

The Hon. W. KENDELL.—That is a great country, capable of being developed, but where you see one train load of manufactured articles going to Gippsland, you see ten going north. The development of Gippsland runs on different lines.

The Hon. G. M. DAVIS.—It is a great province.

The Hon. W. KENDELL.—I do not deny that, and perhaps some day it may be equal to Denmark. I want to get an assurance from the Government that they will not put any obstacle in the way of private enterprise developing the water power in the north. I am quite satisfied that the Morwell scheme will go through, because honourable members are in favour of it. But I think we are a bit premature in going on such scanty information. I want the Government to admit that it is possible for the other scheme to be developed concurrently with this, and that they will have no objection to private enterprise being used. This is what Mr. Mack said in his report on the 12th of November last:—

In my 1908 report I also showed how, just as there was a proper time for proceeding with the Morwell scheme, so, in my opinion, at a later date the water power resources of the State ought to be developed. The increasing cost of fuel, and the time that has elapsed since 1908, makes this matter really urgent. There is no reason for delaying the Morwell scheme, but rather the reverse, as the works for any water power scheme take considerably longer to carry out than for a coal-field power station; and it is clear that, unless the Morwell scheme can be proceeded with at once, some other steps will have to be taken to deal with the demand two or three years hence. Specifications for the plant have not yet been prepared, and, in my opinion, it will take at least two years from the placing of contracts before Melbourne will obtain a supply from the Morwell power station.

He says it will take longer to develop a water power scheme than the brown coal scheme. If we are going to let the northern districts have any show of retaining their industries and of increasing them, we should make some provision to start as soon as possible with the water power, as well as the brown coal, scheme. If the Government are not prepared to go into the water power scheme, they should allow private enterprise to do so. Then they will have nothing to do with the preparation of plans and estimates. All that they will require to do will be to thoroughly safeguard the interests of the State in any lease that may be granted

to private enterprise. If we do that the taxpayers and the Government will have nothing to lose. There will be nothing to be regretted, and, possibly, the scheme will be in operation in the course of a few years. I leave the matter now in the hands of the House, but I should like the Government to give me an assurance that they will reconsider the matter of granting permission to private enterprise to develop water power schemes. The demands in the northern districts and towns for a supply of electricity at a reasonable rate will grow and become immense. I thank honourable members for the good hearing they have given me, and I trust that the Government will give me an assurance on the lines I have indicated.

The Hon. W. P. CROCKETT.—I have listened with considerable interest to the speeches in favour of this proposition and against it, and I may say that I appreciate the enthusiasm shown by those who are supporting the Bill. I would have a somewhat similar feeling to theirs if the proposal were one to spend £3,000,000 or £4,000,000 on the development of the primary industries of this country. As a layman, I do not intend to criticise the Morwell scheme, because I know that the opinion of a layman carries no weight against that of expert engineers; but, as a practical man, I do say that, before the Government enter upon this scheme, they should fully investigate the Kiewa scheme. They should get all the data possible with regard to that proposition. The conservation of water will bring about an asset value that will easily cover the cost of its conservation. Therefore, if it would be possible to conserve the water and use it for generating the necessary power, and also for developing the country, it would be worth while having a little delay, in order that we might make absolutely certain with regard to this proposition. However, it is not on account of the character of the Morwell scheme alone that I take exception to this move. I have no doubt that there are great possibilities of development under it; but, in my opinion, the time for it is not ripe. I think that the Government ought to be far more concerned about the development of the primary industries of the country. I certainly think that if this scheme is carried

out, it will attract outside industries to the city. It is going to have that centralizing effect that all big undertakings around cities have. We have barren spaces in the country, and plenty of men anxious to get on to the land, but development is required. I am up against the policy of the Government, inasmuch as they are not concerning themselves sufficiently as to the matter that will be of the most importance in the future—the settlement of the land. I think that the money it is proposed to spend on the Morwell scheme, instead of being thrown into secondary industries, ought to be spent on primary industries, because it is the primary industries that are the great stay in our country's days of trial. My argument is that if this amount of £3,000,000 or £4,000,000 were spent in developing the resources of the country and filling up the empty spaces, the return in wealth to the whole community would be ten times what the scheme now before us will return in connexion with secondary industries; because, when all is said and done, the secondary industries are entirely dependent upon the wealth and progress of the country. I think the Government ought to be far more concerned than they are about the great vacant spaces and the small population throughout the country. During the debate one honorable member interjected, "What is £3,000,000?" I was a little surprised to think that any honorable member should look with such princely indifference on the expenditure of such a large sum of money, because the various Departments that I have approached, in order to try to get some money for the development of certain primary interests in the country, have always acted in the most niggardly way. The Commissioners of the Mildura Irrigation Trust have approached the Government in regard to getting loans to enable them to settle big areas in the district. Those areas would be wealth producing, and we had engineers' reports showing that the scheme was a satisfactory one from an interest and sinking fund stand-point, and that the expenditure was justified. We never could get the Government to see eye to eye with us and to advance the money necessary to do the work. It is because of the neglect of the Government to forward country interests that I am against

*Hon. W. P. Crockett.*

the proposal in the Bill. The Government ought to develop the country, and, once they have a developed and wealthy country, they will have the means to develop secondary industries. Those industries do not require the encouragement that primary industries do.

The Hon. W. R. CLARKE.—Are not the Government spending £10,000,000 on the primary industries?

The Hon. W. P. CROCKETT.—If they are doing that they are following such slow methods that I have seen no results from them. The Government make promises to us, and even then we have to come down and rap at the back doors of the Departments in order to get the promises fulfilled.

The PRESIDENT.—The honorable member is getting away from the subject-matter of the Bill.

The Hon. W. P. CROCKETT.—I must oppose the Bill from a policy point of view, because of the fact that I think by it the Government are extending consideration to interests that should be secondary.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—If the debate on this Bill has served no other good purpose, it has, at any rate, led to the discovery of a large number of electrical experts. From a layman's point of view, I think it is almost futile to discuss the whole of the details of this measure. We know that the Morwell proposition is not a new one, and, as a member of a previous Government, I had the privilege of being behind the scenes when the investigations were going on. I know something of the investigations Mr. Baillieu referred to, in which he and other people engaged in large enterprises were interested; and I know that Mr. Baillieu was good enough to place the whole of the information obtained at the disposal of the Government. A committee of experts was then appointed to inquire into the Morwell scheme, and they furnished a very encouraging report, which led to the Government doing the only thing that they could do under the circumstances, and that was to introduce a Bill last session authorizing the appointment of Electricity Commissioners. We know what huge deposits of brown coal there are at Morwell, and, notwithstanding what has been said about private enterprise, and the fact that I do