

# Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 28th October, 1947.

	PAGE
Questions: Locomotives, as to number acquired by Commonwealth and built	1527
Morawa District Hospital, as to shortage of nursing sisters	1527
Motor service, Perth-Adelaide, as to fuel allowance and restrictions	1527
Bills: Gas (Standard), 1n.	1528
Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act Amendment, report	1528
Optometrists Act Amendment, 2a.	1528
Constitution Acts Amendment (No. 4), 2a.	1530
Land Alienation Restriction Act Amendment (Continuance), 2a., Com. report	1531
Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act Amendment, (Continuance), 2a.	1531
Water Boards Act Amendment, returned	1533
Municipal Corporations Act Amendment (No. 1), Council's amendments	1533
Government Railways Act Amendment, 2a.	1534
Annual Estimates: Com. of Supply, general debate concluded	1554
Votes and items discussed	1554
Adjournment Special	1557

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

## QUESTIONS.

### LOCOMOTIVES.

*As to Number Acquired by Commonwealth and Built.*

Mr. STYANTS (on notice) asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) How many locomotives were taken over by the Commonwealth from this State between 1939 and 1946?

(2) What were the classes and number in each class involved?

(3) How many locomotives were built in the Midland Junction Workshops during the periods 1929-1939 and 1939-1947, respectively?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Twenty-six.

(2) All Class G.

(3) (a) From January, 1929 to June, 1939—26. (b) From July, 1939 to October, 1947—37. In addition 14 U Class purchased in England were assembled in the Midland Junction Workshops.

### MORAWA DISTRICT HOSPITAL.

*As to Shortage of Nursing Sisters.*

Mr. BRAND (on notice) asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health:

(1) Is she aware that the Morawa District Hospital will be forced to close on the

1st November unless the services of two nursing sisters are made available?

(2) If so, in view of the fact that this hospital serves a very large and isolated area, what steps are being taken to relieve the position?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied:

(1) No; but they may be compelled to restrict operations to midwifery.

(2) Nurses have been personally approached, advertisements have been inserted in newspapers and broadcast appeals have been made.

### MOTOR SERVICE, PERTH-ADELAIDE.

*As to Fuel Allowance and Restrictions.*

Mr. GRAHAM (on notice) asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Is it a fact that a transport company is shortly to commence a passenger omnibus service to operate between Perth and Adelaide?

(2) Is it a fact that it is to cater largely for tourist and holiday traffic?

(3) Has the proposed service been approved by the Government?

(4) Has the Liquid Fuel Control Board issued a license for the purchase of fuel?

(5) If so, what is the monthly allowance to be allocated?

(6) How does he reconcile such an issue in the face of the imposition of further fuel restrictions on motorists, and in any event the added call on dollar exchange, in view of the existence of air, rail and shipping services?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Prior to announcement of recent reductions in fuel allowances, the Transport Board gave approval for a road passenger service from Perth to Adelaide and return, subject to satisfactory arrangements being made for accommodation and amenities en route and subject to fuel being made available by the Liquid Fuel Control Board.

(2) Yes.

(3) The approval referred to was given by the Transport Board in accordance with the State Transport Co-ordination Act.

(4) No; but when the matter was referred to the Commonwealth Liquid Fuel authorities in the Eastern States approval was given for an allocation of a business ration, tak-

ing into consideration the reductions operative from October, 1947. Should further fuel cuts become necessary, the allowance will be reduced accordingly.

(5) No definite allocation has yet been arrived at.

(6) The decision to allow a ration was made by the Commonwealth Liquid Fuel Authorities, who are responsible for fuel rationing, and have permitted the use of fuel for similar purposes in other States.

### **BILL—GAS (STANDARDS).**

Introduced by the Minister for Works and read a first time.

### **BILL—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMENDMENT.**

Report of Committee adopted.

### **BILL—OPTOMETRISTS ACT AMENDMENT.**

#### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 23rd October.

**HON. A. H. PANTON** (Leederville) [4.36]: There are four amendments in this Bill. The first is to delete Subsection (3) of Section 16 of the Act which provides that any surplus moneys held by the board after all expenses have been paid shall pass into Consolidated Revenue. I am surprised at the Treasurer permitting that provision to be taken out. It is interesting to recall how the subsection was first inserted. When the committee appointed to draft the Bill approached me as Minister for Health, it had in the measure a clause providing for all fines, etc., to be paid into the revenue of the board. About that time we had a circular from the Treasury pointing out that such provisions were not to be included in any future Bills, on the ground that as the Government was finding the money for the Police Department and for police courts, fines should be taken into Consolidated Revenue. I pointed out to the committee what had occurred and indicated that that provision would have to be deleted. When the Bill reached this place I found that the committee had gone to the other extreme and had decided to pay all surplus money into the Treasury. I do not know whether anything has been

paid. I would be very surprised to find that that had been the case. Now, however, it is being sought to have that provision deleted.

**Mr. Marshall:** Is that not information which the Honorary Minister should have given when introducing the Bill?

**Hon. A. H. PANTON:** I think the hon. member can leave this matter to me and have his fight with the Honorary Minister. I, myself, do not fight with the weaker sex at any time. There can be little objection to that subsection being removed. It should not have been inserted in the first instance. The next two amendments are purely of a machinery character. The fourth amendment is rather interesting, and I am not too happy about it. The proposal is to insert a new section in the Act which reads—

(3) Any person who—

(a) has secured a pass in respect of both the first and second year examinations of the optometry course of the University of Western Australia;

(b) is attending either the third or fourth year of that course and—

That is something I do not understand. If an individual is attending the fourth year of the course, one would assume that he had passed the third year.

(c) is approved in writing by the board as a fit and proper person to do so.

Having complied with those provisions he may, without contravention of the section—

practise optometry under the supervision of a registered optometrist at any premises or place occupied or used by the registered optometrist for the practice of optometry therein, and while a registered optometrist is personally in full-time attendance thereat.

I do not like that clause. When introducing the Bill the Honorary Minister was asked what was the position as to remuneration, and said it was provided for in the Act. There is no such provision either in the Act or in the Bill, and it therefore seems to me that this clause might open the way to cheap labour. I do not know what such students would be worth to the optometrist with whom they are to work, after two years at the University, but I would assume that, having gone so far with the university course, they would be worth a considerable amount while gaining practical experience. The method of

obtaining registration is set out in the present Act where, in Section 35, the provision is—

(a) he is over the age of twenty-one years when he applies for registration; and

I do not know whether these university students will be over that age, but a student will not be able to apply for registration unless under the present Act—

(b) he has in all respects complied with the requirements of this Act and the rules and regulations; and

(c) he is a person of good character; and

(d) (i) he has completed the prescribed course of training and has passed the prescribed examinations;

Then there are set out various matters with which I am not concerned, for the time being. Assuming that the clause becomes law and several students, having completed the course as set out in the Bill, are taken into an optometrist's establishment, I am not certain whether it is intended that they should go there only during their holidays—as some other students do, to work and gain practical experience—or permanently, having spent a certain time at the university. The Honorary Minister did not offer that information, and I have been unable to find out for myself.

The students will leave the university at some period and for some time will be employed in an optometrist's premises. We do not know whether they are to go there to gain experience without remuneration, or whether they are to be paid and, if so, how much. I think members should know how long the students must remain there before they are entitled to registration. Someone with a knowledge of university work should tell the House how far the students will have gone by the end of their second year. From my knowledge of optometry—gained whilst studying the matter in order to introduce the Bill, as Minister for Health—I say that outside of diseases of the eye, with which optometrists cannot deal under the Act, having got as far as is set out in the Bill, a student, after 12 months' practical experience with an optometrist, should be fit for registration. I think the House should insist on that, and with that object in view I have no objection to the second reading, but when in the Committee stage I propose to move an amendment.

There is another section dealing with those who I think are called technicians—those who grind lenses, and so on. There are 29 apprentices and 16 journeymen employed in the profession in the metropolitan area, and I am informed by the secretary of the organisation that none of these has his leaving certificate, which is the first essential for qualification as an optometrist. These technicians commence their apprenticeship on leaving school, at 14 or 15 years of age. At the end of six years' apprenticeship they are entitled to a margin of 30s. above the basic wage, and that is the end of them, in that regard. They are anxious to be included under the provisions of the Bill, but I do not see how that could be done, and I am afraid they will have to find some other method—through further legislation—of qualifying in order to become optometrists.

I do not think the clause should be passed without some amendment. We should be careful about allowing university students to come into the profession and perhaps be told, at the end of 12 months, that there is no way of qualifying. It must be remembered that the board sets the examination papers. Except when the Attorney General, from this side of the House, introduced a Bill for the purpose of allowing a man from Singapore to get through, as far as I am aware no-one has qualified as an optometrist under this Act up to date. I hope the House will not pass any further legislation, regarding optometry, that will allow further members of the community to come into the profession and be met with a dead end. I have not had time to place an amendment on the notice paper, but, if the Bill does not reach the Committee stage tonight, there will appear on the notice paper an amendment, to add at the end of Clause 5 the following—

And any person who shall so practice optometry for a period of not less than one year shall be deemed to hold evidence of qualification sufficient to qualify him for registration as an optometrist under this Act.

If that amendment is agreed to it will ensure that students coming from the university, will, after 12 months' practical experience, qualify for registration just as nearly all the optometrists now practising qualified. Being already in the profession when the Act was passed, they had only to apply for registration within six months. I hope that, in Committee, members will give earnest considera-

tion to the method by which these people are to be brought into the profession.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

## BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT (No. 4).

### *Second Reading.*

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL** (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth) [4.51] in moving the second reading said: This Bill deals with the franchise of the Legislative Council and represents an amendment of Section 15 of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act, 1899. There are four matters involved in the Bill. The first is to delete the word "sterling" wherever it appears in the section. It is something of an anomaly in the parent Act that in some cases amounts are specified as sterling, whereas, when we come to the qualification involved in being on the electoral list of any municipality or road board, the land required to be held must be of a ratable value of not less than £17 and no reference is made to the word "sterling." So there appears to be some disparity between the amounts in relatively similar qualifications and it is only consistent that we should eliminate the word "sterling" and use Australian currency.

The second amendment deals with the extension of the franchise to the husband or wife of the householder. It is considered reasonable that this extension should be made so as to qualify both members of the family unit. The family unit of husband and wife having established a home and one party being the householder as defined in the Bill, it is thought to be a proper and reasonable extension of the franchise that the husband or wife, as the case may be, of the householder should be normally entitled to exercise the vote where the amount of the rent being paid or the annual value of the house qualifies the householder to exercise a vote for the Legislative Council.

The dwelling or home is the mutual home of the two parties, and the family responsibility was from the outset envisaged as part of the qualifying factors for the Legislative Council, due to the insertion in the franchise section of the original Act of a provision for the householder to exercise a vote. We provide that both the husband and the wife, in order to take advantage

of this extension, shall be resident in the dwelling. I consider that this provision should be made because it relates to the fact that the dwelling is the home of the two parties.

The next amendment deals with the question of flats. When the Act was passed in 1889, it will be within the knowledge, though not the recollection, of members that flats were almost entirely unknown, but modern years have witnessed an immense extension of flats as dwelling places, and now we have the spectacle within daily observation of substantial buildings of flats, the rents of which are sometimes fairly high. In the past the interpretation of a flat has been what would be equivalent to a dwelling, but having an exit from it direct on to the road. That interpretation would disqualify many flats in buildings, the door of which opens on to a common passage way with the common passage way leading to the door which is the exit to the street.

The flat is one of the modern versions of the dwelling house that was not in contemplation when the original Act was passed, and there is no reason why people who, from choice or compulsion, now live in flats should not be entitled to the same privileges as are granted to those occupying dwelling houses. Therefore the occupier of a flat is to be given the same franchise advantages as the occupier of a dwelling house enjoys, and, to make the position quite clear for electoral and administrative purposes, the word "flat" is defined as being a dwelling which is self-contained, separate from other dwellings in the same building, and containing the ordinary offices which are part of a dwelling house, namely, cooking and sleeping accommodation and other usual accommodation to be found in the general run of dwellings.

The next provision has been inserted in deference to a resolution of the House and deals with the matter of plural voting. By the terms of the Bill, plural voting is to be abolished. If a man has the right to vote in two or more provinces, he will be entitled to elect in which province he will record his vote. If, as not infrequently happens, he may have spent the greater part of his life in the North, or on the Goldfields or in country areas and his interests are mainly there, although he may be residing in retirement in Perth, he will be

able, under the Bill as drawn, to file with the Electoral Department a notice electing to be registered for some other province for which he is qualified and which is not the province in which he may be living at the time.

In any measure providing for the abolition of plural voting, it seems reasonable that the voter in certain circumstances should be entitled to exercise an option as to the province for which he is qualified at present and as to which his interests make him most concerned to exercise his vote. The Bill covers the four points I have mentioned, namely, the revision of the term "sterling," the extension of the franchise to the husband or wife of the householder who is living in the same dwelling, the inclusion of self-contained flats as dwellings for the purpose of enabling the householder to have the franchise and, as I have said, a direction in pursuance of the resolution of this House that plural voting shall be abolished, the person entitled to two or more votes electing one province for which he will be enrolled and for which alone he will be entitled to cast his vote. I think that covers the terms of the Bill and I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—LAND ALIENATION RESTRICTION ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE).**

*Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [5.2] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this Bill is to continue for another year the operation of the parent Act, which expires at the end of the present year. In 1944 a Bill was introduced into this Chamber by the Deputy Premier, then Leader of the Opposition, and, with certain amendments it was accepted by the Government of the day. The intention of that measure was to prevent the disposal of Crown land, or of land in the possession of the Commissioners of the Rural and Industries Bank, to persons other than members of the Forces without first obtaining the consent of the Minister for Lands, who is in charge of the two departments concerned. This legislation was continued to 1946 and, with the

approval of the House, it was again continued until 1947.

I am asking the House that it agree to continue the operation of the measure until the end of 1948. The Bill is not a big one, but it has answered a very useful purpose in reserving for soldier settlement Crown lands and lands held by the Rural and Industries Bank. I have been in office for only a short period, but have dealt with several applications for the alienation of Crown land, as well as of properties held by the Rural and Industries Bank, for soldier settlement. The parent Act has empowered me to hold those lands for that purpose. I think it essential that this legislation should be continued, because it will be agreed that we shall probably have difficulty as time goes on in finding sufficient land for soldiers who are applying to be settled on it as producers.

Mr. Reynolds: It looks as though you are experiencing great difficulty now.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** No. I assure the hon. member that we are experiencing no difficulty whatever at present. I shall endeavour to indicate that to him at a later date. As I said, I am asking the House to approve of the continuance of the parent Act till 1948, as it is serving a most useful purpose. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**HON. A. H. PANTON** (Leederville) [5.6]: This is one of those continuance Bills the debate on which I consider should not be adjourned. If the Minister wishes to proceed with it, I may say that members on this side of the House are quite happy about it.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

## **BILL—FARMERS' DEBTS ADJUSTMENT ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE).**

*Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION** (Hon. A. F. Watts—Katanning) [5.8] in moving the second reading said: The

Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act was passed in 1930 at a time when farmers of all types in this State were experiencing great financial difficulty owing to the prices and other conditions which then prevailed. The purpose of the Act was, as I understand it, to avoid the necessity for such proceedings as might normally have been taken under the Bankruptcy Act to give creditors an opportunity to make reasonable arrangements with farmers who were in difficulties and to enable assistance to be provided from one source or another for farming operations to be carried on in difficult cases. A great number of applications were made under the Act, involving altogether some 2,317 meetings of creditors, although in some cases there was more than one meeting in respect of a particular applicant. I say quite frankly that I sought on many occasions to amend the parent Act at times when it obviously required amendment.

While the legislation did not altogether measure up, in my opinion, to the needs of the circumstances of that time I think we can all agree that it did assist in the salvation of numerous farming properties in Western Australia, which otherwise might at present have been productive in hands other than those of their unfortunate owners, or alternatively have been out of production. As the years passed, it has been necessary to renew the parent Act from time to time, although the number of farmers dealt with thereunder has steadily declined until now it has almost reached vanishing point. Circumstances have greatly improved for one reason and another in farming conditions in this State, and consequently it is not very frequently that farmers now seek the assistance of the Act.

In the meantime—and when I say “in the meantime” I refer to the period between the passage of the 1930 Act and the present day—the assistance rendered by the Commonwealth Government, in 1935, which became subject to the Rural Relief Fund Act, which Act was read in conjunction with this Act—made it possible for a large number of difficult cases that otherwise would have been administered entirely under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act to be settled by a compromise in cash, so far as unsecured creditors were concerned, between the creditor and the farmer. That

legislation, which has already this session been the subject of debate in this House by way of amendment, did contribute substantially towards relieving many farmers of a burden of debt which it was impossible for them to carry and which had not been occasioned by any default of their own, but which nevertheless required some kind of treatment if the farmers were to remain on their properties.

The question now arises whether, in view of the very few cases that at present are likely to come under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act, it is necessary to continue this legislation. This Bill provides that the Act, which expires on the 31st March next, shall be continued for another year from that date. There is no doubt that the House would be well advised to agree to that extension. There is not much difference between the position under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act at present and that which prevailed when the Act was last extended by motion of the Minister who was then in charge of it. Much the same arguments apply today as applied then. If we allow this legislation to lapse then we destroy a machine which is still available if the Bill is passed, a machine which is by no means costly—the cost of it is very small at present—but which could step in to relieve any farmer who fell into financial difficulties either through drought or other weather conditions or through some other misfortune outside his control, without involving him in the necessity for taking the only other avenue of relief I know of, namely, the bankruptcy laws.

Mr. Graham: Why only an extension of 12 months?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: If the House agrees to extend the measure for a longer period, I assure the hon. member I shall offer no objection. I was prepared to extend it for only 12 months because for some little time that has been the practice in legislation of this kind, which is somewhat restrictive in its character and which, as a general rule, has been extended only for short periods. But if the hon. member can advance reasons to justify an extension of more than one year I am not prepared to offer strong opposition, and, in fact, I might be able to agree with him.

Mr. Graham: I cannot see why it should be a short period.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: In a few moments the hon. member will be at liberty to tell the House why he thinks so. There is a connection between this legislation and the Rural Relief Fund Act. Our previous discussions revealed that that Act can still operate to the small degree required in conjunction with this measure. I would like to tell the House of the sort of thing which today is taking place under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act. The position is somewhat different from that which obtained in the early stages of the legislation when conditions, in many cases, were very bad. The following is an example of what happens:—

Recently a secured creditor proposed to take action toward repossessing a property on which the farmer has 260 acres of growing crop free of a crop lien or otherwise encumbered.

The involved nature of the security did not lend itself to a composition being arranged under Section XI of the Rural Relief Fund Act and consequently there was no justification to extend the period of the Stay Order issued under that section.

When informed that a Stay Order under Section V would be substituted in order to afford the farmer protection until such time as the crop was harvested, the creditor concerned agreed to an arrangement.

I am informed that, in small numbers, that sort of case is still coming before the officers concerned with the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act. If, for no other reason than the prevention of unreasonable happenings, such as I have just mentioned, the extension of this measure for a further period is justified. I therefore move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. H. Panton, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—WATER BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT.**

Returned from the Council without amendment.

## **BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).**

### *Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of two amendments made by the Council now considered.

### *In Committee.*

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Local Government in charge of the Bill.

No. 1: Clause 5, line 36, page 2—Insert after the word "the" in line 2 of paragraph (c) the words "date of the."

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: The subclause which the Legislative Council seeks to amend was the subject of considerable discussion in this Committee when the Bill was previously before us. The member for Kalgoorlie was responsible for the amendment to the subclause, which deals with the ordering by municipal councils of the removal of verandahs which overhang streets. The Act originally provided that within a period of ten years—that period would expire next year—such verandahs should all be removed. The member for Kalgoorlie extended the time until the 20th February, 1952, which would be a further three years' exemption. The reason given was, and I agreed with it, that the present building position would create a difficulty if there was a law in force which required these particular verandahs to be removed within a particular time. The Legislative Council wants to add a proviso to the paragraph and, as I understand that proviso, it virtually amounts to a partial nullification of the amendment we previously passed. We agreed that the removal law could not take effect until the 20th February, 1952. The Legislative Council's amendment appears to me to give a discretion to municipal councils provided they had passed bylaws previously.

Mr. Styants: Could they make those by-laws before?

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I did not go into that. I intend to oppose the amendment. I assumed that in certain cases they could make the bylaws. If they did they could decide whether they would extend the time by five minutes or three years, and that struck me as being a partial nullification of our amendment. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Mr. STYANTS: I am pleased that the Minister does not intend to agree to the proposed amendment. It appears to me to be doubtful whether any municipality would have been able to make a bylaw, which would have effect prior to a period

of ten years from the passing of paragraph (47) of Section 180 as contained in the 1938 amendment. Paragraph (47) stipulates that no effect shall be given to the compulsory removal of verandahs or balconies supported by posts until after a period of ten years from the passing of that particular paragraph. That was contained in the amending legislation, No. 49 of 1938, and I believe it was assented to early in 1939, although I have not looked that up. It appears doubtful that a municipal council could legally have framed a bylaw in connection with this matter within ten years of the passing of the original provision. I understand that another place gave consideration to councils which had already passed a bylaw dealing with the matter. It appears to me, as a layman, that if a municipal council had passed such a bylaw it exceeded its jurisdiction under the present legislation. I support the Minister.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 2: Clause 5—Add a new paragraph after paragraph (c) to stand as paragraph (d) as follows:—(d) adding to paragraph (47) a proviso as follows:—

*Provided that nothing herein contained will invalidate any bylaw heretofore made by any municipality under this paragraph, but any such municipality by bylaw may extend from time to time the time prescribed in any bylaw heretofore made by it for the removal of verandahs and balconies supported on posts and projecting over the footway of any street, road or way in any part of the municipality.*

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of the Minister for Local Government, Mr. Hegney and Mr. Styants drew up reasons for not agreeing to the Council's amendments.

Reasons adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

## BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 16th October.

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gascoyne) [5.35]: For very many reasons I do not like the Bill at all. I think it most necessary, because of its construction and of the intentions of the Government as indicated in its various provisions, that the measure should be very closely examined. One can safely say that it is always required of a Minister who introduces a Bill to justify its submission. On this occasion it can equally safely be said that the Bill was not justified at all. As a matter of fact, the Minister, in his introductory speech, delivered the same type of address as he has made for many years past from the Opposition side of the House when discussing the Railway Estimates. It was a most uninspiring utterance, and I think that the Government is quite unjustified in introducing a Bill of this description at this particular time.

I am indeed surprised that the Premier and his Government would adopt such a course when there is sitting a Royal Commission appointed by them, one Commissioner having been imported from overseas and the other from another State of Australia, to inquire into various aspects of railway control, and more particularly into railway administration. For my part, I think it very wrong for the Government to submit a Bill either in anticipation of what the Royal Commission may decide or in any circumstances when the whole matter is under the searchlight of investigation by a Royal Commission appointed by it. There is no assumption at all upon which one could anticipate the recommendations of the Royal Commission as likely to be in line with the proposals in the Bill. It is impossible to predict whether, after a searching inquiry into the administration of the railways, there will be a recommendation for any change at all or whether there will be any proposal to effect a change in the control of the system.

I repeat that I am very surprised indeed that the Premier would agree to the introduction of legislation of such a type when the inquiry into the administrative affairs of the Railway Depart-

ment is in progress. But the Government apparently desires to go on with it and the duty devolves upon the Opposition to examine the Bill thoroughly and ascertain what it is proposed to achieve. I agree that it is necessary to ensure that we shall have efficient control over the railway system. All will support any idea or thought along those lines, but I think the Minister has first to justify the introduction of a Bill of this type at this stage and, secondly, to justify the proposed change from control by a single commissioner to the directorate, —which I think that is a very unfortunate name to select—which it is intended to set up, with the composition indicated in the Bill.

The first argument raised by the Minister was that technically trained men should be in charge of the department. It may be that it is not a sound proposition for technically trained men in any professional capacity to be placed in control of the administrative affairs of the railways. That is quite arguable, but the important point is that after making that statement, the Minister went on to say that the people who used the railways should be heard in the management of the undertaking. He said further that various interests intimately concerned in the running of the railways should be adequately represented. The first attempt to justify the proposed change was supported by the assertion that those who have interests and are concerned with the success of the railways themselves should have representation. On the other hand the Minister stressed strongly the need for technically trained men to be placed in charge.

The Minister further advanced the point that technical men should control the system because they knew more about it than the Minister, whoever he might be for the time being. Following upon that statement, he proceeded upon severe criticism of certain angles of the administration, the late running of trains and many other matters that he dealt with when he sat in Opposition. Without commenting on his contentions either way, dealing with his argument regarding a change in control I would point out that he did not indicate the change contemplated in the present administrative personnel. As a matter of fact, it would seem that, without mentioning specifically the

names of those concerned, it is proposed to continue in their positions some of the present personnel.

The wording of the measure makes it clear that when the positions are to be filled, two at least of the present personnel will be those in charge of the administration. I think there can be much argument advanced against men technically trained either in civil engineering or constructional engineering, as being the ideal type to be placed in charge of railway administration. The Bill specifies that the man who is to be in the principal position when there is the changeover from the single commissioner to the directorate, is to be that type of person but implies that that officer must be a man of that type when at any time appointed to fill the position of head of the Railway Department. I suggest to the House that that is a very unsound suggestion to advance.

The Minister who suggested that technically trained men should be in charge has on many occasions over the years advanced arguments as to why trained men should not be in charge. The Minister could not control them. The present Minister admits that. He admits that the Minister had no control, and yet he is prepared to give away still further some of the responsibility—it is meagre enough as it is—attaching to the Ministerial control of this very important department. The Minister has in the past made some very interesting statements concerning other Ministers who were in charge of the department from time to time. Very many of them could be found in the bound volumes of "Hansard" of almost any year. In 1944 we find on page 2573 of "Hansard" of that year the Minister, amongst many other statements of criticism made by him, saying there is no responsibility on the shoulders of the Commissioner; the responsibility really rests with the Government. He went further to say—

Until the Government faces up to some of the problems, with which the Minister admits it is faced, the railways will continue to lose the patronage of the public. It is no use the Minister telling us that there are reports and that the Government is faced with these problems in relation to suburban traffic and other problems relating to primary and secondary industries; the problem must be dealt with.

The hon. gentleman has entirely altered his attitude on that point in recent months. There has not been an occasion when the

Railway Estimates have been dealt with, or motions have been before the House to improve either the metropolitan or country running, but that hon. gentleman has criticised the Government for neglecting to take definite action and a definite stand in the management of the railways. On this occasion, within the first few minutes of his speech, he made it clear that the Minister has very little control. In spite of that, the intention of this Bill is to take from the Government still further authority and to place it in a very remote way in the hands of a directorate barely responsible to any Government. I am surprised that the Treasurer should countenance the introduction of a Bill which relinquishes further Ministerial control of an asset that represents so much of the invested public money in Western Australia. In spite of the hon. gentleman saying that the Minister has no control whatever now, both he and Parliament by this proposal are to have less control than ever.

The Minister for Education: What clauses have been deleted to call for that, because I cannot find them?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I will deal with that directly and will show that the Government, in giving to a directorate the authority which no such appointed body should have, is handing to that body power which can be and I am sure will be very seriously questioned. I wonder whether the hon. gentleman believes that even the meagre control he has now is a good thing, or whether he believes that it would be better for the administration of the railways that he should have more control. Knowing the hon. gentleman I come to the conclusion that he would find it very irksome not being able to do things which definitely would be in conformity with Government policy, but in connection with which he would have very little say at all. I can only conclude that this is a sort of surrender of a position which means that "Since we cannot continue under the present set-up, even to institute alterations in policy as decided by the Government, we had better hand over the railways to a board." I repeat that the need for efficient control is very obvious to everybody.

There was no justification at all, in the introduction of the Bill, for being able to say that by this means we would have any improvement in the method of control. In my view, and I think too, after the ex-

perience of the hon. gentleman himself over the last few months, he would believe in spite of what he said the other evening, that the ideal in connection with an undertaking such as this would be more Ministerial control. Many statements have been made as to the cause of the very serious position of our railways. The railways of this State, having for the most part been developmental lines, consist of a length of line greater per head of the population than is the case in perhaps any part of the world. That may sound something nice and something that can be boasted about, but it makes much more difficult both the administration of the railways and the possibility of being recouped for any expenditure in connection with them. In the construction of the 4,000 odd miles of railway many developmental lines have been built.

In the last report that I have been able to get there is hardly if any spur line that is paying working expenses, even at the present stage of our history long years after the construction of the lines had been completed, a construction which was embarked upon not only to serve the people residing in the localities but to bring added population with more production which the railways would promote. Apparently we have now reached the position in Western Australia where, although the railways represent approximately £27,000,000 of public money invested, one of the suggestions made to cure the difficulty of earning sufficient to maintain them is to write off the many millions of capital so invested. That would get us nowhere. It would merely charge to the public debt rather than to railways' capital account the many millions which would still have to be serviced and still have ultimately to attempt to be redeemed.

The Premier: And greater demands on the railways for concessions, etc.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I will deal with that aspect directly. The railways today, in spite of the £27,000,000 sounding a terrific sum for that mileage and the rollingstock available, would cost more than twice that if any of the lines or all of them were replaced today. The engines would cost three times what they would pre-war, the rails and material used more than 100 per cent. greater than pre-war, and so far as construction costs are concerned I suppose the value of

labour and the cost of labour today is in the proportion of 8s. to 20s.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Compared with 7s 6d. and 8s.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It is futile to suggest that the remedy for the position is to be found in writing off from the railways' account vast sums of money which appear to be an overburden of debt. The trouble always has been the inability of very many lines to pay much more than axle grease, and the inability of many other lines to pay anything approaching working expenses, and in addition there are the limitations imposed by the State of under half a million people as to spending vast sums of money to pump annually into one concern out of the funds available to the State as a whole. That is the trouble with the railways, the inability of the population of the State and the wealth available in the State to find the money annually needed to give the service that is desired. If there is any doubt in the mind of anyone of the real cause of the difficulties of our railways that will be found on page 8 of the last report of the Commissioner of Railways. There can be read these words under the hand of the Commissioner—

During the war it was generally recognised that the railways were doing a very big job under difficulties but with the return of peacetime conditions comparisons are apt to be drawn between the Western Australian railways and those of other systems to the detriment, invariably, of Western Australia.

When making comparisons of this kind, critics should bear in mind the fact that in relation to its population per mile of railway track, Western Australia, of all the Australian States, has pursued the most vigorous policy of railway construction, but at the same time the limitations of population have imposed severe restrictions on the standard of the railways which have been constructed.

The Commissioner goes on to show the cost as well as the length of the railways operating in all States. He states that our capital cost per mile of £6,158 is not much more than half the cost of construction in the State next to it. In New South Wales the capital cost per mile—the gauge there is 4 ft. 8½ ins.—is £25,000. In South Australia, with the same gauge as ourselves, the cost per mile is £11,984 compared with our £6,158. Although we say with some pride that we have a mile of railway to every 113 persons in this State, that has imposed all down the years a very severe burden on the popula-

tion of half a million. There is no mystery about it as to why the railways, through successive Governments, have come to a very serious stage in their history. It is all very well for Ministers of the present Government to criticise the lack of expenditure and past methods in maintaining in first-class condition the railway system of Western Australia.

It would be an easy matter to improve the plant which our Government had planned to do, by the expenditure of 4¼ million pounds in the next few years and which I have no doubt the present Government will continue to arrange for the spending of, but in addition it will be found that when that sum is spent it will be almost a physical impossibility unless many more millions are put into the railway system, whether the capital is written off or not, to attain that efficiency that it is desired should be found in the system. In a country where no agricultural line pays its way but where service is given to the community it stands to reason that the criticism, if the railways are to be run as a business undertaking, should be levelled at the concessional rates that are given.

I ask the Minister when, with those associated with him on that side of the House, he states he does not believe in political control, whether that is a very satisfactory attitude to adopt in the case of an instrumentality which represents so much public money, in the case of an instrumentality where decisions political must be made if the public is to be given a service rather than that there should be imposed on the public a burden which would make a profitable undertaking of the railways. In the course of evidence given by the Secretary for Railways before the Grants Commission last year that officer made the statement that railway freights and fares should be increased by 12½ per cent. immediately. If we closely analysed the railway figures we would find that a 12½ per cent. increase would yield approximately £400,000. The railway deficit on this occasion is going to exceed well over £1,000,000. If we go further and analyse the figures of the earnings per ton mile of the railways and compare them with the cost per ton mile we get an answer to the whole of the financial problem.

Mr. Smith: That is the crux of the whole thing.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: But this suggestion that the Government does not believe in political control is mere piffle.

Mr. Marshall: Rubbish!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: We must face up to this proposition: that in all English speaking countries which believe in democratic forms of Government the people from time to time decide which political section of the community is to govern; the people approve a government to control the affairs of State and control their interests. The people decide the kind of government and the kind of politics they want. The people decided in this case whether the policy of a Liberal-Country Party Government should be the one imposed on the community or the policy of a Labour Government. In the case of an instrumentality of this sort, the Government has a trust which it cannot avoid. It has a responsibility which no handing over to a directorate or a board can evade. The Government has a responsibility which it must accept in the handling of an instrumentality representing about 24 per cent. of the total indebtedness of Western Australia. The policy should be a return to more Ministerial and Governmental authority rather than a taking away from such authority.

The business of the Government of this State has a turn-over within the Government of over £30,000,000, a revenue of something over £15,000,000, and an expenditure of about £16,000,000. This instrumentality is responsible for 26 per cent. of the expenditure of Western Australia by the Government of Western Australia. The Government is answerable to the Grants Commission, the authority which has decided and will decide in future whether any or all of the revenue deficit is to be taken into consideration when a grant is being considered. That Commission will have the right to demand of this Government who is responsible for any further drift in railway costs and deficits.

Mr. Marshall: Then what will it say?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I will provide the answer, and it cannot be denied by the Treasurer, because the only authority that is retained to the Government in the present set-up is the authority to fix rates and charges to be imposed, and the Commissioner will by direction of the Minister impose them.

The Minister for Railways: And the Government will control every expenditure, and you know it.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The Government will control nothing of the sort.

The Minister for Railways: Of course it will; every penny.

Mr. Marshall: You would be in control of everything according to your attitude since you have been Minister!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It will be found that the question will be answered out of the Minister's own mouth. I have sheets of his own statements in direct refutation of the statement that the Government must accept responsibility, but the Government has not the responsibility. The Government has to accept responsibility and must direct policy whether it be in the Railway Department, the Health Department or the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Marshall: Or the Department of Education.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Is it not political control that is exercised in the determination of policy in the Education Department, the Health Department, and the Public Works Department? Of course it is political control! It is a good thing it is; and I am one who will fight on all occasions not merely for the retention of political control but for a return to the constituted authority of Government, of the authority which should be vested in Parliament in connection with an organisation and instrumentality which has represented in the past and will this year represent a sum approximating the deficit the Premier will incur. The Railway Department will incur this year a loss on its workings approximating the sum of the Premier's budget deficit. If that is the case is it not time that we altered the attitude that we should cease from having political control? Because the Government is answerable to the people of the State!

Mr. Marshall: Absolutely!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Is it not time that we gave to the people proper control over this instrumentality, the control proposed in the Bill introduced by the Minister for Railways last year, providing for a return to the Government of control not only of policy, but of direction of the Commissioner who is charged, under the Government, with the management of the railways? The Govern-

ment cannot absolve itself from responsibility in this matter. I am certain—and I think "The West Australian" endeavoured to draw the attention of the Minister and the Premier to this fact—that no matter what arrangement is made with a directorate of this sort, the giving away of further authority is a bad thing. While no applause was given to the proposal of the Minister for Railways last year, I am as certain as I can be that rather than favour a change for the worse, we would find the Press and the community of this State would prefer to give to the Government more authority, as was desired last year; and I trust that the Government, when the Bill is in Committee, will agree to greater authority being given.

I hope that if the Bill reaches the Committee stage the Government will make sure that there will be vested in the Minister an authority which he does not now possess. I submit that the appointment of a large directorate representing sectional interests is not the proper way to approach this problem. It is no way to overcome the worries associated with railway management, worries which face the Commissioner and his staff at the moment. Those worries in a State of this kind are very serious indeed, and where will we get to with a large directorate of this sort? Will it accept joint responsibility? Will it accept responsibility to the Minister, or will this provide an opportunity for a disclaiming of responsibility? If a board is to be appointed, I would be very sorry indeed to find in charge of a concern of this size a directorate which could in its different units curry favour and almost put itself up for auction. What control will the Minister have over it?

Mr. Marshall: Nil!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: What control has the Minister in saying whether there shall be accepted by the individuals of the directorate or any of them jointly, some sense of responsibility?

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Treasurer is beginning to look worried.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I repeat that these different members would certainly have bargaining points. How is it thought that the Government will fare in the making of determinations in regard to what should be recommended to Government and what should be done without recommendation? Is

it considered, for example, that there should be a place on a directorate of this sort for a representative of the Chamber of Commerce? The Chamber of Commerce is not a creative body; it is a body representing commercial interests, which I submit the Government will find very tardy in making contributions to Government revenue. I could understand it much more easily if a directorate of five were to include a representative of the Chamber of Manufacturers. I could understand, too, if the Chamber of Mines had representation.

Mr. Marshall: They pay through the nose more than any.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: But here we have a directorate set up, by design, of people who have an interest in the charges which are levied by the railways. Who in that set of people will be making representations and recommendations to Government in connection with matters that will be to Government benefit? I submit that the members of the directorate will be in a position of being judge and jury of their own case. There is nothing very clearly set out in the Bill as to whether these people are to be engaged full-time or part-time. It is clearly set out by almost naming the two principal members of the directorate, that the directorate is not to be, as now, subject to Parliament. By this measure the specific sections of the Act which make the Commissioner responsible to Parliament, even though appointed by the Government, are removed from the Act and there is no provision for any age limit. The members are to be appointed in perpetuity.

Mr. Marshall: A Kathleen Mavourneen grant!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I think it is a great weakness that sections in the Act dealing with the appointment of the Commissioner and the ratification of his appointment by Parliament, and the period of five years applying to his appointment, have been omitted from this measure. If the Bill reaches Committee the Minister will be well advised to give very close attention to the necessity for providing in it, firstly for a smaller directorate; secondly that the members of the directorate shall be appointed for five years at the most; thirdly that the ratification of that appointment shall be subject to Parliamentary consideration; and fourthly that an age limit

shall be prescribed. Although I oppose the Bill entirely as it is constructed I think the Minister will be very wise if he gives consideration to the obvious necessity, in the interests of the public in this State, for the inclusion of those provisions.

I am wondering whether the Premier was listening when I made my comments as to the delicate position in which he will find himself if this directorate incurs a much greater loss than is the case now; if he is faced with a deficit far in excess of the one anticipated, due to losses incurred on the railways with no Treasury say in the matter, and obviously no Treasury direction of the directorate. What excuse can be advanced in those circumstances if the Grants Commission says, "Who is responsible for these increased losses in the railways?" The answer, of course, is that the directorate will be responsible for the losses in carrying out its management of the railways. Might not the Grants Commission say, "Is this not a matter for which the Government must be responsible? We therefore cannot recommend any recompense, for a deficit incurred in that matter."? Is that not a reasonable assumption?

Is it not true that on every occasion the Grants Commission examines the accounts of this State, the railways aspect has special reference in its report? Is it not true that from time to time it has recommended that consideration be given to an improvement even to the extent of raising fares and charges? What will be the Commission's attitude if the Government is absolved from responsibility by giving to a directorate authority to incur tremendous expenditure without reference to the Government? I would suggest that the Commission will take a very dim view of that aspect. Who is it that arranges at the moment for concessional advantages to the users of the railways? It is the Government. It is the Government—whether it wishes to be divorced from this matter politically or not—which is responsible for the concessional advantages given to users.

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

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Before tea I was dealing with the seriousness, from my point of view, of the relationship between the Government and the source of its finances, and the difficulty associated with getting

from the Grants Commission, either on the basis of the calculation on past deficits of what next year's grant should be, or in regard to current expenditure, sufficient to meet the needs of the State, and how difficult the position of the Government will be in handing over to a directorate of this sort, instead of a single control, so much say in the affairs and management of the railways. I wonder whether this directorate will be very anxious to make of the railways a business concern. It is all very well to argue that the Government has control as to what the revenue and expenditure will be, but under Section 22 of the Railways Act the Government has the right to fix freights and charges—in which the Commissioner must concur—but no say at all as to the continuing expenditure on the railways, provided the money is spent on railways from revenue of that department. It is the only department in which that position obtains.

Every other department must have reference to the Minister or the Treasurer before expenditure is incurred, but successive Ministers for Railways could advise either the present Minister or the Government that they have not been consulted as to expenditure from railway revenue except on matters involving expenditure on new items. The directorate, under the set-up proposed in the Bill, will have all the say regarding expenditure from revenue, provided the money is spent in railway channels. I have no doubt that is the reason that prompted the Government to include in the Bill a provision similar to that made in the Bill of last year, introduced by our Government, to the effect that the control of accounts shall come under the Auditor-General. In those particulars the wording of this Bill is almost identical with that contained in the Bill of last year. I think it is identical, except that the word "directorate" is used in place of the word "Commissioner." So the Government admits that there is need for supervision of the railway's accounts by Government audit, and yet it is giving a directorate, which can incur expenditure in all sorts of ways without any governmental or ministerial control, authority that the Commissioner does not now possess.

I wonder what is in the mind of the Government regarding fares and freights. We have had varying statements from the Minister in this regard. I realise that it is awkward for a Government, that normally

would vigorously oppose any increase in freights, to be placed in a position such as that stated in the last returns tabled this month, in this Parliament, which show that the average return per ton mile, taking all commodities, is 1.79d. That is the average return, but the average cost can only be calculated by scrutinising thoroughly the expenditure of the whole department. It will be found that, under the various items which are hauled at considerable loss, there is a considerable tonnage. We have the position that over  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million tons hauled by the railways returned an average of 1.79d. per ton mile, whereas the cost would be something approaching 3d. per ton mile, so it could be said that almost every rate—with the exception of that charged for such items as imported timber, which is a high rate, or for first or second class goods traffic—in the railways is a concessional rate.

Will the Minister advise the House what is to be done in that connection? I would assume that he will await some comment from the Royal Commission before dealing with that subject, and again I must say that I regret that the Government did not await the report of that Commission on all matters before introducing a Bill dealing with the administration of the railways. There is a clause in the Bill which, either by design or accident, the Minister did not explain. I refer to the clause that takes away from the Government the right to delegate authority regarding appointments. It is the intention of the clause so to amend that section of the Act that not only appointments involving salaries in excess of £400 per year, but all the remainder of them—as to which the Commissioner acts on a delegated authority—are to be handed over to the directorate. The directorate is to have the right to make all appointments. I wonder why the Minister did not mention that clause.

Mr. Marshall: He did not know it was there.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I have read his speech carefully. There is provision in the Bill to take from the Government even the right to delegate authority in connection with the making of appointments. One can readily appreciate what may be done in that regard by a directorate that has very little responsibility, either to the Government or the Minister. It is indeed taking

a serious risk in a matter of public finance over which the Government now has very little control. It cannot be denied that the department makes no reference either to the Minister or the Treasurer for its normal expenditure from revenue, and it is the largest spending department in the State service. Is it any wonder that the previous Government was anxious—in the Bill it introduced—to secure a return to ministerial authority in many of the directions of policy that properly belong to a Government? If this matter was overlooked by the Minister when introducing the Bill I hope he will give it close scrutiny. In another clause there is sought the deletion of two sections of the Act, and that passed unexplained by the Minister. I wonder why the House was not given information on these important matters.

The Attorney General: The clause to which you refer gives the directorate less power than the Commissioner now has.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I would ask the Minister for his interpretation of it, because it is necessary. That clause gives greater authority—as I interpret the wording—to the directorate than the Commissioner now has. In the case of appointments involving salaries of over £400 per annum, the present practice is that they must be referred to the Minister. That power was taken away by the previous Government, in regard to delegated authority.

The Attorney General: All appointments must now be under delegation.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: If that is the interpretation, it was not mentioned by the Minister, and the wording is indeed weird. The first point to which I referred appears to me to be a valid reason why this Bill should not have been introduced at all. It is a most unusual procedure for a Government to introduce a Bill, so far-reaching in its effects on the control of governmental policy such as this, while a Royal Commission is sitting and inquiring into the whole of those affairs.

I cannot recall any such case in the past and I think the Commission has a right to be concerned at the attitude of the Government. Apart from that, if the Government can be absolved entirely from any blame in that regard, in the interests of the people of Western Australia, whose asset the railways—representing over £27,000,000 of invested money—are, there should be, if a

directorate or board is to be set up, more governmental control than at present exists in relation to the Commissioner. If such a directorate is to be set up, it should be constituted of a smaller number than is proposed in the Bill. In summing up on that point, I hope the Government will listen to my argument and make sure that if such a board is to be appointed, it shall be a small board subject—as the Commissioner is—to a term of appointment, such term to be subject to ratification by Parliament. I hope that all members who have the interests of the community at heart will see the flaws in the Bill and strenuously oppose it. The least the Government should do is to withdraw it until the Royal Commission has made its report.

**MR. HILL (Albany) [7.43]:** I have pleasure in supporting the Bill, which I think is a step in the right direction. I have persistently pointed out that the failure of our transport system is due to the fact that we have never had sound transport administration. The Leader of the Opposition must face the fact that for 20 out of the last 23 years the Labour Party has been in power and must therefore accept a full share of responsibility for the deplorable condition of our railways and other transport activities. They have had experts to advise them and have attacked the experts instead of being guided by their advice.

**Mr. May:** There is the Legislative Council, too.

**Mr. HILL:** That does not affect what goes on in this House. The Leader of the Opposition excelled himself in Albany when he sneered at me for studying the reports of Sir George Buchanan. If that gentleman's reports had been studied, this State would not have been in such a deplorable condition today. The Leader of the Opposition referred to the length of our railways, 4,000 miles. The former member for Geraldton once said that if we could tear up our railways and relay them as they should have been laid in the first place, we could do with 1,000 miles less. He also referred to the capital cost per mile and compared it with the capital cost of railway construction in New South Wales and South Australia. I do not know whether the hon. gentleman ever travelled on the main wheat railway of New South Wales—from Broken Hill to Sydney. I have done

so. I travelled first in the Silver City Comet, and then changed to a steam train. The wheat is grown at an altitude of 1,000 feet above sea level, but to reach the seaboard it has to be hauled 3,000 feet over the Blue Mountains.

In this State, the Great Southern railway should be our main link with the seaboard; there is not one engineering difficulty presented by that line. But, thanks to the policy of the previous Government, that railway is not used for the haulage of wheat. Again, who is responsible for the failure of the railways to haul the superphosphate? If members turn to "The West Australian" of the 25th April, 1929, they will find a report of the Government of the day having asked the super. companies to erect works in the wrong place to provide back-loading. It is not the job of the Government to run railways or other activities, but it is the Government's concern to ensure that such activities are soundly administered, and it is usually admitted that administration by a board is superior to administration by one man. We have the Fremantle Harbour Trust, with a loan liability of 3½ millions, controlled by a board. The Bunbury harbour is controlled, not by one man, but by a board. The condition of the Albany harbour under the administration of the railways today is a disgrace. Members have heard the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition, but he is not a railwayman, and he knows very little about transport. The report of one of the leading transport authorities of the world, the general manager of the South African Railways and Harbours, in 1930, may be of interest to members. I will read it—

#### Establishment of Ministry of Transport.

In my annual report for last year I referred to the action which had been taken in Canada whereby the management of the Canadian National Railway had been divorced from direct Government control and placed in the hands of a board of directors, and it is interesting to note that in South Australia the Royal Commission on transport which submitted its report at the end of last year, has recommended, inter alia, that a directorate be established with the least possible delay to control and manage the South Australian railways. The Commission recommended further that the directorate should consist of a managing director and five other directors. He should possess the following qualifications, namely:—

one shall be a person of proved administrative capacity;

one shall be a person of general commercial experience and ability;

one shall be a person of financial training and experience; and

two shall be persons of experience as employees in the Railway service.

Both the Canadian National Railway and the South Australian Railways are State-owned systems, so that the action taken in Canada and the recommendation of the Royal Commission on transport in South Australia to place the railways outside the orbit of direct Government control, are of particular interest to South Africa.

I have for some years now advocated the adoption of a co-ordinated system of control of transport in South Africa under a Ministry of Transport, and with the development of national roads linking up the larger centres of population and the spending of large sums of money on the country's road system the need for a change in the existing control and departmental organisation is daily becoming more apparent.

Under existing conditions, roads and road transport are mainly controlled by provincial and local authorities which, in turn, come under the jurisdiction of the Minister of the Interior; the National Road Board is responsible to the Minister of the Interior; the railways, harbours and airways are controlled by the Minister of Railways and Harbours; the Civil Air Board falls under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Defence. As a result of this multiplicity of control, there has been little action in matters of rail and road policy and in regard to the wider aspects of the transport problems of the Union.

In various parts of the country, extensive and expensive new all-weather roads have been and are being built parallel to the railways, while little has been done by co-ordinated effort to construct and improve roads to open up new areas and to develop agricultural areas in co-ordination with the railways.

The position with regard to parallel railway and road systems has been aptly put by the Royal Commission on Transport in South Australia in their report; the Commission came to the conclusion—

“That expenditure on improvements to the railways system and on roads parallel with railway lines, or serving districts already served by the railways, should be considered in the light of a definite transportation policy. This policy should take into account the State's financial position, as well as the economic advantage to the community, and the probable effect of any contemplated expenditure upon existing transport facilities, both as regards finance and efficiency. The closest co-operation should exist between the authorities responsible for the railways, the construction and improvement of roads, and the Transport Control Board.”

The best means of securing effective co-operation between South Africa's rail and road systems and of avoiding the present overlapping in the functions of the various controlling authorities is to establish a Ministry of Trans-

port. With the creation of such a Ministry, the Minister of Transport, in addition to being the Ministerial head of the Department of Railways and Harbours would, as a matter of course, take over control of the following Government boards, viz:—

National Road Board;  
Central Road Transportation Board;  
South African Shipping Board;  
Perishable Products Export Control Board;  
Civil Air Board.

As in the case of other Government departments, there would be a Department of State for Transport with a State official as Secretary for Transport, and in order to attain the necessary co-ordination between the different forms of transport and secure co-operation between the various Government departments and provincial and local authorities, a national transport body—a Transport Advisory Council—should be established to advise the Minister of Transport. It is suggested that this body should comprise 12 persons appointed by the Governor-General in the following manner:—

the Minister of Transport, who shall be Chairman;  
one member nominated by the Minister of Transport;  
the General Manager of the South African Railways and Harbours;  
the Chairman of the National Road Board;  
the Chairman of the Central Road Transportation Board;  
the Chairman of the South African Shipping Board;  
the Chairman of the Civil Air Board;  
one member nominated by the Directorate of Railways and Harbours;  
two members nominated by the Provincial Consultative Committee;  
one member nominated by local authorities;  
one member nominated by private transport undertakings.

As a natural corollary to the establishment of a Ministry of Transport and the creation of a national body to co-ordinate and control all forms of transport, certain changes will have to be made in the control and organisation of the Department of Railways and Harbours. It is suggested that these should include the appointment of a Directorate of Railways which body should, subject to the authority of the Governor-General and the control of the Minister of Transport, take over the administration of the Railways and Harbours. It is suggested that the Directorate should comprise nine members appointed by the Governor-General in the following manner:—

the General Manager of the South African Railways and Harbours, as Chairman;  
two members nominated by the Minister of Transport;  
two Assistant General Managers of the South African Railways and Harbours Administration;  
one member nominated by the South African Agricultural Union;  
one member nominated by the Association of Chambers of Commerce of South Africa;

one member nominated by the South African Federated Chamber of Industries;

one member nominated by the mining industry.

Under a system of co-ordinated control by a Minister of Transport, advised by a Transport Advisory Council, the disabilities above referred to should disappear and the country as a whole would reap the economic benefits of a well considered, defined, and progressive road and rail policy under which due regard would be had to the interests of all sections of the community. The funds available for road purposes would be consolidated and used to the best advantage. Uniformity of method and incidence of road and road motor vehicle taxation, as well as uniform traffic laws, would be obtained.

I consider that much can be learnt from that report. Our problem is not unlike that of South Africa. If we are to have an efficient transport system, our ports, railways and various other activities must be placed under sound administration. I firmly believe that we shall obtain better results by having a board of directors instead of one man controlling our railways.

Mr. LESLIE: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

**MR. MARSHALL** (Murchison) [7.55]: In my judgment, this measure is one of the most astounding that has been introduced into Parliament since I have had the honour to be a member of this Chamber. It is not only astounding from the viewpoint of the provisions it contains, but when one recalls the attitude constantly, persistently and vigorously adopted by the Minister for Railways and finds that gentleman endeavouring to pilot a measure of this character through the House, the position is astounding in the extreme. I think I shall be able to show that there has never been a more inconsistent critic, one that could never be pinned down to anything in particular, and a merciless critic, too, than he.

May I preface my remarks by referring to the brief period when I had the honour of being Minister for Railways. I took charge of that portfolio when Parliament was in session. Twelve days afterwards, hostilities ceased, and we had to take all the repercussions from individuals and institutions alike, who thought that with the advent of peace, the new world order would immediately be available to one and

all. We took all the persecution for 12 or 18 months after the war ceased, but the present Ministry had five months of holiday before meeting Parliament, joy-riding. I do not speak disparagingly of that because I consider it an obligation upon every Minister to travel the State and become acquainted with the requirements of the people, but it is of little use travelling the State to ascertain the needs of the people when one is not in a position to give them any redress. Of what use is it for the Minister for Railways to go anywhere and listen to the complaints of people about railway administration when he is in a hopeless and invidious position as regards giving them any redress?

If there is one member of the Ministry who understands fully the shortcomings of Railway Department administration, it is the present Minister. He had no occasion to travel the State to find out, because, in session and out of session, from his seat in the House, he criticised the administration. This Government has no vision at all.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: None!

Mr. MARSHALL: Does it propose to be constantly legislating for our grandfathers instead of our grandchildren? Is what was good enough for us 25 or 50 years ago good enough for tomorrow? Is there anything at all progressive in the present Government? References were made to the competition with which the railways have been and are being confronted. But that competition is infinitesimal compared with what the railways will have to face tomorrow. What can we find in this measure to provide for tomorrow? If I understand the Minister correctly, this Bill does not purport or pretend to provide for tomorrow. We are led to infer from what the Minister has said that we shall yet have before us for consideration Bills to control the tramways and other modes of transport. The member for Albany has just quoted at length from a South African report. But what was his intention? Not to cut transport into pieces, but to co-ordinate it, to bring it under one head! This Bill does not purport to do that.

The modes of transport are split up. The railways are in one department, the tramways and their associated modes of transport in another and road and other modes of transport in still another. Therefore, there

is no desire on the part of the Government to co-ordinate transport, but rather to cause rivalry and friction among the three or four different modes. That is the matter which we should be considering today. The railways, shipping, air and road transport must be co-ordinated in the very near future and each branch should be fitted into its correct place in the economy of the State. Each mode of transport has its sphere or place in our economy. In this way, the airways would know its duty and responsibility and the part which it would be called upon to play in the development of the State. This remark applies also to the railways and to road transport. But no, we are to carry on with the old obsolete idea! Instead of co-ordinating all forms of transport, each section is to be put into a different compartment. I cannot understand this attitude of the Government.

The Bill contains three important provisions. First, it denies to Parliament a great measure of the little authority that Parliament did have; but it alters the method of control and in this I think I can say with confidence that members on this side of the House concur. We subscribe to that form of control. We also subscribe to the appointment of a board of management, but not a board constituted as rightly depicted by the Leader of the Opposition, where sectional interests shall assume charge of assets of the State to the value of £27,000,000 and use them for the benefit of their particular section.

Mr. Triat: And not be responsible to the people.

Mr. Reynolds: Shameful, scandalous!

Mr. MARSHALL: I will have something to say on that point a little later. The third provision in the Bill is potentially the same as the provision contained in the measure which I introduced into this Chamber on behalf of the Government preceding the present Government. To this provision we on this side of the House wholeheartedly subscribe. I endorse 100 per cent. the statement made by the Leader of the Opposition in regard to the Government's introduction of this measure at this particular time. I give all credit to the Government for its desire to fulfil the promises which it made on the hustings.

The Premier: Very few promises.

Mr. MARSHALL: I give the Government that credit; but in view of all that has happened, and bearing in mind what the spokesman for the Government said on railway matters when the Government members were in opposition with respect to a change in the method of control, I say the Government kept its promise to the electors to have a thorough investigation made into the whole railway system. A similar promise was made by the previous Government. We also promised to alter the method of control. Therefore the Government will not be surprised if I view the introduction of this measure at this time with a little suspicion, having regard to the provisions contained in it. In my opinion, the Government has behaved in a most offensive way to highly skilled technical men, men of high repute, who were appointed by it to make a thorough investigation into the whole of our railway system. Before the Royal Commission had an opportunity to make its report or recommendation, the Government stepped in and brushed the Commission aside. The Government said, in effect, "Irrespective of what you might recommend after your very thorough investigation, we will precede you by giving effect to a method of control which might be highly objectionable to you."

When one considers the advocacy of the present Minister for Railways while in opposition, it is astounding to realise that he should be the one to recommend the Government to introduce a measure of this character at this moment. Let me quote what the Minister had to say when speaking in opposition to the Bill I introduced last session on behalf of the then Government. I quote from "Hansard," vol. 2, page 2651, as follows:—

What evidence has the House at the present time regarding the powers of the Commissioner and the manner in which they have been exercised? The Commissioner has exercised those powers under the present Act and what have we before us to indicate that we would be justified in taking those powers from him at the present juncture? What right would we have to say, without having an inquiry, "No you are not fit to carry on, but we will put you under the Minister who will direct you." We have not the information upon which we could base that action, and we certainly need to have an inquiry. Surely it would be fair to adopt that course.

The Minister has betrayed his own utterances, denied his recommendations or convictions and introduced a measure to which

his Party strongly objected and he has done so while the Royal Commission is actually sitting. The Government has been unwise, most indiscreet and undignified in introducing this measure while the Royal Commission is in session. I have my own opinion on this measure. In view of certain provisions contained in it, I am confident that the Minister was helped in its preparation. He was ably assisted in ascertaining the basis upon which the measure rests. Its provisions indicate quite clearly who was responsible for its basic principles.

I venture to suggest that neither the Treasury nor those in authority controlling other modes of transport, had anything to do with the framing of this measure. It emanated from one source only, and I will probably be able to convince members of that fact as I proceed. It was obvious that the Minister did not know the full text of the Bill, and could not have understood the possibilities of its repercussions. The Leader of the Opposition, from the financial aspect, pointed that out quite clearly. I am certain that the present Treasurer will not in any circumstances permit the measure, as it is now framed, to pass this Chamber. It would be fatal to him as Treasurer. The Minister, in introducing the Bill, referred to the fact that the job was too big for one man. He went over the history of our railway system to get figures to prove the expansion of industry, in justification of that contention.

One would think that with the growth of the railways the Commissioner had to take the full personal responsibility of administering every detail and every item. Of course, there is nothing of the kind. The Commissioner created departments and delegated his authority, but he remained the overseer or overlord. His responsibilities may have grown, but not to the extent that he was to devote a given period of each day to the administration of the ever expanding railway system. He is merely the overlord, and as such gives a general daily supervision. As a matter of fact, the busiest period our railways ever experienced was during the war, and we then had only an Acting Commissioner—one man. Let us look at some of the Eastern States railway systems to see how they compare with ours, which is controlled by one man. The New South Wales railways have one Commissioner, but he can have two assistants.

The Minister for Railways: He has two assistants. There are three Commissioners.

Mr. MARSHALL: We have one Commissioner and one assistant here. That is a matter about which I shall have something to say later. We have 4,831 miles of railways, and New South Wales has 6,127 miles, or approximately 2,000 miles more. The capital invested in Western Australia is £26,979,563 and in New South Wales it is a paltry £154,976,000. The total number of employees in Western Australia is 8,598 and in New South Wales it is 56,558, or seven times as many. Also, New South Wales has six times as much capital invested, but that evidently is not too large a job for one man. I do not know of any contemplation on the part of the New South Wales Government to alter its one man control. Let us look at Victoria, where there are three Commissioners. Strange to say, the mileage in that State is less than here.

The capital invested in Victoria is £53,454,000 compared with our £27,000,000—just double—and the number of employees is 26,807 as compared with our 8,598. There are many trains going in and out of Flinders-street Station, Melbourne, so that although the mileage of railroad is less, the train miles must be colossal compared with ours. More trains go in and out of that station than in any other railway station in the world. The authority of the three Commissioners in Victoria, if the capitalisation is to be a consideration, and the number of individuals employed, is not by any means out of proportion to that of the single Commissioner in Western Australia.

Mr. Nimmo: We are looking ten years ahead.

Mr. MARSHALL: If the Minister would conscientiously face the situation he would admit that it is not so much the comprehensive nature of the job which the Commissioner has to perform, that has brought about so much dissatisfaction with our administration, as it is the power that is conferred upon the Commissioner. On this point the Minister has been particularly difficult to understand. He first argued that the Minister had ample power, but in almost the next breath he admitted that the Minister had no control. I know from my own experience—although it was only a

short one—what the position of our railway system is.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You have done your good turn.

Mr. MARSHALL: I cannot help whether it be good or bad. I had a job to do, and I endeavoured to do it conscientiously. I cared not whether I pleased or offended, when I filed a minute or made an utterance, I stuck to it.

The Minister for Works: Hear, hear!

Mr. MARSHALL: I never shifted. When I believed I was doing what was just and fair, I never moved. The present Minister is most difficult to follow on this point. He will not take exception to my making some reference to the day I handed over to him. We were in the company of the departmental heads. The Minister will well remember the Commissioner's remarks. After we had both made brief references to railway matters, the Commissioner of Railways told the present Minister that they were a very happy family in the railways. Of course they are a **happy family, because they are immune to any interference!**

The utterances of the Minister in regard to these matters—utterances oft-times repeated—are of great value at the moment. I want again to quote from "Hansard" because on the point of the difference in power between the Minister and the Commissioner, under the Railways Act, the present Minister has never been fixed; he constantly shuffles. I warn him it is a bad practice. When speaking against the Bill I introduced in the last session, that hon. gentleman, after quoting the Acts of other States in connection with the power that the Minister had in regard to the administration of the railways, had this to say:—

If, therefore, the Minister fails to see why the present form of railway management was established under the existing Act, as he said, I can only come to the conclusion that he fails to understand why the Minister was given such wide powers as in this State.

I have "Hansard" references to show that the Minister has on several occasions implied that the Minister for Railways has a great deal of power in the control, management, and maintenance of the railways. Those are vital factors on which the disgruntled community rests its complaints. But the Minister now argues that there is ample power, and that he has

plenty of authority. In speaking to his own measure only a few days ago,—I scribbled these notes down—the Minister had this to say:—

That then is the position, and while certain matters have to be submitted to the Minister for his approval, that is as far as the Minister's authority extends.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You used to blame the Minister previously.

The Minister for Railways: The Minister has no control whatever.

Mr. Kelly: What is the use of him?

Mr. MARSHALL: That does not augur very well for the success of the present Minister. Even if the Minister's convictions are conscientiously held and ultimately are proved to be wrong, it is better for the time being courageously to adhere to them. With regard to the question of power—this applies also to the measure that I introduced—even public men whom we would expect to have a better appreciation of the difficulties and to be able to conceive the line of demarcation between policy and administration, cannot do so.

Mr. Needham: They won't do so.

Mr. MARSHALL: No Minister, not even one experienced in railway matters, would from the standpoint of power enforce policy nor even with regard to matters of administration interfere with those whose responsibility it is directly to control and administer the department. It is true that Ministers are not usually thoroughly experienced in railway management but, by way of comparison, it is equally true that we are not electricians. Because I am not an electrician, does that imply that I have no right, when I desire electricity to be installed in my home, to say exactly where I want the lights to be put and the type of light I desire to make use of—which is a matter of policy—leaving it to the experts to devise ways and means of giving effect to my wishes? That is the difference between policy and administration. As a matter of fact, no Minister would dictate to the Commissioner of Railways with regard to the detailed management of his system.

As pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition, the most criminal aspect of handing over unlimited authority to any individual or institution and providing relief from the wrath of the community is simply totalitarianism without any doubt, unanswer-

able and responsible to no-one but themselves. The Minister now finds himself in the same invidious position as that with which I was confronted. He realises that people require certain changes and the justice of their complaint, but he is in a hopeless position to do anything about it unless it is with the sanction of the Commissioner of Railways. No matter how justified he would be in endeavouring to give effect to what is desired, unless the action meets with the approval of the Commissioner of Railways, the Minister is in a hopeless position. I know that from experience and can refer the Minister to various files which will indicate that I knew of the discontent that existed throughout the railway system.

That discontent was not due to the job being too big. As a matter of fact, it was, and is, due to the fact that there is not enough for the administrators to do, so they go along with their pin-pricking tactics, constantly annoying both the men and the customers—and all the time the Minister is in a hopeless position and he knows it. He is not able to apply the remedies that he realises are necessary. He cannot enforce any remedy that he may have; and the Minister appreciates his position now. He has a better understanding of the ruling that the Crown Law Department has given to Governments over the years. That ruling is that the administrators of our railway system are all-powerful and the Minister has but very limited authority. Under the Bill now before the House, the Government proposes to deny the Government itself, the people generally and Parliament some of the present authority they possess.

As long as I am a member of this Chamber, I will not give my vote in support of any measure that takes away from Parliament the requisite authority when it comes to departmental matters. Here we are in the invidious position of having people clamouring for justice and reforms, and I shall show that that position does not arise because of the obsolescence of the railway system. Truly, we are in a hopeless position. It is absolutely ridiculous that in a democratic country such a position should prevail. Here we have the Country and Democratic League still robbing the people of their rights while claiming to be democratic and liberal. That is the position beyond all doubt.

I can speak very forcefully upon this matter because of my experience.

The Minister for Education: He speaks as one having authority and not as the scribes.

Mr. MARSHALL: The Bill I introduced last session was of a temporary character. Both the Government and the Opposition knew the position—I think I mentioned it when I introduced the measure—had become intolerable. May I quote one instance for the Minister's benefit. A depot had been changed on the Kalgoorlie line. The earlier depot had a pit centred there for cleaning the fireboxes of engines, which made the job easier, cleaner, simpler and quicker.

It was found essential to change the depot and, in consequence, the fireman on a train, when it came to the original depot, had to do that work on his own. That being so, the man who relieved him did not know whether the firebox had, or had not, been cleaned out. It was quicker to do the work with two men to the satisfaction of both and frequently, I have been given to understand from a very authoritative source, the fire had to be cleaned out again at the second depot where there was no pit—a particularly objectionable job on a hot, dusty day with hot cinders and ashes flying about. It was a case to which I considered favourable consideration should be extended for the expenditure of a paltry £100 or £150. I had several interviews with the Commissioner of Railways on the subject and at my last interview with him he gave utterance to a remark that is indelibly imprinted upon my memory. He said, "The union is determined to get this, and I am determined it will not." That was the attitude of the Commissioner, and I, as Minister, had to sit there and take it.

Mr. May: Who won?

Mr. MARSHALL: The Commissioner, of course.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Easy, in seven rounds!

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Long live democracy!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: That is political control!

Mr. MARSHALL: As I mentioned, the Bill I introduced was a temporary measure.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Very temporary.

Mr. MARSHALL: Opposition members at the time were told frequently that we proposed to have a thorough investigation regarding the administration of the railway system. They knew that we proposed to introduce a major Bill with a view to co-ordinating all traffic matters and bringing them all under one heading. We intended to bring all licensing matters under one heading in the metropolitan area, thus making things more simple and easier for all concerned. We intended to bring all forms of transport under their respective headings—but the present Minister vigorously opposed the measure. He pointed out, in his own inimical way, that the Minister had ample power. I have quoted some of his utterances already. But one of the most interesting features of the present Minister's contribution to the debate lies in the fact that he quoted from a speech delivered in 1907 by a former Minister for Railways. That was in support of his contention that the Minister had ample power. Strange to relate, the speech from which he made his quotation was in defence of non-political control. I shall read portion of the Minister's quotation from his ministerial predecessor. It is as follows:—

By adopting ministerial control we are compelled to throw the whole of the responsibility for the administration of the department on the Minister; and I ask is the Minister for the time being ever selected because of special knowledge in regard to railway administration? During Mr. George's term of office as commissioner, five years, we have had as Minister successively Mr. Kingsmill, Mr. Rason, Mr. Holman, Mr. Johnson, now myself; I take it that in no one instance was the Minister selected on account of any peculiar knowledge he had of railway administration. Each of them, I take it, was at liberty to create his own policy, or to follow the policy of his predecessor. It is easy for a Minister to fix his own line of policy in connection with the administration of the railways, and he is not bound to follow the policy of his predecessor. But when it comes to a question of railway administration, and when, as I have pointed out, we may have as many as five Ministers in five years, then to place the entire responsibility for the working of the railways on the Minister is placing on his shoulders a responsibility you have no right to put upon him.

That is what the Minister quoted from his predecessor's speech when he said that the Minister had ample control. The Bill that was dealt with in 1907 concerned ministerial control over the administration of the railways. So I think by now the Minister is

convinced that the situation is not altogether a pleasant one. Far from it! In speaking against that measure, the Minister also put forward the argument that if the Bill became law it would reduce the Commissioner of Railways to the status of an office boy. I think I can say now that the Commissioner of Railways has reduced the present Minister's status to that of an office boy by way of a change. The Minister for Railways visited Bunbury and during the course of his reply to a deputation made these utterances—

In the past he did not think the Railway Department had made a reasonable effort to give an efficient service in regard to the transport of primary products. The time taken in the transport of passengers was too long.

That is in conformity with the attitude that the Minister has always adopted in this House. He was on very good grounds, positively on good grounds. But I know what happened. The Minister was hardly in his office on the following day or that evening when he was asked for an explanation from the Commissioner of Railways in regard to his statement.

Mr. Needham: Please explain!

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes. And the Minister was under an obligation to counteract the effects of his previous statement.

Mr. Needham: Please explain!

Mr. MARSHALL: He went into the Press next day with this statement—

The Minister for Railways said yesterday that the report of a speech he made at Bunbury on Tuesday concerning the railways was so abbreviated as to convey in some respects the false impression that he was blaming the Commissioner and the administration. That was not correct—

If it was not, the hon. gentleman has had a lot to say in this House over the past few years that was not correct. He went on—  
—as the purport of his remarks was to emphasise obsolescence, not inefficiency in the railways.

Of course there is a lot of comment that could be offered on that! In passing, may I say that the Minister was obliged to correct his statement at Bunbury which was, in my judgment, a very correct one.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You should see the Bunbury paper!

Mr. MARSHALL: I know. I have the Bunbury paper here, again pointing out that the Minister evidently made a blunder

somewhere—but where, I am not prepared to argue here. In introducing this Bill the Minister said—

I wanted to look at the car-barn, and I got into hot water because I did not consult the Commissioner of Railways. Surely I do not have to ask a busy man like the Commissioner if I want to look at the car-barn.

The Minister will find that he has to do so. He is an office boy.

The Attorney General: That means that you were an office boy too, apparently!

Mr. MARSHALL: That is the position. The Minister realises now whether he is an office boy or not, when he is asked by the Commissioner to correct a statement that was true! When the hon. gentleman speaks about the obsolescence of our railway system and tries to smother up the actual position regarding lack of business acumen and efficiency in the administration of our railway system, he does something that is wrong. The people of Western Australia, realising just exactly what the position of our railway system is with regard to traction power and rollingstock, are prepared to tolerate the inconveniences they experience by virtue of obsolescence. But that is not their chief complaint, and the Minister knows it. I have "Hansards" here by the dozen. Might I tell the Minister that one of the chief complaints about the railways is the stowing of persons' goods.

Constantly complaints are being received with regard to bad stowing. I think that is the principal complaint. I ask the Minister: Is the bad stowing in the guard's van the outcome of an obsolete engine drawing the train? Of course it is not! Is the neglect of people's goods and the neglect of passengers travelling in the hot summer months through the Goldfields without any waterbags, due to obsolete guards' vans at the rear of the trains? Of course not! Are the apathy and indifference of thousands of employees due to the obsolescence of the system? Of course not! How often has the present Minister for Railways spoken in high and glowing terms of the lower-paid officers of the department and the general rank and file employees? But they have become indifferent, quite indifferent, because of the administration.

While there may be some justification for complaints about the obsolescence of our system, I feel that people are prepared to

tolerate it until time amends that aspect. But in the meantime they want business acumen and efficiency, in which obsolescence plays no part. I know that by experience. The first provision in this measure, together with two other provisions that I will refer to later, is a clear indication to me that this Bill or the basis of this Bill was not drafted in the Minister's office. One clause provides for two nominee members of the directorate to be created and for three representative members. May I point out, in passing, that much of the responsibility for the administration of this department is disappearing? At one time the department controlled the electricity department. That control has long since gone. It is proposed by this measure that the department shall shed its responsibility for the tramways and ferries. So while we are reducing the work of the administration we propose to create a board out of all proportion to the responsibility that will be experienced by those controlling the department in course of time, if the Government gets its way by legislation.

In explaining the appointment of the two nominee members, the Minister said or implied that the position was quite open. I say, without the slightest doubt, that the two nominee members have already been chosen because under this measure it is an utter impossibility to exclude them. One is to be an engineer and is also to possess an extensive knowledge of railway administration. Where is such an individual to be obtained? But I have a more convincing piece of evidence on this point. There is only one man in this State who can provide those qualifications. I venture to say one would travel the world and get no-one who is an engineer with an extensive knowledge of administration. I have further convincing evidence of what is in the mind of the Government, for I found in the Press, a statement headed, "Railways and Tramways. Future Control by Separate Boards." The statement reads—

At a meeting on Monday the State Cabinet decided that the Railways and Tramways Departments should be separately controlled in each case under a board of management.

I might say in passing that there will be plenty of jobs by and by providing spoils for the victors! The statement continued—

The decision was in accordance with the views expressed by the leaders of the present

Government parties when they delivered their policy speeches in February last. The Minister for Railways and Transport said yesterday that legislation to give effect to the new policy would be introduced during the coming session of Parliament. The Commissioner of Railways would probably be chosen as Chairman of the Railways Board of Management.

The Minister for Railways: I certainly never said that!

Mr. MARSHALL: It is all cut and dried.

Mr. Yates: It did not say he would be appointed.

Mr MARSHALL: It is all cut and dried. It would be absolutely impossible to get a man with the necessary qualifications outside of our own particular Commissioner. Why was the word "engineer" included at all? As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, why is it necessary to have the qualification of an engineer in order to be an administrator of a railway system? We have our Civil Engineer's Department and our Mechanical Engineer's Department. We do not want an engineer. We want a competent administrator. That is the man we want. The next is the most remarkable appointment. This nominee has to be employed in the railway system. He has to be an employee of the railways. He is to be known as the departmental member and has to be employed either in the transport or the administration branch. I will give any individual three guesses as to who will get that appointment.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Why three?

Mr. Yates: You are wide of the mark.

Mr. MARSHALL: The remarkable part is that this nominee has to be employed in the railway system and yet be a representative on the directorate. That is why I know where this Bill was drafted and where it came from. Here is a man who is to be a director of himself, plus the rest of the employees of the Railway Department. He is to be an administrator over himself in the railways, so he will get on fairly well and will be able to present both sides of the case on his directorate. I agree with the utterance of the Leader of the Opposition, that we do not want a board of five members at this juncture, as we are diminishing the responsibility of the Railway Department, not increasing it.

The Attorney General: Surely this State is to go ahead.

Mr. MARSHALL: When introducing the Bill the Minister rightly said that road transport is a keen competitor of the railways. It will be a still keener competitor in the future, as will air travel and sea travel, when the various companies get back to their pre-war status. They will then all be serious competitors of the railways, and that is why we should be co-ordinating the department instead of splitting it up into units. The Minister was particularly keen on having appointed to this directorate what he termed technically-trained men. He said that we must have men experienced in railway administration, in order to make a success of it. I ask him when have we had an administration that was not of technical men trained in the railway system? Never. They have all been men who have graduated—thoroughly trained men—yet the Minister was one of the most bitter critics of the railway administration. In introducing the Bill he said—

My main reason for saying that is that I am of the opinion that technically trained men should be in charge of the department in order to ensure the successful management of so great an undertaking. I am not reflecting against any Ministers who might have occupied this position, but I think it must be admitted that a man who has spent his life in the service of the Railway Department becomes an expert and consequently must know infinitely more about the working of the department than any member of Parliament, who might for the time being be filling the position of Minister for Railways, could possibly know.

I do not dispute that. The great trouble with the administration lies in another direction; it is not lack of knowledge, but because they are immune from interference by Ministers. As Lord Acton once said, "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." There lies our trouble. I do not dispute the point about having technically-trained men, but I will quote the Minister's idea of technically-trained men. It is very interesting. At page 599 of "Hansard," on the 8th September, 1937, the Minister said—

There are, however, other aspects of the railways for which we must hold the present railway administration responsible. I have no desire to blame any of the railway officers. I have received much attention from them. But if the administration is falling behind, no matter how courteous the officials may be, we must hold them responsible.

Those are the technical men for whom we are providing here. At page 160 of "Han-

sard," on the 16th August, 1938, when speaking on the Estimates the Minister said—

My only regret is that I have to mention any of them at all. It should not be necessary to take up the time of the House with them, but I find it is absolutely useless for me to go to the Commissioner. I have been doing that for the last five years, with always the same reply. Therefore I am appealing to the Minister to take up these matters and find out for himself what the travelling public or rather what the public thinks of this system.

That is the technical man. At page 2477 of "Hansard," on the 30th November, 1939, the Minister castigated the men whom he now eulogises, and to whom he now proposes to give lifetime jobs. He said—

Really I have nothing but admiration for the staff of the Railways Department; my complaints, when they are complaints, are directed towards the head of the department and those who are immediately under him.

The heads of the department are now to be provided with lifetime jobs. At page 155 of "Hansard," on the 12 August, 1942, the Minister said—

I wish that Mr. Ellis and Mr. Tomlinson could be put into one of these compartments and sent up to Wiluna and back two or three times and have to fight at Chidnows and Spencer's Brook for something to eat.

Now he will not send them to Wiluna. What a change of attitude there has been!

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: I think the member for Pingelly made too many speeches in past years.

Hon. A. H. Panton: He forgot "Hansard."

The Minister for Railways: Do not put up an Aunt Sally and then knock it down.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Perhaps we should abolish "Hansard."

Mr. MARSHALL: At page 601 of "Hansard" on the 14th September, 1944, the Minister said—

The trip I refer to was only a brief one; yet that sort of thing often happens. If we had a representative of the primary producers on the directorate, he could discuss such matters on terms of equality with the Commissioner of Railways, but if he is forced into the position of having to speak to the man who holds the gun there will be little prospect of getting satisfaction.

Those are not my utterances, but the words of the present Minister, and I have quoted his attitude regarding this Bill. I tell the Minister that blowing first hot and then

cold on this subject will bring him into bad odour and bad grace with the people whose case he pleaded so often, rightly and justly. He has somersaulted on his past utterances and contemplates putting men into such a position, removed absolutely from the Parliamentary control which has always existed regarding the administration. He intends to give them a reward for past maladministration by appointing them permanently to these positions. I have warned the Minister—I have been in the country a good deal—that when people realise what is contained in the Bill I do not think he will be very popular. I believe the Government would be well advised to follow the advice of the Leader of the Opposition.

There is another remarkable attitude on the part of the Minister. When the Commissioner of Railways returned from the Eastern States, having finished his employment with the Commonwealth Government, I realised that his responsibilities would be difficult for him to carry out, as he had been absent for a year or two, and when he asked for assistance I had no objection and granted it, in an acting capacity. The same applied to the Secretary of Railways. Realising that we are to change the method of control in the near future, why make these appointments permanent? Why not leave it to the new directorate to say whether these particular officers are required or not.

Mr. Needham: Why not wait for the report of the Royal Commission?

Mr. MARSHALL: The present Government appointed them permanently. I left them acting, and told them why. The Minister knows that, as it is on the files. I would not appoint them except in an acting capacity, for that reason. Our intentions were honourable and we had proposed to introduce legislation, and institute an inquiry. While that was contemplated I was not prepared to make permanent appointments, but for some reason—best known to the Government and the Minister—in July last both these men were appointed to permanent positions. The next provision with which I wish to deal has to do with the appointment of officers in receipt of salaries of over £400 per year. This is further evidence that the Bill first saw the light of day in the Railway Department. I know the Minister would never have contemplated interfering with that section of the

parent Act, and I know exactly why the provision appears in the Bill.

During my period of office a certain individual was appointed to a position in the Railway Department, and I took very strong exception to that appointment, because I knew that man's record. I knew that he had no qualifications whatever for the job. True, in the Army he worked in the Ordnance Department checking up on the distribution of flour, potatoes and like commodities to different depots; but what did he know of catering in the real sense of the word? Yet he was appointed to an inspectorship over individuals who had spent a lifetime in the catering business. The appointment was made against my instructions. I took the matter to Cabinet and it was decided that the appointment should not be made. It was unfortunate for that section of the department that we went out of office. I left instructions for the file to be forwarded to the incoming Minister so that he might let the incoming Government decide whether that man had the qualifications for the position. However, the Minister appointed him, a man with no capacity whatever for the work.

I regret that the Minister for Lands is not in his place, because I understand that he made a statement during the election regarding this appointment, and accused the Labour Government of having made it. I have explained that we did not make it and, what is more, the Labour Government was keen on securing efficiency and wanted the best possible man for the catering department as we were starting a departmentally controlled institution. For having appointed a man with no qualifications whatever, the Minister will ultimately have to answer, because it is utterly impossible for this man to give satisfaction, and equally impossible for an experienced caterer under him to give him satisfaction. Fancy an individual like that endeavouring to teach his grandmother how to suck eggs, an individual who could not boil a kettle of water without burning it! Yet he is put in charge as an inspector and is appointed.

The Minister for Railways: Are you quite sure of that? You had better call for the papers.

Mr. MARSHALL: If the Minister did not receive that file immediately he took of-

fice, the Commissioner of Railways and his officers treated him with contempt. Distinct instructions were given that the file should be submitted to the incoming Minister immediately he took office.

The Attorney General: I think they treated you with contempt.

Mr. MARSHALL: If the file was not submitted to the Minister, they showed him no respect whatever. It is six months since he took office. This goes to show the contempt in which the Minister is held if he has not the file and has not made the appointment, because the man is holding the position. If a man is left in a position long enough, he will naturally learn something about the job. That is why I know this Bill came from the Railway Department. I make that statement unhesitatingly.

What is going to be the outcome of appointing this authority to run the railways? We are asked to take the power from Parliament and hand it to this directorate to appoint highly-paid officers, and Parliament will have no say in the matter. The appointment I refer to was made at less than £400 a year in order to defeat me and the Government. Had the amount been over £400, it would have been necessary to forward the matter to me for Ex-Co. sanction. However, the appointment was made at under £400 a year, and I still affirm that it should not have been made. The Minister has not his head in the clouds now and his feet dangling in the gutter. He is beginning to realise the position. The officials are only waiting for this measure to go through and they can then put this man up a couple of hundred pounds a year. I say that this appointment was made only through influence and not on qualifications. I put it to the Minister that, if the file has not been submitted to him, he has been treated with utter contempt. I know the officials of the department very well.

That is my objection to the Bill. I shall agree to no measure if there is the slightest indication that it will deny to the people's representatives in this Chamber a say in what shall happen. We want no bureaucratic institution exercising complete power and removed from the control of the people, an institution that can treat members of Parliament with utter contempt and put them in an invidious position, to render us impotent to represent the people although

we are here to do so. That is the antithesis of democracy. In this House we are able to interrogate Ministers and electors can interrogate us in turn, and thus we preserve some semblance of democracy. But when institutions of this sort are created, I say they are directly opposed to democracy, and for that reason I must vote against the second reading.

On motion by Hon. E. Nulsen, debate adjourned.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1947-48.

### *In Committee of Supply.*

Debate resumed from the 23rd October on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates; Mr. Perkins in the Chair.

*Vote—Legislative Council, £3,028:*

**HON. E. NULSEN** (Kanowna) [9.22]: Though quite a lot has been said about the railways tonight, I propose to say something more in justification of the Labour Government. Nearly every member of the political complexion of the present Government that has spoken has condemned the Labour Government and blamed it for the lack of efficiency in the general working of the railways and for their present condition. The Acting Premier, when speaking on the Address-in-reply debate on the 27th August last, said—

I will turn for a moment or two to the question of the State railways. It must be a well-known fact that, in a State such as Western Australia, where vast quantities of goods of low freight value and heavy tonnage have to be carried over extremely long distances, the State's economy, prosperity, development and production to a very substantial degree rest upon an efficient railway system.

I entirely agree with that. All Labour Governments have endeavoured to keep the railways up to standard. I feel that a direct reflection has been cast upon the Labour Government and upon Labour Ministers because the Acting Premier reminded us of the importance of the railways to the progress and development of the State. I assure members and the public that Labour Governments have been fully seized of the importance of the railways and have done their best when the opportunity was available to them.

The foundations of our railway system were laid very badly. By whom were they

laid? They were laid by men of a political complexion similar to that of those now in power. The rails used were very light for one-half of the lines, as I shall show by quoting presently from the Commissioner's report. On account of the shortage of money, the foundations were simply thrown down. Money has been the problem and really has been the downfall of our railway system. Freights on the lower strata are much below what is necessary if the railways are to pay. There are only a few freight charges that are sufficiently payable to put our railways on a business basis. I realise, and I believe members and the general public realise, that our railways are purely a developmental utility. They were intended to assist the development of the State and in that direction have done a wonderfully good job. They were never constructed as a business proposition.

From the time of responsible government in 1890 to 1933, Labour was in office for only 12 years. The first Labour Administration was the Daglish Government, which took office 1904 and remained until 1905. The second Labour Government was the Seaddan Government which held office from 1911 to 1916. That makes six years in all, a period that had no effect one way or the other on the railway system. The next occasion on which Labour secured office was in 1924, and it continued until 1930. The Acting Premier pointed out clearly that, in the years 1930 to 1932, the railways were quite capable of meeting all demands. I believe it was in 1932 that we had our largest harvest, a yield of over 50,000,000 bushels. That quantity of wheat had to be moved and the requisite super had to be transported for it, and so nobody can blame the Collier Government up to 1930 for any inefficiency of administration or decline in the general condition of the railways.

The Mitchell-Latham Government held office from 1930 to 1933. I do not intend to blame that Government because it was confronted with one of the worst depressions we have ever experienced. It was a man-made depression, man-made by some of those of the same political complexion as that of the present Government. It was a world-wide depression, really a big financial move by big money. No-one can tell me that a depression is necessary and that the banks must withdraw their money

for spending during a time of plenty—we had plenty of food and all the raw material necessary; in fact, we had more than we ourselves required. That was the real reason for the depression. No Labour Government was to blame for it. The blame for the conditions at that time must fall upon a Government of a complexion similar to that of the present Government. For three years practically no maintenance work had been undertaken for the railways, notwithstanding that ample manpower and materials were available. Nothing was done during that period to keep the railways up to a reasonable standard. The belated repairs and maintenance at that time were estimated to be not less than £500,000.

Is it reasonable to blame the Labour Government for a depression in the first place, and in the second place for the shortage of money, when ample supplies of material and labour were available? It has always seemed to me to be ridiculous for a Government to approach private enterprise and borrow money from it to develop the country, pay interest on the money and increase the value of the security. Why should we be in the hands of the big financiers? Had we not been in their hands at the time of the depression which they engineered, our railways would not be in their present position. Yet we hear a lot about the banking Bill.

The Premier: Do you favour the banking Bill?

Hon. E. NULSEN: I shall be quite candid. I do definitely favour the nationalisation of banks. I am only speaking for myself—

The Premier: Oh, no!

Hon. E. NULSEN:—and not for anyone else. I have no authority to speak for anyone else. I saw in the depression warehouses filled with all the stores that the people required and yet people were starving, people who were willing to work and produce what was required for the nation. Why were they not permitted to work? Even animals, when plenty of grass is available in a good season, wax fat. Our native fauna share in the fruits of good seasons and do well. Our natives fare well in a good season and live in the sunshine instead of in the gloom, amidst plenty. That is what the people did because the big fin-

anciers called in their overdrafts and so shortened the spending power of the people as to make them unable to participate in the wealth which they produced. The Government of the day did its work well up to that time. Members opposite may smile, but why should people have had to starve while they were willing to work? It was the depression that brought about the state of our railways. There is no doubt about that at all.

The Honorary Minister: Rubbish!

Hon. E. NULSEN: The Honorary Minister says it is rubbish, but she does not think for herself. She reads the papers and listens to the financiers who let men starve while we had more than enough of what the people required.

The Honorary Minister: You know more about me than I know about myself.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The Honorary Minister is a big financier herself. That is the trouble.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I am not going to be harsh on the administration of the railways. I sum the position up in these words: Financial starvation! That has been the trouble. Our railways have done a wonderfully good job taking them right through. I was Minister for Railways from 1939 until my friend, the member for Murchison, took over the portfolio from me. He worked for the department just as enthusiastically as all other Ministers had done. He tried to keep the railways on an even keel and up to a fair standard.

The Minister for Works: That was easily said.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I think the Committee will agree with me that nobody expected a war. The Railway Department had to make good in the period between 1933, when the railways were left in a terrible condition, and the outbreak of war. The railways were in reasonably good working order at the time I took office. But a war broke out. Our Premier at the time (Hon. J. C. Willecock) was a sincere and able administrator. He had as much knowledge of Government finance as any member of this Committee. He was patriotic and realised after war broke out that our only aim was to win it. He promised the Menzies Government and subsequently the Curtin and Chifley Governments to do all in his power to help win the war. He was the creator

of a surplus during each year while he was Premier.

At that time a request was made by the Commonwealth Government to our Government to hand over some railway rollingstock which could not be obtained elsewhere in Australia. It was required for the purpose of winning the war. The Commissioner of Railways consented very reluctantly, because he could ill afford to allow the Commonwealth Government to have the rollingstock, including 26 engines. But he was patriotic and accordingly consented. The engines were not in the best of condition but were capable of doing a reasonably good job. Our Government accordingly agreed to comply with the Commonwealth Government's request and the rollingstock was delivered to it. Any Government in power at that time would have acted in exactly the same way. The Government of the day realised that nothing mattered except to hold Australia intact. I have often been asked what the Labour Government has done for our railways. Up to the outbreak of war and since the Labour Government has done as much, if not more than, any other Government, because it realised that we had a huge State to develop. That Government also realised that the railways were not a business concern and were never put on a business basis. The fares and freights were not sufficiently high to permit of that being done. Our railways were used purely and simply to develop the State. In confirmation of my remarks, I quote from the report of the Commissioner of Railways for the year ended the 30th June, 1946, at page 7:—

In the years following the economic depression of 1930-32, the railways were faced with an accumulation of deferred maintenance representing upwards of £500,000.

That was brought about by the depression at the time the Mitchell-Latham Government was in power. I repeat that up to that time the railways were in reasonably good order, because it was admitted by the Deputy Premier that the big wheat harvest in 1932, and everything appertaining to it, had been removed. So he acknowledged that the railways were in real good order, but nobody could say that after 1933 because, as is stated in this report by the Commissioner, there was at least £500,000 worth of belated maintenance and repairs to be made. The Commissioner goes on to say—

Our present inability to keep pace with necessary repairs and renewals of permanent-way rollingstock and structures has built up a liability which already greatly exceeds that which accrued during the depression and the total must keep on building up until manpower, materials and finance in sufficient quantities are available to reduce it. This accumulated liability does not appear as an outstanding in departmental accounts but is nevertheless a real and inescapable liability which must be liquidated in due course.

I will not give the details of that liability, but the total increase for 1945-46, as compared with 1937-38, was £1,247,000. That was something of which no Government nor the Commissioner of Railways had any control. On page 8 of the report is reference to equipment, track and maintenance standards. In this connection it is stated—

During the war it was generally recognised that the railways were doing a very big job under difficulties, but with the return of peacetime conditions comparisons are apt to be drawn between the Western Australian Railways and those of other systems, to the detriment, invariably, of Western Australia.

When making comparisons of this kind, critics should bear in mind the fact that in relation to its population per mile of railway track Western Australia, of all the Australian States, has pursued the most vigorous policy of railway construction, but at the same time the limitations of population have imposed severe restrictions on the standard of the railways which have been constructed.

The table hereunder gives the length of railway operated in each of the Australian mainland States and New Zealand, the capital cost per mile of railway, the population per mile of railway, and the railway indebtedness per head of population as at 30th June, 1946.

Members may wonder why I am reading extracts from this report. The reason is that I wish them to appear in "Hansard" so the people of this State will have some idea of the position. Otherwise they do not know whom to blame, and are inclined to blame the Labour Governments of the past. The people knew all about the depression, but they did not know the effect that depression had on Labour administration nor the effect of the war. Here are the figures given by the Commissioner—

State.	Length of open railway.	Capital cost per mile.	Population per mile of line.	Capital cost per head of population
	miles.	£		£ s. d.
Western Australia	4,381	6,158	113	54 14 4
New South Wales	6,127	25,802	475	63 4 1
Victoria	4,748	16,649	424	39 5 2
South Australia	2,547	11,934	249	48 2 3
Queensland	6,497	10,808	167	63 0 8
New Zealand	3,528	21,107	485	43 10 6

The Minister for Works: What light will that throw on the situation to outsiders?

Hon. E. NULSEN: Probably the Minister for Works is not interested in railways; otherwise he would not have asked that question. With regard to the Queensland figures, I remind members that in that State there is a 3-ft. 6-in. gauge. If members make comparisons they will find that on a population basis the Western Australian Railways have done a tremendously good job, especially when we realise our capital cost in accordance with the work that was done with less rollingstock owing to our having had to hand some over to the Commonwealth Government to assist the war effort. The results achieved speak volumes for the work of the men and of the administration. The Commissioner's report continues—

The above figures, in the cases of Victoria and Queensland, include amounts of £25,594,906 (1936) and £28,000,000 (1931) respectively, by which amounts the railway capital of these States was reduced in the years shown in brackets.

While the possession of a mile of railway to every 113 persons is a source of pride to Western Australians—it probably is not equalled anywhere else in the world—it also represents a severe handicap so far as interest and operating costs are concerned. It will be noted that although the railway indebtedness per head in Western Australia is exceeded only by Queensland, the capital cost per mile is considerably below that of any other system, and even after allowing for the difference in gauges, provides ample evidence of the fact that our standards of track do not, and cannot be expected to, approach those of the other systems.

Approximately half of our track is laid with 45-lb. rails, on which rollingstock of relatively light axle load only can operate. This imposes restrictions on rollingstock construction which make railway operation more costly.

So I feel that the Commissioner and the whole of his staff, including the salaried and wages staffs, have done a very good job, when we make comparisons between this system and other systems, and especially when we take into consideration the fact that we have only 113 persons per mile of railway with a very low cost of £6,127 per mile of railway construction. The Labour Governments have shown initiative wherever possible. They broke away from the tradition of carrying on railways only. The present Government is following the example of the ex-Minister for Railways, and that of other Labour Governments. Rail-cars were introduced by the member for Brown Hill-

Ivanhoe, and the Labour Government also introduced the buses. The first bus service was the one between Perth and Kojonup. It saved a considerable amount of time, and it has proved to be a financial success. On page 10 there is a paragraph which will prove to the Committee that the ex-Premier was alive to the position. He was going to make sure that our railways would not be financially embarrassed. The paragraph to which I refer is as follows:—

Rollingstock construction included in the regeneration proposals provides for an expenditure of £2,819,500 over a 10-year period, but efforts are being made to accelerate the programme over a shorter time.

The Labour Government did not put any obstruction in the way of the Commissioner. I do not see that Labour Governments should be blamed for the present position of the railways. That paragraph continues:—

A further £197,000 is provided for workshops, buildings and machinery, including some rearrangement of existing buildings, and replacement of worn-out and obsolete machines. It is anticipated that practically the whole cost, except for the importation of power units for six diesel electric trains and workshops machinery, will be expended within the State.

There is another paragraph, as follows:—

A tentative programme covering the first five years envisages construction of 62 locomotives, 48 coaches and 1040 wagons. In addition, the power units for six new diesel electric trains are on order and it is hoped that delivery will commence early in 1947. The actual programme of construction will be reviewed year by year and individual items may be altered to meet particular requirements, but utilisation of maximum workshops capacity has been planned for.

Members of the Committee will see that Labour Governments have done everything in their power to keep the railways up to standard. We have realised their importance and done everything possible to keep them on a reasonable basis. There are two small paragraphs on page 11 which I wish to read, the first of which is:—

In conjunction with proposals for regeneration of rollingstock, referred to in another paragraph, the Government approved an allocation of £600,000 for the rehabilitation of the track, buildings and other appurtenances, spread over five years at the rate of approximately £120,000 per annum.

That is something else the Wise Government did. Again, I feel that, as Treasurer, he recognised the real importance of the railways by making available money which could be

spent within ten years, or less if possible. The second paragraph on that page, that I wish to read, is as follows:—

Early in 1946 advice was received from the Agent General that 14 locomotives of the 4-6-2 type, built originally for war service in the Sudan, were surplus and available for advantageous purchase. From inspection of general arrangement drawings these locomotives were found to be of a type suitable for use on these railways and about midway in power between the existing P and L classes. It was accordingly decided to acquire them at a price about 60 per cent. of present-day costs and an inspecting engineer was sent to England in May last to finalise the matter. It is expected that the first of these locomotives will reach this State very shortly and provide much needed relief for the harvest season.

Those engines were ordered, and today they are in the State. I could quote a number of other paragraphs from the Commissioner's report for that year to substantiate the fact that Labour is in no way to blame for the present condition of the railways. Our railway system first started to deteriorate just after the depression. The Deputy Premier acknowledged that up to the time of the depression our railways were in first class order. They moved the greatest crop that we have ever had. To show that Labour Governments have been active in regard to transport, when I first took office as Minister, I debated in Cabinet, on several occasions, the condition of our rollingstock. I also submitted reports to the Premier. I happen to have some of those reports in my possession and I want to read them to the Committee, in order to get them into Hansard and to show that the Labour Government has always been wide awake to the responsibilities of transport in this State, including the metropolitan area. This report, addressed to the Premier, is dated the 29th June, 1939, and is as follows:—

I have given serious consideration to the report submitted by the Commissioner of Railways regarding metropolitan transport services, wherein it was suggested that the time was opportune for the Government to take action to place all metropolitan street transport under one controlling body; and proposals were submitted with regard to immediate requirements.

2. I am of the opinion that before embarking on any further extensions of the service suggested—with the exception of the proposed South Perth conversion scheme, which is an urgent matter—a special committee should be appointed to advise on the more complete co-ordination and control of passenger transport in the metropolitan area, which should include services rendered by the Government

Tramways which at present do not come under the control of the Transport Board.

3. I find on examination that the principle of common ownership and control of passenger transport is one that in recent years has been adopted in all the large cities of the world. A review of the Royal Commission's report on the co-ordination and development of transport in London clearly shows that the various private and other services had reached a point at which it was found that it was impossible to carry on by reason of the losses sustained through duplication of services and the sheer inability to find capital to meet the cost of extensions and improvements rendered essential in the general public interest.

On page 148 of the Commission's report, reference is made to an announcement by the Minister for Transport on the 2nd October, 1930, with regard to the co-ordination of London passenger transport, in which he stated that the objects aimed at were—

That uneconomic and unnecessary competition must be eliminated.

That a single and simple form of public ownership should therefore be substituted for the complicated network of separate private and municipal interests now existing.

The principle of public ownership should be combined with the principle of commercial management, thus ensuring the advantages of vigorous business enterprise.

This Royal Commission was appointed in August, 1928, and its final report was presented to Parliament in December, 1930.

I understand that in 1933 legislation was passed to give effect to the recommendation of the Royal Commission that all street transport be brought under one controlling body.

4. As a result of the legislation referred to, following on the Royal Commission's report, the whole of the huge London organisations have now been merged into a composite transport entity controlled by the London Passenger Transport Board, the members of which are all able administrators and include a certificated accountant. The board appointed is a board of administration.

5. I have carefully examined the report of the general manager of the Brisbane City Council's Tramway Department on street passenger transport in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. In all the Eastern States the principle of common ownership and control of passenger transport has been adopted.

6. As an illustration of successful management I refer to the Western Australian Transport Board's report for the year ended 30th June, 1937, paragraph 123, in which the example of the Fremantle Tramway Trust is cited:—

The terms of the Act under which it operates provide that due provision must be made for depreciation, renewals, and the redemption of loans. The result of such provision is that by June, 1938, the whole of the

loan indebtedness will have been redeemed and the Trust will be in possession of an unencumbered asset.

In the meantime, the Trust operates a system where power derived from a local product (coal) is used; due provision has been made year by year for depreciation and renewals; the fares charged are very moderate; while the Board is informed that the working conditions of employees are equal to those enjoyed by any body of tramway workers anywhere in Australia.

The Fremantle Tramways Trust will soon be in a financial position to embark on a policy of improvement of the service in keeping with modern requirements.

It was this knowledge that induced the Board to refuse applications for extension of omnibus services on the south side of the river into Fremantle.

I have been informed by the Chairman of the Transport Board that the Fremantle Tramways Trust since has purchased five motor omnibuses for essential services in co-ordination with the tramways and not in competition with them.

7. I do not propose that the suggested Committee should report on the Fremantle Tramways Trust, except in a general way as to the linking up of services.

8. The following comparative statistics for the financial year ended 30th June, 1938, are shown in the Transport Board's Annual Report (page 16).

I desire members to take note of this, as it shows that in our services we are playing but a small part in metropolitan transport, as compared with the omnibus metropolitan area transport of that time.

	W.A. Government Tramways.	Fremantle Municipal Tramways.	Omnibus Metropolitan Area.
Gross Earnings	£285,847	£43,242	£268,112
Earnings per mile	19.56d.	16.86d.	9.79d.
No. of passengers carried	30,166,084	5,268,877	12,806,868
Miles traversed	3,507,321	615,481	7,306,137
No. of passengers per mile	8.60	8.66	1.75

9. On page 22, paragraph 72, of the report of the general manager of the Brisbane Tramways (October, 1937) a return shows the number of trams and buses in operation in the capital cities of the Eastern States.

	Number of vehicles.			Proportion of total.	
	Trams	Buses	Total	Trams	Buses
Brisbane	361	77	438	82½%	17½%
Sydney	1502	577	2079	72¼%	27¾%
Melb'ne	738	281	1019	72½%	27½%
Adelaide	307	69	376	81½%	18½%

While the above figures show that trams represented from 72½ per cent. to 81½ per cent. of the total in the Eastern States, the proportion of trams in Perth represents only

41.1 per cent. of the total, the comparison as disclosed in the reports of the Tramway Department and the Transport Board for the year ended 30th June, 1938, being as follows:—

Perth	Number of vehicles			Proportion of total	
	Trams	Buses	Total	Trams	Buses
	138	198	336	41.1%	58.9%

This might be tedious, Mr. Chairman, but I am anxious to have it recorded in "Hansard" so that people—not only in this House—may know something about the efforts of the Labour Government in this direction.

10. It is evident to me from the records and after a perusal of the file dealing with the proposed Board of Trust to control public utilities (M.W.S. File 904/1934) that the inability to find capital to meet the cost of extensions and improvements rendered essential in the public interest is the reason for the small proportion of trams to the total number of vehicles required to meet essential services.

11. Reference is made in the Commissioner's report to the fact that in recent years, since motor transport had become so widely established, bus routes had come into being on various routes without regard to existing services and that on some routes wasteful competition existed, while others had been neglected. Regarding this statement, the Chairman of the Transport Board, in a minute addressed to me, states that the only extension approved of during the past two years (with the exception of the Morley Park route) was a short continuation of an existing route to the western end of Walcott Street, and in approving this extension the Board advised the proprietor of the service that it was to be understood that it was of a temporary nature only, the Board reserving the right to cancel the same at any time on giving one month's notice. The Railway Department was made aware of this proposed extension before approval was given by the Transport Board.

12. In view of the fact that the suggestion to place all metropolitan street transport under one controlling body, and the recommendations in regard to extensions, are not accompanied by financial estimates as to the result of the application of any of the suggestions upon the finances of the State, I am of the opinion that the report of a special committee would be of valuable assistance in arriving at a decision in regard to the safeguarding of the State's asset, the interests of the public, and the persons employed in the whole of the transport industry.

I realise that these extracts are not very interesting, but I want to show that members on this side of the Chamber were sincere in doing what they considered to be right. Following that report, the war occurred, and nothing could be done. On the 19th

January, 1945, I addressed a minute to the Premier, as follows:—

#### Metropolitan Street Transport Services.

I have given consideration to the report submitted by the Commissioner of Railways regarding metropolitan street transport services, wherein it is suggested that the time is opportune for the Government to take action to place all metropolitan street transport under one controlling body. The Commissioner has also submitted proposals with regard to immediate requirements.

The present position requires a superior and more effective transport system which we must endeavour to build. The influence of a good and effective system is widely spread through the whole community and is reflected in the harmony and contentment of the travelling public. The Government could now secure credit for its initiative in the consolidation of the administration of all road transport.

Our present plant in the metropolitan area is inadequate, obsolete and worn out to a great extent. The trolley-buses and omnibuses are in reasonably good condition, but they are beginning to show signs of wear and tear.

It is most important that consideration should be given to a plan for putting the whole of the metropolitan transport on a more favourable basis. We should avoid duplications, overlappings and unnecessary mileage. A person seeking transport should not be left standing on the road if a bus is not loaded to its capacity, as is the case now with our piecemeal system.

I find on examination that the principle of common ownership and control of passenger transport is one that in recent years has been adopted in all the large cities of the world.

Adjustment to new conditions is essential for better passenger transport in the metropolitan area. Consolidation, re-organisation and rebuilding in anticipation of the future should be commenced before we are condemned through lack of initiative.

With the end of the present war in sight, the people of Australia—especially in Western Australia—will be looking for better conditions and demanding comfort and convenience, particularly in transport. The modernisation and rebuilding of transport, which task undoubtedly lies ahead, must be undertaken with vision, courage and practical judgment and on a scale which the times demand. I consider that no better time than now could be found for undertaking this task. The question of transport in all spheres is an urgent problem.

Conditions throughout the world have changed, are still changing, and we must change our ideas accordingly. We must conform with the standard of comfort and convenience given to the travelling public in other States and countries.

One solution of the problem lies in the appointment by the Government of a metropolitan transport co-ordination board to take over the private transport services, trams, trolley-buses, road, petrol and Diesel buses, which serve the metropolitan area.

I am of opinion that such a board should be self-contained financially and have full administrative control subject, of course, to a Minister. We should not allow our habits of thinking, our fiscal policy, or our organisational limitations to intervene. If other big cities can do the job, so can we.

This matter should also be considered in conjunction with the Commissioner of Railways's recommendations regarding the setting up of a department of transport to include road, rail (both metropolitan and country) and air. The relevant paragraphs (11 to 13) are quoted hereunder:—

It is my considered view that the control of all intrastate land and air transport should be brought under one Ministerial head, who would be responsible for the whole transportation policy of the State. The Minister concerned should have under him a department of transport, whose functions would be effectively to co-ordinate the activities of the various forms of transport by—

(a) Having regard to the transport requirements of the State as a whole;

(b) Determining the rightful sphere of action of each form of transport;

(c) Prevent overlapping and economic waste.

The advantages of such a method of centralised control must be obvious. Generally, throughout the Australian States, authority at the moment is divided between various departments and boards. Each of these bodies is charged with the control, regulation and arrangement of one form of transport only, and in the discharge of such duties may, in all honesty, come to a decision unnecessarily harmful to another form of transport. Under the method of control suggested in this report, such circumstances could not arise, because the department of transport would be vested with plenary powers, and, naturally, before coming to any decision would take into consideration the effect of such decision on the whole of the interests concerned.

I have previously suggested that a board, on the lines of the London Passenger Transport Board, be set up to control and co-ordinate metropolitan street transport. This would not clash with the proposed department of transport, as either one of two alternatives could be adopted—

(a) Set up a separate board to deal with metropolitan transport, including suburban railway service (as is done in London) and exclude such activity from the functions of the department of transport;

(b) allow the Minister for Transport, through the Department of Transport, to control both phases.

I recommend that all transport should be put under one controlling body—air included.

I do not think there is any need to comment on the various routes suggested by the Commissioner of Railways: That is a matter which I think should be considered by a committee.

I want to show members that the Labour Government was active in every way and did all that was possible and, but for the war, these suggestions, possibly with various alterations, might have been implemented. To substantiate the minutes I have read, I wish to quote the following:—

There is, much to commend the idea of placing all metropolitan street transport under a single controlling body.

1. Centralisation should be given effect to, which, *inter alia*, means—

- (a) A common policy.
- (b) A common office staff.
- (c) A limited number of buildings for office purposes.
- (d) A limited number of buildings for depot purposes.
- (e) A common workshop and filling and service station.
- (f) One set of bowser equipment.
- (g) Lower prices for fuel and oil owing to greater purchases on a common Government contract.
- (h) Standardisation of machines and bodies.
- (i) Standardisation of equipment for repairs.
- (j) A lesser number of machines required for relief purposes.
- (k) A lesser number of spares to be carried for standardised fleet.
- (l) A cheaper rate for parts owing to large standardised fleet.
- (m) Less chance of obsolescence of parts on hand.
- (n) Saving in parts cost by use of discarded vehicle parts to rest of fleet.

(o) Obviates necessity of subcontracting work of repairs for retyring, remetalting, roof work, panel-beating, etc., as is now done with subsequent high costs where each contractor has to make a profit.

(p) Eliminating the delay incurred through (o).

- (q) Consequent reduction in—  
overheads,  
repair costs,  
fuel bill,  
rents and rates,  
excess staff.

‘I could quote many other reasons why we should have one transport board for the metropolitan area, or even one for the whole of the State. I have another statement I wish to read in order to get it into “Hansard”, so that the public may know that the Labour Government was not asleep and that suggestions were put up that were fully discussed by Cabinet.

The Premier: What about writing to the paper? The public do not read “Hansard.” See whether you can get it in the paper.

Hon. E. NULSEN: If it is not in “Hansard”, they will not read it in the

paper. The following report is dated the 19th January, 1945, and it is addressed to the Premier:—

My comments on the comprehensive report of the Commissioner of Railways dated 7th December, 1944, are as follows:—

#### 1. Railways:

The question of improving the existing railway service in the country in order to provide improved passenger facilities is one which is now exercising my mind.

I think it will be readily admitted that the State railway system, now consisting of 4,381 miles, has played a very important part in the development of the country and will continue to do so in the future, provided that due regard is paid to efficiency and improvements are introduced with a view to keeping abreast of the progress made in other States. Lack of finance, shortage of manpower and material owing to the war, have retarded progress being made during the last few years. From a financial standpoint, if it were considered practicable to write off the capital sunk in the railways, then a considerable burden would be lifted and open the door for many very desirable improvements.

That suggestion emanated from me. The Government of the time, however, was not prepared to write off the capital for the reason given by the Leader of the Opposition tonight. Continuing:—

The immediate problem we have to face is to conserve our assets by a thorough renovating overhaul of the rollingstock and generally improve the working system. The present administration has, of course, been seriously handicapped in attending to such matters owing to the restrictions introduced by the war. Apart from the difficulty in obtaining essential material, it should be remembered that approximately 1,500 railway employees have enlisted for military service. Then again, the working costs have increased to approximately one million pounds over the 1939 figure, while the average fare and freights have remained stationary since 1920.

The task to be faced in reconstruction with a view to modernising the railways and at the same time placing them on a sound financial basis is a very formidable one.

Experience has taught us that the travelling public dislike having to undertake country journeys in mixed trains and I consider their use should be eliminated wherever this can be done without serious financial sacrifice. I have in mind that in many places this mode of service could be substituted by a system of feeder-buses of an approved type suitable for the purpose.

I referred to this matter in my report dated 24th June, 1943, after my visit to and inspection of transport in the Eastern States. I there mentioned the service operating between Frankston and Mornington in Victoria.

I have also inspected the semi-trailer buses now running in the metropolitan area under the control of the Western Australian Transport Board.

This is the second occasion on which I have been impressed with the general utility of these buses and in particular with their carrying capacity and comparatively good manoeuvrability. The impression made was so favourable that it seems to me it will be worth while to give serious consideration to providing auxiliary services to the railways to cater for passengers from areas where railway facilities are inadequate. This type of unit will also be more economical than some of the existing services. In particular, I have in mind the provision of quick and comfortable transport from outlying districts which, in the post-war period, will offer a service to the individual which will weigh against the use of his own conveyance.

My inquiries reveal that these buses are operating successfully on long distance passenger routes in America and even in Syria; they have proved to be a success in the Eastern States of Australia. I do not see any reason why they could not be air-conditioned. If they were, what more could any traveller want? He would have expedition, comfort and economy.

#### Air Travel:

In common with the Commissioner I am of opinion the Government should make provision for air travel as soon as it is economically practicable, and the Railway Act should be amended at the next session of Parliament to include provisions relating to aviation. I feel confident that aviation is going to play a very important part in the transport of passengers and light traffic in this State.

#### Refreshment Rooms:

I have no hesitation in recommending that the catering be taken over by the department where economically possible. (The Commissioner's report on catering is attached.)

#### Conclusions:

I think the ferries should be taken away from the Commissioner and put under the Metropolitan Transport Board and the Electricity Department should be directly under the control of a manager who will be subject to a Minister.

I am of opinion that the railways should be managed by a board of three Commissioners with administrative experience and ability, with the present Commissioner as chairman.

I am sorry if I have bored the Committee, but I was anxious to get this report into "Hansard" because of the impression of the public of this State that the Labour Government did not include primary producers and therefore took no heed of the condition of our railways. I think I have proved that—withstanding the Labour Government was only in office for 12 years out of the 43 years up to the end of 1933 when our railways were handed over in an

appalling condition to a Labour Government—between 1933 and 1936 the Collier Government and the Willcock Government did all they possibly could to rehabilitate them. Nobody knew that another war was to break out. The Labour Government then did not have the opportunity of keeping the railways on a reasonable basis because of the huge amount of tonnage and the large number of passengers with which owing to military movements the department had to cope.

Although probably the present Commissioner's administration has not been perfect, we must attribute the position of our railways to what can be summed up in two words, namely, financial starvation. That could not be avoided under the then existing conditions and because of the foundation that was laid in the early days. Our railways were constructed for the purpose of developing the State and to provide means of distribution. Although we produced great wealth we could not keep our railways up to a satisfactory standard. We did not have the necessary money and had to borrow it. It appeals to me, as I know it appeals to all businessmen, that no matter what business a person runs, if he is not in control of the finance he cannot carry on his business successfully. I have had practical experience myself of borrowing money. I had to go to the bank and say, "I want to do so and so; can I get a few more pounds?"

The Premier: You had no difficulty in getting them.

Mr. Leslie: You will have to ask harder in future.

Hon. E. NULSEN: At that time I had to give proof of my ability, otherwise I would not have had any hope of getting the additional money. The same thing applies to big financiers all over the world. They say to Governments, "You can have only what we will allow you to have and no more." When we do get nationalisation of banking I hope money will be available, and I think it will. I would like to quote a remark of Anstey on finance. He said—

If I owned Australia and had 100 persons working for me with £100 each, so long as I had control of the banks I would not need any further money for the development of this huge country.

Thereby he proved to the people that if we wanted to develop this huge area of ours—

nearly 3,000,000 square miles—it was necessary to have control of finance. If we had had such control at the time of the depression, there would have been no depression, because we had plenty of real wealth. I hope the Committee will understand that we take no blame, although we would be prepared to do so if any were attributable to us; because we were only in office for a few years and the Collier Government handed the railways over to the Mitchell-Latham Government and, as the Deputy Premier said, everything must have been O.K. because the greatest harvest moved by the railways was moved in 1932.

**MR. MURRAY (Bunbury)** [10.32]: I shall be in the position at a later stage to refer to matters that I desire to mention, but I take this opportunity of speaking in the hope I will receive some assurance that my fears are unjustified; because in some directions I have certain fears. Members will have noticed that last week I asked the Minister for Works some questions regarding the Preston River flooding which is due to hundreds of tons of good soil coming from the higher reaches through erosion and clearing operations. I asked whether it was proposed to erect the levees from siltage reclaimed from the river bed. The reply was that the banks would be built from material obtained from elsewhere. To my mind, and in the opinion of most engineers, the natural place from which to obtain soil for the erection of these levees is from the river bed. Two jobs would thus be done at the one time—the deepening of the channel and also the erecting of the levees.

Another question I asked was whether the heavy clay bank at a point known as Johnson's Bridge was going to be deepened to a satisfactory depth. The reply was that a report would be obtained. It is 14 years since that river was diverted and it is 14 years since that clay bank was there. I fail to see the necessity for a further report. I am sure the file contains any number of reports. The final question I asked was what type of drag-line was going to be used. I asked that for a specific purpose because, though I am no engineer, I believe there is only one drag-line in the State that can do that job efficiently and economically. The reply given was that the

question would be answered when question No. 2 was answered. From Preston River flooding I will now move to the Bunbury Harbour, because the two are closely linked.

**Hon. J. B. Sleeman:** You had better keep one eye on the member for Albany while you are doing it.

**Mr. MURRAY:** A little earlier in the session I asked a question of the Minister for Works regarding the Bunbury Harbour. The reply was that on the draft estimates was a sum of £80,000 for this year. I was not so deeply concerned with the amount of money as I was with regard to the open cut above Turkey Point. Again my opinion, and that of a lot of engineers—I am not an engineer myself—is that this cut is most important as far as the Bunbury Harbour scheme is concerned. If that is a failure it practically means that Bunbury Harbour, when it is finished, will still be a dredging proposition. I do not think this Committee would like to consider Bunbury an everlasting dredging proposition. I am sure it costs more money than it has ever returned in revenue.

**Hon. A. H. Panton:** Albany might come into its own then.

**Mr. MURRAY:** I mentioned one drag-line suitable for the work on the Preston River flooding. I am certain that drag-line is the only one that could be used to put that open cut through above Turkey Point. It is also engineering advice that two or three years will elapse before we know the result of that open cut, yet I understand that this drag-line which, from Bunbury's point of view, is the only one that is of any interest, is going to be spirited away to an unknown destination for, shall we say, experimental work elsewhere; and it will be away for three years. That means that for six years Bunbury is going to be in doubt as to whether that cut will be satisfactory, and the Preston River flooding will never be suitably overcome. Those are my main worries for the moment. There is another question I want to take up and that is the difference between the Commonwealth viewpoint and the State Government's viewpoint with regard to the necessity for helping dairy farmers. Any member who has read the papers will have noticed that the Commonwealth's viewpoint is that butter requires to be increased to 2s. a pound so that pro-

ducers will receive sufficient recompense for this particular item. Furthermore, there is a guarantee of five years so that farmers can plan ahead.

Mr. Reynolds: That is an adjustable price.

Mr. MURRAY: Yet an appeal to the previous Government and also to the present Government to give this particular industry some relief in the way of permitting farmers to cart butter by road met with no response at all. Such a concession would have ensured both hygienic and economic transport of dairy products. Actually, on the present output of one co-operative society, it would have meant a difference of £5,000 in its return. Having looked at the clock, I have no intention of keeping the Committee any longer. I will have an opportunity later on to bring this matter up, but I am looking for some assurance that my fears are not justified.

Vote put and passed.

*Votes—Legislative Assembly, £4,142; Joint House Committee, £7,342; Joint Printing Committee, £7,530; Joint Library Committee, £340; Premier's Office, £20,310; Treasury, £36,922; Governor's Establishment, £3,392; Executive Council, £5; London Agency, £13,630; Public Service Commissioner, £2,995; Government Motor Car Service, £1,695; Audit, £23,250; Compassionate Allowances, Etc., £3,492; Government Stores, £26,382; Taxation, £12,000; State Housing Commission, £13,054; Superannuation Board, £4,265; Printing, £123,298: agreed to.*

*Vote—Literary and Scientific Grants, Etc., £16,000:*

Item, Royal Society, £200.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: Would the Premier explain this item?

Mr. Marshall: It is a donation to Princess Elizabeth.

The PREMIER: This is a grant towards the cost of publishing the journal of the Royal Society, a group of scientists in Western Australia, and towards the general expenses of the Society. The printing is done at the Government Printing Office.

Vote put and passed.

*Vote—Miscellaneous Services, £1,775,873:*

Item, Parks, recreation grounds, etc., £5,350.

Mr. LESLIE: I notice that included in this item is an amount of £100 for the Point Walter Reserve. Is it the intention to make this reserve available for camping and recreation purposes as it was in pre-war days, or is to be set apart entirely as a home for foreigners coming into the State?

Mr. Nimmo: The camping section is miles away from that part.

Mr. LESLIE: Is the recreation part to be made available again?

The Minister for Lands: It is available now.

Mr. LESLIE: The sum of £100 seems small to bring the reserve back to its pre-war condition.

The PREMIER: I understand that it is available now. Part of it, as has been pointed out, is being used for a migrants' home. I am not too conversant with what the reserve is actually being used for at the moment. I know that this money has been provided for some time past.

Item, Children's Receiving Home, Applecross—purchase of land, £1,250.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Two amounts are shown against this item. There is the sum of £510 last year and the proposed expenditure of £1,250 this year. Would the Premier explain how it is that the full amount of the purchase money was not paid in one sum?

The PREMIER: The note I have is that the site will be used for building a receiving home for children, who will be under the care of the Child Welfare Department until such time as they may be suitably placed.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That does not help me much. My recollection is that the land was to be obtained for considerably less than £1,760. Whilst I am not absolutely certain about that, I am surprised to see that an additional £1,250 is required to secure the land. My recollection is that the formalities, with regard to the purchase of the land, had been completed.

The Minister for Lands: I understood the £510 was the deposit.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That may be so.

The Minister for Lands: And the rest is the balance of the purchase money.

Item, Interest and Sinking Fund on advances by Commonwealth for purchase of wire netting, £21,481.

Mr. MARSHALL: This item—together with two or three more—does not indicate clearly what the cost of servicing our debt really amounts to for the year. There are several items involved, and from the figures I have from the various headings I believe about £4,000,000 is paid out in interest annually, plus sinking fund. I think there should be clearly set out in the Estimates the total indebtedness and the total cost of interest payments. I take no exception to this item, but it is the first one appearing on the Treasury list. These items involve a large sum of money annually to service the debt, and yet to find what we have to pay annually for our total indebtedness one must go right through the Estimates to get that figure.

The Premier: Does not page 19 give you that information?

Mr. MARSHALL: I do not know, but I will look that up. I rose only to make that comment.

Item, Expenditure as may be necessary owing to war conditions, £8,500.

Mr. NEEDHAM: This item is expressed in very broad terms. War conditions obtaining in which department, and what for? I realise that certain extraordinary expenditure was necessary during the war, but something over two years has elapsed since the war ended and I would like more specific information as to how £30,000,000 was spent last year.

The PREMIER: I think I can satisfy the member for Perth, as I understand he wants a list of the expenditure. It is still necessary to meet outstanding commitments created by war conditions. It is not expected that the expenditure will exceed the amount provided on this year's Estimates. There is a big reduction on last year's actual figures. The particulars are as follows:

	£	s.	d.
Sundry Expenses re War Precaution Measures .. ..	8	13	3
Annual, Military and Long Service Leave .. ..	15,107	5	5
Railway Fares and Military Concessions .. ..	11,817	6	0
Superannuation Contributions for Officers on War Service ..	1,448	17	9
Insurance .. ..	14	16	8
A.R.P. .. ..	1,577	11	8
Transfer of Officers .. ..	3	18	9
Broome Road Board .. ..	72	19	9
Roebourne Water Board ..	55	0	0
Cartage Petrol Broome Jetty ..	33	16	3
Broome Road Board Rehabilitating Public Facilities ..	2,073	17	3
Transfer of Printing Machinery Barton's Mill to Fremantle ..	90	10	10
Freight on Clothing .. ..	191	2	3
Subsidy Transport Pyrites Norseman-Wiluna .. ..	2,380	12	0
Greenbushes Tantalite Production ..	2,025	7	4
Total .. ..	£36,901	15	2

Item, University of Western Australia—additional grant £8,370.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Here there is shown a decrease, in the amount provided in the Estimates, of £4,442 in the grant to the University. I am well aware that under special statutes £40,000 is provided, independent of the Acts that deal with university buildings, for which—from memory—there is an amount of about £6,000 voted annually. This is a sum additional to that provided for in other statutes and I am wondering why there is a decrease shown and whether the Senate anticipates that its expenditure will be less than that of last year. Obviously there is no figure to give any indication of an intention on the part of the Government to go on with the medical school. I would like both those points clarified.

The PREMIER: The amount is provided to meet increased commitments of the University, in addition to the £40,000 provided under the item "Special Acts." The medical school is a matter to which the Government has given a considerable amount of attention. A committee consisting of the Under-Treasurer, the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor Currie, the Principal Architect and other personnel recently made investigations as to the most practical way of starting the medical school. As members know, Professor McCallum recently attended the Scientists' Congress and spent some time with Ministers discussing how best to

start the medical school. We are as yet unable to make up our minds whether we should use the present Royal Perth Hospital for the purposes of the medical school—if we do that we will have to reclaim certain land there, which is now the property of the City Council—or whether we should start a new hospital at the university. It is claimed that if we start a new hospital the accommodation will be needed in a few years' time. All I can say at this stage is that the question of starting a medical school is still receiving the consideration of the Government.

Item, Retiring allowances, £1,000.

Mr. NEEDHAM: The expenditure last year was £514. The names of the recipients of these allowances should be given.

The PREMIER: I am unable to give the names tonight but, if the hon. member wishes to have them, I shall see that they are supplied.

Item, Grant to Royal Agricultural Society, £6,444.

Mr. YATES: Last year the expenditure was £3,000. What is the reason for the increase?

The PREMIER: A deputation from the society asked for a grant of £9,444. Approval was given for £10,000. An amount of £3,000 was paid to the society and the estimate for this year is the balance of the amount originally asked for.

Item, Electricity and Cinema Board fees to be paid to State Electricity Commission, £5,000.

Mr. MARSHALL: If the fees are collected by the board, how is it that a debit is levied against the Treasury and by what process of book-keeping is that decision arrived at?

The PREMIER: The State Electricity Commission has taken over the administration of the Electrical Workers Board and Cinema Operators Board. It is also proposed to create other boards in connection with the licensing and registration of electrical contractors, approval of electrical material and the licensing of radio workers. At present no provision is made in the Act for these boards but, as the Commission attends to the administration of them, the amount provided on the Estimates is equivalent to

the fees expected to be collected and is being paid to the Commission to cover the cost of administration.

Item, Dairy cattle compensation, £2,500.

Mr. WILD: Why has this item been provided?

The PREMIER: This is the estimated amount provided as a contribution to the Dairy Cattle Compensation Fund that is applied towards compensating owners whose dairy cattle will be destroyed owing to T.B.

Item, Concession freight on fittings on railway trucks used for bulk wheat, £2,300.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am interested in this item because a request for the payment of it has been resisted through the years. Will the Premier give an explanation of the item?

The PREMIER: The amount is provided as a recoup to the Railway Department for the cost of freight on fittings used and sent to the country to enable wooden trucks to be used for bulk wheat. Co-operative Bulk-handling, Ltd., provided the necessary canvas and bamboo to enable full truck loads to be carried over the railways, thus saving the department the need for constructing special trucks.

Item, State Electricity Commission, loss, £41,000.

Mr. MARSHALL: How is it that we show a loss of £41,000 due to this institution being in existence?

The PREMIER: This amount has been provided to meet the loss pending the Commission's establishing itself and earning sufficient revenue to meet current expenditure.

Item, Free Milk Council, grant for children attending school, £500.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: Is this item intended to benefit children in the metropolitan area or throughout the State? How will it be applied and will there be any means test?

The PREMIER: There will be no means test and this is the total amount provided. At present it is not intended to provide any more.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It does not seem very much if you are going to give milk to all the children.

Mr. LESLIE: I strongly object to this item. I understand it is to be spent only in the metropolitan area and I cannot see any justification for that. If we were experiencing a depression the position would be different, but in these days everybody except those who are incapacitated is supposed to be in work. If the privilege were extended to deserving cases only I should not mind but, if it is to be a free milk scheme for children indiscriminately in the metropolitan area, I consider it quite unjustifiable.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It should be the lot or none.

Mr. LESLIE: I agree. I hope the Premier will seriously consider the item before disbursing the money. I could suggest many ways in which £500 could be put to a more useful purpose.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported.

### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 7.30 p.m. tomorrow.

*House adjourned at 11.11 p.m.*

## Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 29th October, 1947.

	Page
Questions: Goldmining, as to allowance to prospectors, etc. ....	1567
Cinema films, as to objections by local authorities	1567
Government motor vehicles, as to activities and fuel restrictions ....	1568
Bills: Economic Stability Act Amendment (Continuance), 3R., passed ....	1568
State Housing Act Amendment, 3R., passed ....	1568
Wheat Marketing, 2R. ....	1568
Land Alienation Restriction Act Amendment (Continuance), 1R. ....	1570
Commonwealth Powers Act, 1943, Amendment, 2R., Com. ....	1570
Commonwealth Powers Act, 1945, Amendment, 2R. ....	1571
Companies Act Amendment, 2R. ....	1571
Inspection of Machinery Act Amendment, Assembly's amendment ....	1572
Municipal Corporations Act Amendment (No. 1), Assembly's message ....	1572
Child Welfare, 2R. ....	1575
Adjournment, special ....	1575

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 7.30 p.m., and read prayers.

## QUESTIONS.

### GOLDMINING.

*As to Allowance to Prospectors, Etc.*

Hon. E. M. HEENAN (on notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) In view of the importance of the goldmining industry and the necessity for the encouragement of prospecting, is it the intention of the Government to increase the allowance of 30s. per week now made to prospectors under the Government prospecting scheme?

(2) Is it the Government's intention to accede to the request of the Amalgamated Prospectors' Association that a supervisor be appointed to fill the position held by the late Mr. Curtis?

(3) Is it the Government's intention to abolish the present system which precludes men in the receipt of an old-age pension from being eligible to receive assistance under the Government prospecting scheme?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) This matter is at present under consideration.

(2) No. It is not considered practicable.

(3) It is intended to review the question as regards old-age pensioners.

### CINEMA FILMS.

*As to Objections by Local Authorities.*

Hon. E. M. DAVIES (on notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) Is the Minister aware that certain local authorities are objecting to the types of films being screened at matinees?

(2) If so, will he consider introducing legislation to improve programmes by the screening of more films of an educational, travel and comic nature to the exclusion of films of the "two-gun" variety?

(3) If not, will the Minister make the necessary inquiries and obtain a copy of the Victorian Act?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) and (3) Inquiries have been made from all State authorities relative to their legislation in connection with censorship of films, and a draft Bill dealing with this matter is now under consideration.