HOUSE OF LORDS

Thursday, 18th March, 1965

The House met at three of the clock (*Prayers having been read earlier at the Judicial Sitting by the Lord Bishop of Lincoln*), The LORD CHANCELLOR on the Woolsack.

NORFOLK RAIL CLOSURES AND COMPENSATION TO BUS COMPANY

LORD WISE: My Lords, I beg leave to ask the first Question which stands in my name on the Order Paper.

[The Question was as follows:

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether an estimate can be given as to the amount of the annual compensation, if any, which may fall to be paid to the Eastern Counties Bus Company by reason of the alteration of their road services due to the closing of railway stations and lines in Norfolk by the British Railways Board.]

THE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT (LORD LINDGREN): My Lords, payments by the Board to another party come within the sphere of management matters, and I am not therefore in a position to give an estimate.

LORD WISE: My Lords, while thanking my noble friend for that reply, may I ask, if compensation should be paid, whether he can state the basis of such compensation? Will it be present-day figures or figures which were given before the rail closures? Is it not possible to give some idea of what the compensation is likely to be?

LORD LINDGREN: My Lords, I am afraid that I could not give the basis for the compensation. That is a matter of negotiation between the Railways Board and the bus company. But the Railways Board stated in their 1963 Report that the total amount of compensation they paid during 1963 to bus companies was £92,600. As to the particular lines in which my noble friend appears to be interested, for Dereham—Wells-next-the-Sea the compensation is £6,000 per annum, and for North Walsham—Mundesly-on-Sea it is £2,200 per annum.

RAIL FARE INCREASES IN NORFOLK

LORD WISE: My Lords, I beg leave to ask the second Question which stands in my name on the Order Paper.

[The Question was as follows:

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they were consulted before the recent increase of day rail fares in mid-Norfolk was imposed by the British Railways Board; and, if not, whether strong representation will be made to the Board that increasing fares by amounts up to 40 per cent. and more in the case of a Saturday excursion train is not in accordance with national policy and should be revised as it makes such rail travelling prohibitive to many potential passengers in this country area.]

LORD LINDGREN: My Lords, the Railways Board consult my right honourable friend before making major changes in fares. The increases to which the noble Lord refers are in excursion and other concessionary fares, and we were not consulted about them. The Board are responsible for fixing fares, and it would be inappropriate for my right honourable friend to intervene.

LORD WISE: My Lords, while thanking my noble friend for that reply, I would ask whether I am to understand that in some areas the Government are consulted in regard to proposals to increase fares, but that in country areas no such consultation takes place? If that is so, is it not apparent that the railway passengers in country areas are at a disadvantage compared to those in the Metropolis and elsewhere; and if such consultation does not take place, is it not possible to devise means whereby it should?

LORD LINDGREN: My Lords, so far as the London area is concerned, of course, there is the Transport Tribunal, to whom application must be made by the Railways Board or by London Transport when it is proposed to increase fares within the London area. But under the Transport Act, 1962, the rest of the

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country was completely freed from any requirement on the Railways Board to go to arbitration or to any tribunal, and the Board are completely free to assess their fares in the way they think necessary.

LORD WISE: My Lords, should I be right in saying that here is a national monopoly, which is inflicting hardship upon one section of the community? And should that not be put right?

LORD LINDGREN: My Lords, unfortunately—though perhaps I ought not to say "unfortunately"—this is not a monopoly, and competition from buses is causing the problem of falling railway revenue. The Board have a difficult job. They have to face a £30 million annual increase in their costs, arising from a wages award. They are meeting two-thirds of this cost by increased efficiency and productivity, and only one-third falls to be met by increased fares and freight charges.

SOUTH AFRICA: UNITED NATIONS REPORT

3.5 p.m.

THE EARL OF DUNDEE: My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question which stands in my name on the Order Paper.

[The Question was as follows:

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will publish, in a form obtainable by Members of this House from the Printed Paper Office, the impending report of the Expert Committee of the Security Council of the United Nations appointed to consider measures against the Republic of South Africa, and whether Her Majesty's Government have yet been informed of the contents of this report.]

THE PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS (LORD WALSTON): My Lords, before answering this Question, may I be allowed to say how pleased we are to see the noble Lord the Leader of the Opposition back in his place, and to say how much we look forward to having before long the benefit of all he has learned in his travels in foreign parts?

In answer to the Question of the noble Earl, it is true that the Report has not yet been received by Her Majesty's Government from the United Nations. Copies will be made available in the Library of this House in the normal way as soon as it has been received. Her Majesty's Government participated fully in the work of the expert Committee and are therefore aware of the contents of the Report.

THE EARL OF DUNDEE: My Lords, I thank the noble Lord for his Answer. Is he aware that it is always rather difficult for ordinary people to get hold of United Nations documents? And I wonder if he could say how many copies will be put in the Library, because, although it is unnecessary to print all publications of this kind, in this particular question of sanctions against South Africa, it is specially important that Members of Parliament should be thoroughly informed of what is happening and of what is being said by all the different delegates in the United Nations, so that we may not be confronted later on with some situation without being thoroughly familiar with the background?

LORD WALSTON: My Lords, I am glad to say that I could not agree more with the noble Earl when he said that it was important for Members of Parliament in both Houses to be fully informed on all these matters, and I shall certainly see that there are enough copies put in the Library to satisfy all reasonable needs.

LORD FRASER OF LONSDALE: My Lords, is the noble Lord aware that there are two sides to every question in this world and that it will be greatly welcome if the best possible publicity is given to this Report, so that both Houses of Parliament may be well informed by the time they come to debate this matter?

LORD WALSTON: My Lords, I think that the noble Lord is perhaps being over-optimistic when he speaks of their being two sides to this question. I think there are many more than two sides to this. But I repeat the assurance I have given to the noble Earl, that, so far as the Government are concerned in making the Report available, there will be ample copies.

LORD CARRINGTON: My Lords, may I thank the noble Lord for his courteous remarks about myself, and may

I ask him whether the noble Lord, Lord Caradon, was our representative on this Committee, or whether it was someone else?

LORD WALSTON: No, my Lords, it was an expert Committee, and while I am not suggesting that my noble friend is not an expert in many spheres, he was not, in fact, the expert on this Committee.

THE EARL OF DUNDEE: My Lords, is the noble Lord aware—I am sure he is—that there was, in advance of this Report, a Press communiqué about a fortnight ago giving two resolutions which were rejected and one which was accepted by the Committee. While not wishing to draw any conclusion before the Report is published, it appears from this Press communiqué that some countries recognise that the burden of sanctions would fall almost wholly, or at least very largely, on the United Kingdom, but that no specific proposals at all were made with a view to sharing the burden with other countries, who were pressing most strongly for sanctions but whose economies would not be adversely affected at all by their application.

LORD WALSTON: My Lords, the noble Earl is even more aware than I am of the weight that should be given to Press reports and the dangers of making up one's mind simply from Press reports. Therefore, I would urge upon him, before he makes up his mind, to adhere to the good resolution he just tells me he has made, to await the publication of the Report.

LORD FRASER OF LONSDALE: My Lords, can the noble Lord say when this document may become available?

LORD WALSTON: My Lords, it is available at the moment in the United Nations, but Her Majesty's Government have not yet received it.

LORD FRASER OF LONSDALE: Is it a public document?

LORD WALSTON: My Lords, it is a United Nations document, and, so far as I know, it is freely available to anybody who wishes to get it from the United Nations.

JUSTICES OF THE PEACE BILL [H.L.]

LORD SILKIN: My Lords, I beg leave to introduce a Bill to amend Section 20 of the Justice of the Peace Act, 1949, and for connected purposes. I beg to move that the Bill be now read a first time.

Moved, That the Bill be now read 1ª. —(*Lord Silkin.*)

On Quesion, Bill read 1ª, and to be printed.

NATIONAL INSURANCE (INDUSTRIAL INJURIES) (COLLIERY WORKERS SUPPLEMENTARY SCHEME) AMENDMENT ORDER, 1965

3.12 p.m.

LORD BOWLES: My Lords, this draft Order, increasing certain benefits and contributions under the Colliery Workers Supplementary Scheme, follows on from the higher rates of industrial injuries benefit enacted in the National Insurance Act, 1964. Under Section 83 of the Industrial Injuries Act, any group of employers and employees can apply to the Minister of Pensions and National Insurance to set up a supplementary scheme of benefits on top of those provided by the Industrial Injuries Act. Under this provision, the supplementary scheme can be given statutory cover, and the machinery of the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance can be used in administering and paying out benefits.

The only scheme made under the Act is that for colliery workers, which was established in 1948. It is run by a National Committee representing the National Coal Board and the mineworkers unions. Under the scheme, the rates of supplement payable to injured workmen are linked with the rates of industrial injuries benefit themselves, so that the supplements will go up as a result of the higher State benefits under the 1964 Act. An amending Order is, however, needed to increase the supplementary benefits for widows and the contributions under the scheme; the draft Order now before the House would make these changes which have been asked for by the National Committee of the scheme, and is similar to amending Orders which have been brought

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forward after previous Acts increasing industrial injuries benefits—for example, in 1961 and 1963.

Under the draft Order, the rates of supplements to widows' benefits will go up, in the same proportion as the increases in supplements for injured workmen, from the end of March when the industrial injuries benefits for widows are increased. These supplements are paid to rather more than 7,000 widows of colliery workers who died as a result of an industrial accident or industrial disease. The vast majority of the supplements are payable at the rate of 41s. a week, which will be increased under the Order to 47s. 6d. a week.

The draft Order will also increase the contributions under the scheme. These are at present 5½d. a week for men (with lower rates for women and juveniles), with the National Coal Board paying 5½d. per ton of deep-mined coal. Under the Order these contributions would become 6¼d. a side. The Government Actuary, who advises the National Committee on the scheme and the Minister of Pensions and National Insurance on its finances, has advised that this new rate of contributions should be sufficient to maintain the finances of the scheme in proper balance. I should emphasise that no part of the cost of the supplementary scheme falls on the Exchequer; the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance, who undertake part of the administrative arrangements for the scheme in conjunction with their work on industrial injuries benefits, are reimbursed by the scheme for their administration costs.

The opportunity is also taken to propose two technical changes in the scheme. One is to bring its accounting periods into line with the new accounting periods of the National Coal Board; the other will enable the scheme, which already has power to invest in leasehold property, to issue bonds for the due performance of obligations entered into under such leases. I beg to move that the draft Order be approved.

Moved, That the Draft National Insurance (Industrial Injuries) (Colliery Workers Supplementary Scheme) Amendment Order, 1965, laid before the House on 24th February, be approved.—(*Lord Bowles.*)

LORD DRUMALBYN: My Lords, on behalf of my noble friends I should like to thank the noble Lord for his explanation of this scheme. May I ask him just one question? The contributions are calculated on a different basis, I understand, according to the Explanatory Memorandum, for the employees and for the employers, the employees' contribution being per head and that of the employers being calculated per ton of deep-mined coal. I would ask the noble Lord whether the resulting effect is that the increase in payments, in revenue, and also, indeed, the cost of the scheme, is shared approximately equally between the Coal Board and the colliery workers.

LORD BOWLES: No, my Lords. The position is that originally about one-fifth was paid by the colliers and the other four-fifths by the National Coal Board. The rate of contribution at the moment, as the noble Lord has said, is 5½d. each side; and it is going up to 6¼d. With the increased efficiency of the coal industry—because more coal is being produced by fewer miners, and more machinery is being used—about 88 per cent. (I have not the exact figures with me at the moment) of that cost will be borne by the National Coal Board and the other private colliery owners, and about 12 per cent. will be paid by the colliers.

LORD DRUMALBYN: My Lords, I am obliged to the noble Lord for that explanation.

On Question, Motion agreed to.

THAMES CONSERVANCY (NEW FUNCTIONS OF RIVER AUTHORITIES IN THAMES CATCHMENT AREA) (AMENDMENT) ORDER, 1965

3.18 p.m.

THE JOINT PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES (LORD MITCHISON): My Lords, as your Lordships will remember, the Water Resources Act, 1963, was one of those non-controversial measures that are fought long, hard, and in detail. It comes fully into operation on April 1 this year. The interval since the passing of the Act has been occupied by the setting up of river authorities who take over on April 1 the land drainage, prevention of pollution and fisheries work of the river boards,

and will also be charged with the water conservation work that was the purpose of the Act. The Order that is before the House is a modest part in the establishment of the new system. In the Thames catchment, as in the Lee catchment, there is no actual river board, and the existing functions are carried out by the Thames Conservancy, established long before the river boards, and with rather different powers and duties.

The Act itself did not apply the water resources work to the Thames area: it provided that the application could be made by Order, and this was done last July by the Order that is being amended to-day. That Order also reconstituted the Conservancy on the lines of the constitutions provided in the Act for river authorities. A bare majority of the Conservators were to be appointed by the local authorities—county councils, county borough and London borough councils—on which the Conservancy precepts. The other members were to be appointed by the Ministers of Housing, Agriculture and Transport for their knowledge of public water supply, industry, agriculture, land drainage, navigation, and the recreational use of the Thames. There is also a member appointed by the Port of London Authority.

This constitution did not altogether satisfy the London County Council and the Greater London Council. They argued forcibly, when the original Order was introduced, that the Greater London Council ought to be represented on a body that would have so much effect on the work of the Council and the interests of Londoners. The London County Council have always had a representative—and, after all, many Londoners use the Thames for recreation. The Greater London Council, of course, will be responsible for the prevention of pollution on those splendidly named tributaries of the Thames—the Crane, the Ravensbourne, the Duke of Northumberland's River, and others. All this the Greater London Council argued, and all this the then Minister accepted. He gave an undertaking, of which the noble Lord, Lord Hastings, informed this House, that the Greater London Council should be given membership of the Conservancy. My right honourable friend fully agrees that this is the right thing to do, and the Order before the House secures it.

At the same time it is desirable to keep to the principle that local authorities should have a majority of only one on the Conservancy, as on river authorities, and the amending Order provides for a member with experience in fisheries. The Conservancy have no statutory fisheries duties, but fishing is closely bound up with their other interests. The fisheries member will complement the experience of the other specialist apointments and will, I am sure, be generally welcomed.

One final point about the Order. Section 128 of the Water Resources Act exempts from the general restriction on taking water any abstraction under an order made by the Minister under the Water Act, 1958. These are orders that allow water undertakers, when there is an exceptional shortage of rain, to extract more water than they normally have power to take. They are commonly known as drought orders. But they do not apply to the Metropolitan Water Board's abstractions from the Thames, where the equivalent is an emergency order under Section 167 of the Thames Conservancy Act, 1932. It was an omission from the original Order that these orders were not given the same saving as the ordinary drought orders. The amending Order puts this right. I beg to move.

Moved, That the Thames Conservancy (New Functions of River Authorities in Thames Catchment Area) (Amendment) Order, 1965, be approved.—(*Lord Mitchison.*)

3.22 p.m.

LORD HASTINGS: My Lords, I am grateful to the noble Lord the Parliamentary Secretary for bringing this amending Order forward. As he said, one of its main purposes is to honour an undertaking which I gave on behalf of my right honourable friend the then Minister in respect of an additional member to be given to the Greater London Council, which in fact was simply carrying over a responsibility already held by the London County Council for matters of pollution. As he said, it is a non-controversial matter in which all Parties were agreed, and I am glad it has been done.

Of course, when I gave that undertaking I did not point out (although I think it was implicit) that it would be

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necessary to appoint another member among the ministerial appointments so that the local authorities would not have an overall majority of more than one on the Thames Conservancy. That extra member has been appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture for the purpose of representing fisheries. I would just remind the noble Lord—I am sure he knows this very well—that among the ministerial appointments, that is to say, the appointments by the Minister of Housing and Local Government, one member was to be appointed—and I quote the words:

"after consultation with such persons or bodies representative of persons concerned in the use of the Thames as a place of recreation as the Minister considers appropriate."

I think I am right in believing that that was intended as a reference to boating interests on the Thames, and not to fisheries interests. I wanted to clear up that point, otherwise it would not have been necessary to appoint a member to represent fisheries. But I think I am right in saying that it was not found possible to award a member to fisheries interests, and the member was to represent boating interests. I am glad that this omission has been discovered. Having read the Memorandum supplied by the Minister of Housing and Local Government, I think it is clearly essential that this power of reservation from restrictions should be inserted.

There is only one other small point, which the noble Lord did not mention: I can see that he may hardly have thought it necessary. In the amending Order, Article 3(*e*) says:

"in article 13, after the words 'the Minister of Transport' there shall be inserted the words 'the Greater London Council'".

I am not sure that those words are necessary, because as a result of this amending Order the Greater London Council is, of course, already inserted in Articles 2(1) and 9(1) of the original July Order; and I should have thought, turning to Article 13 of that Order, in which reference is made to the necessity for the Conservators' to send their annual report and accounts to each of the constituent councils, that those words would have included the Greater London Council.

However, that is not the real point I wish to make. The fact that the reference to the London Council has been specifically inserted in Article 13—whether it is necessary or not—brought to my attention the fact that there is no mention in that Article of the Port of London Authority. They are listed, of course, in Article 9, but it seems to me that they are not actually a constituent council. Perhaps the noble Lord might look at that to see whether or not it might be advisable to insert the Port of London Authority, as well as the Greater London Council in Article 13.

LORD MITCHISON: My Lords, I will gladly look at the interesting point raised by the noble Lord—his second point. As to the first point, that the member was already on the Board to represent recreational interests, that member was appointed after consultation with both what I may call the boating side and the fishery people. What is happening now is that he is left to represent boating, and fishing has an extra representative. I think that is in accordance with the general intentions of the Act.

On Question, Motion agreed to.

NUCLEAR INSTALLATIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL

House in Committee (according to Order).

House resumed: Bill reported without amendment: Report received.

COMMONS REGISTRATION BILL [H.L.]

3.29 p.m.

Order of the Day for the Third Reading read.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR (LORD GARDINER): My Lords, I have it in command from Her Majesty the Queen to acquaint the House that Her Majesty, having been informed of the purport of the Commons Registration Bill, has consented to place Her interest, so far as it is concerned on behalf of the Crown, the Duchy of Lancaster and the Duchy of Cornwall, at the disposal of Parliament for the purposes of the Bill.

LORD MITCHISON: My Lords, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a third time.

Moved, That the Bill be now read 3ª. —(*Lord Mitchison.*)

On Question, Bill read 3ª.

LORD MITCHISON: My Lords, I beg to move that this Bill do now pass. On this Motion I should like to say, if I may, that I gave an undertaking on the Report stage to make an Amendment on lines I indicated in some detail at the time, and that undertaking will, I am afraid, as I foresaw at the time, have to be carried out in another place. I need hardly assure your Lordships that it will be carried out. A question was put by the noble Lord, Lord Molson, in connection with that undertaking with the following effect. The undertaking was that during the period after the final registration of common land and pending the ascertainment of an owner where no owner had been registered, the registration authorities should be given power to stand in the shoes (if I may use the phrase) of the true owner in order to institute or carry on criminal proceedings, in effect for the preservation of the common land and common rights over it.

Lord Molson's request was that it should also be considered whether in those circumstances the registration authorities should not have power to carry on civil proceedings of a similar character. Your Lordships are well aware that the common notice " Trespassers will be prosecuted " is a little misconceived; they are in fact amenable to civil remedies but not as a rule to criminal ones. That matter has been considered, but the provision is difficult to draft. It is still under consideration and we hope to be able to do something to meet the views of the noble Lord, Lord Molson.

We are also considering whether it may be possible to give this power and duty not merely to the registration authorities but, in certain circumstances, to other local authorities, too. Registration authorities, as your Lordships will remember, are the county councils and the councils of county boroughs; and the question that we are considering is whether something can be done to assist the county district councils in this respect. This is very much a matter in which it is desirable to have agreement—cordial, I hope—between the local authorities concerned. There is some prospect of getting it, but I can say no more. Your Lordships will appreciate that in all those circumstances it has taken time to try to reach a solution satisfactory to all concerned, and the undertaking I gave will therefore have to be carried out in another place.

My Lords, may I make one final observation, at the risk of repeating what I said at an earlier stage of the Bill? I have seen a good deal of this Bill, both before it came here and during its passage here, and I am quite certain that the commons of this country and the large areas of ground that they represent are a matter of general concern to Members of this House, as they are to the public at large. It is up to all of us in this particular matter to do what we can to remove a considerable degree of confusion and resulting misuse or lack of use of part of our common heritage in this country. Therefore, this Bill seems to me, at the end of the day so far as we are concerned here, and I hope it will seem to your Lordships too, to be something which properly calls for the cordial co-operation of the elected local government bodies who will have to play a considerable part in putting it into effect.

It will, I believe, stand or fall by the degrees to which it gets that co-operation, from county councils and county borough councils as registration authorities, and from those who can help them in the researches they will have to make and the work they will have to do. If that is the common view of Members of this House, as I think it is, I feel sure that all of us will do what we can, in the areas where we are particularly interested, perhaps those where we live, to see that that co-operation is given and supplemented by the individual co-operation that from your Lordships may indeed be valuable.

LORD MOLSON: My Lords, I think it would be ungracious if I did not say a few words of thanks to the Government on the attitude they have adopted.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR: My Lords, if I might interrupt the noble Lord, before your Lordships can pass the Bill there is the question of the privilege Amendment to be dealt with.

LORD MITCHISON: My Lords, I owe the House an apology, as I do also the

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noble and learned Lord the Lord Chancellor, as I ought to have moved that the privilege Amendment be agreed to. I do so now. I beg to move.

Amendment (privilege) moved—

Page 12, line 41, at end insert—

("( ) Nothing in this Act shall impose any charge on the people or on public funds, or vary the amount or incidence of or otherwise alter any such charge in any manner, or affect the assessment, levying, administration or application of any money raised by any such charge.").—(*Lord Mitchison.*)

On Question, Amendment agreed to.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR: My Lords, perhaps the noble Lord will now move his Motion that the Bill do now pass.

LORD MITCHISON: My Lords, I beg to move that the Bill do now pass.

Moved, That the Bill do now pass.—(*Lord Mitchison.*)

LORD MOLSON: My Lords, as I was saying, I think it would be ungracious if I did not say a few words of thanks to the Government for the way in which they have responded to the numerous Amendments that I moved on the Committee stage. I feel that, as a result of what the Government have done in the way of putting down Amendments, most of the points I raised on Second Reading have been to a greater or less extent met, and I hope that, as a result, this registration Bill will result in the rights of commoners and the owners of commons being registered and ascertained for all time, and that with the co-operation of the local authorities, upon whom so much depends, it will not result, as is of course always possible under a registration Bill, in the extinction of some rights which are valuable and which will be of increasing value to the ever-growing population of this country.

On Question, Bill passed, and sent to the Commons.

NATIONAL ASSISTANCE BILL [H.L.]

3.37 p.m.

Order of the Day for the Third Reading read.

BARONESS SUMMERSKILL: My Lords, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a third time.

Moved, That the Bill be now read 3ª.—(*Baroness Summerskill.*)

LORD DRUMALBYN: My Lords, before the Question is put, I think that we ought perhaps at some stage or another to have some comment from the Government. May I say, first of all—and I hope your Lordships will agree—that I think this is a better Bill now than it was when it was discussed on Second Reading. Of course, I am biased in that matter, as the noble Lady has been good enough to accept some of my Amendments, as well as incorporating many of her own. I think it is perhaps too much to expect that in its present form this is, in the classic words, a "good and perfect Bill", for the very good reason that we have not since Second Reading had the benefit of the advice and counsel of the Government. But I suggest that the Bill in its present form is at least worthy of further consideration in another place.

I think it is unfortunate that, apart from one intervention by the noble Lord, Lord Mitchison, on the Committee stage, when he said that he was not going to intervene, but intervened as a matter of courtesy, the Government have abstained from giving their advice. They have not contributed at all to the remaining stages of the Bill. I feel that I am reminded very much of the well-known cartoon, and if I might parody that I would say this to the noble Lord: "Say something, my Lord, even if it is only 'Goodbye' ".

LORD MITCHISON: My Lords, nobody could resist an invitation in those terms. The noble Lord, Lord Drumalbyn, is perfectly right in saying that very considerable changes have been made in this Bill during its passage through this House. I developed my objections to it (at great length, I am afraid, and I am sorry that the noble Lord has forgotten them all) on the Second Reading of the Bill, and those objections to the Bill in

its original form are still there. The changes it has now undergone seem to me to be a matter for comment in another place, and not on Third Reading in your Lordships' House.

It is indeed a very different Bill from what it was to start with. This was a case where the Government took the view —and I expressed it—that the Bill was misconceived. We had—and still have—the greatest respect for the experience of my noble friend Lady Summerskill—and, for that matter, for that of the noble Lord himself, not to mention the noble Lord, a former Chairman of the National Assistance Board, who addressed the House on this subject. But the noble Lord will have to reconcile himself, as I have to, to the fact that on Second Reading his views and mine were overruled by a majority of the House. In those circumstances, I think, it would be singularly inappropriate if the Government were called upon to follow the bewildering changes the Bill has undergone subsequently. I think they will have to be considered carefully when it goes to another place and considered as it now is, not as it started. I was charged with sulking, like Achilles, in my tent. This Bill is Proteus.

On Question, Bill read 3ª.

BARONESS SUMMERSKILL: My Lords, this is a very simple Amendment. I have been advised by the House authorities that this form of words should be added to the Long Title. I beg to move.

Amendment moved—

In the Title, line 2, at end insert (" and for purposes connected therewith ").—(*Baroness Summerskill.*)

LORD DRUMALBYN: My Lords, perhaps this Amendment gives us on this side an opportunity of congratulating the noble Baroness on her success on getting this Bill through this place. She has worked very hard on it and I think she deserves the support of the whole House.

LORD MITCHISON: My Lords, may I be allowed to add my personal congratulations to the noble Baroness? We have known one another a long time. I have always found her a most energetic and, if she does not mind my saying so, a most sympathetic character, and in this case she has shown her sympathy for people who have considerable need of the help she can give them. These are my personal congratulations.

On Question, Amendment agreed to.

BARONESS SUMMERSKILL: I beg to move that the Privilege Amendment be agreed to.

Moved, That the Privilege Amendment be made.—(*Baroness Summerskill.*)

On Question, Amendment agreed to.

BARONESS SUMMERSKILL: My Lords, I beg to move that this Bill do now pass. It is very kind of the noble Lord, Lord Mitchison, to say what he has, and also the noble Lord opposite, but they were a little premature, because this is the moment when they should make their little speeches, and so they have another opportunity. I should like to express my appreciation of all who have helped me to improve the Bill in the various stages.

I must confess I do not quite follow my noble friend. I was not going to mention him, but he has intervened, although he said at an earlier stage, when he was sitting at the corner of the Bench, that he had no intention of saying any more. I think he cannot have read the Bill. If he reads the Bill, he will find that everything in the Bill can be related to everything I said on Second Reading. I carefully read the Second Reading debate this morning and I found that every point I made is reflected in the Bill before your Lordships. I would ask my noble friend, who curiously enough has had second thoughts, to read the Bill again, and he will find that, far from being altered, as the noble Lord, Lord Drumalbyn, said it has been strengthened. After all, that is the whole purpose of having various stages of a Bill; we discussed it on Committee stage and on Report stage and now we discuss it at this stage. I think we can say that this is as good as we can make it. And although it is a measure limited to certain functions of the National Assistance Board and the court, nevertheless I believe it marks another stage in doing more for the fatherless child and its mother.

I want to mention two Amendments that have been made in the course of the passage of the Bill. I think it has been improved by my Amendment which makes it the duty of the court to bring proceedings pending to the notice of the

[Baroness Summerskill.]

Board, thereby giving the mother protection in the initial stages of the order. I think the House agreed on Second Reading that she should be protected in the early stages, but this Amendment ensures that the Board is alerted immediately the order is made. I am grateful to the House for its acceptance also of the new clause, which enables the Board to give assistance to a child, irrespective of whether the mother is in full-time employment or not. This is certainly a departure, but I emphasise that I was asking for this concession only for the child and not for the mother.

Promoting a Private Member's Bill is not easy unless one has the assistance of knowledgeable friends, and preferably people with a legal training. Sometimes this is withheld. I should like to express my deep appreciation of the excellent advice and courtesy which I have always received from the Clerks at the Table. I would also thank the noble Lord, Lord Drnmalbyn, who as a former Minister of National Insurance recognised the hardships which exist, as I did, having served in that Department for some years. Although the noble Lord opposed this Bill on the Second Reading, nevertheless he bore me no ill-will and has co-operated in trying to improve the Bill on the Committee and Report stages.

LORD DRUMALBYN: My Lords may I intervene to say that I did not vote against the Bill on Second Reading?

BARONESS SUMMERSKILL: I beg the noble Lord's pardon; I thought he did. I thought he had been very noble thinking he voted against the Bill, and I should like to thank him for his help. He has given his time and knowledge to the consideration of the proposals embodied in the Bill and I am very grateful for it. I would also thank the noble Viscount, Lord Colville of Culross, who has also been of great help to me. Last, but not least, may I thank noble Lords from all parts of the House who supported me on Second Reading? Now I propose to consign this Bill to the care of my daughter in another place, where I hope she will successfully pilot it to the Statute Book.

Moved, That the Bill do now pass.—(*Baroness Summerskill.*)

On Question, Bill passed and sent to the Commons.

INDUSTRIAL AND PROVIDENT SOCIETIES BILL [H.L.]

Report of Amendments received (according to Order).

SUPERANNUATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Read 3ª (according to Order), with the Amendments, and passed, and returned to the Commons.

SOLICITORS BILL [H.L.]

Report of Amendments received (according to Order).

AIRPORTS AUTHORITY BILL

3.50 p.m.

Order of the Day read for the House to be put into Committee (on Re-commitment).

Moved, That the House do now resolve itself into Committee.—(*Lord Shackleton.*)

On Question, Motion agreed to.

House in Committee accordingly.

[The LORD MERTHYR in the Chair.]

Clauses 1 to 14 agreed to.

LORD SHACKLETON moved, after Clause 14, to insert the following new clause:

Grants towards cost of sound-proofing dwellings

" .—(1) If it appears to the Minister that dwellings near an aerodrome owned or managed by the Authority require further protection from noise and vibration attributable to the use of the aerodrome than can be given by measures taken or to be taken in pursuance of section 14 of this Act he may by statutory instrument make a scheme requiring the Authority to make grants towards the cost of insulating such dwellings or parts of such dwellings against noise.

(2) A scheme under this section shall specify the area or areas in which dwellings must be situated for the grants to be payable, and the persons to whom, the expenditure in respect of which and the rate at which the grants are to be paid, and may make the payment of any grant dependent upon compliance with such conditions as may be specified in the scheme.

(3) A scheme under this section may require the Authority in any case where an application for a grant is refused, to give the applicant at his request a written statement of its reasons for the refusal.

(4) A scheme under this section may authorise or require local authorities to act as agents of the Authority in dealing with applicaions for and payments of grants and may provide for the making by the Authority of payments to local authorities in respect of anything done by them as such agents.

(5) A scheme under this section may make different provision with respect to different areas or different circumstances and may be varied or revoked by a subsequent scheme under this section.

(6) Before making a scheme under this section the Minister shall consult the Authority.

(7) Any statutory instrument made under this section shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament."

The noble Lord said: This Amendment gives effect to the Government's intention which I announced in the House on March 10, that the British Airports Authority should be enabled to make grants for soundproofing dwellings near to Heathrow. As noble Lords will see, this is an enabling provision. The details will be set out in a scheme made by the Minister after consulting the Authority—this means after the Authority comes into existence—in a Statutory Instrument which will be subject to Negative Resolution of either House. When noble Lords examine the form of the Amendment, they will see that the Government hope that local authorities will collaborate in the administration of the scheme. The new clause gives the necessary statutory basis for this—this is subsection (4) of the clause. We have also thought it right that if the Authority refuses an application for a grant it should give the applicant its reasons. The clause will enable this right to be established.

I should point out that the clause as drafted enables the Minister to make a scheme for any of the four airports which are being transferred to the Authority. The Government feel that it is right for general powers to be obtained in this way. But it is our impression, and our considered opinion, that it will be a long time before any airport other than Heathrow will qualify for soundproofing provisions. The criterion which the Government have adopted as the basis of the Statement which was made the other day presupposes that many thousands of night movements, and night jet movements, per annum will take place, but it will be a long while before there exists elsewhere anything like the sort of combination of noise and frequency that exists at Heathrow. This view of the Government was shared by the Wilson Committee, who regarded Heathrow as unique and recommended payments of grants in respect of only dwellings around this one airport.

There are one or two further observations that I would make. First of all, I appreciate that this is a fairly major Amendment, and it is for this reason that we thought it right to recommit the Bill so that the Committee had a full opportunity to discuss it, and no doubt, if they wished, to make any further observations or Amendments—I hope there will not be any—when we come to the Report stage. Of course, as I have already indicated, it springs from the Report of the Wilson Committee, which accepted, as we accept that the noise at London Airport, at Heathrow, was making life intolerable for many people; and it is right that some steps should be taken to rectify this. These steps are being taken under this new clause, and the responsibility for paying for this is being put upon the agency which is most concerned with causing the noise—namely, the Airports Authority. It is our view that the airlines, or the Airports Authority who are the agency concerned, are the right people to finance this scheme. It is estimated that over a period of years it will cost in total about £2½ million.

EARL JELLICOE: I am sorry to intervene, but may I ask the noble Lord whether the £2½ million is the estimated total cost, or, on the Government's basis, that part of the cost which will fall on the Authority?

LORD SHACKLETON: This is the part which will represent the Authority's contribution. Perhaps I should add that it has been estimated that the cost per house, on a three-room basis, will be something of the order of £200, of which £100 will be paid by the Authority. This is based on a close examination of the cost of carrying out the necessary soundproofing which, it is suggested—the noble Lord, Lord Merrivale, was interested in this—should be done by double glazing, with additional ventilation. These costs, which I agree are not the same as are suggested in the Wilson Report, have none the less been arrived at by the

[Lord Shackleton.]

Building Research Station after a rather closer examination. The Wilson Report suggested that it would very likely be an average of £300 per house; but the figure of £200 has now been carefully arrived at.

The other point I should like to make on the financial side relates to the concern that some noble Lords have expressed with regard to the ability of the Authority to finance this scheme. The noble Earl, Lord Jellicoe, was particularly interested in this subject at an early stage on Committee, and it may well be that on the Report stage there will be an opportunity to go rather more fully into the whole of the financial arrangements of the Authority. I am quite prepared to do that, and to explain how the cash flow is made up, and perhaps even to give the noble Earl some of the figures which I have.

In broad terms, for the basis of this particular operation, I would say that in the estimates which the Government have made as to the likely needs of the Authority over the first five years, there is a substantial margin. The capital expenditure of the Authority has been estimated over this period at £34 million. When we add in the cash which we think will be available from the trading operations of the Authority, and the borrowing which is open to the Authority under this Bill, we reckon that over the next five years the Authority ought not to have to spend, or ought not to employ capital of, an amount greater than £65 million; and we are providing a total limit—so to speak, an authorised limit—of £70 million. So there is ample margin for this particular matter, even if the Airports Authority were not to recoup either by improved revenue through increased utilisation of the airport or through higher charges, if that be thought right. I am not advocating any of these; I am merely explaining why it is well within the capacity of the Authority who finance this scheme.

May I again mention briefly what I said when I repeated the Statement of my right honourable friend, that the area is related to the N.N.I. (the Noise and Number Indicator contours) which was the measure used by the Wilson Committee. I made available to the House, in the Library, a copy of the map which showed how these contours appeared over this particular area. For the sake of administrative convenience, however, the eligibility for grants does not follow strictly along the N.N.I. line, but along local authority and ward lines. This clearly is much more convenient and there will be people who are living beyond the 55 N.N.I. line who will still benefit. This is obviously essential, and it is right to base these on ward boundaries. They will in all cases extend beyond the 1970 estimated 55 N.N.I. contour.

I appreciate that this is a complicated and difficult issue and that there are powerful arguments against doing anything at all. Indeed, the previous Administration decided that this was so difficult—and I do not blame them for coming to this decision—that it was better not to embark in this particular sphere. But the Government have accepted that this noise is an intolerable nuisance, and it must be right for the Government to recognise that the community has a responsibility to those who suffer from the increase of noise. I do not see any immediate consequences in other directions flowing from the acceptance of this principle in the matter of aircraft noise. There is no likelihood, judging from the investigations which I have made, that any military, Navy, or Royal Air Force airports will be affected, but we must face the consequence that this is a new principle. In accepting it, the Committee must also realise that it may carry consequences for the future, but I think it is unlikely to do so for quite a number of years. I beg to move.

Amendment moved—

After Clause 14, insert the said new clause. —(*Lord Shackleton.*)

4.3 p.m.

VISCOUNT STUART OF FINDHORN had given Notice of his intention to move, as an Amendment to the proposed new clause, to leave out "aerodrome" and to insert "airport". The noble Viscount said: It will probably be for the convenience of the Committee if I refrain from moving my first Amendment at this stage and concentrate on the later Amendments to Schedule 2 which appear on the Order Paper. For, if the Government should be so gracious as to accept those Amendments, then on Report I could

move to make this first Amendment in my name without interrupting the debate on the noise proposition. If I might say one word on that aspect, I agree with the noble Lord, Lord Shackleton, that the nuisance created is certainly an intolerable nuuisance to those who live in or near an airport.

EARL JELLICOE: I am not certain whether I am in order in speaking to the first Amendment. I should like, if I may, to say a word about it. I would preface my remarks by saying that I am grateful to the noble Lord for the clear way in which he has uuveiled this new clause—this foundling which the Government have adopted, rather at the eleventh hour.

I do not know what my noble friends may feel about this Amendment, but let me, for one, say straight away that I do not wish to dispute the main principle behind the clause. The Wilson Committee (and I have recently had a chance of refreshing my memory of that Committee, to whose remarkable, indeed fascinating, Report I should like to add my tribute) rightly said that Heathrow provides one of the most difficult aircraft noise problems in the world. I agree; and, that being so, I think it right that special measures should be taken to help those who live near Heathrow to shut themselves out, at least to some extent, from this far from heavenly music which assails their ears. But while I welcome the principle behind this clause, I have a number of doubts and reservations about the proposals which the noble Lord has produced "out of the hat", as I have said, rather at the last minute.

In the first place, the clause itself is a masterpiece of vagueness. The noble Lord, Lord Shackleton, and his right honourable friend the Minister had a good deal to say last Wednesday about the Government's intentions, but we find precious little about these intentions—good, bad or indifferent—in the clause itself, which is merely, as the noble Lord has fairly remarked, an enabling measure. I would not wish to argue that all the details which were spelt out last Wednesday should necessarily have been spelt out in this clause. But I feel that some of the main principles might well have been included in it.

For instance, should not the size of the sums at least have been specified? And should it not at least have been made clear who is responsible for paying them? On all this we are given absolutely nothing to bite on at this stage. For all this, we—and, what is more important, the people who live round Heathrow—have only the Minister's statement and what the noble Lord has said this afternoon (and I do not wish to decry its importance) to go on, and we have to await the promise of the statutory instrument. When, incidentally, will the promise be redeemed? When may we expect to have the Statutory Instrument laid. I should be grateful if the noble Lord could give us some indication of the Government's intentions in that regard.

Then we were told last Wednesday, as we have been told again today, that it would be the new authority, not the Government, which would be required to meet the bill for these grants. I should like to explore this aspect of the matter a little further. Last Wednesday we were told that the Government had decided to accept the principle of the Wilson Committee's recommendation about the sound-proofing of houses. That was a shade disingenuous, because in recommending these grants the Wilson Committee specifically recommended that they might appropriately come from the Government. We were not told this last Wednesday, nor have we been told it to-day. On the contrary, in answer to Lord Airedale's intervention, the noble Lord, Lord Shackleton, said on Wednesday:

> "I should have thought that Her Majesty's Treasury were the last people who should bear the cost."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, Vol. 264 (No. 49), col. 77, March 10, 1965.]

I am sorry that the noble Lord opposite and the Government have been "nobbled" by the Treasury at so early a stage in their career.

LORD SHACKLETON: May I interrupt the noble Lord, because it may save time? When the Wilsou Committee reported there was no Airports Authority; indeed, the Airports Authority Bill was sitting in the archives of the previous Government. Therefore, there was nobody, other than the Government and the Ministry, who could be responsible

[Lord Shackleton.]

for paying. But, as the noble Lord must surely recall, it was always the policy of the previous Government that airports should pay their way. I should have assumed that if the then Government had accepted this proposal, it would equally have been their intention that this money should be provided out of the revenues of the airports. I am not trying to be difficult on this, or to split hairs, but I want the noble Earl to understand the situation in relation to which the Wilson Committee reported.

EARL JELLICOE: I am grateful to the noble Lord for his intervention, but, in a way, I do not think he has helped me particularly on this aspect. I realise that when the Wilson Committee reported there was no Airports Authodity in existence, although one was contemplated. But that does not advance the argument much further, because in his statement the Minister went a great deal further than that. He stated that:

> "The Government consider that the cost of these grants should fall on those whose activities cause the disturbance, or those who benefit from such activities."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, Commons, Vol. 708 (No. 74), col. 413, March 10, 1965.]

That was precisely the point to which the Wilson Committee addressed themselves, and I think it is a pity that on the face of it—I wish to explore this—the Government have decided to reject the more generous Alan Wilson line, and to accept the less generous Callaghan line on this particular point.

In the first place, my reasons for saying this are the same as those adduced by the Wilson Committee themselves. They argued that

> "Heathrow is a national asset, encouraging tourists and trade to Britain."

They went on to say:

> "It is, then, only fair that the nation should help to mitigate the undoubted nuisance that is caused by the noise."

That is, I would submit, an argument which cannot very easily be shrugged off. After all, it was the Government of the time, and not this as yet unborn Authority, who put the airport where it is. The Wilson Committee, I again wish to remind your Lordships, also went on to point out in the next paragraph of their Report, paragraph 326, that since Parliament has specifically exempted aircraft operators from civil action or proceedings, and since the onus of protecting people from the nuisance caused by aircraft noises falls ou the Minister, it is logical for the Government to help those exposed to intolerable or barely tolerable noise to protect themselves from it. Again, there seems a powerful logic in this argument.

After all, it is the Minister himself who, as a result of Clause 14 in this very Bill, will be ultimately responsible in this sphere of noise, and since he and the Government are calling the tune, should they not also be prepared to pay the piper? After all—and here, again, I am merely taking up a point made by the Wilson Committee themselves—this grant will be very closely akin to a house improvement grant, and the Government, as your Lordships well know, make a contribution to approved house improvement schemes.

There is one final reason why I am a little worried about the proposal to lay this burden on the new Authority. As the noble Lord mentioned just now, I have already voiced my doubts whether the Government are providing this body with really adequate financial resources. Now we learn that they will have to "cough up" another £2½ million, on the basis of a calculation that some 40 per cent. of the eligible householders will take advantage of this grant. I should like to know, incidentally, how this 40 per cent. calculation is arrived at. We know that Mr. Jenkins is a very clever Minister, but how he can possibly know that four out of ten rather than, say, eight out of ten of those eligible for this grant will avail themselves of it, I do not, I must confess, know.

But, be that as it may, this will certainly add to the drain on the Authority's funds, as the noble Lord, Lord Shackleton, recognised, and there are only two ways by which, as I see it, they can make up for that drain. One way is through higher landing fees, and we all know that those at Heathrow are already pretty high by international standards; and the other is by cutting back on capital expenditure. The noble Lord, Lord Shackleton, has again said—and I should like to study very carefully what he said in this respect—that the Authority's financial resources and borrowing powers are really adequate and have been arrived at on the basis

of very careful calculations. I should like to ask the noble Lord whether those calculations included this £2½ million, because if they did not include this £2½ million, and if they were as carefully calculated as all that, then I should have thought there was at least a case for increasing their borrowing ceiling by that amount.

I certainly do not wish to prejudge this particular aspect of the matter in any way, and I shall listen very carefully to what the noble Lord who is replying has to say in this respect, but it seems to me that, if one is going to go for grant—and I admit that the previous Government rejected this in the first instance—then there is a strong case, on the basis of the Wilson recommendations themselves, on the basis of precedent and on the basis of financial common sense, for laying this particular onus on the Government rather than on this fledgling Authority. That said, I hope that the noble Lord can give me some enlightenment on the following supplementary points.

In the first place, could he tell us what is being done for people other than householders who are affected by noise in this area? I have in mind, particularly, patients in hospitals, children in schools and, not least, teachers in schools. The Committee emphasised in paragraphs 257 to 259 of their Report the importance of tackling this aspect of the matter. Can the noble Lord tell us anything about what has been done, or is being done, on this aspect of the matter, and is the possible cost of any such improvements included in the £2½ million figure?

Secondly, there is the area affected. I am grateful to the noble Lord opposite for making available in the Library the map showing the wards and the parishes and the 55 NNI contour line, but may I ask him a couple of questions about the area? I notice that, as one would expect, there has already been pressure in another place for the area to be extended. The area which the Government have hit upon may be the right one, or it may be the wrong one. I would mention, in passing, that the Wilson Committee stressed that their contours were essentially approximate. But the question I wish to ask the noble Lord is how those who feel that the area should be changed—enlarged, presumably—will be able to represent their views; and how, if we are tied to the Statutory Instrument procedure, will the changes be made? Presumably, it will be only by a new Statutory Instrument, but am I right in that assumption?

There are two further points on which I should like some enlightenment from noble Lords, if this is the right occasion for it. In his statement the Minister of Aviation said that Heathrow was unique and that similar arrangements were not required elsewhere; and the noble Lord, Lord Shackleton, has reflected that view in his remarks this afternoon. That may very well be so at present, but whether it will remain so in the future is another matter. Again, I would refer noble Lords opposite to what the Wilson Committee themselves have said about Ringway and Prestwick; and, not least, about the possible noise effect of "city centre operations", as they are called, by helicopters and even by V.T.O. and S.T.O. aircraft. Can the noble Lord assure us that the Government have not closed their minds to similar schemes elsewhere, should the need for them become manifest?

Finally, can the noble Lord tell us anything about the Government's, or the Minister's own, general intentions in this very important field of aircraft noise? How is the significant research on aircraft noise reduction, to which the Wilson Committee drew attention, proceeding? Can he assure us that, desirable though noise reduction certainly is, the Minister has no intention of imposing such restrictions on aircraft operations as could conceivably impair their safety? I know that this is a point which my noble friend Lord Balfour of Inchrye had in mind when he made his intervention last Wednesday.

Finally, and not least important, can the noble Lord tell us what the Government feel about the recommendation in paragraph 649 of the Wilson Report? Perhaps I should very briefly quote it:

> "This country should take the initiative in attempting to secure greater international recognition of the urgent need to reduce aircraft noise".

Do the Government accept this; and, if so, can the noble Lord tell us what they are doing about this particular recommendation? That is all I have to say at this stage on this particular

[Earl Jellicoe.]

Amendment. In conclusion, I merely wish to repeat that my personal view is that the principle of it is perfectly acceptable, but I have quite serious reservations as to whether the Government are right in wishing to lay this additional burden on the new Authority. I hope that the noble Lord will be able to persuade me that they are right, but I wish to reserve judgment on that point.

4.22 p.m.

THE EARL OF SELKIRK: I should like to join my noble friend Lord Jellicoe in welcoming the principle behind this Bill, but I must say that I agree very much with what the noble Lord, Lord Shackleton, has said. This is a major step. This is a very important and extremely far-reaching Amendment which we are examining at the present time. Indeed, it brings about a very big change in this Bill itself. We were told earlier that the Airports Authority were to have responsibility for everything except navigation and noise, which were matters to be reserved for the Minister. Now the problem of noise is put squarely back on to the Airports Authority and in rather a peculiar way.

The noble Earl, Lord Jellicoe, has referred to the fact that this is a different recommendation from that made in the Wilson Report. The Wilson Report examined who should pay for this—whether it should be the Government, the local authority or the airlines—and came out specifically, for reasons which were given, with the view that the Government should be responsible. I think we ought to hear why it is that that course has been changed. The Wilson Report specifically said that the airlines should make their contributions indirectly, in other ways; that they have already incurred considerable financial penalties; and that it is not really their business to pay for past mistakes, whereas the Government have quite specifically undertaken overall responsibility. What is happening now is quite a change from that. I am not going to say that it is necessarily wrong, but I think we should hear a little more of the reasons why this alteration has been made.

I think this matter is far-reaching because the noble Lord talked about more night movements. Your Lordships are, I believe, aware that aviation starts coming into London Airport at about six o'clock in the morning. Many people living in the centre of London are not unaware of that noise, although they are a long way away from the airport itself. If this is to go on all night, it will have a very much wider repercussion than simply in the immediate vicinity of Heathrow. I am a little doubtful how this arrangement is going to work. This is clearly making the Airports Authority very much of an agency for doing something which I can understand the Ministry of Civil Aviation is reluctant to do itself. First of all, the Minister sets up the standard, whatever that may be—we have very little idea, although I shall be asking one or two questions about that—and then, secondly, payment will be made by the Airports Authority on the standard which the Minister has already decided.

I do not know whether we can get any information about what that standard is to be and what sort of limits are to be set to it, but I should have thought that if you are going to have double windows, or whatever the arrangement is, it would have to include air-conditioning—and that, of course, can be quite expensive. The estimate of 25,000 houses which may require to be done may well prove to be a considerable underestimate. I should also like to know whether it is envisaged that there should be any appeals against what is decided. I see it is stated that there should be a written statement of reasons for refusal. The normal purpose of a written statement is so that somebody can protest against those reasons in certain circumstances. In any case, I am fairly certain some protests will be made, or an endeavour to protest will be made in Parliament. I know not on what authority, but I think it almost certainly will be made.

One other question is: what about maintenance? Is this a once-and-for-all grant, or are these improvements to be maintained in future? There may be better means of insulating houses in the future. Are these to be undertaken? I am asking these questions because I think this is a very big departure, and we ought to ask the noble Lord to go as far as

he can, even before we come to the stage of a Statutory Instrument, to give us as much information as possible about the Government's intentions.

THE EARL OF GOSFORD: I have only one small point to make. I should like first of all to join my two noble friends in welcoming this courageous decision, if I may put it that way, though I, too, can see many snags for the future. The noble Lord, Lord Shackleton, in answer to an intervention by my noble friend Lord Jellicoe, said, quite rightly, that the airports should pay their way. But in this case they are to be responsible for expenditure on items over which they have absolutely no control whatsoever—by which I mean the number of houses being built in their area. They cannot say, "We cannot afford to pay for having this item put into any more houses", because the local authority will merely say, "We are going to build more houses". Therefore, that is something over which they have no control at all. And to my mind that makes it imperative that, if the airports are to pay their way, the Government themselves, and not the Airports Authority, must pay for this work.

LORD HAWKE: Although on humanitarian grounds I greatly welcome this Amendment, on grounds of public policy I am inclined to think that in future years it is going to land the Government in very deep waters. My noble friend Lord Jellicoe wishes, I think, that the whole of the cost should fall on the Government—and as the Government may well be the only people who have any money to pay for it, that may be the only practical solution.

EARL JELLICOE: I wonder whether I may correct my noble friend there. I was not suggesting that the whole of the cost should fall on the Government. It seems to me quite right that a percentage—say, 50 per cent.—of the anticipated cost should be borne by the householders themselves. That would stop frivolous use of this facility. But I was suggesting that the other 50 per cent. should be borne by the Government, rather than by the Airports Authority.

LORD HAWKE: I think I still differ slightly from my noble friend, because he wants half to fall on the Government and half to fall on the householder. I agree that a proportion must fall on the householder to stop frivolous use of the facility, but I also believe that some proportion must fall on this Airports Authority. After all, they are the only people who have any influence on the amount of noise created. If the cost of remedying the noise and the general nuisance created by aircraft is going to be imposed on a completely outside body, the Government, there will be no stimulus at all for the Authority to research into stopping noise and to draw up regulations, and so on, within the safety limits, to mitigate the noise of take-off.

I notice that all my noble friends talk about Heathrow, as if that is the only place that is likely to be involved; but there is Gatwick, as well. Up till fairly recently, Gatwick was a less noisy airport, because it was largely used by turboprops; but now the jets are creeping in, and certain people—though admittedly, the country under the immediate, rising path of these aircraft is not very populated—are going to suffer just as big a dose of noise as those people at the business end of the same thing at Heathrow. Therefore we must regard the unfortunate inhabitants near Gatwick as possible recipients. That makes me wonder whether my noble friend is not entirely right in thinking that the burden of the expense created by this Amendment is going to be very much greater than the Government imagine. I should like to support the other point made by my noble friend, that these facilities should definitely not be available in respect of houses not yet erected. Anybody who builds a house in what is known to be an aircraft path should remember the maxim, *Caveat emptor*, and should not be eligible for these facilities.

4.32 p.m.

LORD BESWICK: I shall do my best to answer the points that have been raised. I should have to make a very considerable speech if I were to answer all the details, but if I do miss any point I undertake to supplement what I say by explanation in writing. I think that the Government can be satisfied with the general welcome that has been given to this clause and I am sure that my right honourable friend in another place will be extremely pleased to hear the words that have been said in support of it.

[Lord Beswick.]

The first criticism made of the clause was that it was vague; but I think the principle we are discussing is clearly set out, and, of course, the details of this scheme will follow in the Statutory Instrument. I do not think the criticism now being made about vagueness will be valid when we have the Statutory Instrument. The principle criticism, as I understand it, is on the point that the Airports Authority should be made responsible for the payment of the grant. Who will pay? I must say that on this point I was a little surprised to hear noble Lords opposite make the criticism they did, because over the years previous Governments which they supported, and of which, in many cases, they have been members, have laid down quite clearly that civil aviation and air transport in this country should pay its way; that there should not be a hidden subsidy.

In the discussion that we had a year or so ago about the charges for *en route* information and navigation services, the Government of the day laid it down quite clearly that the obligation to provide these services should be placed on the airlines. I should have thought that this is exactly what we are now doing. We are placing on the airlines indirectly the cost of meeting this sound-proofing, this endeavour to go some way, at any rate, to meet the inconvenience we are placing on the citizens around London Airport.

There is another point here. It was said that the Wilson Committee had laid down that the Treasury should pay. But I think that if the noble Earl, Lord Jellicoe, refreshes him memory, and reads again the relevant paragraphs, he will see that the Wilson Report by no means emphasises the obligation of the Treasury in this matter. The Committee talk about a balance of consideration; they discuss the arguments in favour of placing the burden on the local authorities, or on the Treasury or on the airlines. While it is true that they came down in favour of placing the burden on the Government, the wording they use does not suggest that they felt strongly about this. The Report says:

> "The grant to help to ameliorate the present situation might appropriately come from the Government."

With that certainly lukewarm recommendation, plus the policy of the previous Governments, I should have thought that the present Government were justified in saying that the Authority and the airlines which they serve, and who will benefit from this provision, ought to make a contribution towards the cost. In fact, of course, the cost will be shared. The householder or tenant will make a contribution; the authority will be making a contribution; and the local authority, too, it is expected, or hoped, will be making a contribution, because upon them will be the responsibility for the administration of this scheme.

The other question I was asked was when the Statutory Instrument would be laid. It is expected that it will be laid some time in the autumn, after the Authority has been established; it could not be laid before it was established. Then we had discussion about the area within which these grants will be paid and I was asked whether the area could be varied. The fact is that the Statutory Instrument which will define the area cannot be varied. No doubt there will be great discussion as to whether it is right to have the area drawn in the way it is proposed; but, as I say, the Instrument itself will not be capable of variation. But if a case is made for extending the area it will be perfectly possible for the Government to lay another Instrument, and thus meet the wish of Parliament if there is a majority in favour of different boundary lines.

I ought to emphasise here that the boundaries now proposed are rather more generous than the proposals made by the Wilson Committee. The local government boundaries, of course, do not coincide with the line drawn based on this NNI figure, but the doubt in all cases, or the considerable majority, has been in favour of the new boundary line so that more people will be brought into the scheme than was originally proposed.

I was asked whether the establishments such as hospitals and schools would come into this scheme. The answer is, No. There is no provision in this Amendment, and there will be no provision in the proposed Statutory Instrument for making grants towards the cost of sound-proofing schools or hospitals. But, of course, the hospital management committees themselves have the power to sound-proof buildings, and so have the education committees; and in at least one

case, so far, a school building in the area has been sound-proofed.

There was also the question whether the mind of the Government was completely closed so far as the reference to Heathrow only is concerned, and whether it will be possible in the future to extend this provision to other airports. So far as the present Amendment is concerned (though it is open to the Government in the future to extend the provisions) this is not, as my noble friend said, the intention now, or in the foreseeable future. Heathrow is undoubtedly a special case; the difference between the nuisance at Heathrow and elsewhere is considerable, and it is not expected that this margin of difference will be closed in the foreseeable future; although the power will be there for extending the area of the grant in future if it were thought necessary. I think my answer is that the mind of the Government, though not closed finally, is unlikely to be much more widely opened.

LORD HAWKE: May I interrupt the noble Lord?—this is very important for the people living around Gatwick. The noble Lord says that power exists in the Bill to extend the provision at Gatwick, but that the Government have no intention of doing so at the moment. Surely he can go no further than saying "at the moment". We do not know what the situation may be in five years' time.

LORD BESWICK: I think that I said "in the foreseeable future". This boundary line and this recommendation from the Wilson Committee and from a further study of the problem are based upon the fact that the problem around Heathrow is immeasurably worse than that to be found around Prestwick or Gatwick or, so far as we know, around the third London airport.

I was asked some questions about the costs involved. I must say that I accept the anxiety expressed by the noble Earl, Lord Jellicoe, and other noble Lords, about this apparent placing of an additional financial burden upon the Authority. It will be an additional financial burden but, looked at in perspective, it is not a crushing burden. The amount involved is £2½ million, amortised, it is suggested, over a period of twenty years, making an annual liability of £220,000. Althongh one may have reservations about the accuracy of the estimates that have been placed before the House of the revenue of the Authority and the surplus that is expected, all I can say on that point is that, although the noble Earl may have his ideas and I may have my ideas, the figures that have been placed before the House are based on estimates of the experts who examined this question, and I think that we have to accept that the likelihood would be that there would be a surplus as calculated and within the surplus it will be possible to absorb this £220,000.

I was going to give a breakdown of the financial situation. In the first five years, the Authority's capital expenditure, as estimated at the moment, will amount to £34 million, exclusive of these payments for sound-proofing grants. In this period, the cash available to the Authority, it is estimated, will be £23 million and the difference of £11 million will have to be found by borrowing from the Minister. If we add to this £11 million the initial capital debt of £54 million, the total borrowing will be £65 million. This leaves a margin of £5 million as between this estimate and the £70 million for which we are making provision, and I would have thought it reasonable to suggest that this £2½ million can be absorbed within the margin for which we are making provision.

EARL JELLICOE: I am really puzzled on this point. As the noble Lord knows, we went into this carefully on Committee stage and I voiced my doubts about whether the borrowing ceiling, although fixed at £70 million, was adequate, given other possible commitments. I was told then, and have been told again, that all these calculations have been most carefully made by the Government. What I should like to know is, when those calculations were made, did they include this extra £2½ million?

LORD BESWICK: The answer to the question is, no, it is not included, but what was provided was a margin for contingency.

EARL JELLICOE: Surely, if £70 million was the right ceiling then and

[Earl Jellicoe.]
another £2½ million burden is placed on the Authority, £72½ million is now the right ceiling—is that not so?

4.44 p.m.

LORD BESWICK: The provision is for a margin of £5 million for contingencies, and this is a contingency which will cost £2½ million. But I think that I should remind the noble Earl that we are not here laying down a definite and final figure. If, before the end of the five years, the Authority is able to make out a case for an additional loan, it will be possible for it to come to Parliament to get permission for an additional amount to be raised. We are not placing any final limit upon borrowing powers. We have said that, on the basis of the best calculations available, the £70 million should last it for four or five years. It may well be a good thing that, after three or four years, the Authority, if it has had additional responsibilities placed upon it, may want to make its case, may want Parliament to know what is happening, may want Parliament to know the details and discuss them in the course of making an application for additional loan. Therefore, although in the event it may well be that within five years the provision which has been made will be found inadequate, no real damage is done to the Authority. It will simply mean that it will come to the Treasury and then to Parliament for additional borrowing power.

The question was raised of what was being done in connection with reducing noise at source. To some extent the answer was given in the exchanges during the Committee stage in this House. This is a matter in which I know a number of noble Lords, and certainly I myself, have been greatly interested over recent years. I am certain that the only really satisfactory solution is to get a reduction in noise at source. We are assured that there is no financial limit upon the research which is now being done into various possibilities of damping the noise at the engine's source. I think that I can claim, however, now that there is this financial obligation to provide soundproofing if the noise level remains as it is or if it increases, that this probably will be an additional stimulus to research. The Government have taken part in discussions at international level and I would have thought that, as a result of this additional obligation, there will be an additional attempt to get some sort of co-operation in research or exchange of research at international level in order to find some solution to the engine problem.

I was asked whether a householder, having made an application for grant and having been turned down, would have any posibility of appeal. Of course, this would depend upon the reason for the grant's being turned down. If the householder was outside the geographical area delineated by the Statutory Instrument, then, of course, there would be no appeal. But if the application was refused because the grant was based upon a sound-proofing scheme not up to the standards required, there is an obligatiou upon the Authority to state in writing why they have rejected the claim, and it would be perfectly possible for the householder to make an objection and put in another claim. There is no provision for any other appeal procedure.

THE EARL OF SELKIRK: The noble Lord means that the agreement will terminate between the householder, on the one hand, aud the Airports Authority, on the other?

LORD BESWICK: Yes; excepting that in between we shall have the local authority. It will be the representatives of the local authority who inspect the property and decide whether the soundproofing is in accordance with the standards required. I have no doubt that over the area the representatives of the local authority will not only be inspectors in this matter, but will also be advisers; and I should have thought that there would be a lot of exchanges as between the local authority and the owner or occupier of the property.

I think I have answered the greater part of the questions which have been put to me. We are dealing with an extremely complicated problem. It is a problem which will have additional repercussions. Having had some little experience myself of the householders in the area, I can say that, taken by and large, they are a very tenacious body of citizens, and I can well see that there will be many of them not provided for in this Amendment who will want to put their case.

I would hope that noble Lords on both sides of the House and Members of another place would accept some responsibility in this matter. Earlier today, if I may be allowed to say so to your Lordships, I thought the contributions made were on a most restrained and responsible level. It would be possible to inflame or exaggerate all the difficulties, and it would be possible to stimulate arguments and controversy in this area around Heathrow. But we are dealing with a serious social problem. It is not, in any sense, I should have thought, a Party political problem. It should be possible to put over to the people concerned, those who come within the area and those who are just outside it, the point which I think was well made by my right honourable friend in another place—namely, that if we are invited to do everything we shall end up doing nothing. We are endeavouring to go as far as is reasonable, and to the extent that we have been supported in this by noble Lords in this House, I am sure the Government will be greatly obliged.

THE EARL OF GOSFORD: Before the noble Lord sits down, he mentioned that one of the reasons why the Airports Authority should pay this money, and not the Government, was the question of hidden subsidy. As I understand a subsidy, hidden or otherwise, it must be of financial benefit to an organisation and help it in its operation. I cannot see that the sound-proofing of housing outside an airfield can in any way help either the aircraft companies or the airport itself in their operations, unless, of course, the present limitations on take-off, for instance, and on the numbers of flights in 24 hours, will eventually be completely removed when all houses which need it have been sound-proofed.

I should like to mention one other point to which I did not get an answer —and it is my fault really, because I did not put the question properly—and which I think was also mentioned by my noble friend Lord Selkirk. If houses are to be built in future, will the Airports Authority pay £100 towards each house erected in future if it has sound-proofing in it?

LORD BESWICK: With regard to the last point, I am sorry I did not answer the question, but it was made clear in the original Statement made in this House by my noble friend Lord Shackleton, and also made in another place, that these grants will be payable in respect of existing private dwellings and those completed by January 1, 1966, and confined to owners or residents in the defined area by that date. The work must be completed by December 31, 1970, when the scheme will come to an end.

THE EARL OF GOSFORD: Could that not go into the Bill? That would, at least, tie it up.

LORD BESWICK: It could go into the Bill; but then I should have thought you would be restricting activity in the future. I was asked by the noble Earl, Lord Selkirk, if the mind of the Government was completely closed, and if that went into the Bill, one's mind would be completely closed in that respect.

There was then the other question about the responsibility being placed on the Authority. There is here, I think, an additional argument. There is no similar obligation on, for example, the airport authority of New York. But I did go round the area of New York earlier this week, and as we went over some of the buildings my pilot said, "From this community we have a lawsuit, and from that community over there we are expecting a lawsuit, in respect of noise." They are very concerned. What the outcome of these legal proceedings will be they do not know. But in the case of London, or in the case of the Airports Authority, there is no possibility of bringing a Common Law action. Parliament has by Act of Parliament removed this possibility, and because citizens have not that right in Common Law to bring a case, it is felt that there is this additional moral obligation to try to ameliorate the inconvenience and suffering that is caused.

4.56 p.m.

LORD DRUMALBYN: May I put to the noble Lord a question that has been rather troubling me? I think a great deal of the discussion we have had this afternoon has been on the point of who should bear that part of the cost which is not to fall on the householder. I should have thought it was a general principle that you pass on a charge to an authority only if they can in turn recover that charge in some reasonable

[Lord Drumalbyn.]

manner, so that the method of distribution of that charge is rational. Logically, if you are putting a charge on the Authority in respect of noise, the charge should be recovered in relation to the noise made—there is no other fair means that I can see of doing it—because, otherwise, you will not achieve the object that my noble friend Lord Hawke had in mind, that the charge should help the suppression of noise. I should like to ask the noble Lord this question. I think he would agree that it would be unreasonable and unfair that owners of aircraft in which noise had been successfully reduced should pay the same charge as owners of comparable aircraft in which it had not been reduced. Can the noble Lord say, as a matter of expert judgment, whether a decibel rating is practicable? Can this charge be passed on on a fair basis? I think this would influence the opinion of noble Lords on this side of the Committee. If the charge cannot be passed on on a fair basis, that would be a good reason why the Government should bear the charge. This, I think, is one of the points that have been worrying us on this side of the Committee.

LORD BESWICK: In the first place, we are setting up an Airports Authority. The point has been made strongly from the Benches opposite that this Authority should have a degree of independence. On that principle, I stand. I do not think we should tell the Authority exactly how they should recover this £220,000 a year. I should have thought it was obvious that if it is impossible to absorb the liability within the surplus about which we were speaking earlier, then the Authority naturally would have to think about the possibility of increasing, for example, landing fees on aircraft landing at night.

I was asked whether it was possible to differentiate as between one aircraft and another in respect of noise level. The answer is that it is so possible, and in fact there is now a known rating of all aircraft relating to the noise they generate. That technically would be possible. I cannot commit the Airports Authority to saying that they will do anything along those lines. I should add that the air transport operators and the airline industry generally have taken to a fine art this question of promotional fares or promotional charges. They want to encourage flights at a given time of the day or night, and they make a charge or a fare in accordance with their desire to promote traffic. I should have thought it would be technically possible to devise a system of landing fees in accordance with the nuisance the aircraft generate. I am only putting this forward as a technical possibility. I have no authority for saying this will be done

EARL JELLICOE: I do not wish to detain your Lordships much longer on this matter, but, as several noble Lords have said, this is a complicated and important matter, and it is one in which the Government are breaking new ground; and I am quite certain we have been right to give it detailed attention this afternoon. The noble Lord said that the Government could feel satisfied with the reception his Amendment has received. I am glad he feels that, and I should like to thank him for the explanation which he has given of this Amendment, but I should add that I am not entirely satisfied in two respects with his explanation, and perhaps I may briefly mention them. The first is that he will recall that I referred to the vagueness of this enabling measure, and, following the noble Lord, I made suggestions about the amount of this grant (to which my noble friend Lord Selkirk drew attention) and as to who would be responsible for paying the non-householders' share. Both those principles, which are important matters, should be spelled out in the enabling measure itself.

The noble Lord said, if I recall him correctly—and I am paraphrasing—that we need not worry about this, and that it will be gone into in great detail in the Statutory Instrument. That is so, no doubt. But, surely, he is missing the point, because the difficulty is that with a Statutory Instrument we can only accept or reject it. We all like the principle behind this Bill. We should not wish to reject a Statutory Instrument giving effect to it. Therefore, I submit that in these important respects it would be wise to include the main principles in the enabling measure itself, and I hope that the noble Lord, between now and Report stage, will be prepared at least to give consideration to that point of view.

The second matter about which I am far from satisfied is his statement about the Government's not bearing a share of this new financial burden. He asked me to refresh my memory about the Wilson Committee. It was not really necessary, because I had refreshed my memory and, indeed, was quoting from it, or sticking very closely to its words in my remarks. The noble Lord said that the Wilson Committee was lukewarm in its recommendation. That may or may not be so—it depends on how one interprets the English language. He said there was a balance of argument. Of course, in a matter like this there is a balance of considerations, and it is not surprising that the Wilson Committee should have given the pros and cons. But they came down quite specifically for the Government's bearing this extra burden, rightly or wrongly.

They were far from lukewarm in what they said about those whom the noble Lord suggested should bear this burden, who must be either the airline operators or the passengers. So far as the airline operators are concerned, the Wilson Committee said:

" . . . but the subsequent attempts to restrict the nuisance have placed considerable financial penalities on the airlines, who might well be thought to have made their financial contribution to the lessening of the nuisance."

As for the passengers, they said:

"Nor can present airline passengers be expected to pay for past mistakes."

That seems perfectly clear-cut. The nohle Lord also referred to a possible contribution—I presume he did not mean financial contribution—by the local authorities. On that the Wilson Committee said:

"There seems to be little to be said for requiring a contribution from the local authorities."

I do not think these are lukewarm statements. I think they are perfectly clear cut, and as for the burden falling on the Government, I have quoted what the Wilson Committee themselves said.

Perhaps we can leave this particular aspect of the matter to a later occasion. On this occasion, I feel it would be wrong of me to say that I have been convinced by what the noble Lord has said on these two points. I hope he can give some further consideration to them, and I should like to reserve the right to come back to them if necessary on Report stage.

LORD BESWICK: Of course, it would be less than gracious if I did not say that we will look at what has been said, and I am sure that the Government generally will acknowledge that in this matter the last word has not been spoken. I cannot undertake that there will be any change. I ought to make it clear about the local authority contribution. I said that that would be in kind. It was hoped that their administration of the scheme would be carried out without payment. It was that that I was construing as a contribution.

On Question, Amendment agreed to.

Remaining clauses agreed to.

Schedule 1 agreed to.

Schedule 2 [*Transfer of the four aerodromes*]:

5.6 p.m.

VISCOUNT STUART OF FINDHORN moved, in the Title, to leave out "Aerodromes" and insert "Airports". The noble Viscount said: I do not want to strain the intelligence of your Lordships too much. If you read my first Amendment you need not bother to read the following Amendments, because they are identical, and I hope it will be for the convenience of your Lordships if I move the four together. I have already deliberately omitted to move the Amendment on the new clause which we have just been discussing because I did not wish to interrupt an interesting and important debate on this problem of noise nuisance.

I think that the objects I have in mind are perfectly simple. The maddening thing is that, having sat here listening for the last couple of hours, I have now been reading backwards and find that I should have moved many Amendments on Clauses 1 and 2 of the Bill. So I suppose the Government's answer to me may be, "You let them go, and we suppose you approve of the use of the word 'aerodrome'". The truth of the matter is, as I want to make clear, that I do not approve, and I will briefly give my reasons.

This Bill is entitled "Airports Authority Bill," so, in the fewest of words, my real object is to ask the Government why, having named the Bill "Airports Authority Bill," they then revert to the use of the word "aerodrome" in Schedule 2 and, as I now

[Viscount Stuart of Findhorn.]

find, in other parts of the Bill. The late lamented Sir Winston Churchill said to me some years ago, when I once used the word " aerodrome " in his presence, " You must on no account use that word; it is a foreign word. You may say ' airport ' or ' airfield '." Here we have " airport ". Why do we now go back to " aerodrome "? I admit that I have not the latest edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary,* but I have the two-volume edition dated 1933, and I cannot find any reference to the word " aerodrome ", which I think must be a modern foreign importation.

LORD SNOW: It is very old—all but obsolete.

VISCOUNT STUART OF FINDHORN: I shall have to get a new dictionary. At any rate, I am quite prepared to be corrected on that point. I only wish to say that I think it is worth while preserving and using the English language, and " airport " is a good English word. That is in the Title of the Bill, and I hope that the Government will consider the Amendment of the Bill wherever the word " aerodrome " appears and will substitute for it the word " airport." That is really all I need say. I do not wish to delay the progress of the Bill in the least, and I beg to move.

Amendment moved—

Page 24, line 10, leave out (" aerodromes ") and insert (" airports ").—(*Viscount Stuart of Findhorn.*)

EARL JELLICOE: I should like very briefly to support what my noble friend has said. In so doing I should like to hazard a guess that his *Oxford Dictionary* is not old enough, because I looked up the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* in your Lordships' Library, and under "Aerodrome, 1901," was given:

" A course for the use of flying machines."

And in 1902:

" a tract of level ground from which aeroplanes or airships can start."

The definiton of " airport " was

" A place containing an aerodrome at which flying machines start on or land from their voyages."

It is that second definition on which I should like to rest in support of my noble friend, because it seems to me that the airports which we have in mind in this Bill are not merely just courses or tracts of land. They are places containing courses or tracts of land from which aeroplanes and those in them depart, or at which they arrive. It seems to me that " airport " is the larger conception, embracing possibly these much-maligned aerodromes, and that " airport " is the proper term to be applied to the sort of institutions we are talking about in this Bill.

LORD BESWICK: I must say that one of the most agreeable features of this Bill we have discussed is the argument we have had about the use of words. In exactly the same way as I myself prefer the words " initial ", " start " or " begin " to the word " commence ", I personally feel that we ought to use the word " airport " instead of " aerodrome ". Having said that, however, I am sorry to have to add that I cannot accept the noble Lord's Amendment. I assure him that I am not being awkward about this simply because he did not raise the question earlier in the course of our proceedings. I agree with him on two points that " airport " is the better word: it is more compact, and more English; and I should have thought that it expressed much more precisely what people mean when they are talking about the facility we are discussing in this Bill.

I would also agree with the noble Viscount that if we are asking Parliament to consider an Airports Authority Bill, for the purpose of setting up a British Airports Authority, it would be natural, reasonable and sensible in the context to refer to an " airport " rather than to an " aerodrome ". But I am afraid that on this point we move beyond what is natural, reasonable and sensible, and into the field of law and legal matters; and when we get into that field I am assured that " aerodrome " has a special meaning—though not the meaning put forward by the noble Earl, Lord Jellicoe. In fact, it is the more comprehensive of the two terms. The term " aerodrome " is defined in the Civil Aviation Act, 1949, and in the Air Navigation Order, 1960. The definition is widened in Clause 22 of this Bill to include a roof-top heliport. But the original definition, despite what the *Oxford Dictionary* may say, is: any area of land or water designed, equipped, set

apart or commonly used for affording facilities for the landing and departure of aircraft. It is that meaning which it is intended to imply in this Bill. The legal authorities say that it would be difficult and would lead to confusion if we had the term "aerodrome" in some of the earlier Statutes and now reverted to "airport".

There is just one other point. As I have said, the term "aerodrome" is more comprehensive than "airport". In the Chicago Couvention, "airport" is used to describe an aerodrome which handles international traffic and has Customs facilities. It is just possible that this Authority will be required, or will wish, to acquire or to set up an establishment which is not used for international traffic and probably does not have Customs facilities. Therefore, although I have the utmost sympathy with the noble Viscount, and should very much like to accept his Amendment, I am afraid that I must ask him to withdraw it.

THE EARL OF SELKIRK: Having heard the noble Lord, Lord Beswick, speak, I must say that I am convinced that my noble friend is right. The simplest way of getting round the legal problem is to put an additional phrase in the Interpretation Clause. That presents absolutely no difficulty. If I may say so, the description of an aerodrome in Clause 22 seems to me rather inadequate. It deals simply with the landing and taking off of aircraft, whereas we know that there are a great many other things, such as car parks, passenger facilities, and so on, which I, in my ignorance, may regard as incorporated in the word "airport", though not in the word "aerodrome". The simplest thing is to put in the word "airport", say that "airport" means "aerodrome" and then define it. The noble Lord, of course, wants to be natural and sensible in this matter and not legal. I appreciate his point. But, frankly, "airport" is the much more normal word to be used in present-day English.

LORD AIREDALE: On reflection, does not the Minister think that he has given his whole case away when he mentioned that two earlier Statutes used the word "aerodrome", and that the term is now being used in this Bill in a different and, as he told us, widened sense? There is something to be said for saying that the same word shall be used in all Acts of Parliament, that it means the same thing; and there is a great deal to be said for the idea that if you look up the word "aerodrome" in one Act of Parliament you have its meaning for every Act of Parliament in which the word is used. But if you are going to use in this Bill the word "aerodrome" as meaning something different from the word "aerodrome" used in two other Statutes which the noble Lord mentioned to us just now, surely here is an opportunity for getting on to a different word and introducing the word "airport", which is obviously the appropriate word to use in an Airports Authority Bill.

LORD LEATHERLAND: May I make the shortest speech your Lordships have ever heard? Could we not get over this difficulty by calling the Bill the Airports and Aerodromes Authority Bill?

VISCOUNT STUART OF FINDHORN: I am very grateful to my noble friends Lord Jellicoe and Lord Selkirk for their support and also to the Minister for his reply, which enlightened me, but only up to a point, as to why he cannot accept my Amendment. I do not know whether I agree with the last speaker. I applaud the brevity of his speech, but it would be making the title of the Bill very much longer and complicated. And I recall that another of the late Sir Winston Churchill's remarks, in the course of his education of me as regards the English language, is that one should never use a long word where a shorter word will convey the meaning. The word "airport" is shorter than "aerodrome", and I therefore adhere to "airport".

I feel that our legal friends and the draftsmen might object to admitting that they were wrong—because nobody likes to admit he is wrong. But I hope that at least this short debate may draw their attention to this point, so that perhaps in future Bills, if not in further stages of this Bill, attention may be paid to the views I have expressed. That will save the trouble of going, say, to the Ministry of Transport and asking them to alter all the signposts out to Heathrow from "London Airport" to "London Aerodrome", and the very

[Viscount Stuart of Findhorn.]
considerable—and quite unnecessary—expense and great nuisance. But in view of what has been said, I beg leave to withdraw my Amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

On Question, Schedule 2 agreed to.

Remaining Schedules agreed to.

On Question, Whether the Title shall be agreed to?

LORD HAWKE: I regret that the Government did not take any notice of my suggestion that they should reverse the initials of this body, because I still think it is very unfortunate to create a new organisation with the initials B.A.A. From time to time we shall have complaints about the quality of our airports, their efficiency and the like, and we shall find the newspapers printing the reply "B.A.A. Bleats again". It would be much better to reverse it and call it A.A.B.

LORD BESWICK: I am sure there will be no harm done in saying that we will have another look at this. I do not quite know what the pronunication of the initials would be if we did reverse them. They would not look any more dignified, I would suggest. I agree that B.A.A. is an awkward contraction. "B. double-A." is probably the reference we shall make to this body. On the other hand, I do assure him that, both in the other place and here, very careful attention was given to the various alternative names, and when one saw them all lined up the balance of advantage was for British Airports Authority. Nevertheless, having said that, I say that we can have another look at what has been said.

Title agreed to.

House resumed; Bill reported with Amendments.

WORLD SUPPLIES OF TIN

5.22 p.m.

LORD ARWYN asked Her Majejsty's Government: What steps they are taking to provide for the situation that will arise as a result of the rapid depletion of world sources of tin? The noble Lord said: My Lords, may I claim your Lordships' indulgence for the courtesy which is the tradition of your Lordships' House on these occasions? We now come down from the problems of aviation to mining, from the blue heavens to the darkest depths; but it is another problem caused by the advancement in our standards of living. I am asking what steps are Her Majesty's Government taking to provide for the situation that will arise as a result of the rapid decline of world supplies of tin? A programme on B.B.C. Television on Monday last, and an article in the *Financial Times* on March 4 last, also drew attention to this subject.

The increase in demand is, of course, compatible with the rising standards of living. The world shortfall is already getting near 25,000 tons a year. The gap has been bridged by releases from United States disposable strategic stockpiles. Our old international buffer stocks were exhausted before 1961, and the price per ton of tin has since jumped from £900 to £1,300. Since September, 1962, releases from the United States stockpile have totalled some 51,000 tons, leaving a disposable surplus of only 98,000 tons. Even assuming there is no further leap in consumption, all remaining disposable stocks will be completely exhausted within four to five years. We shall then be faced with this serious and increasing gap between production and consumption, which will cause serious disruption to all tin-consuming industries throughout the world, and particularly in this country.

The International Tin Council, who are a very responsible body, also consider the situation to be very serious and have decided to set up two working parties to study production problems, administrative as well as technical. There is a definite danger of international allocations of tin rationing in the near future, and we in this country are in a highly vulnerable position. We produce about 1,200 tons a year and we consume 21,000 tons. This gap of 20,000 tons costs us

at present over £25 million a year to import.

May I again draw your Lordships' attention to another of the *Financial Times* statements? It is that 75 per cent. of world tin supplies come from countries which must be regarded at present as politically unstable. I would also point out that there is a rapid depletion of the once rich alluvial deposits of Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia, which together are at present contributing 63 per cent. of world production. And the progress of industrialisation in all producing countries could eventnally lead to the consumption of much of their own tin production.

In Cornwall for the 30 years between 1860 and 1890 our average annual production was over 9,000 tons. To-day, I would remind your Lordships, it is only 1,200 tons. We were at that time exporters of tin, producing more than we consumed. The reason for the gradual, and later the rapid, decline in production in Cornwall was not the exhanstion of our resources: it was competition from the very low cost overseas alluvial deposits. In the circumstances, it was not possible for any but the well-managed mines, those with ample reserves of payable ore, to survive. In spite of this disastrous competition, Cornish tin mining has survived without the kind of Government support and encouragement given in other countries.

As far back as 1937, as President of the Institute of Cornish Mining Engineers, I drew attention in my Presidential address to the need for a thorough appraisal of our long-term productive capacity. In view of the imminent peril of war it was also necessary to plan for higher production at short notice, in case we suffered from shipping losses, as we did in the First War. In April, 1938, the Institute sent a delegation to the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, supported by all the Cornish Members from the other place. All we asked for was Government support to peg the price of tin, in order that we could budget for the increased output which would be required of us, as in the First War. We were shocked by the failure of the Minister concerned to grasp the position. That Minister's record, as many noble Lords will remember, was far from brilliant. He told us, rather curtly, that our total production for three years could be exceeded in one single shipment from Nigeria. Submarines did not exist, apparently, in his pattern of thinking.

My Lords, to-day we are worried about the loss of production, not the loss of cargoes; but we are still up against the same attitude and, I suggest, another time limit. Back in 1946, the Labour Government, realising the importance of assessing our own mineral resources, set up the Minerals Development Committee, under the chairmanship of the late Lord Westwood. I had the honour to serve under him. We put in some three years hard work on a detailed survey, which of course included tin as one major item. Our Report of July, 1949, included certain recommendations. If these had been adopted they would have encouraged the production of the tin we now need. But in 1951, there was a change of Government, and we soon realised that we were back to square one. We were most disappointed.

The Minerals Development Committee in 1949 had reported favourably on our pleas for tax relief, on our problems in regard to the complexities of mineral rights, and on the need for an intensive geological survey. Their Report also confirmed our conclusions on the danger of the increasing rate of depletion in world tin reserves. This was sixteen years ago. We can assume that in Cornwall most of the good-grade lodes detectable on the surface have been worked out, so that we have to drill for deep-lode formations which do not outcrop on the surface.

To start a new modern tin mine of moderate output at least £1 million must be available. But before this sum is spent, a long and costly period of geological exploration is necessary, with drilling on a large scale, followed by the sinking of an exploratory shaft and driving to prove the lodes. All this will cost between £200,000 and £250,000 before spending the £1 million or entering into a long-term lease. Assuming that an attractive yield of ore is revealed, the next problem is to consider the effects of taxation. Even a proved and attractive mineral deposit would have to be abandoned if the tax burden were too heavy. Make no mistake about that. Mining companies are not philanthropists.

[Lord Arwyn.]

From 1951 onwards we have continued our appeals to Conservative Governments. They were made by the Cornish Mining and Development Association, supported jointly by the Cornish Institute of Mining Engineers and the Cornish Chamber of Mines. These are all non-political bodies. They wanted the Government to revise taxation incentives in order to compete on equal terms with the mineral producing countries overseas. The standard reply has always been, with suitable variations, that we were seeking preferential treatment for tin mining which could encourage similar requests by other industries, and that the tax allowance available to the prospector and the mining operator provided all the inducements which the mining industry could reasonably expect.

On June 20, 1961, my right honourable friend the Prime Minister, who was at that time Shadow Chancellor, moved an Amendment to the Finance Bill (OFFICIAL REPORT, Commons, Vol. 642, col. 1513) to exempt from the profits tax the profits of a non-ferrous metal mine for 36 months from the day on which the mine was brought into commercial operation. I would recommend noble Lords to read this comprehensive speech. It covers the whole question minutely, with all the relevant details, and it was supported by all the Cornish Members and at least one Devon Member. The Chancellor of the Exchequer seemed impressed, but it all ended as before, and so the industry has had to continue its fight.

A serious reappraisal of the deeper tin lodes of Cornwall by the large international deep mining corporations is now being carried out on selected sites. The head of one of these corporations wrote an article in the *Tin International* in August, 1964, entitled "The Disincentive of Mining Taxation in the U.K." In it he described Cornwall, not as a depressed worked-out area—a description used by those who know nothing about mining—but as a well-endowed and underdeveloped area that invites intensive and imaginative exploration if the investment climate competes with conditions elsewhere. He quotes Ireland, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ghana, Iran and Canada as examples of countries employing these sensible tax-holiday incentives. He also states,

> 'You people in Britain still live in the potato age. Even Ireland has shown you the way to dig deeper for the riches which lie below."

This is what we in Cornwall have been saying for thirty years.

In spite of our taxation obstacles, the big mining corporations are pushing ahead with exploration, hoping that Britain will, before it is too late, see the wisdom of a tax-holiday incentive in mining and equal inducements with other Commonwealth countries. Altogether they have already spent over £500,000 in deep drilling in the tin-bearing rocks of Cornwall. But exploration, in mining terms, is like research in other industries—it is only the prelude to production, financed from a fund expendable anywhere. The results, as I have mentioned earlier, have to be considered with other factors. One of the essential factors is examination of the tax incentives in the country being explored.

Another important step to regain lost time is to establish the rightful ownership of mineral rights. The present difficulties in establishing ownership lead inevitably to endless negotiations before capital can be invested, even for the initial exploratory programme. Failure to identify the ownership of minerals means that under the present laws a considerable portion of the mineral wealth of the country is sterilised. A simple piece of legislation is required making it compulsory for every mineral owner, within an advertised time, to establish and define his ownership, and to declare his intentions as to development. We should consider most seriously a suggestion made in a memorandum written for the Cornish Chamber of Mines, that a tribunal be set up, roughly on the same lines as the Agricultural Lands Tribunal. I have no experience of that Tribunal, but I am putting this forward as a suggestion. This might not only accelerate the investment of the necessary capital to operate in the revival of our mining industry but also ensure that the rightful owners receive their just rewards. Appeals made to the tribunal would be in cases where the ownership could not be established or when an owner refused to grant a lease on reasonable terms. Noble Lords will know that this takes a long time, and it is most cumbersome. Unless our own production is attended to quickly, I think we are going to be in a jam.

As a final summary, world demand exceeds production, and the United States disposable strategic stockpile, the last reserves, will be exhausted in less than five years. Unless our own production increases we are therefore bound to suffer. Cornwall can produce many times the present output, but it takes five to eight years to develop a mine from exploration to production, and we shall need several mines using the latest techniques now available to us, plus the expertise of those big international mining corporations which are experienced in deep-scale mining all over the world. Our mines are shallow.

I must declare my interests, and they are as follows. I have spent many years in Cornwall, and, although I am a mining engineer, I hold no office or any investment in tin or in any tin-mining company, but I am familiar with the problems of the country. I think that your Lordships are entitled to have that declaration before I finish.

My Lords, you are now, I hope, impregnated with the key words "tax incentives", "registration of mineral rights", and "equality with other countries"—not the usual "too little and too late" palliatives. There is one other important factor—the revival of tin mining as a basic industry with its ancillaries. Cornwall can be an international metallurgical and geological centre. This is very important in our technological age. This small area has one of the highest concentrations in the world in its range of minerals. The word "toot" has always interested me. It means a short blast. I am more familiar with blasting, but I hope that my first toot on this tin trumpet will sound the alarm, and that Her Majesty's Government will respond by taking early action. I assure your Lordships that we have for a long time been sitting on a tin time-bomb.

5.42 p.m.

LORD FRASER OF LONSDALE: My Lords, I must declare an interest, as I am the chairman of a company which refines and smelts tin in the United Kingdom in a substantial way. When I was in the House of Commons, on many occasions in the last twenty years I joined with other Members on all sides of the House in attempting to persuade successive Governments to do exactly what my noble friend opposite has been asking them to do to-day. We were not wholly unsuccessful, though usually we were disappointed.

It cannot be gainsaid that it would be of great advantage to the economy of Britain if we could get some of our own indigenous tin into use instead of allowing it to remain in the depths of the earth. Probably the present high price of tin is the most important factor for bringing out local tin, but if a tax holiday and the legislation which the noble Lord opposite asks for could be facilitated, it would make it even easier still. I think that I am right in saying that only about 100,000 tons of tin is used in the whole world in one year; therefore not a great deal of tin is required to redress the balance. There is new tin now being found in South-West Africa which may prove to be very considerable; and there is some tin being found in Canada. I do not think the situation is quite as bleak as the noble Lord suggests, or that we shall find ourselves without any tin should the American stockpile, or that part of it which they are prepared to release, run out. Nevertheless, it is a serious matter, and British industry needs this tin. No motor car or aeroplane can be made without a little tin. Tin is required for the canning of foods—some foods cannot otherwise be canned than with the use of tin. And so far no very effective substitute for tin has been found.

I join with the noble Lord, Lord Arwyn, in pleading with the Government to do these two simple things. The first is to give a tax holiday. The Treasury are always anxious not to lose money, and it will not lose money this time but will gain it. A new sort of wealth will be brought back to these Islands—a source of wealth upon which we relied in earlier times, but which we have not been able to use recently, except to a very limited extent. Therefore I thank the noble Lord very much for raising this subject and should like to express my appreciation of an eloquent maiden speech. I have known the noble Lord in the other place, but one would think from his manner that he had been here long enough to learn our ways. It will be a pleasure to all of us to hear him again on this and on other subjects.

5.46 p.m.

LORD HAWKE: My Lords, I am very glad that the noble Lord, Lord Arwyn, thought of making his maiden speech on this particular subject, and I am glad that I follow him, because I have always had the greatest respect for mining engineers. Therefore, to be able to congratulate a mining engineer on his maiden speech in this House gives me great pleasure. I trust that on the subject of other metals and minerals the noble Lord will on other occasions give us the benefit of his great experience.

This subject is of considerable national importance, though I agree with my noble friend Lord Fraser of Lonsdale that perhaps the noble Lord, Lord Arwyn, painted the position in rather too sombre tones. After all, although tin is required for many purposes, a number of other substitutes would soon be found if there were no tin. Nevertheless, it is much more convenient to deal with material one knows all about and to which one's machines are adapted than to allow oneself to run out of tin. When one surveys the fields over which the tin is mined, I think the noble Lord is perhaps a little optimistic in saying that only 75 per cent. of them are politically unstable.

I was interested to hear my noble friend Lord Fraser of Lonsdale say that there was tin in South West Africa (I had not heard of that), and also in Canada. I had always regarded the great hope for the future as possibly Siberia, because we do not know a great deal about that area. If Canada and South West Africa can come to our rescue, so much the better, but we know that Cornwall is stuffed full of metals. They are just not being mined because of the out-of-date taxation system of this country. This applies not only to tin but to copper, arsenic and all sorts of other minerals. They would all be mined on a much greater scale if we could bring our taxation into line with that of other countries which are more enlightened in this respect. Lode-mining in Cornwall is not going to be so easy as dredging up tin in Malaya. Nevertheless, it is within our sterling guarantee area, and therefore is that much more welcome. The Chancellor of the Exchequer a year or two ago made some slight concessions, as a result of which two more mines are being worked in Cornwall than was the case five or six years ago; but, as the noble Lord, Lord Arwyn, said, there could be more.

I join in exhorting the Chancellor of the Exchequer to look at this matter a great deal more carefully than Chancellors have done in the past. I would add something further which nobody has mentioned so far. Mining companies based on the United Kingdom investing in subsidiary mining companies all over the world have been the means of developing and bringing into the world's markets a great many of the minerals of the world. At the moment a heavy cloud hangs over them, because they do not know the intentions of the Chancellor and his economic advisers, intentions which are to be disclosed in two or three weeks' time. But if he wants minerals to be produced all over the world, he had better be certain that he is not dealing some death blow to them in the next Budget.

5.50 p.m.

LORD BROWN: My Lords, I should like to join in the tributes paid to the noble Lord, Lord Arwyn, on his maiden speech. I think it is very important that the House should have an opportunity of debating in this way issues such as he has presented to us to-day. Nobody can suggest that tin mining in Cornwall has the opportunity of being a large industry, relatively, in this country; yet it might be a very important one strategically. So we would express our gratitude to the noble Lord for bringing this subject before us. I would also add that I welcome very much his presence on this side of the House, swelling the number of those who have experience of the kind he has exhibited to us this afternoon.

May I preface my short contribution to this debate, by saying that I am chairman of a company which is a very large user of tin. We use about 700 tons of tin each year in the manufacture, largely, of bearings, and I well remember the difficulties in which we found ourselves during the last war when it became necessary very severely to restrict the use of tin in this way. Were this situation to come upon us again, I think it is true that modern technology, as the noble Lord, Lord Hawke, has reminded

us, can always provide a substitute; but substitutes can be, at times, extremely bothering and extremely expensive. So I regard the suggestion that has been made as essentially a sound one.

In addition to what has been said already, the production of an increased quantity of tin in Cornwall would certainly help our balance of trade. It seems likely—although I do not know the local circumstances—that if tin mines were opened up there we should find that a certain number of people in Cornwall were contributing to our unfortunate balance-of-trade position and to our economy, whereas if these mines were not opened up, they would not. But certainly every small piece of help that can be given to this long-standing and pressing problem is well worth our support.

It is likely that in the past the necessary attention has not been given to this subject because it is not a large industry, or one that can exert large pressures. There is a school of thought which one finds in various quarters in this country—and sometimes in very unexpected quarters—which always takes the standpoint that any artificial support to a particular industry is a bad thing. These are the people who are living in the past, and who, incidentally, still fall back on the basic argument associated with the international division of labour, deriving from the idea that one should always buy everything from its cheapest source. I think it is necessary for us, as an absolute principle, to stop thinking in that way.

I am never tired of pointing out to people who decry any form of preferential taxation treatment, or decry any form of import duty, that some of our most successful industries in this country would probably not be in the position they are to-day, had there not been supports of this sort; for example, the motor industry, which still benefits from a 33⅓ per cent. import duty. I have been to Australia once or twice, and I am sometimes amazed at the contradiction of these old economic ideas which is exhibited by an economy that has succeeded in growing a very successful series of second industries behind enormous tariff barriers.

I think the argument for this sort of support for the production of tin in this country, for the use of a national asset which has lain waste for many years, the use of which could benefit our balance of trade, is a very strong one indeed. That is particularly so if, as seems probable, the sort of concession on profits tax which has been suggested (and I do not know whether this would be adequate or practicable) is given. And, of course, the consequence to the Exchequer of such a concession would be beneficial, rather than costly, if these companies started making a profit on which income tax could be claimed.

The other suggestion which the noble Lord has made, concerned with the necessity of registering ownership of these mineral assets, seems to be one based on such clear common-sense as to make me wonder why attention has not been given to it before. My Lords, having made this contribution, I should like to sit down with a ringing assent and support for the proposals put forward, and, again, to congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Arwyn, on a very useful contribution to our debate.

5.56 p.m.

THE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY, BOARD OF TRADE (LORD RHODES): My Lords, I am grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Arwyn, for raising this subject. It was the noble Lord's maiden speech, and it was a good maiden speech. His is a voice that is rugged, and he is also knowledgeable, but it seemed to me to be a voice that was (shall I say?) across the Bristol Channel from the place that he was really talking about. I hope that he has the opportunity of speaking often in this House, because his type of voice is one which I am perfectly certain this House welcomes.

His Question and his speech were appropriate to the present time, in view of the United Nations Conference on Tin which opens next Monday in New York to draft the Third International Tin Agreement. While it is right that we, as a major tin consuming country, should be concerned about world supplies of tin, I think it is important that we should keep the problem in its proper perspective. No one would deny that at

[Lord Rhodes.]

present world demand for tin is outstripping mine production. Of course it is. We must not forget, however, that this situation has not obtained for long. As recently as 1958 the tin producing countries within the framework of the First International Tin Agreement, imposed controls on the exports of tin in an effort to stimulate prices, and those quotas were removed only in the third quarter of 1960—less than five years ago. Since the removal of export quotas the world production of tin has failed to increase significantly, and in all probability is currently almost 30,000 tons a year below the level of production some ten years ago. So we cannot minimise that, either.

So what are we to think? The reasons for this short-fall in production are almost wholly political, and I think that we must recognise that the essence of the problem which we face lies less in the depletion of world sources of tin than in maintaining and increasing production to satisfy demand. Although it is certainly true that the world's richest known alluvial deposits are being fully worked, I do not think we need be too apprehensive. Authoritative opinion maintains that reserves of tin are adequate to meet, under the right conditions, world demand in the foreseeable future.

The noble Lord has referred to the releases of surplus tin from the United States strategic stockpile. He rightly points out that these releases at present bridge the gap between production and consumption. Tin consumers—and, I believe, the producers also, if they have regard to longer-term considerations—must be grateful that the American Government can make surplus tin available for disposal. The American programme for releases gives consumer and producer countries alike a breathing space, and we must concentrate our efforts on seeing that during the next few years a better balance is achieved between production and consumption.

The noble Lord also referred to the work of the International Tin Council, and he is, I know, aware that the United Kingdom is a member of the Second International Tin Agreement, as she was of the First. In discussions in the International Tin Council the producing countries have pressed for increases in the floor and ceiling prices as a means of encouraging investment in tin production. The United Kingdom accepted the decision (I do not suppose we could do much more about it) which was taken last November by the International Tin Council to raise the price range for tin under the International Tin Agreement from £850 to £1,000 per ton to £1,000 to £1,200 per ton. Her Majesty's Government believe that the present price range under the International Tin Agreement should provide a considerable stimulus for increasing world tin production.

Price, of course, is not the only factor to be taken into account in considering steps to increase tin production, and it is for this reason that Her Majesty's Government has especially welcomed the creation by the International Tin Council of the Standing Committee for Production, to the two Working Parties of which the noble Lord referred in his speech and of which the noble Lord, Lord Hawke, also made mention. It is our hope that this Committee will help identify those administrative and economic factors which will encourage investment in the main tin-producing countries and lead to a wise and balanced exploitation of the world's tin resources.

I have made several references to the importance of the price of tin in the world supply position, and I feel that I must stress that all the problems of tin producers will not be solved by price increases alone. The high price of tin has already led to a search, not only for ways of using less tin but for ways of not using tin at all. I referred earlier to the fact that the world consumption of tin has not grown as rapidly as was at one time expected. This is due largely to the failure of the consumption of tin for tinplate to expand as strongly as had been predicted, and I would remind your Lordships that over 40 per cent. of the world's tin metal is used for tinplating. On the one hand, new electrolytic processes of tinplate production have reduced by over five times the thickness of the coating of tin used in the older production methods, and, on the other hand, new materials, such as aluminium, glass and plastics, are taking over in many of the fields which were once traditionally dominated by tin. Fortunately, I believe that many tin producers are alive to the danger that if

we do not succeed in keeping prices at a realistic level the high price of tin will, to borrow a metaphor from another metal, " kill the goose which lays the golden egg ".

The noble Lord has made an eloquent plea for the Cornish tin industry. May I say that in the last century Cornwall, with an annual production of tin approaching 10,000 tons from some 200 mines, accounted for about a quarter of the world's tin supplies, and Cornishmen are quite rightly proud of that record. Today, it is true that Cornwall produces only a fraction of the output achieved in the 19th century, but the two mines in operation have enjoyed heightened prosperity as a result of the current price of tin; and, with an annual output which has continued at a level of some 1,200 tons a year, make a useful marginal contribution to our total consumption of tin. With the increase in price that I have mentioned, their position is possibly even stronger.

Now the noble Lord has argued about a tax holiday. I have been hearing about this tax holiday for mines ever since I came to Parliament in 1945; and we in the Labour Party have, in successive Budgets, Finance Bills, put up our Amendments on this subject. But may I say to the noble Lord: do not expect us to do in six months what the other side did not do in thirteen years. We must have a little time to think round this subject, but we shall be thinking round it. We agree with the noble Lord, Lord Brown, that our own resources are invalnable, and I agree with him that we should be thinking abont this matter very seriously indeed. The noble Lord mentioned a tax holiday, and I know he will not expect me to commit myself this afternoon. I hope that his advocacy of this particular form of tax relief will not obscure from mining interests the very substantial incentives which exist already for mining in Cornwall—and they are quite considerable. They are even bigger under the 1963 financial provisions. It is a Development Area; it has the opportunity to take the benefit of the grants and the loans.

My Lords, Her Majesty's Government are following with very close interest the activities of the several mining companies which are investigating the possibilities of an extension of tin mining operations in Cornwall. If those activities are successful—and we hope they are—we shall welcome an expansion of the output of tin from our domestic mines. I believe, however, that it would be entirely unrealistic to suppose that Cornish tin can ever make more than a very limited contribution to total home supplies. We must bear in mind that it is only by international co-operation that we can meet the dangers which the noble Lord foresees. It is the hope of Her Majesty's Government that producing countries and consuming countries alike will approach the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Tin in a practical and realistic frame of mind, and that the outcome will be a New Agreement which will ensure adequate supplies of tin at reasonable prices, both in the long and the short term. I hope that my speech this afternoon has gone at any rate some way towards reassuring the noble Lord, Lord Arwyn, that we are thinking seriously about this problem and hope that a satisfactory outcome can be achieved.

CONVERSION OF BRANCH LINES TO LIGHT RAILWAYS

6.12 p.m.

LORD MERRIVALE rose to ask Her Majesty's Government whether they would not agree that in certain cases branch lines could be usefully and economically converted to light railways; and whether they will give favourable consideration to suitable applications received for such a type of operation, made after a branch-line closure application has been snbmitted or approved; finally, whether they would agree that an effective start could be made by authorising the use of the existing track of the Havant—Hayling Island branch line for a modern light railway. The noble Lord said: My Lords, at the outset I would say that I have no financial interest in any of the proposals that I shall be bringing to your Lordships' attention this afternoon. My interest could lie only in the fact that I am a vice-president of the Light Railways Transport League and President of the Railway Development Association.

May I stress, too, that I recognise that some railway lines that have been closed down, or are being closed down, can never be made to pay? On the other

[Lord Merrivale.]

hand, there are many that can be made viable, and I certainly deprecate the fact that so many assets are being allowed to go to waste. The object of my Question this afternoon is to endeavour to show that in certain cases it is feasible to convert our branch lines into an economic proposition by operating them on the light railway principle. I would add, also, that I am not pressing for any particular type of traction unit or power unit; I am not pressing for diesel or electric traction but purely for light railway systems, using modern rail cars.

Let us consider what is being done abroad. In West Germany, for instance, undertakings operating light railways have retained considerable importance. They are members of the V.D.N.E. (*Verband Deutsches Nichtbundeseigenen Eisenbahn*), and according to the latest information that I have these 225 light railways, operating public or private transport, form a system 3,456 miles in length, which is a not inconsiderable length of light railway. Recently examples of conversion to light railway operations took place at Karlsruhe, on the line to Ittersbach, and also between Nürnberg and Fürth. In Switzerland the V.S.T. (I will not mention the German words) members operate a total network of standard and narrow gauge "private railways", as they are called, amounting to 1,380 miles in length.

These "private railways" are of great importance, particularly in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, mainly, I am advised, due to Government assistance given in the form of their Railways Act dated December 20, 1957. There, everything possible is done to ensure that the light railways can continue to maintain, and even extend, the service they render to the community. In certain regions, in fact, the "private railways" represent the backbone of the public transport services. I am sure that many noble Lords are well aware of the rapid-transit light railway facilities to be found in the United States of America.

To turn to this country, it is interesting to note the unanimity of opinion on the part of consultants who have been brought in by outside bodies or organisations to consider and report on the economic feasibility of operating on a different basis certain branch lines that are being closed. To quote a few specific examples, there is, for instance, Kinord Associates, who, in their report on the Deeside railway from Aberdeen to Ballater, confirm that scope exists for improving the operation of this railway to a point in excess of a break-even on operating costs. Martech Consultants, in their report, entitled *An Approach to the Problem of Branch Lines*, take a similar view. They give as an example the line from Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh—though I recognise (I say this in case the noble Lord, Lord Lindgren, should mention it), that this line has been kept open for social and general economic reasons. But I understand that the Ministry of Transport have said that the net cost of keeping this line open is £120,000 a year.

But I am advised by Martech Consultants (who advised British Railways on their liner-trains) that by a completely fresh approach the line could be made into a commercial proposition. In the main, this approach is based on the use of lightweight twin-car trains only and unmanned stations, except at the two terminals at Dingwall and Achnasheen, while providing an extra stop between Inverness and Dingwall. The level crossings would be controlled by traffic lights, and the staff would amount to one-fifth of the present number but would be paid an average of 40 per cent. more. On these premises I am advised that the cost of operating the proposed service, including interest on capital, would be £70,000 a year, against a revenue of £85,000 a year. These figures are based on a capital outlay of £183,000, including £100,000 for the permanent way. For this to be achieved the complete line would have to be transferred to an independent operating organisation and the line reclassified as a light railway.

The noble Lord, Lord Lindgren, is well aware of the existence of numerous small bodies interested in the less important railway lines that are being closed down. I will mention but a few: the Deeside Railway Preservation Committee, the East Sussex Travellers' Association, the Forest Row Link Line Association, the Hayling Light Railway Society, and so on. I would therefore strongly urge the

Minister to believe that such organisations need some sponsoring and co-ordinating authority to look after their interests, as well as to assist and sympathise with their efforts in a practical way.

If something is not done fairly quickly, the lines which have already been closed, or are to be closed, will soon become derelict, so that any later takeover or conversion would certainly be most costly, due to the rehabilitation that would be necessary. Therefore, I sincerely ask the Minister to give serious consideration to the setting up of some sponsoring and co-ordinating authority, such as a light railways board, so that the assets and advantages of these branch lines are not wasted and may be used to provide an efficient, effective and economic transport system.

On the advice of Mr. J. P. Cunliffe, a consulting engineer with railway experience dating back to before the last war, the Heathfield line, between Eridge and Hailsham, which is due to close down on June 14 of this year, could be put on to an economic footing. In the main this could be achieved fairly simply by installing new signalling apparatus, the mechanisation of track maintenance, the long welding of rails, the conversion of the majority of stations to unattended halts, and the adoption of diesel units. Equally, the Three Bridges to Ashurst line, on which I understand the T.U.C.C. will be reporting next week to the Minister, could be run at a profit.

Regarding the Havant–Hayling branch line, on which the last train ran on November 3, 1963, the Havant and Waterloo Urban District Council have now submitted to the Minister a compulsory purchase order for part of this railway land. I think that the objections to this would be as follows. First, a single line railway track is unsuitable, and too narrow, for conversion to a highway; secondly, any extension of roadway facilities between these two points would, in the main, be of use during only four months of the year; thirdly, the ratepayers should not be saddled with the cost of an extra road mainly of use to people residing outside the area; and, fourthly, consideration should be given to the needs of the population of the urban district who have not motor cars in which to go to the seaside. I understand that the total population is around 85,000. According to a resident of Hayling Island, on Saturday there are no buses between 8.30 in the morning and 4.10 p.m. Finally, greater attention should be paid to the needs of the residents of the Hayling Island-Havant area, who might have luggage, prams, babies and so forth. Even during the summer congestion periods, a light railway could operate a half-hourly service, while there would be a bottleneck at the road bridge.

If I may, I would mention the Langstone Viaduct, as not so long ago the noble Lord, Lord Lindgren, expressed interest in the cost of repairing this viaduct, in view of the high figure which was quoted to him. I am advised authoritatively by a consulting civil engineer in Victoria Street that the cost of renewing the central swing span would be in the region of £3,500 and, extra to that, there would be required an annual expenditure of £1,600 for the other parts of the bridge for the next ten years—a total expenditure of only £19,500.

In conclusion, I would ask Her Majesty's Government to consider the fact that under certain conditions there are effective economic advantages in modern light railway services and that many of the branch line systems which have, or are being, closed down were Victorian in concept and operation. I would further ask Her Majesty's Government to consider setting up some sponsoring and co-ordinating authority for the purpose of developing such a form of transport, within the overall context of the objective planning of transport systems, each method of transport being assessed on its true potential.

6.25 p.m.

LORD HURCOMB: My Lords, as I have to keep an engagement in a few minutes' time, my noble friend Lord Somers has kindly allowed me to speak at once. I have very little to say. I am not at all averse to a close look at the possibility of operating some of these lines under light railway conditions, but I am bound to say that a long experience of the operation of light railways leaves me in a mood not very sanguine as to their probable success. What I would urge upon the Government is not to commit public money to ventures of

[Lord Hurcomb.]

this sort in the first place, because, as we found so often in the past, grants and grants in aid have been sunk in light railways which have not become profitable undertakings.

Another point which I think is important, and which I am sure is not in the mind of the noble Lord who has asked this Question, is that no pressure should be put upon the Railways Board to shoulder a burden of this kind. The only other point I should like to make is that, though I would agree with the noble Lord, Lord Merrivale, that a great many economies could be made in operation and maintenance, the important thing is a realistic study of the traffic potential. That is one of the great services that Dr. Beeching has brought to bear on the railway system, and it is here that promoters or enthusiasts or those who genuinely want to see the facilities maintained are only too apt to take an unduly sanguine view.

LORD MERRIVALE: My Lords, I am not trying to bring pressure on the Railways Board in any way whatsoever. What I am saying is, if they do away with certain branch lines, why do they not let some other organisation use them?

LORD HURCOMB: My Lords, I agree with that, but too often in the past it has come back on the public authority. I very well remember that when, a great many years ago, Sir Eric Geddes was amalgamating the railways, against the advice of most of his experts —which was very much on the lines of that which the noble Lord, Lord Merrivale, has quoted, that all these things ought to be taken into the main line railway system—he said that they were going to be " white elephants " and it was better to leave them out. We do not want to stable any more " white elephants " in transport, upon either the taxpayer or the ratepayer. If private enterprise is willing to do it without any kind of subsidisation, that is another question.

6.30 p.m.

LORD SOMERS: My Lords, I cannot help feeling that my noble friend Lord Hurcomb is unduly pessimistic over this, though I quite agree with him that we do not want to risk the taxpayers' money. I think that under a modern system these railways could be made paying propositions. It has been a very hard thing for the residents, who live in the areas where these lines have been closed down, to see their means of transport going, and I think that if they can be operated on an economic system, they are well worth preserving. I believe there is every evidence to prove that they can be.

To most people, a light railway means a narrow gauge one, but I am not suggesting that the gauge should be altered at all. The permauent way can remain just as it is, except for the renewal and, I hope, long welding of the track. I have here details of the Heathfield Line mentioned by my noble friend Lord Merrivale, which I think could be a very workable scheme. It is a single track throughout, with passing loops at each station, but under a new system of signalling, known as the tokenless block system, the whole length of line can be operated by one man with a push-button control and coloured lights for the actual signals.

I quote from the description given here:

> " It is fundamental to this system that only one train can enter a single line block section at any one time, and until this train has been proved complete and clear of that section a second train cannot enter. Essential safety is therefore assured."

It goes on to give a summary of the various advantages of the system.

> " There is push-button control for all signalling work on the single line. The time for trains to cross or to enter their respective single line sections can be reduced from minutes to seconds. Effective control by telephone from a distant control office such as Croydon is easily possible."

If we were to reduce the manpower on these lines, and class them under an entirely different heading as light railways, I cannot help feeling that they would pay. The stations need not be manned at all. If we were going to run, say, single diesel cars, it could be done by one man who would act as driver and conductor, and there could be a standard average fare of, say, 2s. or something like that, which the passenger would pay whatever the distance he travelled, and, therefore, would save the bother of various fares for which change would have to be given. If you are going to have a trailer, you would obviously need to have a second man in the trailer.

Then there would be needed automated rail repair services in the way of rail cars and a rail loader equipped for various tasks, a motorised inspection vehicle, a controller weave control apparatus and so on. All that would involve a considerable preliminary capital expenditure. I see that the estimate given by the East Sussex Travellers Association for this line is £44,000. That is a heavy expenditure, and if they are going to be owned by private bodes it would be practically impossible. Therefore, I think the suggestion made by my noble friend Lord Merrivale of having a parent body who would control all light railways is a very good one, since they would be able to give financial as well as technical help.

So far as safety devices are concerned, it is obvious that these railways would be open to any official railway inspector if he wanted to see that everything was working efficiently. I cannot help feeling that these light railways would be a very workable project. One has to realise that if the branch happens to be a double track one, the problem is easier still, because there could be just the automatic self-cancelling signal such as is used on the underground, except at the terminals. Again, there could be unmanned stations and a single-manned car for the driver and conductor. I hope that the Government will think over this proposition and see whether it cannot be worked to save these valuable branch lines.

6.34 p.m.

THE EARL OF KINNOULL: My Lords, I rise to speak quite briefly in support of my noble friend Lord Merrivale. As a member of the National Council of Inland Transport I have seen many letters throughout the country showing the hardship felt from branch line closures. I believe that, to a certain extent, the Ministry of Transport appear to have forgotten the powers that they have under the old 1896 Light Railways Act. This is a most useful Act, because, in one sense, it is vague in character and allows the Minister wide discretion to run branch lines as economically as possible.

I should like to cite a recent example of where successful use has been made of the Light Railways Act. This was the case of the Central Wales Line running between Swansea and Shrewsbury. This was, I understand, to be closed down in 1962. However, after much local and national opposition, the former Minister of Transport decided to reprieve this line, and instructed British Railways to work out a scheme for operating the line under the Light Railways Act. The interesting point of this is that the Railways Board later announced that they hoped to reduce the existing annual loss on this line of some £176,000 down to a figure of £30,000. This, I would submit, gigantic saving is of itself proof of how useful the old Act can be. I believe there are many other examples of branch lines that could be saved under the powers of this Act by reducing their running costs.

This Act, as I have said, has the advantage of allowing the Minister wide discretion as to the conditions he may impose. It has an added advantage of not defining exactly what a light railway is, and thus allows the Minister, as I see it, to consider using his powers for any branch line under this Act. I feel that we are fortunate in this House to have the noble Lord, Lord Lindgren, a man who has a wealth of practical experience of railway matters. I believe he started his, if I may so describe it, brilliant career in the old L.N.E.R.

LORD LINDGREN: The Great Northern.

THE EARL OF KINNOULL: Later he was Deputy Regional Commissioner of the Midland Region. He has the further advantage that up to last October he had no political commitment directly involved with the railways. He is therefore, I suggest, uncommitted with preconceived ideas, except for one fact, and that is that the Labour Party at the last Election gave a clear commitment as regards branch lines. I am hopeful that when he comes to reply a satisfactory answer will be forthcoming from the noble Lord, and that he will undertake to make more use of the powers under this Act.

6.39 p.m.

VISCOUNT ADDISON: My Lords, I think we should be grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Merrivale, for raising this matter, and I should like to offer support to him. It is perhaps a little unfair to refer to "the dead hand of Beeching", because, after all, the poor man was only doing what he was appointed to do within the terms of reference, and he has received, so far as I know, nothing but praise for his work. But one

[Viscount Addison.]

sees examples up and down the countryside of semi-derelict or derelict lines, and it must be remembered that every time a branch railway line is closed down, especially one going to a seaside place like Hayling Island, it merely adds to the congestion on the already overcrowded road, fills up the car park at Hayling Island, and makes it almost impossible for people to go to and fro.

These examples can be multiplied many times throughout the country especially in the West Country. I remember the railway line which in the old days ran from Plymouth to Princetown on Dartmoor, one of the most beautiful railway lines on which I have ever travelled. Now, of course, it is derelict and has been pulled up. If that line existed to-day, as a holiday attraction with a light rail car running up and down, I am quite sure it would be a viable proposition. There was another case many years before the war of a light railway between Chichester and Selsey, which was taken over by a bus company and closed down, I think I am right in saying, in 1935. There, again, the crowded road between Chichester and Selsey makes it almost impossible to travel from place to place. If that little light railway existed to-day, I am sure it would be a great attraction, and there is no earthly reason why it should not be a viable proposition.

I could not understand why it was that the noble Lord, Lord Hurcomb, was so reluctant to bring pressure to bear upon the Railways Board. It seems to me that we should direct pressure on them to provide a decent public service as well as looking at the exact cost of small sections of branch railway lines which happen not to pay under certain statistical methods of approach. But I think the whole subject is one which should receive encouragement from the Government, and I hope very much that the noble Lord, Lord Lindgren, will feel able to support it, or at any rate let us feel encouraged that some measure of activity may be allowed to take place. I hope that where the Railway Boards are not willing themselves to undertake to run services, private enterprise will be allowed to step in and will be encouraged as much as possible, wherever it can be done.

6.42 p.m.

LORD LINDGREN: My Lords, I, too, am grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Merrivale, for introducing this debate to-night, and also for his usual courtesy in letting me know beforehand the general line on which he was going to approach this subject. Of course, his general approach has been supported by every other noble Lord who has taken part in the debate so far.

THE MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO (LORD CHAMPION): With the exception of Lord Hurcomb.

LORD LINDGREN: My noble friend Lord Champion, in more than a whisper, reminds me that it was not complete unanimity, because the noble Lord, Lord Hurcomb, entered a *caveat* in regard to it. Of course, there may be some significance in that, because the noble Lord has had responsibility in operating transport services.

At the start, I should like to make it clear that my right honourable friend is always ready to consider favourably an application for a Light Railway Order. In order to put the matter in perspective, I think I should first of all set out the various ways in which my right honourable friend, as Minister of Transport, is concerned. The noble Lord, Lord Merrivale, referred to cases where a closure proposal for a branch railway line has been submitted or approved. My right honourable friend's position in relation to railway passenger closure proposals is, I think, well known to your Lordships, and I need do no more than summarise it briefly. When such a proposal is published and opposed, the Minister has to consider the report of the Transport Users Consultative Committee. He also considers all the other factors which may be relevant. He then either consents to the proposal, with or without conditions, or he refuses his consent.

Let us take first the case where he refuses his consent. When that happens the Railways Board must maintain a passenger service, and they will naturally consider the most economical means of doing so. One such instance was referred to by the noble Earl, Lord Kinnoull. What I want to make quite clear is that this consideration of the method of operation where a consent has been refused is entirely a matter for the

Railways Board. Where conditions are suitable they may decide, for example, to leave stations without staff, as has been suggested by a number of noble Lords during the course of this short debate. If they thought it appropriate, they could ask my right honourable friend for his authorisation to operate the line as a light railway. But, I repeat, it is essentially for the Board—not my right honourable friend—to decide whether or not this is the right course to adopt. The consideration of the Board's application—like any other application for authorisation of light railway operation—would be a matter for my right honourable friend, as I shall explain in a moment.

If, on the other hand, consent to the closure is granted, the Board will probably wish to dispose of the line—that is, assuming that it is not required for freight. But some other body may be interested in running the line as a light railway, and may make an approach to the Board with a view to taking it over. In such circumstances, the usual procedure is for the Board first to apply to my right honourable friend for an order to enable the line to be operated as a light railway. The other body then applies for a further order to authorise them to take over the line. This may seem a roundabout method, but it has been found convenient in the past. It does, for instance, enable the light railway interests to know that a Light Railway Order will be granted before they commit themselves too far. This was, in fact, the procedure followed in the case of the famous "Bluebell Line".

My right honourable friend has specific functions in relation to the operation of light railways. No light railway may be operated without the statutory authorisation of a Light Railway Order. When he is considering an application for such an Order the Minister must satisfy himself that the applicants are a body which can properly be authorised to provide a light railway service. To this end he will wish to be satisfied on the technical aspects of the proposals for operating the service, and on the applicants' technical resources to maintain the appropriate safety standards. He will also wish to be satisfied about the financial resources of the applicants to meet any demands which might possibly fall upon them.

He must also take into account any objections duly made to the application when it is advertised in accordance with the statutory procedure. In all these matters he has the benefit of the advice of the Chief Inspecting Officer of Railways and his staff, whose reputation in matters of rail safety is well known to your Lordships. If the Minister is satisfied that the proposals are sound, he then authorises the service by means of a Light Railway Order.

Now what is my right honourable friend's policy in such matters? I can give an unequivocal assurance that he is very ready to consider applications for Light Railway Orders. He will give such applications every consideration. In the preparation of proposals his Department will be ready to give any advice they can. Whether individual applications for Orders or for the transfer of a line can be granted, however, must obviously depend, as I have said already, on my right honourable friend's being fully satisfied that he can authorise the interests concerned to undertake the operation of what is of course a public service. Every application must be carefully examined, and my right honourable friend must be fully satisfied about the technical soundness of the proposals and about the technical and financial soundness of the undertaking to operate the service. His first care must be for the safety of the travelling public.

I come now to the question of the Havant-Hayling Island line. The Hayling Island Light Railway Society have been in touch for some time with the Ministry about their proposals. They have been given technical information on various aspects. So far, however, no application has been made for a Light Railway Order. The noble Lord, Lord Merrivale, quite rightly suggested that my right honourable friend should give favourable consideration to the Society's proposals, because a light railway would provide a better alternative service than the buses can. Again quite rightly, he referred to women concerned with youngsters and carrying push-chairs, prams, parcels and that sort of thing. I appreciate his desire to see the best possible service available,

[Lord Lindgren.]

but, as I have already said, in considering light railway operation the overriding consideration must be the safety of the public.

Meantime, the Havant and Waterloo Urban District Council have prepared a scheme for using the line for a new road and have sought the necessary planning permission. I should like to make it quite clear here that that planning permission is not a permission from the Ministry of Transport: it is the normal planning permission from the Hampshire County Council. And should there be any dispute in regard to that, it would be a matter to be dealt with by the Minister of Housing and Local Government, and not by the Minister of Transport. The Havant and Waterloo Urban District Council have advertised a compulsory purchase order for the acquisition of the line. This order will require the confirmation of my right honourable friend, and if objections are received from any of the owners or owner-occupiers of any of the land covered by the order, and are not withdrawn, my right honourable friend must arrange for a public inquiry or for a hearing of such objections; and these objections, of course, are those referred to as statutory objections.

Objections from other sources will be considered by my right honourable friend, and he may, if he thinks fit, hold a public inquiry into them. For the benefit of the noble Lord, Lord Merrivale, I would say (although perhaps he already knows) that such an objection has already been lodged by the Havant and Hayling Rapid Transit Company.

If I may sum up my right honourable friend's position, it is this. He is always ready to consider applications from any body to run a line as a light railway. Before he can authorise light railway operation, however, he must be fully satisfied about the relevant aspects of the proposal, and, in particular, those affecting public safety.

In the particular case of the Hayling Island line, noble Lords, particularly the noble Lord, Lord Merrivale, will not, I am sure, expect me to commit my right honourable friend in any way as to the decision he would take on an application for a Light Railway Order, bearing in mind that first of all no such application is before him at present and that, on the other hand, the Urban District Council's compulsory purchase order has come to him for confirmation. Therefore, too, I am sure the noble Lord would not expect me to make any comments on his observations with regard to the practicability of the road scheme, because that is a matter which would have to be dealt with by my right honourable friend the Minister of Transport when he is called upon to confirm the order.

Again, my Lords, I would express appreciation for the opportunity for this debate. I think I have made it quite clear that so far as the Minister is concerned he is happy to use his powers to issue Light Railway Orders to the full. He is concerned, of course, that those who undertake operations under them should be of a standing and status, both technically and financially, to enable them to do the job as a public service, and that public safety should be assured as well.

WRITTEN ANSWER

SKID TRAINING FOR DRIVERS

THE EARL OF HARROWBY asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they will consider the desirability of establishing skid training on specially prepared pitches as part of the driving test in view of the high proportion of fatal accidents caused by the lack of this training.

LORD LINDGREN: There is no evidence that the absence of skid training causes a high proportion of fatal accidents. The cost of providing special skid facilities for every driving test centre would be out of proportion to the likely benefits.

House adjourned at five minutes before seven o'clock.