*If you want to discover the extent and intensity of the growing pains of a large metropolis you must go out to its fringes where country meets city and where the ever-increasing urban development puts thoughts of aggrandisement and progress into the collective minds of quiet little shires and their ridings.*

It was not so long ago that the city of Box Hill was part of the shire of Nunawading, but as settlement progressed eastward—and who can blame anybody for wanting to live out in the beautiful high country of Box Hill?—a large community collected there.

And this community thought: "Why should a large and growing suburb like this be merely a portion of a shire?"

So people agitated, and presently the shire of Nunawading disappeared; the borough of Box Hill was created and the remainder of the old shire became the shire of Blackburn and Mitcham.

That was in 1925, only 14 years ago, and pretty soon afterward the borough of Box Hill was receiving a revenue of more than £25,000 a year and was entitled to be created a city, which was done.

## Nearer The City

The shire of Blackburn and Mitcham, after the whittling down, found itself with the small area of 15 square miles to administer, cut up into three ridings, Blackburn, Tunstall and Mitcham. In the first instance the whole area could have been described as rural, but development did not stop short with Box Hill.

Electric train services and the bitumenised White Horse Road led many people out in that direction. Contact with the heart of the city was reduced in time from something like hours to minutes. Mitcham, the furthest-flung riding, is now only 35 minutes away although 13 miles distant.

Nobody who goes out that way can fail to appreciate the value of the heights of Blackburn and Mitcham for residential purposes. Many people have gone there to look and have remained to build. Along the White Horse Road and the railway line there are built-up areas practically the whole way to Ringwood.

Some fine homes have gone up in the shire, particularly at Vermont. For several years the building figures of the shire have been high and they are continuing to remain high. At the same time much of the building has been done in Blackburn riding, which is closest to Melbourne. That is only natural.

## Blackburn's Bid

Today the Blackburn riding has an attack of growing pains just as Box Hill had some years ago. Like the grown nestling, it wants to fly out of the nest and grapple with the world on its own.

Blackburn seeks to become a borough, which means the cutting off of the Blackburn riding from the shire. Possibly it has hopes, as its larger neighbor Box Hill had, of becoming a city in time. Well, why not? Ambition in the young is an excellent attribute, and Blackburn has all the qualifications for a borough.

So Blackburn has been going hammer and tongs for separation and last year the Government appointed an advisory board to go into the matter and report. Blackburn told the board that it contributed 45 per cent. of the shire's revenue, a lot of which was not spent in Blackburn. It said it had lost faith in the shire and wanted to become a model town for which it had all facilities.

There was more than one inquiry and more than one scheme was considered but nothing has happened yet. Everything rests now with the Government.

First of all the question of severance was gone into. Then a re-division of the shire into two, three or four ridings, and the establishment of two boroughs were considered but so far nothing has been settled.

## Stumbling Block

It was easy enough to lop off Box Hill from the old Nunawading shire because there was something left, but seemingly the objection to putting Blackburn into long trousers, so to speak, is that what is left over will have to be disposed of in some way, and just how the disposal is to be made nobody seems to know.

If Blackburn takes the full nine square miles that a borough is entitled to, the remainder of the shire would be only six square miles in extent and might have to be a separate borough or be tacked on to Doncaster or Mulgrave shires. If I am informed correctly it is the remainder that is the stumbling block.

However, these things straighten out eventually. At the same time there is a strong body of opinion in favor of holding the shire together and readjusting internal differences.

The tipping at the moment is for a re-subdivision of the ridings, possibly into four. It is hard luck on Blackburn, which is fully entitled to the status of borough, but I have no doubt that the growing pains will con-