacture of sulphuric acid. I notice that £512,471 was expended on such bounties during the last financial year, and this year it is estimated that £450,000 will be so expended. It is a matter of regret to me that, despite this incentive, the great sulphuric acid manufacturers of Australia are not fully using pyrites, and the producers of pyrites, including Mount Morgan Mines Limited and the Lake George Mining Company at Captains Flat have not benefited because the Government has been long-winded in adopting a practical solution to the problem. Officers of the Department of Defence Production have visited various

parts of Australia to see whether an improvement can be effected. I do not believe that Australia can afford to spend millions of pounds on the importation of sulphur for the manufacture of sulphuric acid when there are indigenous materials at hand that could be utilized by the sulphuric acid manufacturers without incurring undue cost. I urge the Government to turn its mind expeditiously to this subject. I think that a limitation should be placed on the importation of sulphur, and the money thus saved should be used to import other commodities that we need. It would mean a great deal to the mining companies themselves if the Government could say to them quickly—and I am told, he gives twice who gives quickly—"In order to save dollars, indigenous materials should be used for the manufacture of sulphuric acid". I point out that it is necessary for mining companies to plan a long way ahead. The life of the great mine that is operated by Mount Morgan Limited might be reduced by 50 years if the abundant supply of pyrites that is available is not used. On the other hand, the reverse would be the case if the pyrites were used; the mine would have another 50 years of profitable and effective life, to the benefit of the people of the district. I ask the Minister at the table (Mr. Davidson) to express my strong conviction in this matter to the Government. I hope that something will be done speedily to encourage the pyrites mining industry, because it is important to the welfare of the nation.

Mr. PETERS (Scullin) [9.49].—I propose to address myself to the subject of the repatriation of ex-servicemen, which is a responsibility of the Commonwealth Government. Although the Commonwealth can share certain functions with the States, ultimately the obligation to repatriate ex-servicemen rests on this Government. In 1953, I asked the then Minister for the Interior, the honorable member for Chisholm (Mr. Kent Hughes) to inform me of the number of ex-servicemen who had applied for land under the war service land settlement scheme. He stated that 36,000 of those who had applied for land were regarded by the Government as qualified by age or training, or both, to take up land. More than that number had applied for land but only 36,000 had all the qualifications essential to make a success of farming. The

other day I asked the Minister for Primary Industry (Mr. McMahon) to tell me the number of ex-servicemen who had been settled upon the land and the cost to the Government of their settlement. He informed me that throughout the Commonwealth 7,529 had been settled and the cost to the Commonwealth Government was £56,645,491. In addition to that, New South Wales had spent £38,600,000. Victoria £38,000,000, and Queensland £4,700,000. That means that 7,000 persons were settled upon the land at a cost of £138,000,000.

Mr. Mackinnon.—That did not include single-unit farms.

Mr. PETERS.—That included all that were settled upon the land. Re-establishment agricultural loan applications were in addition to that, and £10,000,000 was granted for that purpose.

The point I desire to make is that that is a vast expenditure to settle comparatively few people upon the land. The story, of course, is worse than it appears at first sight, because in Tasmania 340 ex-servicemen were settled at a cost of £9,338,000, nearly £30,000 for each settler. In Western Australia 692 ex-servicemen were settled at a cost of £24,241,000, again over £30,000 for each settler. Of course, some additional work may be in progress that will mean that ultimately more ex-servicemen will go upon the land. However, the figures are staggering and national disaster exists in the fact that we cannot, as a nation, commence any type of civilian settlement until we have settled all the ex-servicemen seeking to go upon the land.

It is of the greatest importance to the people of this country that more and more people be settled upon the land. I recall that during the period prior to World War II, governments in this country were deplored the drift from the country to the cities. They were deplored the lack of balance that existed in the community due to a large preponderance of people being engaged in urban and city occupations whilst relatively few were settled on the land. As the years passed by those engaged in rural occupations were becoming fewer, and it was said that the position had to be remedied. To-day, we have a government that points out that we must bring more and more immigrants from overseas if we

are to carry on efficiently as a nation and develop Australia as it should be developed and that our immigrants must be employed mainly in primary production. That being so, we should have more and more people upon the land. Even if the population of Australia had remained stationary from 1939 until the present time the position would not be satisfactory, but it has not done so. In 1939, the population was 7,077,586, whereas to-day it is over 9,090,000. The census taken in 1954 revealed a population of 9,090,000 people. So, there were 2,000,000 more people in this country at that date than there were in 1940.

I also asked the Minister for Primary Industry to state the number of rural holdings in 1939 and the number to-day. The Minister was unable to tell me the number in 1939 but he told me that in 1946 the number was 233,000. I am able to tell the Minister the figure for 1939 because I secured the information from the "Year-Book". In 1939 there were 253,000 farms in Australia whereas, to-day, there are 20,000 fewer farms in this country.

Mr. Mackinnon.—That number included areas of under ten acres on which somebody ran a cow or a sheep. Those areas have been absorbed in building settlements adjacent to metropolitan areas.

Mr. PETERS.—The honorable member for Corangamite (Mr. Mackinnon) points out that the number I have quoted includes small farms. I am an advocate for small farms. The fact is that in 1939, 253,000 farms were owned by farmers and in 1946 the number was 233,000, a diminution of 20,000. At the present time, I am informed, the number is 243,000; so, the number of farms has diminished by over 10,000 although £138,000,000 has been expended in order to settle on the land 7,000 more farmers, and, in addition, £10,000,000 has been granted to farmers in occupation of farms or to others who were securing farms and required only re-establishment agricultural loans. Nobody can be satisfied with that position from a national point of view.

I also asked the Minister for Primary Industry to state the number of people engaged in rural occupations in 1939. He informed me that in that year the number was 391,000, and in 1955 it was 357,000, a

reduction of 34,000, despite the fact that we have an increased population of well over 2,000,000 people. No one can deny that there is a lack of balance in the development of this country about which the Government should do something. The Commonwealth Government, of course, has the overriding authority. It provides the finance and those who pay the piper should have a fair chance of at least calling the tune.

I suggest to the Government that, in the interests of the development of this nation and to encourage more and more people to go on to the land, it should immediately call a conference of representatives of the State departments which deal with land settlement and Commonwealth authorities. Those representatives should investigate methods that will enable the completion of soldier settlement schemes and evolve some plan that will enable a greater settlement to take place throughout this country. Everybody knows that vast areas of land are not being used to their full productive capacity. From the east to the west of Victoria are vast areas of land with hardly a sheep or any other animal upon them. They are not being used to their full productive capacity. Any one travelling by train from Victoria to Canberra will see areas of land in New South Wales that, under existing conditions, are not being used to their full productive capacity.

With the advantages that science has brought to agriculture, those areas could be made considerably more productive than they are to-day. The development of those areas would make possible the settlement of more people on the land and absorb some of those who have come, or who may come, from overseas to help to build up this great nation. But nothing is done! Eleven years have passed since World War II. ended, but governments admit that they have not completed the scheme for the land settlement of ex-servicemen that was commenced after the war. I do not know how many of those who fought in Korea have applied for land, but their prospects are distant indeed.

In a country like Australia, the settlement of people on the land should be a major and urgent consideration. The Commonwealth says that the States should undertake this responsibility, and the States

say that the Commonwealth does not provide sufficient money for the purpose. Because that method of evading responsibility is adopted, the scheme of repatriation is not carried out. When I asked my question in 1953, I was told that 36,000 eligible, suitable people had applied to go on the land. If I were to ask the Minister today how many men wanted to go on the land, I would probably find that there is not the difference between the 7,000 that had been settled upon the land—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bowden).—Order! The honorable member's time has expired.

Mr. TURNBULL (Mallee) [10.4].—Before I come to the matters on which I desire to speak, I shall touch on one or two of the salient points made by the honorable member for Scullin (Mr. Peters). He said, very rightly, that war service land settlement has cost an enormous amount of money. I know that is to be deplored, but however much soldier settlement costs, when valuations of soldier settlement holdings are made, the men who have been put on the land must secure it at a productive value. It is not their fault that it has cost the Government a lot of money. Valuations are being made at the present time in a place that I represent, Robinvale, in Victoria, where we have a great new vine fruit settlement. Many of the settlers realize that the prices that are indicated are far too high for them to be able to make a good living.

Although these blocks have cost a lot of money, as the honorable member for Scullin has rightly pointed out, let us advocate in this Parliament, whenever we get the opportunity, that the valuations for the returned soldiers be kept as low as possible. If that is done, these men who have served this country will go on the land with a chance of making a good living and at the same time will be in a position to produce those goods that we now need so urgently—more urgently, perhaps, than ever before.

The other point I want to make may not be quite so pleasant to the honorable member for Scullin. He has pointed out that fewer people are on the land to-day than was the case some years ago. I have no reason whatever to doubt his figures, but I believe there is an explanation for the position. The explanation is that we have modern machinery now. We have

machinery which enables two men to harvest hundreds of bushels of wheat whereas previously many men were required to do the job. Hitherto, bags had to be sewn, and other jobs had to be done by hand which gave employment to a number of men. To-day, we have bulk handling of wheat, and few employees are required. That is the full answer to the honorable member for Scullin.

When I came into this Parliament first in 1946, just after the war, when Labour was in power, most of my correspondence was from people wanting tractors, harvester and all the modern equipment. With the new machinery, two or three times the amount of work can be done with half the number of men. That is all the better for this great continent of Australia because, as everybody knows, we have a labour shortage. The more labour we can save by using machinery, up to a point—and I admit with Labour supporters that it must be up to a point—the better for this country.

The honorable member for Scullin also stated that vast areas of land are not being used in this country.

Mr. Peters.—Not being used to their full productive capacity.

Mr. TURNBULL.—I accept the correction. I want to be right when I use the words of the honorable member for Scullin. His suggestion is quite right in relation to some places. He said that any one travelling to Canberra through Albury can see vast areas of paddocks without much stock on them. Much the same thing can be seen in my electorate, but there is such a thing as rotation of cropping. The best method is to sow a crop of wheat in one year, miss two years and then sow another crop. If a crop is sown every year on the same land, the returns will rapidly diminish. With the high price of sheep to-day, it does not pay a man to buy sheep and put them on the land, in certain circumstances, although it is an aid to the rotational system. That is the answer to the honorable member for Scullin. There are areas of land that could be brought into greater productivity, but a lot of the paddocks that the city dweller looks at and thinks are not used because he cannot see any stock or crops, are not really neglected. There are reasons for these things, and this is the place for

us to give those reasons when a speech is made, such as that made by the honorable member for Scullin, which is not wholly wrong but is only partly correct.

I want to thank the Federal Government for providing £300,000 for the dried vine fruit growers of Victoria, not as a loan, but as a grant. This Government gave it to them through the Victorian Government. For two years I have been pointing out in this chamber that the dried fruits industry needed all the assistance we could give it. In the dry seasons some years ago, the industry had good drying periods; but over the last four or five years, just when the harvest was ready, down came the rain. That was all right for wheat but it was no good for dried fruits. When the rain came, the crop was absolutely ruined. The grant of £300,000, and the price paid overseas for dried fruits, have given the industry new life. Although this year's crop is very poor, I hope brighter times are ahead for the dried fruits industry.

Before I say something that does not favour the Postmaster-General (Mr. Davidson), I want to state that I was very delighted, after my advocacy, that he was able to reinstate a news service from stations 3WV and 3WL in western Victoria. It will be remembered that I mentioned this matter in the House on a previous occasion. I said that on Monday morning we had an all-sports broadcast, and that we had no news service at all from Saturday night until Monday night. That has now been changed, and we have a six-minute western Victorian regional news service on Monday mornings from 3WV and 3WL, followed by four minutes of South Australian news. It was thought at one time that there would not be enough news to fill in the time, but that has not proved to be the case. The time is well filled, and the news is quite interesting. When we tune in to this news broadcast we get all the week-end news, and every one knows that it is during the week-end that interesting news items are gathered. I can assure honorable members that my constituents and others fully appreciate it.

I should like now to make some remarks about flood relief. I represent a district that includes 248 miles of Murray River frontage, and the people in my electorate have suffered severely. I had the privilege of submitting to the House, as its first

business in this sessional period, a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the disastrous effect of the flooding of the Murray River and its tributaries. In the short time at my disposal I could not traverse the matter in full detail, nor can I do so now. I have been in the affected area again recently. I went to Swan Hill last Saturday, and one of the results of the flood devastation that was particularly noticeable was the state of the roads. They are just deplorable. The floods have undermined the bitumen and the foundations, and have swept the road material away in many places. Much of the road foundations have been completely destroyed, and it will cost many thousands of pounds to put the roads back into their former condition. I have tried previously to persuade the Government to change the formula that is used for the distribution of receipts from petrol tax. If the whole of the money raised by petrol tax were distributed to the States. Western Australia and Queensland would receive far more than they could use. Every one knows that that is a fact. I suggest that the Government, which is retaining about 5d. of the tax collected on each gallon of petrol, should distribute some of that money, in the form of flood relief, to enable the roads that have been devastated by floods to be repaired. This is a fair proposition, because the tax has been collected from people who transport goods over the roads, and transport vehicles must be enabled to travel again over good roads in these districts if we are to market the products that grow there so prolifically, and if, as the honorable member for Scullin (Mr. Peters) hopes, we are to encourage more people to settle on the land in the future.

The Postmaster-General (Mr. Davidson) knows very well that when I said that I might speak of a matter that is less pleasing to him I referred to the post office at Robinvale, in Victoria. Robinvale is a very progressive soldier settlement area, where the settlers produce, mainly, dried vine fruits. The post office in this town is an old tin shed. It was illustrated in the Melbourne "Argus" some nine or ten months ago. The population of the town some little time ago was only 200 or 300, but now it has grown to about 3,000, and we still have the old tin shed for a post office. I am not complaining too bitterly about this matter,

because for some years I have been advocating that a new post office should be built at Robinvale, and the Postmaster-General has assured me that provision has been made for it in the Estimates. But it was also provided for in the Estimates last year. I am not sure whether it was in the Estimates for the year before that. However, it is included in the Estimates for this year, and I hope that a start will be made on it. Honorable members can imagine the conditions in a tin shed in northern Victoria in summer, not only for the employees of the department but also for the vastly increased population of the town and district, who have to use this public utility. I ask the Postmaster-General to endeavour to expedite this work as much as possible, so that the people of Robinvale may be provided with a post office building worthy of the town.

We have heard many honorable members speaking about railways and some speaking about the port at Portland, and I wish to say a few words on this subject in the short time that remains at my disposal. We have had general discussions on railways, and I believe, therefore, that I am entitled to speak on this matter. I have advocated on many occasions the construction of a railway from Hay to Ouyen. This is not only my idea; it has been advocated by people in northern Victoria and other places for 25 years or more. A railway line from Hay to Ouyen would provide a rail link from Adelaide to Sydney, obviating the necessity to send goods via Melbourne. This, incidentally, may be a reason why we have not been successful in obtaining this rail link, because the city octopus prefers to have the goods sent through Melbourne, and then through Bacchus Marsh and up a steep grade, where all the loads have to be reduced. If a line were constructed between Hay and Ouyen, and another from Patchewollock to Ouyen, we would have a link with the port at Portland. The honorable member for Ballarat (Mr. Erwin) has said that it is time we had a port at Portland, and also one at Eden. I can tell him that the one at Portland is almost an accomplished fact. The work has been going on for some years, and before many more years have passed there will be a first-class deep-water port at Portland. I am most interested in this matter, because I believe that we should send goods from the Mallee district to Portland, and receive

goods at that place from overseas and from other parts of Australia. They should then be transported into the north-western part of Victoria without going through Melbourne at all.

An amount of money has been provided in these Estimates for the reception of immigrants. I believe that a lot of immigrants who have been nominated for rural work never get to the country at all. They come to Melbourne and are then sent to the reception depots, and are offered good wages for jobs in the city. Their friends persuade them to stay in Melbourne, and their nominators may never see them. Those immigrants should disembark at places like Portland, from which they can be sent straight to their destinations in the country. They should not be exposed to the city lights immediately on their arrival in the country. Many of these immigrants have worked on intensive culture farms, which are little better than market gardens, and which are usually located adjacent to cities. They have been able to go to the cities every weekend, and in some cases every night. If we take them hundreds of miles from a city they will want to get back to it. In order to start them off on the right track, I suggest that reception depots should be located at places like Portland. The immigrants can then be sent to their jobs in the country, and they will be more likely to stay there.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN.—Order! The honorable member's time has expired.

Mr. MINOGUE (West Sydney) [10.19].—The group of Estimates that we are now discussing includes miscellaneous services, refunds of revenue and advance to the Treasurer. My complaint is that the Treasurer has given very few advances to the State of New South Wales, in which my electorate is situated. We are also considering bounties and subsidies, and war and repatriation services.

For the last eight weeks we have been discussing the budget and the Estimates for various departments. Most of our time has been taken up with a discussion of the Estimates for defence services. I take second place to no one in advocating the effective defence of Australia, but I believe it is wrong to spend £190,000,000 annually on defence in peace-time, while allowing thousands of our people to go hungry and

unhoused. When war breaks out no difficulty is encountered in finding money to finance our war effort. If the last world war had continued for another two years, we would have found sufficient money to conduct it.

The people whom I represent should be much better looked after. Every honorable member will agree with the Government that shipping is very important, but I have before me a letter from a worker at Cockatoo Dock showing just what the Government is doing about providing shipping. Potatoes have been lying on the wharfs in Tasmania, and hardly a ship has been available to bring them to Sydney, Melbourne and the other places where they are needed. At the same time, shipbuilders, including many men who were trained under the Chifley Labour Government's reconstruction training scheme after the war, are being put off at Australian dockyards at the rate of 100 a week. They are good tradesmen, but they are being told to look elsewhere for work. The letter gives first-hand information on what is happening in the dockyards. It reads—

In the week ending 2nd October, about eighty workers were dismissed at Cockatoo Dockyard, and the management has intimated that upwards of one hundred more will probably be dismissed in the next few weeks.

These sackings, following numerous others at Garden Island—

About 120 men were put off three weeks ago and a deputation came to Canberra to see the Minister for the Navy (Senator O'Sullivan), but with very little result. The letter continues—

Williamstown Dockyard, N.S.W. State Dockyard, Mort's Dock, Poole & Steel, and other firms, show an alarming situation in the Australian shipbuilding industry.

Hundreds of men are being sacked while ships for our coastal trade are being built in West Germany and Japan.

The Government is sacking men who fought for their country, but is giving contracts for shipbuilding to West Germany and Japan! That is typical of its attitude. The writer continues—

The Federal Government has stated and reiterated its intention of building and maintaining an efficient shipbuilding industry as a national necessity, but it would seem this is not being carried out.

As an employee of Cockatoo and one of your constituents, I request that you raise this matter in Parliament and have the dismissals at Cockatoo cancelled, and also that steps be taken immediately to ensure that the declared policy of the Government is put into effect.

Is it Government policy to throw skilled tradesmen into an unemployment pool? The honorable member for Mallee (Mr. Turnbull) told us that men were not needed in the country, where machinery did all the work, yet in the dockyards and shipbuilding industry of the cities men are being put off, as they were in the depression some years ago!

I turn now to the subject of war and repatriation services. This is the most insincere Government that has ever sat on the treasury bench. It has promised the soldiers that it will give them homes, but it will have gone to the polls, and been beaten, long before that promise can be honoured. Two years pass before an applicant for a war service home is authorized even to raise money with which to buy a home. The present Minister for Primary Industry (Mr. McMahon), when he was Minister for Social Services told honorable members that returned soldiers who wished to buy a home should be advised to go to a private bank or insurance company for finance.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN.—
Order! Housing does not come within the scope of the Estimates that are before the committee.

Mr. MINOGUE.—This Government, in telling ex-servicemen that they will have a house in eighteen months' or two years' time, is making a promise that it does not intend to fulfil. Indeed, it will not even be on the treasury bench in another two years. As has happened on previous occasions, it will be dismissed from office and will leave the mess for the incoming Labour government to clean up.

The Government has allowed the age pensioners to starve, ignoring the fact that in recent years the cost of living has gone up 200 per cent. In New South Wales alone, 60,000 people are still urgently in need of homes. All that this Government will do is to say that the State government must provide them. The present Minister for the Army (Mr. Cramer) and the honorable member for Sturt (Mr. Wilson) were going to remedy the housing position, but precisely nothing has been done about it. Fifteen shillings of every £1 that is collected in taxation in New South Wales goes to the federal Treasurer, who then tells

us that the State should be able to build the homes that it needs. About £14,000,000 was spent on housing last year.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN.—Order! The honorable member cannot discuss housing during a consideration of these Estimates.

Mr. MINOGUE.—Referring again to the shipping position, I would mention the plight of Lord Howe Island, which has been virtually boycotted by this Government. Though the Treasurer collects income and other taxes from the people of the island not one ship has been sent there in recent times. The Government ignores requests to visit the island and ascertain whether an airstrip could be built there. There are 215 people on the electoral roll, and 300 visit the island on holidays every week. These 500 people are at the mercy of a service using a flying boat which is about 25 years old. If it breaks down there is not another to take its place. The Government has ignored requests for the provision of shipping, and for the building of an airstrip at the island. The people of Lord Howe Island, like Robinson Crusoe, are marooned, yet this Government claims that it looks after the people.

The Government has done a great disservice to Australia, and to New South Wales in particular. The present Postmaster-General (Mr. Davidson), when appointed, gave excellent promise of supplying some of the services which have been unavailable for ten or twelve years, and we felt that we were well rid of his predecessor. The other day I brought up the case of a man who had been waiting for a telephone service for ten years. He came into my office last Monday. He was on his way to the general post office, to find out whether he would get a telephone. The Minister had sent me a letter saying that he would get a telephone within three months, but my constituent said, "I can't believe that. I don't think that I will ever get it". His application has been on the files ever since the honorable member for Dalley, Mr. O'Connor, represented that portion of the present electorate of West Sydney. It can be seen on the files.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN.—Order! The honorable member must not mention names in this debate.

Mr. MINOGUE.—The honorable member for East Sydney (Mr. Ward) has referred in this chamber to persons who have had applications for telephones with the Postal Department for six or seven years. Many persons who urgently need telephone connexions cannot get the service.

I give this Government credit for taking a step in the right direction when it provided a £1-for-£1 subsidy for the provision of homes for aged persons, but the money that is available is not being spent quickly enough. Why cannot the Government provide this money without strings to it? Persons who are interested in institutions for the aged have to go around with collection boxes trying to raise money so that they can obtain the benefit of a subsidy from the Government. At this time, when hospital facilities for aged persons are not available, and many are living in rooms or are sleeping in parks, the Government should make straight-out advances to institutions and organizations that are prepared to provide homes for the aged.

The Government provides a funeral benefit of £10. It is impossible to buy a plot of land for a grave for that amount, but the Government is prepared to allow the pioneers of Australia to be buried as paupers. If they had not subscribed to funds for funeral expenses, many aged persons would not be buried in the proper manner.

We have an organization at No. 7 Young-street, Sydney, where 3,000 meals are provided for aged pensioners in the last days of each fortnight before pension day. They flock to that centre. There are 30 beds where they may sleep without charge. This Government is always ready to give relief to other nations. Why cannot it give aid to its own people first?

Mr. DAVIDSON (Dawson—Postmaster-General) [10.34].—I do not desire to intrude unduly into these discussions, or to take too much of the time that is available to honorable members to discuss various departments in connexion with the Estimates that are before the committee. Nevertheless, it is desirable that I should make some comments on the opinions that have been expressed by honorable members in connexion with the work of the Postmaster-General's Department. The honorable member for Moore (Mr. Leslie)

referred to the operations of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, and complained that no provision had been made for the Australian Broadcasting Commission team to conduct an Argonauts session at the Perth show. The honorable member said he was aware that I, as Minister, had no control over the Australian Broadcasting Commission programmes. That is correct, but I can assure him that a representative of the Australian Broadcasting Commission is in the chamber, and I know that the remarks made by the honorable member for Moore will be noted by him.

The honorable member for Banks (Mr. Costa) spent all the time available to him in dealing with the possible introduction of the system called Tress. He credited me with having said that the system would improve telegraph services in Australia. I join issue with him on some of his statements, and that statement which he attributed to me is not correct. I believe I said that the system was being investigated because it appeared that it might improve the service that is available in Australia.

It will be seen from figures that I shall cite that some improvement in the handling of telegraphic traffic is highly desirable. The latest figures available, which relate to the financial year ended 30th June, 1955, indicate that the operating costs in the handling of telegraphic traffic represent 3s. 10d. of the total expenditure of 5s. 2d. on each telegram. In that period, the average revenue from telegrams was about 3s. 6d. so there is a large labour component in operation costs. Therefore, some method of reducing the handling costs is highly desirable if we are to put those services on a sound economic basis.

The system known as Tress, which the honorable member described as the telephone reperforator electric switching system, was designed in the United States of America with the object of improving the handling of telegraphic traffic. I believe that it could be fairly described, without going into technicalities, as a method of repeating telegrams over long distances through several repeating stations by automatic mechanical means instead of by manual handling. In that respect, it is akin to a system that was introduced in Australia by the Postmaster-General's Department for the handling of long-range

trunk-line telephone calls. That is the transit system, by which it is now possible to connect a call from Perth to a person in Brisbane without any manual handling in the stations in between.

The Tress system was developed, as the honorable member has said, in 1927, by the Western Union Company in the United States. It is correct that, so far, that is one of the few countries that are operating it. That does not mean that the service is not satisfactory. The Postmaster-General's Department has had the system under investigation for some time, because of the need for some method of reducing operational costs. The investigation was begun during the régime of my predecessor, the honorable member for Richmond (Mr. Anthony). Experiments have been conducted in Melbourne with a pilot plant, and inquiries have been made into the possible cost of installation. That is the position that has been reached so far in the investigations and, as yet, as I have said in this chamber previously, no firm determination to install the system has been reached. Two departmental officers were sent to the United States to investigate the system. They found that it was operating very well, and gave great promise of being worthy of introduction into Australia.

A lot of propaganda about the system has emanated from the secretary of the Third Division Postal Clerks and Telegraphists Union. He has written to most honorable members, I believe, but many of the statements that he has made are not in accordance with the facts as I have ascertained them for myself. The honorable member said that it was estimated that the introduction of this system would reduce the telegraphic staff by about 400. I understand that is correct; but that does not mean that there would be wholesale retrenchment in the department because if the system is to be introduced—I repeat that this has not yet been determined—it will be done gradually, over a period of years. Telegraphists who are now working and who may be displaced at the start will not be retrenched because there will be only a few involved and they will be absorbed in other sections of the department. The department has no intention whatsoever of allowing highly trained men who have served it for years to be put out on the streets. Any further reductions

in staffing which will be possible as the system is developed can be taken care of by reducing the annual intake into the department. Thus, retrenchment of those already employed will be obviated. When the investigations to which I have referred are completed, I assure the committee that the introduction or non-introduction of the Tress system will be treated as a matter of policy which will be determined not by the department but by the Government.

Before leaving this subject, let me correct a few of the mis-statements that have been made about the Tress system by those who are attempting to decry it. It has been stated that a certain gentleman, who is a telegraph supervisor in Brisbane and who has been to the United States of America, said on his return that he was prepared to report that it should not be installed. This gentleman has had discussions with some of the senior officers of the department, and he has stated that in his opinion—he has made a written statement to this effect—the Tress system being operated in the United States by the Western Union Telegraph Company appeared to be 100 per cent. satisfactory on the circuits operated by that company. He said he had discussions with officers of that company who had been with it for over 25 years and that they gave him to understand that the present system was more efficient than the old one. He claimed that the system he saw in operation was efficient, virtually foolproof and labour-saving. I remind the committee that this is the gentleman who is supposed to have come back from America and decried the system. Addressing delegates at the annual conference of the Australian Fourth Division Telegraphists Union and the Postal Workers Union, this same gentleman said he was amazed at the efficiency of Tress and was completely confident that competent engineers would be able to make the system work satisfactorily here.

At this stage, it is appropriate to quote statements made by various men, most of them union officials in the United States, who have had experience of this system. These statements are all more or less commendatory. For instance, the vice-president of the Philadelphia local area stated that the telegraph service was more efficient than ever before. He said that the reduction of the human error factor in this

method had been instrumental in providing greater accuracy in the transmission of public telegram traffic. Mr. J. Racz, district chairman of the local 146 C.T.U. in America, said that the Australian Telegraphists Union had been misinformed, and that the service had definitely been improved following the introduction of the reperforator system. Those statements have been made not by departmental officers but by union representatives in America who have had experience of the system.

It has been stated also that one of the reasons why this system is obviously not satisfactory is that it is in use only in the United States and that it is not used by postal authorities anywhere else in the world. The fact is that in Argentina there is an efficient teleprinter reperforator switching system in use on the public telegraph service, and the postal administrations in South Africa and Western Germany are doing exactly what Australia is doing—they are making investigations into the system with a view to adopting it if it proves to be satisfactory. In addition, the Indian administration is considering the matter and so also are the telegraph operating companies of Canada which are private companies. This is a relatively recently developed system, and that is the reason why it has not yet been adopted in other countries outside America. However, it is under urgent investigation by other countries, and the fact that it is not yet adopted by them does not mean that it is not satisfactory.

That is the position as I know it in connexion with this system. I have set out to give a factual statement in reply to what the honorable member for Banks has said. I repeat that as yet no determination has been given, but I anticipate that within the next few weeks a report will be made to me from the department. Whatever happens after that will depend upon my interpretation of that report and the attitude of the Government towards it as a policy matter.

The honorable member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. H. V. Johnson) referred to the proposed new post office at Geraldton for which he has been pressing me and my predecessor so strongly over a period of years. The department has stated quite frankly that it knows that there is need for a new post office at Geraldton. In fact, a quite comprehensive scheme was developed a couple

of years ago. The honorable member for Kalgoorlie gave the full history of the case and he was quite correct when he said that in the list of new buildings for this year no provision is made for the commencement of the work at Geraldton. I very much regret that fact, but the suggestion by the honorable member that it would seem to him from a perusal of the list of buildings that are to be commenced in Western Australia, that preference has been given to the construction of buildings in electorates represented by Government members is completely ill-founded. I do not think he really meant that very seriously. I have before me a list of the new works building programmes for all areas throughout Australia. It sets out the new buildings for the various States, and gives their order of priority. The fact is that because the department has not got all the money for new capital works that it would like to have this year—although in the circumstances generally it has been given a very generous allocation—some of the works on the Western Australian programme have had to be cut out, and at the moment the Geraldton proposal is not being undertaken. Far from that building being omitted from the list in order to make provision for others in electorates represented by honorable members on this side, the fact is that it was taken out of the proposed programme in order to make provision for proceeding with the work of improving the facilities in the main store at Perth.

Some little time ago, before I went to Perth, the federal secretary of the Australian Postal Workers Union saw me personally and wrote to me about the state of the main store in Perth and referred particularly to the conditions under which the men were working. He said that those conditions were very bad and that it appeared as though it might be two or three years before any improvement was made. He said that something should be done urgently because of the very bad working conditions in that store, and he asked me particularly to have a look at the store. I had a look at it, and I agree with his statement that the conditions are bad. In summer the building is extremely hot, and during the wet season there is a great deal of stagnant water underneath it. Finally, in my own opinion, there was a very grave fire risk

in this building which housed tens of thousands of pounds worth of departmental equipment. For those reasons, and after discussions with departmental officers, it has been decided this year to proceed with the third and fourth stages of that main store. This will vastly improve conditions for the postal workers and also make it a much better building for the storage of departmental equipment. I acknowledge that the honorable member for Kalgoorlie has made a case for a new post office at Geraldton, and as that building happens to be the next item on the list to be dealt with immediately we get more finance, I shall not forget his representations.

The honorable member for Kalgoorlie mentioned another matter which has also been referred to recently by other honorable members from Western Australia, particularly the honorable member for Canning (Mr. Hamilton). It relates to broadcasting reception in Western Australia. The Australian Broadcasting Control Board realizes that reception is not good in certain areas of Western Australia. It has been planning, for some time, to try to effect improvements in that State. This is not an easy task, because of the large sparsely populated areas. In actual fact, the national stations in the eastern States are required to cover a much greater number of people than the stations in Western Australia.

There are two ways in which the board hopes to improve reception in Western Australia. One is by increasing the power of the two stations at Perth which, I think, speaking from memory, are 6WF and 6WN; and also by increasing the power of station 6WA at Wagin. The power of this latter station is to be increased to 50,000 watts, and I understand that the work required for that purpose will proceed at some time in this financial year. I had the opportunity, with my friend, the honorable member for Canning (Mr. Hamilton), to see that station during my visit to the west. I believe, from representations made to me, that that increase in power will go a long way towards meeting the difficulties at present experienced in that area and towards Kalgoorlie.

The north-western part of Western Australia presents a much more difficult

problem, because it is not economically or technically feasible to service that area by the installation of medium frequency stations. It has to be serviced by short-wave stations, and we find that those stations are subject to a considerable amount of interference by stations operating in the Near East. For instance, there are times at which considerable interference is experienced from foreign stations, due to the confused situation regarding the use of channels in the high frequency band and to the fact that certain nations, including the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, frequently transmit on channels assigned to other countries. Although representations are made to these countries from time to time, and although some adjustments have been made, the position is still not satisfactory from that stand-point.

Furthermore, the short-wave transmitters in Perth, which operate on two kilowatts and 10 kilowatts, respectively, are required to broadcast to areas in which some of the overseas stations which are powered with 100 kilowatts are also operating. So I hope it will be appreciated that the problem will not be an easy one. Nevertheless, I can assure honorable members from Western Australia—they are all interested in this matter—that the board is fully cognisant of the difficulties of reception in that State and will continue to do its utmost to improve these conditions, consistent with the funds available to it.

Mr. BIRD (Batman) [10.54].—I desire to deal, under the Estimates for Miscellaneous Services, with the item, "Colombo plan—Technical assistance and economic development, £4,700,000". In recent months there has been some criticism of this plan. According to press reports, there was a division in the ranks of the Government about whether the amount should be reduced. Whether any credence should be given to those reports I do not know, but I am pleased that, if any pressure was exerted by a section of the Ministry to have the amount reduced, that pressure was resisted and that it is proposed that the same amount shall be spent on the Colombo plan in this financial year as was spent in the last financial year.

I think, in view of the controversy that has arisen, not only in the ranks of the Cabinet but also among certain newspapers, that it is necessary to re-state the aim of the Colombo plan. The Colombo plan is a co-operative enterprise under which several of the more developed countries of the world, including Australia, are assisting less developed countries in South and South-East Asia to raise their living standards. The attitude of the Australian Labour party to this project is quite unequivocal. I wish to read a resolution which was passed last year by the famous Hobart conference—the federal conference of the Labour party—

Mr. Haworth.—Which Labour party?

Mr. BIRD.—There is only one federal Labour party. Section 6 of the resolution of the conference reads as follows:—

The Labour party advocates generous assistance by Australia to Asian peoples suffering from poverty, disease and lack of educational facilities.

That statement of Labour party policy is unambiguous. Despite any statement that may be made to the contrary, that is our policy and, as our federal policy, this party is bound to support it.

The Colombo plan is a long-range plan. It is not necessarily of only twelve months' duration, and it is impossible to assess the result of the plan in the light of expenditure in one year. It is easy to say, "This sum of nearly £5,000,000 should be devoted to something else". I heard one member of the Australian Country party say that, whilst he believed in assisting people overseas, he considered that charity began at home. But I point out that charity does not end at home. I suggest that this is charity that could well be given by the Australian Government outside the confines of the Commonwealth of Australia itself.

At this stage, when the Colombo plan is being discussed and examined by certain interested parties, I consider that the underlying motive for Australia's support of the plan should once again be enunciated. Some people say that its purpose is to make Australia popular in the East. Others say that it is intended to buy Asian gratitude.

Then again, some people say that it is intended to stop the spread of communism in Asia. A fourth section of the community asserts that it is an assurance for ourselves and an attempt to guarantee us allies in the event of some future conflict. If these are reasons that actuate the Government in according support to the plan, we should not let it get out to the Asian people that they are the only reasons. A lot of the good work of the Colombo plan will be undone if the Asian people think that we are supporting the plan merely in order to achieve base, materialistic gains for this country. We shall delude ourselves dangerously if we think that the giving of aid for these reasons will gain for us permanent Asian friendship. We have to recognize, if we want to understand the Asian mind, that the Asian countries have developed an abnormal, if quite understandable, sensitivity to any signs of patronage on the part of Western Powers.

Under the provisions of the Colombo plan, Australia is providing material and technical assistance. I regret to say that that assistance has often been received by the recipients with distrust and suspicion. That is to be deplored, but the fact that some of the Asian people apparently mistrust our motives in giving them equipment and in providing technical assistance is no reason why we should reduce our aid. Nobody really believes that genuine friendship between countries will follow automatically the mere act of one country giving another some capital equipment or technical assistance. We must impress on the Asian people that Australia is genuinely sympathetic to their struggle and their resolve to create new standards of living. If we cannot impress that salient factor on the Asian people, the whole basis of the Colombo plan will fail as far as they are concerned. Unless we can secure their genuine friendship and unless they can be sure that we are actuated by humanitarian motives in relation to their problems, all the money that we can pour into the Colombo plan will be so much money wasted.

I think that the Government and the people of Australia are of the opinion—and the Labour party is certainly of the opinion—that we must help the people of

Asia, and recognize their problems which they are unable to combat. We can do our share, as a nation, to assist them in their long and upward struggle. While it is quite easy to support the plan from an emotional or sentimental angle, a sober appraisement of the achievement to date shows that although progress has been made in some directions there is still a tremendous amount to be achieved before any large-scale success can be reported. For example, the latest report of the consultative committee—the reports are issued annually and I always read them avidly when they are distributed to members—shows that in a number of countries there have been improvements in the fields of agriculture, irrigation, power, and community development programmes. Expenditure on health, education, housing, and other social services has continued to rise, despite financial stringency in a number of countries. The technical assistance scheme has prospered. Last year, for example, a record number of Asian trainees was sent abroad. It would not be a bad idea if we reciprocated the visits of Asian students to Australia by sending a number of Australian students to the Colombo plan countries. The universities of India and Indonesia would be only too pleased to receive a token number of Australian students who could take courses at those universities. I am certain that a visit by perhaps only 20 or 30 students would create a profound effect on the Eastern mind.

Public investment in the Colombo plan countries continues to increase. Last year, it reached £723,000,000 sterling, as compared with £540,000,000 sterling in the previous year. Unfortunately, private investment, which was intended to be a large factor in the Colombo plan has not risen to the extent to which we hoped it would rise. The United Nations research committee, which made a study of the needs of the Asian people in the investment field, stated that about £5,000,000,000 of new investment annually was required to jolt the Asian people out of their chronic poverty. Of course, that objective is far outside our capacity to attain, so it would therefore appear that for the time being, in the main, the Colombo plan must rely on public investment and that governmental assistance by the donor nations, including Australia, must be the main prop of the plan.

On the debit side, of which we must take particular notice, because it is of no use to delude ourselves that everything is rosy with the plan, the population in recipient countries is increasing at the rate of 10,000,000 persons a year, and this increase has complicated the position. When health and social services decrease the infant mortality rate in those countries, as they will in a very short space of time, the rate of population increase can be expected to accelerate. The expected reduction in this mortality rate will cause the rate of population increase to rise from 10,000,000 to probably 12,000,000 or 15,000,000 a year. This will more than balance the increase in food production in the area as a result of the plan. In other words, the tangible benefits of the plan are being wiped out by the unforeseen circumstance, if I may use the term, of a rapid increase in population. To-day, despite the operation of the plan, the tragic fact remains that Asians are eating less per head of population than they were eating before the war. That is tragic because we had hoped that as a result of the plan they would eat more; actually, because of the increase in population, they are eating less. Not only has the increase in population more or less cut across the basic purposes of the plan, but also Asia's booming population has added to the severity of the unemployment problem. Unfortunately, the main impact of the Colombo plan has been in the rural sector, and therefore there has been little effect upon the level of employment in recipient countries. Over the last four years India's industrial production has increased by 40 per cent. This is a considerable increase in a period of four years. Unfortunately, however, there has been no increase in employment in factories. Because of the introduction of technical processes, production has increased without any increase in the work force.

One of the great drawbacks of the plan—and it may well founder on this, unless a solution is found—is that the recipient countries suffer from fluctuating prices for their staple raw materials which are exported. For example, in the last year or so, the overseas price of rice fell, which had an adverse effect upon the economies of rice-exporting countries. The prices of hemp, copra, raw cotton and tin also fell. On the credit side, however, the export prices

of rubber, tea and jute were higher than formerly. So there is a fluctuating group of economies whose prosperity, to use the term in a very relative, negative sense, rises or falls in accordance with the world prices received for their exports.

Existing statistical data does not permit any exact and reliable measure of the real economic development under the plan, but the general picture revealed by the last report of the consultative committee shows that there has been but limited progress. This is rather disappointing, but nevertheless some progress must be reported. One fact stands out like a beacon on a headland. Despite the impact of the plan, Asian economies remain precariously poised between low productivity and high and rapidly increasing population. These economies will never be able to withstand the effects of a run of bad seasons or a mild world recession. In these circumstances, it is not unreasonable to expect that the Colombo plan in its next phase will have to provide for a high rate of economic aid. There must be a next phase, and further phases, because I should say that the plan will on present indications have to operate for at least 20 or 30 years if we wish to reach ultimately the basis which we originally sought to attain. There will have to be heavier investment in most countries, if productivity and national income are to be further increased. There is urgent need for new capital projects to accommodate the growing labour force. The rate of technical assistance will have to be stepped up if additional foreign aid is to be absorbed. It is not a bit of good giving aid in the form of either private or government investment to provide modern machines if the technical knowledge necessary for the operation of those machines is not available locally. I would say that the plan, despite the carping criticism that has been directed at it, is based upon humanitarian aims and it should be supported by all of the Australian people.

Mr. CLEAVER (Swan) [11.9].—I wish to direct my comments to Division No. 222, Department of Health, Item 3, "Commonwealth Council for National Fitness. £72,500". In the first place, I want to remind the committee, by a quick reference

to the history of the national fitness movement, of the outstanding value of this organization to the nation. The movement was established under the Commonwealth National Fitness Act of 1941. We should appreciate, therefore, that it came into being at a time when the nation was engaged in war. The attention of the Commonwealth was, no doubt, centred on the need to build the youth of Australia into young men and women who were as fit as it was possible for them to be, so that from that valuable source the nation might draw people suited to the needs of the times. The National Fitness Act was passed in 1941, and the vote provided by the Commonwealth naturally was experimental; but within three years it was increased substantially to £72,500. That was the amount of the vote in 1944. I make the point that, from 1944 to the present time, there has been no addition to the vote. So far as I can see, this vote, with the exception of the National Service Training Scheme and several grants to certain organizations, is the only direct contribution to the welfare of the youth of the nation.

I have spoken previously in this chamber about the responsibility of the Commonwealth to consider the needs of our youth. A government that fails to recognize that young men and women need to be given every encouragement surely overlooks one of its fundamental tasks. Is it possible to justify the attitude, on the part of a federal government, that this vote need not be increased and that the States should do more, either through their education departments or by way of grants to the national fitness organization? Can we justify leaving this field of activity to the States alone? Is it not true that, since the National Fitness Act emanated from the National Parliament here at Canberra, other nationally based plans might well be adopted? I believe that it is. At the present time, the Government of Victoria is concerned—and rightly so—with the problem of vandalism. If honorable members have read their newspapers during the last few days, they will share the concern of that government. A grant of £20,000 to train youth leaders is being considered by the Victorian Parliament in connexion with the Youth Organizations Assistance Bill. I affirm that there is no need for a new committee to be

appointed in Victoria, or elsewhere, to provide assistance of this kind for the youth of Australia. In each State, the national fitness organization has an associated youth committee which acts as an extremely valuable co-ordinating body with voluntary youth organizations. Victoria, like other States, has a most efficient national fitness organization. Only last Friday evening, I understand that the honorable member for Wills (Mr. Bryant) was invited to attend the re-opening of a youth centre in the Melbourne suburb of Brunswick, and, on Monday last, it was my privilege to be taken, as a visitor, to see the same centre at which, on Saturday, no less than 250 young people had been in attendance. I was delighted to see this practical approach towards helping the young men and women of what I may, perhaps, describe as a very difficult district, by providing training in hobbies such as photography and woodwork, and in a variety of other ways, to employ their time sensibly and usefully.

The vote of £72,500, to which I have referred, has been allocated this year, as in recent years, as follows:—The various State councils will absorb £36,954; the State education departments will receive grants totalling £17,000; the universities will receive £12,400; the central administrative office here in Canberra will require £3,396; and the balance of £2,750 has been allocated for work within the Australian Capital Territory. It is significant that there is a relationship, in this allocation, to educational institutions of the States, in the form of State education departments and universities. I have every respect for the Minister for Health (Dr. Donald Cameron) and for the national fitness officer in charge of this important division, but I pose the question whether the National Fitness Council is well placed strategically under the administration of the Minister for Health and the Department of Health. Because its operations are related almost entirely to the field of youth, I claim that it could be better administered by the Commonwealth Office of Education. If that were so, surely matters pertaining to the activities of youth would receive keener scrutiny and wider understanding.

If we turn to the last printed report of the National Fitness Council, we find, at

page 5, a reference to Australian representation at international youth conferences, and in that connexion I want to make a very important point. The committee will appreciate that Australian representation at international youth conferences is dealt with in the report of a council which is administered by the Department of Health. If honorable members have an opportunity to look carefully at this section of the report, they will see that this matter has given concern to national fitness authorities for some years, particularly the associated youth committees which act as the co-ordinating bodies for the major voluntary youth organizations in each State. The report states that the lack of a national youth committee has prevented Australia from being affiliated with the international youth organization known as the World Assembly of Youth, with which other countries of the West, and of the British Commonwealth, are affiliated. The report states that the second general assembly of the World Assembly of Youth was held in Singapore in August, 1954, and that Australia was invited to send delegates. Through the Commonwealth Office of Education and the national fitness organization, two observers were nominated. Only two observers were sent because there were no other organizations from which direct representatives of the youth of this country could be sent. These two observers, on their return to Australia, reported that their participation in the meeting was valuable, but that it was considerably hampered by lack of proper status as fully accredited delegates of Australia. I think we must recognize that, because of the relationship of national fitness to education, the Commonwealth Office of Education is the most appropriate body to handle national fitness matters.

The report of the national fitness organization convinces one of the value of this body and indicates something of its achievements. At the same time, it underlines the inadequacy of the vote, which, as I have said, has remained unaltered since 1944. The report, in referring to the achievements of the organization, mentions the continuing use of national fitness camps for leadership training, and by youth organizations. It directs attention to the need to promote physical recreation. The

number of school camps and hostels has increased in all States. In addition, there has been splendid co-ordination of youth activities by each of the State councils. To support my claim concerning the inadequacy of the vote, I invite attention to the problems occasioned by shortage of finance. The various State governments have been called upon to supplement their grants substantially because last year this Parliament decided that the vote of £72,500 could not be increased. New South Wales is now providing approximately £72,000, compared with the Commonwealth grant, under this vote, of £12,000. The report clearly indicates that the grants to universities which undertake physical education courses are inadequate, as are the grants for State centres and youth head-quarters. Bursaries for specialist training are also short of requirements. I find, with interest, that the Tasmanian bursary has not been taken up because it is only £400 per annum. Apparently, it is not attractive to any one who otherwise would be glad of bursary assistance. The amount of £484 granted to each State for books, films, records, and so on, has been wholly expended, indicating that a larger amount could be usefully employed.

In conclusion, I wish to recommend, first, the transfer of the National Fitness Division from the administration of the Department of Health to that of the Commonwealth Office of Education. Secondly, that the vote of £72,500 for national fitness should be increased, at the first opportunity, to at least £150,000. I suggest, further, that grants to youth organizations should be substantially increased. The grants of £3,000 in the State of New South Wales and of £600 in my own State of Western Australia represent only a very small proportion of the funds needed to provide equipment and facilities for the training of young people. I further recommend greater activity among underprivileged children, and the children of immigrants and aborigines, so that camps may be organized and free equipment and even uniforms may be issued to boy scouts, girl guides, and members of other organizations of that kind.

My final recommendation is that youth head-quarters should be set up in every capital city. Surely this country warrants central head-quarters for national fitness organizations to provide council and committee rooms, theatrettes and central youth group offices. These are essential in a country such as Australia, which has many privileges and opportunities available to train young men and women. I urge the Government to recognize the need for making special grants, even greater than the figures I have recommended, so that there may rise in every capital city of the Commonwealth youth head-quarters in which a work second to none may be done.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.23 p.m.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS.

The following answers to questions were circulated:—

Commonwealth Motor Transport.

Mr. Brimblecombe asked the Minister for Supply, upon notice—

1. How many motor cars, utilities, and trucks, respectively, are owned and operated by the Commonwealth in each of the States and territories?
2. What is the total cost of (a) operation and (b) upkeep and maintenance?
3. What is the cost incurred annually for the hire of vehicles for departmental purposes from (a) taxi owners and (b) owners of private vehicles?
4. What amount per mile is allowed to public servants for the use of their own vehicles for departmental purposes?

Mr. Menzies.—Since the reply to the questions involves obtaining information from all government departments the Minister for Supply has requested that my department undertake this survey. The honorable member will appreciate that the obtaining of the necessary information will take some time, but I assure him that his questions will be answered as soon as possible.

Army Public Relations Staff.

Mr. Ward asked the Minister for the Army, upon notice—

1. Does the Army have any personnel engaged upon public relations work?
2. If so, how many are so employed, what is their rank, and pay, and what are their precise duties?

Mr. Cramer.—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follows:—

1. Yes.
2. The Army public relations staff is organized as follows:—

Army Head-quarters.—Director of Public Relations (Civil), one; major, one; captain, one; journalist (civil) (temporary), one; clerks (civil), two; typist (civil), one.

Commands.—On Head-quarters, Eastern and Southern Commands.—Lieutenant-colonel, one; warrant officer, Class 2, photographer, one; clerk (civil), one. On Head-quarters, Northern Command.—Major, one; warrant officer, class 2, photographer, one; clerk (civil) (part-time), one. On Head-quarters, Central, Western and Tasmania Commands.—Captain, one.

In each command, there are Citizen Military Forces public relations officers on part-time duty with major formations

Malaya.—Australian Army Force: Captain, one; warrant officer, class 2, photographer, one; warrant officer, class 2, reporter-clerk, one; sergeant, clerk, one.

Rates of Pay.—Director—Commonwealth Public Service salary range £1,888-£2,053), which is the equivalent of the salary of an A1 journalist; journalist (civil), £29 12s. a week; commissioned officers, in accordance with the Regular Army pay code applicable to their rank ranging from £5 7s. a day for a lieutenant-colonel to £3 4s. 7d. a day for a captain; warrant officer, class 2, £2 11s. 11d. a day; sergeant, £2 5s. 8d. a day.

Marriage and other allowances are additional and are paid where appropriate.

Duties.—The Directorate of Public Relations performs the following functions:—

- (a) By direction of the Military Board—Supervision of Army publicity within the Commonwealth and overseas, including policy direction and administration of the Public Relations Service in Malaya; planning and supervision of expenditure of an annual publicity vote; appointment and training of public relations officers in publicity techniques and planning and preparation of the Army publicity organization for mobilization; production of publicity and recruiting films and radio broadcast features; co-ordination of public relations recruiting publicity with the Directorate of Recruiting; liaison with press, broadcasting and newsreels.

press inquiries and visits to Army establishments, camps, ceremonials; preparation and distribution of press statements and publicity photographs, blocks, and stereos to metropolitan and country newspapers; internal public relations within the Army.

- (b) Ministerial publicity functions—General press and radio publicity covering Army and departmental activities on a higher, or policy level; interpretation through general publicity media of government policy concerning the Army; preparation, release and distribution of principal ministerial statements.

Transfer of Army Officers.

Mr. Ward asked the Minister for the Army, upon notice—

How many Army officers have been seconded to—(a) the Department of External Affairs, and (b) other departments in each of the last five years?

Mr. Cramer.—The answer to the honorable member's question is as follows:—

Army officers who have been seconded for duty with other departments in each year since 1st January, 1951, number—

- (a) Department of External Affairs.—1951, 8; 1952, 2; 1953, 2; 1954, 2; 1955, 2; 1956, 5.
- (b) Other Commonwealth departments.—1951, 30; 1952, 31; 1953, 30; 1954, 20; 1955, 27; 1956, 10.

Australian Army Camps.

Mr. Luchetti asked the Minister for the Army, upon notice—

1. What was the number of Army camps in use and under the control of the Army at the end of World War II.?

2. How many camps are now in use?

3. What is the number of camps under the control of the Army not being used for Army purposes?

4. How many camps were sold or leased by the Department of the Army?

5. What was the total cost of the construction of all Army camps, and what has been realized from the sale of Army camps and establishments?

Mr. Cramer.—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follows:—

1. Eighty-three, each of which provided accommodation for more than 1,000 personnel. There were also numerous smaller temporary transit camps established at various strategic locations providing accommodation for lesser numbers.

2. Twenty-three wholly and three partly used (Wacol, Queensland; Woodside, South Australia; and Wallgrove, New South Wales).

3. The number of camps which are nominally under Army control, in that the sites were acquired for my department's use, and which are now occupied on a permissive occupancy basis by other Commonwealth departments is: Three wholly and three partly. There are no Army personnel in these camps wholly occupied by other departments and responsibility for repairs and maintenance and general administration rests with the occupying department, or is shared proportionately where camps are jointly occupied.

4. Fifty-four camps, each of which provided accommodation for more than 1,000 personnel, have been disposed of by my department in that control thereof has been passed to the appropriate Commonwealth authority, i.e. the Commonwealth Disposals Commission, which functioned until July, 1949, and since that date the Department of the Interior, in which the custody of all Commonwealth property is vested.

5. (a) Construction costs.—The total cost of the construction of all Army camps is not known. Camps were constructed by many agencies during the war—generally under conditions of extreme urgency. (b) Realizations from disposals.—It is regretted the information desired is not available within my department. Since the war the Commonwealth Disposals Commission (until July, 1949) and then the Department of the Interior have arranged the disposal of Army assets and any moneys obtained have been paid into Consolidated Revenue. To obtain the desired information from the various authorities concerned would require detailed research involving many man hours. It is regretted that staff are not available for the task.

Air Mail Payments.

Mr. Bryant asked the Postmaster-General, upon notice—

1. What airlines have received payments for the carriage of internal air mails during the years 1953-54, 1954-55 and 1955-56?

2. What amounts have been paid in each case?

3. On what basis is the payment computed?

4. When was this basis first decided, and how often is it reviewed?

Mr. Davidson.—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follows:—

1 and 2. Please see statement below.

3. In respect of most of the mail carried by air, the rates of payment are computed on a weight-distance basis and these rates range from .05d. per pound mile for mail carried on mail routes to .11d. per pound mile for mail conveyed on minor routes where the traffic is comparatively small. Australian National Airways and Trans-Australia Airlines receive payment based on the rate of .05d. per pound mile. In a few instances where the carriage is mostly in outback areas, the carrier receives a lump-sum payment which is not directly related to the volume of mail carried.

4. The dates of inception of the rates currently paid to the various carriers vary and the rates are reviewed when desired by the Government or the particular air carrier.

PARTICULARS OF THE MAIL PAYMENTS MADE TO DOMESTIC AIR CARRIERS DURING THE YEARS 1953-54, 1954-55 AND 1955-56.

Operator.	Mail Payments.			Current basis of payment and date of inception.
	1953-54.	1954-55.	1955-56.	
Trans-Australia Airlines	£ 305,641	£ 340,680	£ 273,186	.05d. per lb. mile from 1st September, 1952 on main routes plus payment for *special services
Australian National Airways	222,992	202,875	244,670	.05d. per lb. mile from 1st September, 1952 on main routes plus payment for *special services
Qantas	10,614	12,835	14,559	.05d. per lb. mile from 1st September, 1952
Ansett's..	3,523	2,225	3,450	Freight rates plus delivery charge from 11th July, 1951
MacRobertson-Miller Aviation Co. Airlines (W.A.) Ltd.	48,211 93,671	55,281 98,692	Merged as MacRobertson-Miller Airlines as from 1st July, 1955
MacRobertson-Miller Airlines	180,000	Annual amount determined from year to year
Guinea Airways	6,681	6,170	5,992	.08d. per lb. mile from 1st July, 1950
Connellan Airways	51,488	51,575	56,125	Annual amount determined from year to year
Butler Air Transport	10,826	5,115	5,875	Freight rates plus delivery charge from 1st July, 1955. Previously .11d. per lb. mile plus subsidy
East-West Airlines	442	450	330	.11d. per lb. mile from 1st April, 1956
Queensland Airlines	3,017	3,060	3,599	Previously £8 10s. per week
Townsville Country Airways	67911d. per lb. mile from 1st November, 1949
	756,785	778,958	787,746	Was .11d. per lb. mile

* Includes unsurcharged mails carried in emergencies at .025d. lb./mile and developmental services such as—Trans-Australia Airlines—Channel country and gulf country (Queensland) services; Australian National Airways—Bass Strait Islands and gulf country (Queensland) services.

Telephone Services.

Mr. Whitlam asked the Postmaster-General, upon notice—

1. How many applications for telephones are outstanding within the unit-fee area of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart and Newcastle?

2. What is the radius of the unit-fee area from the general post office in each of these cities?

Mr. Davidson.—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follows:—

1. Sydney 30,535; Melbourne, 23,667; Brisbane, 104; Adelaide, 7,284 Perth, 5,155; Hobart, 446; Newcastle, 1,299. The relatively small number of outstanding applications in Brisbane is due mainly to the large amount of telephone plant provided for the armed forces in the war period which was available for normal purposes when hostilities ceased, the lower rate of demand for services than in other capital cities and the availability of labour and building materials during post-war years when there was generally an acute shortage in other capitals. These factors have been taken into account when preparing the overall programme of capital works.

2. Sydney and Melbourne, 15 miles. Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart and Newcastle, 10 miles.

Postal Buildings in Lang Electorate.

Mr. Stewart asked the Postmaster-General, upon notice—

1. What repairs, renovations or extensions are proposed for post offices and telephone exchanges in the electoral division of Lang during the year 1956-57?

2. Is it intended to provide any new buildings?

3. Are the existing post offices and telephone exchanges considered to be adequate to serve the needs of the district?

Mr. Davidson.—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follows:—

1. Repairs and maintenance to the Lakemba post office and telephone exchange have just been completed. The Bankstown and Kingsgrove post offices are to be painted externally.

2. No.

3. Most of the post offices and exchanges in the Lang electorate are providing reasonably adequate service at present. Although conditions at some of them could be improved, priority must be given to centres where the needs are much more urgent. Bankstown is the least satisfactory office in the area and a proposal for the extension of the building is listed on the department's three-year building programme. The work will be undertaken as soon as the circumstances permit.

Greenacre Post Office.

Mr. Stewart asked the Postmaster-General, upon notice—

1. When was work commenced on the official post office at Greenacre?
2. When is it estimated the work will be completed?
3. What was the estimated cost of the building?

4. Will this estimate be exceeded; if so, by how much?

Mr. Davidson.—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follows:—

1. Commenced 16th February, 1956.
2. January, 1957.
3. £21,571.
4. No. The actual cost is expected to be about £900 less than the estimate.