

preciate the beneficial effect of the Act. Had the Act not been passed, more troublesome times would have confronted the community. Many people were being turned out of their homes, and that could not continue without creating tremendous problems. We are now afforded a favourable opportunity to amend the Act by dealing with these two material blots. There are other small alterations that one's experience as the result of many appearances in court on behalf of persons who have applied for protection orders, suggests should be dealt with; we were overhauling the Act, but, in the meantime I hope the Minister will grant relief on the two major points I have mentioned.

On motion by Minister for Lands, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 11.4 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 16th November, 1932.

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

QUESTION—SUPERPHOSPHATE BONUS.

Hon. G. W. MILES asked the Chief Secretary,—To assist the dairying, pig-raising, grazing, and fat lamb industries of the State, is it the intention of the Gov-

ernment to urge the Commonwealth Government to maintain the superphosphate bonus of £1 per ton recently announced?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: The payment of a bonus is entirely a matter for the Federal Government.

QUESTION—COLLIE COAL, ROYAL COMMISSION.

Hon. G. W. MILES (for Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom) asked the Chief Secretary, 1, In what circumstances, and for what reasons, was a Royal Commissioner appointed to inquire into the business of the Amalgamated Collieries Company? 2, At whose instigation was it done, the Premier, the Government, or any member of the Government? 3, What will be the cost of employing Dr. Herman for conducting this Commission? 4, Is it intended to conduct a further inquiry under this Royal Commissioner into other companies, such as the Swan Brewery, the West Australian Newspapers Company, the Orient or P. & O. Navigation Company? 5, If not, why not?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, and 2, A resolution was passed by the Legislative Council requesting the appointment of a Commission on the 12th November, 1930. Copy of resolution is attached. 3, The cost cannot be stated until the inquiry is completed. 4, No. 5, The Government has not (as was the case in connection with the Coal Commission) received a request to hold an inquiry. Resolution—That a Royal Commission be appointed to inquire into and report upon the coal industry of the State and particularly regarding:—1, The present position of the coal industry including the production, carriage, distribution, bunkering, and sale of coal. 2, The cost of production, including interest, rent, royalties, commission salaries, wages, railway and shipping freights and all other expenditure. 3, The profits or losses of collieries or corporations interested in the coal industry. 4, The efficiency of management, marketing, and control, including business methods, keeping of accounts, method of mining, and the utilisation of by-products. 5, The importation of coal into the State, the relative values of imported and State coals.

6, The economic values of State and imported coals, and other relevant factors which are necessary to make coal available to the community at a price corresponding to its economic values. 7, To examine books, accounts, contracts, and agreements relating to the production and sale of coal, including fees, commissions, and other charges on sale costs, and report thereon. 8, To inquire into and report upon agreements, if any, between persons or companies having for their objective the fixation of prices or of anything in the nature of restraint of trade. 9, The effect of the present price of coal on railway freights and on industry within the State. 10, The reason for and effect of eliminating a three-months' cancellation clause from the agreement between the Government and the Collie Coal Mining Companies.

MOTION—MINING ACT, TREATMENT OF SANDS.

HON. E. H. HARRIS (North-East)
I move—

That in the opinion of this House the Mining Act should be amended immediately so that the hundreds of thousands of tons of sands and tailings on Crown lands, abandoned and forfeited leases, tailings and machinery areas may be made available for retreatment.

I do not think it is necessary to say much to justify this motion. Gold is one of the most needed commodities of the day, and the yield is increasing monthly. We hope that shortly we shall regain the prestige we formerly possessed in the early days of the history of gold mining in this State. We now have 17 goldfields, covering a wide area. Over this are dotted huge dumps of medium, high grade and low grade tailings. These are situated on abandoned gold mining leases, surrendered leases, and leases which have been voided by the Crown for non-payment of rent, but which in many instances are now Crown lands. Then there are some dumps situated on Crown lands which have never been alienated in the form of leases. There are tailing areas, machinery areas and prospecting areas. They cover a wide field. Prospectors, speculators and enterprising citizens generally, being stimulated by the high price of gold, are in search of that commodity, both on the surface and underground, in these areas, and are

endeavouring to locate some matter that contains gold of a payable value. They complain, and have previously complained but there is no right on the part of the Crown to give them a lease over these abandoned dumps, which have been lying there for anything up to 25 or 30 years. Formerly it has not paid anyone to spend much money in taking up the new areas that is, the old dumping areas, for the purpose of retreating the material, but the higher price of gold has made it payable to endeavour to extract the metal from the dumps if the Crown would grant the opportunity to exploit the material. To facilitate and expedite the extraction of gold from these dumps, I submit it is necessary to amend the Act. I do not think it was ever intended by the framers of the Act of 1904 that the owners of sand or slimes that were left on Crown land should be given a perpetual title, while they might remain there. Those who have left the dumps have not contributed anything to the revenue of the State. Any one who desires to reserve an area of tailings by paying an annual fee would be entitled to reserve his rights to the Crown lands concerned. My first reference to this matter was in 1924. On page 363 of Volume I. of "Hansard" of that year it will be seen that I drew the attention of the Government to the necessity for amending the Act. I pointed out that in a certain case a metallurgist on the Golden Mile had persevered with a process which, he claimed, would extract 97 per cent. of the gold from the tailings. After the process had gone beyond the experimental stage, he selected a big tailing area that had been abandoned for the previous 12 or 14 years. He erected a plant there, but only then discovered that the Government could not give him a title to the tailings on the area. This was discovered only after £600 or £700 had been spent in erecting a plant. The result was that he had to negotiate with the owners of the tailings that were lying on Crown land for 14 years in order that he might be able to try the plan and endeavour to extract the gold. No amendments have yet been made to the Act in that direction. For the information of members who may not be familiar with the Act, may I say that the first essential is to become the possessor of a

miner's right. In effect, this gives a man a license to peg ground, and subsequently apply to the warden's court, after which, if the applicant has complied with the statute, he may have the ground in question granted to him. Section 111 reads—

When any mining lease is surrendered or expires through effluxion of time, or is forfeited or declared void, and the lessee leaves upon the land comprised in the lease any tailings or other mining material, and does not within six months from such surrender, expiration, forfeiture or voidance, or such extended time as the Minister may, under special circumstances, allow, either remove or bona fide treat, and afterwards, with all reasonable despatch, continue to treat such tailings or other mining material, then, at the expiration of six months, or such extended time as aforesaid, such tailings or other mining material shall become the absolute property of the Crown.

When reading that, one is led to believe that the Crown becomes the possessor of the whole of the tailings that are left on the abandoned areas or leases, after a period of six months. If one desires to hold them longer, or to treat them at a later stage, one can reserve one's right by paying the necessary rent. Section 112 says—

The Governor, in the name and on behalf of His Majesty, may grant to any person, subject to the provisions of this Act and the regulations, a license or licenses in respect of any such tailings or other mining material.

If it is the property of the Crown and the tailings are on an abandoned area, the Crown can issue a right to treat such tailings and the holder of that right may extract gold therefrom. As I have said, we have mining leases, tailings areas, machinery areas, prospecting areas, and Crown lands, and dumps are to be found on all of these. These are the tailings and slimes that I wish to be freed in order that persons may have an opportunity to treat them. There is no provision for a man having the right to take any tailings unless they are on abandoned leases. There are many other classes of leases or tenements over which one may have the right to work these dumps other than merely gold mining leases. A mine may have been worked for many years and the tailings dumped next to the battery on the lease. As the dump grew, it would extend perhaps to a tailings area covering many acres of ground on Crown

land, and then perhaps on an adjacent area extending to a prospecting area. Then, if the lease is subsequently abandoned, the portion that has machinery on it is held as a machinery area. By Section 111 of the Act one might have an area with 50,000 tons of tailings on it, and if the lease is surrendered or forfeited, after six months the whole of the tailings on the mining lease revert to the Crown. Say, for instance, there are 20,000 tons of tailings, on a tailings area, 10,000 tons on a machinery area, then 15,000 or 20,000 tons are the only tailings that the Crown by granting a license can give one the right to work. The other sections of the Act are silent as to the power that would be necessary for the Government to make such a grant. We may embrace the tailings dump in a prospecting area, but it does not give any rights to a dump. We might have a dump of tailings covering an area equal to Parliament House grounds, and a man for 10s. can get a right to a prospecting area, which gives him authority to work underground, but not a title to the tailings on the surface. The Government have no right, and the tailings are really owned by the person or persons who mined them, perhaps 20 years ago. That man, or those men, may be dead, but the thing is still in their name, and it is necessary to amend the Act in order that the dump might be utilised by enterprising citizens. There is no provision for any form for an application for tailings. All that is provided for in the Act is an authority to treat for gold. In my opinion Section 112 of the Act needs amending to bring it within the ambit of the tailings area, as provided in the other sections of the Act. If a person desires to apply for a tailings area of, say, 30,000 tons worth 1½ dwts., he has first to apply for a license, and will have to get a search-out to prove that the tailings have definitely reverted to the Minister. Very often it is difficult to ascertain whether it is free for a person to apply for. Then he must appear at the warden's court, and advertise in a local newspaper, calling upon those who have any right to come forward and object within a specified time. After that period has expired he must then tender evidence as to his financial resources. Then the warden may make a recommendation to the Minister, and if the Minister approves, the applicant can be granted a license to re-treat

the tailings. When the Act is amended it should also provide that that person, having got a permit to re-treat the tailings, should take out some class of tenement. The Act does not provide that when he has been granted that right it is necessary for him to take out any tenement at all. Under regulation 185 provision is made that when a man thinks he has some earth of value, he can have it registered, and although the ground on which it is stacked may be available for someone else to work, his rights to the stack of ore or earth or tailings are reserved to him so long as he continues to pay the necessary fees. In putting this proposal forward I am not making any reference to mining on private property. I think the necessity for an amendment dealing with tailing areas should apply with equal force to the other. Many of those dumps are adjacent to water, which is essential for treatment. Naturally, the first to be worked would be those near to the Coolgardie water scheme. However, farther north there are many places where water is available at shallow depth, and in some of the abandoned shafts near the dumps to be worked men would erect pumping plants to utilise the water in the mine. The cost to the Mines Department of putting into operation the amendments I have suggested would be practically nil. Those amendments would open greater avenues for employment and the production of wealth. It might be a little complicated to draft the necessary amendments, but I think if the inclination is there a solution can be found which would make the whole of the areas open to those who desire to re-treat the dumps. I commend the motion to the House in the hope that it will be carried, and submitted to the Government as a means of assisting those who are endeavouring to assist themselves.

On motion by Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED FROM THE ASSEMBLY.

- 1, Government Ferries.
Without Amendment.
- 2, Pearling Act Amendment.
With amendments.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Financial Emergency Tax Assessment.
Returned to the Assembly with amendments.
- 2, Financial Emergency Tax.
Passed.

BILL—JUSTICES ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Recommittal.

On motion by Chief Secretary, Bill re-committed for the further consideration of Clauses 17, 39 and 59.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 17—Amendment of Section 129:

Hon. A. THOMSON: I move an amendment—

That the following paragraph be added to stand as paragraph (c):—"Any Board or Boards acting with the approval of the Governor, and, subject to regulations, as may be prescribed, may establish and maintain a superannuation fund for the benefit of their employees; contributions to be made by each employee and each local authority; the Minister for Works to act as Trustee."

It was thought it might be an advantage to road boards and their employees if Section 129 were amended to enable the boards, if they so desired, to combine for the purpose of establishing a superannuation fund. That is the object of the new paragraph. It was previously suggested that I should indicate in what proportion the employees and the boards themselves should contribute. If the new paragraph is agreed to, the matter can be arranged by the boards desirous of assisting their employees by establishing the fund, in conjunction with the employees or their representative, and the Minister for Works or his representative. Too often have many of those who have given years of valuable service been compelled to retire without anything in the form of superannuation. Those people it might be said have been thrown practically on the rubbish heap. Most of the employees of the road boards would be willing to contribute to a fund if it were in

existence. This is purely a voluntary proposal on the part of the boards and the employees. There are about 100 boards in the State and if it is desired to create this fund, with the Minister for Works as trustee, we can be assured of its being successfully controlled.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Should there not be a special Bill for a proposal of this kind, instead of merely embodying it in the Road Districts Bill?

Hon. A. THOMSON: I do not think so, because already Section 129 of the Act provides that a board, with the approval of the Minister, may cause to be paid a sum of money by way of gratuity to an officer or his surviving relatives in the event of death. It is purely an act of grace at the present time whether an officer gets a gratuity or assistance unless of course he is dismissed for misconduct. Indeed, I should like to see this matter taken much further and a comprehensive insurance fund established.

The CHAIRMAN: Is there any necessity for the words "or boards" in the proposed paragraph?

Hon. A. THOMSON: My wish is that the boards, if they so desire, may act collectively.

The CHAIRMAN: In the Interpretation Act the singular includes the plural.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If local authorities are to be given this power, this is not the place to make provision for it; the proper place is a special Bill for the purpose. The hon. member desires that the Minister shall act as trustee. Can anyone imagine the Minister of the Crown desiring to take on such a responsibility? I certainly would not dream of it. Then there is the establishment of the fund. Who is going to provide the money at the outset?

Hon. A. Thomson: It will be built up in the process of time.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The amendment will be futile, and I hope it will not be agreed to.

Hon. G. FRASER: The hon. member could not have given any thought to the question. The subject is very much deeper than the hon. member thinks, and should not be inserted in an Act of Parliament dealing with other matters merely by way of a paragraph in one of the sections. It would be dangerous to introduce the matter in the way suggested by the hon. member. If a

Bill is brought in to cover all road board and municipal employees, in the State, I shall be prepared to support it, but I cannot support the proposal as the hon. member now suggests.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I have a recollection of a Bill being introduced for the purpose of the Perth City Council establishing a superannuation fund, but after the measure had been examined by a select committee, it was withdrawn. If any such proposal as that indicated in the amendment is to receive consideration, it should be embodied in a Bill, and the matter should not be dealt with in the fashion proposed, particularly as the governing factors would be set out in regulations, which is not regarded as a satisfactory way of dealing with such matters.

Hon. A. Thomson: The regulations would have to be tabled.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: But that is not regarded as a satisfactory method. Does the hon. member intend the superannuation fund to be conducted on an actuarial basis, or will lump sums be taken out of the municipal or road board funds as required?

Hon. Sir Charles Nathan: Who would be responsible for the actuarial calculations?

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The secretary of the road board.

Hon. A. Thomson: I did not say so.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: If that were the position, I would not think of supporting the proposal. It is proposed that the Minister for Works shall act as the trustee.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: And he will not have any funds.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: A little while ago the Chief Secretary told us that when the Government took office they found that every penny of the trust funds had been used.

Hon. A. Thomson: You would not suggest that the Government were dishonest!

Hon. J. M. Drew: The Minister referred to the previous Government.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: It was not suggested that the Government were dishonest, but that the trust funds had been used. That has been done before. The Chief Secretary said that personally he would decline to act as trustee in such circumstances as that indicated in the amendment.

Hon. A. Thomson: Would he not trust the Government? That is a dreadful accusation to level against Ministers.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: A question such as the establishment of a superannuation fund for the benefit of road board or municipal employees should be dealt with by way of special legislation and not merely by means of a small amendment in the Bill.

Hon. J. M. DREW: Mr. Thomson is to be commended for the fine spirit that has actuated him in moving the amendment. It may not achieve its purpose and some machinery may be necessary to provide the basis through regulations. If we agree to the amendment, we shall probably be called upon at a later date to deal with a Bill providing for the establishment of a superannuation fund in connection with road boards. The amendment will serve the purpose of testing the feelings of the different road boards throughout the State, and for that reason alone, if for no other, I shall support it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The amendment specifies that the Minister for Works shall act as trustee. It is wrong to mention any Minister specifically, because it may not be the Minister for Works who will be in charge of road board matters.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I oppose the amendment. The men working on the roads are in a better position than many of those who are supposed to contribute the rates from which the workers are paid. The employees should be able to make the necessary provision for themselves. It is all very well to be generous with other people's money. The proposition is an extraordinary one.

Hon. J. T. FRANKLIN: I support the amendment. If members will remember the Bill introduced by the City Council, they will recollect that an attempt was made to provide for a section of the municipal employees.

Hon. V. Hamersley: That was the trouble: it provided for a section only.

Hon. J. T. FRANKLIN: Unfortunately such drastic alterations were made to the Bill that the city council could not proceed with the scheme.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I have a distinct recollection of the hon. member himself getting rid of the Bill by moving the Chairman out of the Chair.

Hon. J. T. FRANKLIN: And that was on your own recommendation, Mr. Chairman! I adopted that course for the sake of the employees themselves. The amendment is a step in the right direction, and will permit road board employees to maintain their own superannuation schemes.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Probably every member of the Committee is sympathetically inclined towards the objective Mr. Thomson has in view, but any such scheme should be considered carefully and should not be dealt with by means of a small amendment sandwiched in between other clauses of the Bill. I would like to see some such scheme inaugurated by the road boards or municipalities, and presented to Parliament in such a form that we could give it proper consideration.

Hon. G. Fraser: To secure the best results, the road board and municipal employees should participate in one scheme.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The amendment provides that the fund shall be established and conducted subject to regulations that may be prescribed. From time to time we have protested against government by means of regulations, and I certainly do not think that the method proposed is at all satisfactory.

Hon. J. T. Franklin: The Governor would not approve except on the advice of the Government.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The regulations would lay down the scheme. I object to an important matter being provided for in that way.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Well, vote against the amendment.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It is undesirable to formulate such a scheme by regulation, but I hope the Government will introduce a measure to embrace not only road districts, but municipalities.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: I support the amendment. Officers employed by road boards have very little to look forward to on their retirement. I have discussed the matter with country road board officers, and most of them would be willing to set aside approximately 2½ per cent. of their salaries to build up a superannuation fund.

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not think any member would oppose a definite scheme of superannuation, but a bald proposal such as this is—

Hon. W. J. Mann: A blank cheque.

Hon. G. FRASER: Absolutely. Any superannuation scheme should receive serious consideration. Where is there any guarantee that contributors would reap the benefit after, say, ten years? The fund might be depleted in a couple of years. Many road boards have old employees, and probably exceptionally heavy calls would be made upon the fund in the early years. A scheme introduced some years ago provided for a section and not for the whole of the employees, but that scheme came to a sudden end. In view of that experience, I am surprised at an effort being made to secure a scheme even less elaborate than that one was.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Proposals are sometimes damned with faint praise. Some members have declared themselves favourable to superannuation, but foresee many difficulties to its accomplishment. Why ask a private member to introduce a Bill laying down the whole of the details? It would be beyond me to do so. I agree with Mr. Harris. Any such fund must be established on an actuarial basis. Under the amendment the approval of the Governor would be essential, and the establishment of the scheme would be subject to regulations which may be prescribed.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Prescribed by whom?

Hon. A. THOMSON: The Government would have power to disapprove of proposed regulations.

Hon. J. Nicholson: The power to frame regulations would have to be embodied in the Act.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Road districts already have power to prescribe regulations for general administration, and there should be no insurmountable difficulty to empowering them to establish a superannuation fund.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: On what basis?

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am not suggesting a basis.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Someone will have to suggest it.

Hon. A. THOMSON: All I desire is that local authorities be empowered to establish such a fund. The regulations could be based on existing schemes, and could be made fair and just to the employees and to the rate-payers. It has been suggested that the Minister would not accept the responsibility of trustee, because the trust funds might disappear. If we cannot trust the Government

to administer trust funds, we have reached a bad state.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: In your amendment you stipulate the Minister for Works, not the Government.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I suggested the Minister for Works because he controls the local government branch of the Works Department. I am rather surprised at the opposition to the amendment.

The CHAIRMAN: I did not want to interrupt Mr. Thomson in the course of his remarks, although I waited patiently for him to refer to an episode that occurred when, by leave, he withdrew an amendment similar to the present one. I then pointed out that the clause of the Bill which he desired to amend would amend Section 129 of the parent Act, which provides that in certain cases a board may grant a gratuity to any officer on his resignation, or to his relatives on his death. In the parent Act there is no reference whatever to a superannuation fund. To a section of the Act which deals specifically with gratuities the hon. member is desirous of adding a principle which is altogether foreign to the section. When the Bill was previously before the Committee I suggested that the hon. member might deal with the question of superannuation by an entirely new clause. Up to the present the hon. member has made no reference whatever to any new clause.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I must apologise. However, I move it as a new clause.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 39—Amendment of Section 202:

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That Clause 39 previously struck out be reinstated with the insertion, after "may," of the words "upon application by a board."

This is a very important clause indeed. It affects no fewer than 61 road boards, because they have granted permission to people to erect buildings with external walls of wood in certain districts, notwithstanding that under the Second Schedule to the Act they were not empowered to do so. The Second Schedule applies to 11 districts and 62 townsites. Surely the Committee do not desire that that should be the position. I say advisedly that owing to the provisions of the Second Schedule people have been

compelled to erect houses in brick far beyond their means. Many people have had to give up those houses because of their inability to continue to pay for them. A wooden house can be made not only comfortable, but to look very attractive. People should be allowed to build houses within their means.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: If road boards were granted this permission, would not insurance rates be considerably increased in those areas?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Wooden buildings are necessarily more expensive to insure than brick buildings.

Hon. V. Hamersley: The whole neighbourhood would be affected.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Not necessarily. It would depend upon how far apart the houses were and upon the situation. I appeal to the Committee to agree to the reinstatement of this clause. Surely we can trust local governing bodies to handle their own affairs. Because one or two wooden houses have been erected in a district, that would not affect the rate, except in the case of those particular dwellings. Everything depends on how they are situated, such as if they are in juxtaposition to some brick house.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I ask members to consider the effect of the amendment which has now been made. The clause, as it is presented to us, is practically the same as it was before it was struck out, with a minor alteration setting out that the Governor may, upon application by the board at any time, and from time to time by Order in Council declare so and so. That brings us back to where we were before we struck out the other words. Members agreed before, that it would be unwise to place this power in the hands of the Governor-in-Council. It means that the Minister could override the local authority. I object to the way in which this amendment has been framed. Perhaps the Chief Secretary will agree to some alteration being made in it. I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out the words in line 2 "and from time to time."

Amendment on amendment put and passed.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I should like to see the whole clause struck out, at all events all

the words after "inclusive" in line 14. I would remind members that there is such a place as Katanning.

Hon. Sir Charles Nathan: Do we not know it!

Hon. A. THOMSON: It is an important centre, too. The minutes of the last Road Boards Association conference contained a motion to the effect that power should be given to the local authorities to declare specified areas, in any portion of the townsites of their road district in which only buildings of a specified value and approved design may be erected. That particular provision has already been inserted in the Bill.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m..

Hon. A. THOMSON: I move an amendment on the amendment—

That all words after "inclusive" in line 14 be struck out.

If those words remain they will give the Minister power to over-ride any local authority. If a local authority determines upon a brick area it will be within the power of the Minister to nullify that determination. If my amendment on the amendment be carried, the Minister will not be able to over-ride the local authority.

The CHAIRMAN: The words the hon. member proposes to strike out deal only with by-laws that are inconsistent or repugnant to an order in council.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am sorry I cannot agree with the Chairman. My view is backed by legal opinion. The Minister definitely laid it down that the clause is to give the Government power to over-ride a local authority and insist on wooden houses being allowed in a brick area. However, I have done my duty, and if my amendment on the amendment be not agreed to I will be able at some future date to tell members I was right and they were wrong.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member cannot even read the intention of the clause. This applies simply to an order in council, and has nothing to do with either brick houses or wooden houses. How can it be said that the clause gives the Minister power to over-ride local authorities?

The CHAIRMAN: Does the hon. member still persist in moving his amendment on the amendment.

Hon. A. Thomson: Yes, I must.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The striking out of all words after "inclusive" would nullify the whole effect of the clause and reduce it to nonsense. All that is intended in the clause is to provide that no regulations or by-laws shall be inconsistent with or repugnant to an order in council.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I will withdraw my amendment on the amendment.

Amendment on the amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I move an amendment on the amendment—

That in lines 18 and 19 of proposed Clause 39 the words "or by the Minister are deemed to be" be struck out.

Amendment on amendment put and passed.

Amendment, as amended, agreed to; Clause 39, as amended, reinserted.

Clause 59—Amendment of Section 283:

Hon. W. J. MANN: I move—

That Clause 59 struck out by a previous committee be reinserted.

By striking out the clause we put road boards and residents in an invidious position. It has happened that new areas have been settled and in some cases quite desirable homes erected, whilst some old buildings which serve their purpose for a time have been allowed to remain, but ultimately have been removed. Then the residents have asked the local authorities to build a road or afford some necessary facility for which they declared they would be prepared to pay their proportion of the loan rate. Under the old Act it was competent for 20 ratepayers to ask for a referendum for the raising of the loan, and it was made obligatory for the decision to be arrived at by a poll of the majority of the resident owners. It has been known that people agreed to the proposal and then, with their tongues in their cheeks, have gone away and raised objections. Under the existing Act, all they required to do was to refrain from voting, and in that way the facilities sought would be denied.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That could all be done by 20 people.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Yes. If people have not sufficient interest to record their votes, they should not be considered to any extent. It is highly desirable that the clause should be reinstated because the

position as it stands is a bar to progress. Only in this morning's paper there was an analogous case at Nedlands, where the desires of a majority of the people there were frustrated because of the required majority refraining from voting.

Hon. Sir CHARLES NATHAN: I support the proposal to reinstate the clause. Members will have noticed the extraordinary position the electorate I represent has been put in by almost a similar set of circumstances. A poll was asked for with respect to certain proposals put up by the local bodies, and a substantial number of ratepayers registered their votes. Actually within ten or 12 of the majority required was obtained. The total, however, was just short of the number set out by the Act, and the result is that a substantial schedule of works, unquestionably for the benefit of the ratepayers as a whole, has become ineffective because the stipulated number of ratepayers did not vote. If the clause is reinstated it will mean that the vote of the majority of those who do take the trouble to go to the poll will have the desired effect.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is urgently necessary that this clause should be reinstated. The provision has been asked for by three successive road boards conferences as being the outcome of the difficulty experienced by boards in getting a majority of those resident owners on the roll to vote. The Bill as now amended permits any ratepayer to vote when a poll is taken in connection with a loan. Thus owners of vacant blocks who may be resident in the Eastern States or owners who would gladly give vacant blocks away, if they could, will have the same voting power as the man who is a resident owner, and who has improved his property and naturally wishes to see that the local authority has the requisite finance to carry out necessary works in the district, whereas the absentee owner will selfishly consider himself only and will do everything in his power to keep the rates he has to pay, at the lowest possible figure. In the case of the Melville Road Board for instance, the number of absentee owners of vacant blocks far exceeds the number of resident ratepayers. Even in the case of resident ratepayers you will always find a big percentage who, even if they are in favour of a loan, will not bother to vote, so that it

is only right and just that a majority of those resident owners who do vote should be permitted to say whether money should be borrowed or not. For they are the ones who take their duties as voters seriously. The South Perth Road Board recently took a poll on some loan proposals with the following results:—

General Loan—No. on Roll	340
For	278
Against	149
West Ward Loan—No. on Roll	340
For	39
Against	130
East Ward Loan—No. on Roll	315
For	118
Against	15

The result was that the loans had to be abandoned as in no case was there a majority of resident owners who voted. The Board wrote in to the Department on the matter as follows—

Under this new ruling (that is, the Crown Law ruled that a majority of those on the roll must be obtained) it is almost impossible for road boards to raise a loan, and I am directed to ask that you be good enough to arrange a deputation to Mr. McCallum on the subject as early as possible.

The Board's request was carried out and an amendment to the Act was inserted in the Bill to amend the Act. The Claremont Road Board also proposed to raise a loan of £8,000 for road work and a loan poll was taken. The number of resident owners on the roll was 520. The result of the poll was: 243 in favour of, and 57 against the proposal. Thus it will be seen that although a big majority of those who voted were in favour of the loan, yet they did not comprise a majority of the resident owners, and so the loan could not be raised. The Balnugup Road Board conducted a loan poll. This board had 211 resident owners on the roll and the voting resulted in 105 voting in favour and 64 against. It was found on examining the roll, however, that there were four names which should not have been on, thus reducing the total number of resident owners to 207 and giving the necessary majority in favour of the loan. I consider it is only just that when a majority of those people in a district who take enough interest in the affairs of their local government to record their votes, they should have the power to say whether a thing is to be done or not, and those same people should not be penalised because others will not do their

duty as citizens. Three successive road board conferences and individual road boards have recognised the necessity for an amendment along the lines I am suggesting, and, on top of that, we have the instance that appeared in the "West Australian" to-day. There are some road board areas adjacent to the metropolitan area that have no hope of ever raising a loan to promote the progress of their districts unless the law is altered. With the additional information before them I hope the Committee will agree to the reinstatement of the clause.

Amendment put and passed.

Bill again reported with further amendments.

BILL—PUBLIC SERVICE APPEAL BOARD ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. M. DREW (Central) [8.4]: I support the second reading of the Bill but I am much afraid that it will not achieve the end in view. It will enable members of the different railway organisations to approach the Public Service Appeal Board with the object, I understand, of submitting their claims to pension rights under the Superannuation Act. It will do no more than that. Since 1871, when the Superannuation Act—it is better known as the Pensions Act—was passed, numerous claims of this description have been made by men who have been for long periods in the Government service but many of whom failed for various reasons in their objective. There have been two great obstacles to the favourable consideration of their claims. The Superannuation Act lays it down that claimants must have held office under the Crown and, further, that they must have held them in an established capacity. A succession of legal authorities starting with the late Mr. Septimus Burt, and officers attached to the Crown Law Department have interpreted the term "office" to be a position held by a salaried officer and not by any person whose salary or wages were paid out of a lump sum voted by Parliament. The term "established capacity" provided a further restriction. It has been definitely held that men on wages who are liable to have their services dis-

pense with at short notice, are not employed in an established capacity and, further, that a salaried officer, perhaps one who had served for 20 or 30 years under the Government, engaged in supervising contracts or works constructed out of loan funds, was not employed in an established capacity either. The argument advanced was that the services of officers in that position were limited by the ability to float loans.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That would apply appropriately in these times.

Hon. J. M. DREW: Yes, that is so. The late Mr. Septimus Burt, as I have already indicated, gave a ruling on the whole question when he was Attorney General in the Forrest Ministry, and that ruling has been supported by a long procession of lawyers who succeeded him. All Executive Councils have been guided by that ruling and the advice of the officers of the Crown Law Department has been that Governments should follow it. The Bill does not attempt to provide a remedy. It merely allows more persons than formerly to go before the Public Service Appeal Board, and the Privy Council has held that the Superannuation Act was not altered by the Public Service Act of 1920, under which the appeal board operates. The Bill does not amend the Superannuation Act. It leaves it exactly where it is. However, the men affected wish to have the right to approach the Public Service Appeal Board, and I shall not be one to deprive them of the right extended to them by the Bill, should it become law.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Does the Bill provide for a special board?

Hon. J. M. DREW: There is provision for a special board. Under the Act at present if a Public Service matter is being dealt with, a representative of the service sits on the board. If it is a matter affecting the Education Department, then a representative of the teachers sits on the board. Otherwise the remaining two members of the appeal board are unchanged. The Bill simply gives the railway men an opportunity to go before the Public Service Appeal Board, but it renders them no assistance whatever in order to accomplish the great object they have in view, namely, to secure their pensions.

On motion by Hon. W. H. Kitson, debate adjourned.

MOTION—RAILWAYS' CAPITAL ACCOUNT.

To inquire by Committee.

Debate resumed from the previous day, on the following motion by Hon. A. Thomson—

That in the opinion of this House a Committee should be appointed with the powers of an honorary Royal Commission—1, To inquire into and report upon the Western Australian Railways' Capital Account with a view to reducing the amount upon which the Commissioner of Railways is expected to find interest and running costs. 2, To make such recommendations to Parliament as the Committee or Commission may deem desirable to enable the Railways to meet the competition of motor transport.

To which an amendment had been moved by Hon. H. Seddon to delete all words after "that" down to and including "Commission" and insert in lieu thereof the words "a Select Committee to be appointed."

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [8.12]: I hope the House will reject the motion if for no other reason than because of the wording of it. I do not think Mr. Thomson ever intended that the motion should be carried.

Hon. A. Thomson: You have no right to say that.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Otherwise Mr. Thomson would have moved it in a different form. He has had experience in another place that should, at all events, have taught him that a select committee can act only while Parliament is sitting. We understand that the session will close towards the end of December and the life of Parliament itself will expire at the end of January. Mr. Thomson suggests that "in the opinion of this House a committee should be appointed with the powers of an honorary Royal Commission." This House has no right to confer the powers of an honorary Royal Commission upon a select committee.

Hon. J. Cornell: The motion does not provide for the appointment of a select committee, to start with.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: At any rate we have no right to confer such powers on a select committee. If we appointed a select committee to deal with this question, the committee could not deal with this big subject in about four weeks or so, and then an application would have to be made to the Government for the com-

mittee to be appointed an honorary Royal Commission. As I understand the position, I do not think there is any hope whatever—at any rate, I should hope not—of the appointment of a Royal Commission that would consist of five members of Parliament to inquire into the finances of the railways. We will all agree that it is political interference both in regard to the construction and to the carrying on of the railways that has been at the bottom of all our troubles. I feel justified in saying that Mr. Thomson, although one of the new members of this Chamber, happens to have been trained to a certain extent in another place. Had he not been experienced in that direction, there might have been some excuse. But Mr. Thomson has had experience elsewhere and, with the capacity he would lead us to believe he possesses, he should appreciate the position. I know he certainly possesses the capacity to hold up the business of this Chamber. I hope we will not take as long in the disposing of this motion as we have in dealing with some amendments that have appeared on the Notice Paper during the last few days. A number of railways have been authorised and not built; a number have been authorised and built, and a great number of the latter either terminate at Kataning or in the vicinity. Railways have been built that should never have been authorised, and if we search the records of another place for the last 10 or 15 years, I think it will be found that Mr. Thomson voted for one and all of them. That being so, I consider it ill-becomes the hon. member to come here now and attempt to place the responsibility upon the management of the Railway Department and seek an inquiry by politicians. The whole trouble has been brought about by the action of politicians, particularly those associated with one party. Thirty years ago I thought I had solved the railway problem. It may be remembered that for a time I was Commissioner of and Minister for Railways.

Hon. E. H. Harris: So you speak with some authority.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I was not many hours in office before I realised that the running of railways was a job for a railway man. What did I know about the running of railways? I might be able to decide a question of policy, but to dictate

as to the running of railways was a job for an expert. We then passed the Government Railways Act which we thought vested the control of the railways in the Commissioner of Railways and removed them from political influence. Where we blundered was that the re-appointing of the Commissioner became the duty of the Government at the time the appointment expired.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: That is the point.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Either that was necessary or, had we known as much as we know now, we might have made it a life appointment, but even that course would have been attended with difficulty. The Commissioner has the power, but if he exercises it in defiance of the Minister, when his time for reappointment occurs, there is no reappointment. Knowing all that, it is proposed when the railways are up against difficulties—compared with other railways ours are doing very well—to appoint a select committee to tell the public and the Government what ought to be done. One member of this House whom I respect highly is Mr. Seddon, because he deals with matters in a manner we all appreciate. He said last night that there should be a committee to tender technical advice to the Railway Department. What are the executive officers of the railways for? Are men who have had life-long experience of the railways and have given good service to be harried and annoyed by members of Parliament when we are confronted with problems? If members carry their memories back to the early days of development in this State they will recall at least one public officer—one of the best we ever had—who came to an end largely as a result of political influence. The motion suggests the writing-down of the capital of the railways. How are we going to write down the capital? Are we going to transfer the burden to the Treasury? No matter what we do, the Treasury have to find the interest on the money. With a partnership or a company, it is quite a different matter. People put their money into a concern and, if it goes to the pack, the loss is sustained by individuals. What is the idea of writing down the capital of the railways? In order that it may appear that the railways are paying, and once the railways are put on an apparently payable basis, what will

follow will be a reduction in railway charges and the construction of more railways. I think the railway capital account should stand as a monument to the incompetence of some men who authorised and constructed railways well knowing that they would never pay for more than axle grease. And some such railways have been constructed in the territory that lies between Perth and Albany. In the good days when everything was booming, the session immediately preceding a general election was usually noted for the passing of three or four railway Bills. They were put up by all parties. No matter what party happened to be in power, it put up railway Bills as a sort of drag-net to catch votes, and the Bills were passed by both Houses. In fact some members representing country districts claimed that, whether a railway was justified or not, it was their duty to vote for it. Action of that kind on the part of members of Parliament has brought this country to its present position, and we shall never get back to sanity—or, I was going to say, decency—until members of Parliament stand up and say "This is right" or "That is wrong; we will not have that railway constructed because there is no justification for it." Until we reach that stage we shall never get out of our difficulties. Some railways were approved at a time when a number of other railways which had been authorised were unbuilt, and there was a resolution by both Houses of Parliament that the railway first authorised should be first constructed. Let me give an instance of what happened. I refer to that magnificent proposal to build a railway from Pemberton to Denmark—a tremendous undertaking. The Government had agreed to bring out 75,000 migrants from the Old Country, and were going to build the railway a mile at a time, clear the adjacent land, and settle the people as the work proceeded. Cable messages were produced to show that the Imperial Government expected us to take more than the 75,000 people and we were to make provision for them. If we had agreed to that railway proposal and had started out to build the line, every other railway project authorised would have been held up until that one was completed. No matter whether a gold mine had been discovered or what expansion had rendered urgently necessary

the construction of some other line, there was the fact staring us in the face that no other railway could be built until that huge work was completed. I think I was responsible for causing Parliament to resume its sittings after Christmas. I pointed out that Pemberton was connected with Bunbury and that Denmark had a port in Albany, and that if we wanted to develop that country, we should build one section 20 miles from Pemberton and another section 20 miles from Denmark. There would be a terminal port at each end to serve each section. The Engineer-in-Chief explained that 20 miles would not suit the department because, owing to the levels of the country, he had to fix stations at given points. We subsequently agreed to concede what was necessary in order that the sections might terminate at stations, and I think we agreed to sections of 30 miles. The railway sections were a long time under construction, and I am led to believe there is very little in the way of settlement there yet. We never took the 75,000 people whom we agreed to take, much less the thousands of others we were expected to take. Having loaded ourselves up with all those unpayable propositions, we are now asked to appoint a select committee to tell the railway officials what should be done. I should like to put Mr. Hall right if I can, though I admit it will be a job to do so. To listen to him one would think that everything was in favour of the Midland Railway. Nothing of the kind. Nobody can help admiring the railway officers for their astuteness. There was a time when goods could be booked from Fremantle to Geraldton and similar places on a through long-distance freight. Then the Government railway officials discovered that the rate from Fremantle to Midland Junction was a high rate, and that the long distance rate was a low one. Consequently the Government railways collected the high freight from Fremantle to Midland Junction, leaving the Midland Railway authorities to collect the lower rate for the main portion of the journey. If members look up the particulars, they will find that there was what was known as the port-to-port rate. If it was a shorter distance from Geraldton to Fremantle via the Midland line as compared with the Wongan line it was only natural that the Midland Railway Company should get the trade. Let me tell the House something that is rather interesting. When the Midland Railway Company were granted the concession,

Parliament, in its wisdom, inserted a clause in the agreement requiring the company to charge freight at Government railway rates. That was done to prevent the public from being victimised by this so-called foreign company. After the Wongan Hills line was built, the Midland Railway Company were carrying goods at special rates. Then those railway officers who we are given to understand do not know their business got to work. They had seen the railway traffic that should have been coming down the Wongan Hills line coming down the Midland Company's line at special rates. Then one of the officers unearthed the original agreement and found it provided that the Midland Company should carry goods at Government rates. The railway officers stepped in and told the Midland Railway Company that that meant at Government rates, no more and no less. The Government considered that the provision meant at rates not greater than the Government rates, but the railway officers went further and contended it meant also at rates not less than the Government rates. Members will therefore see how this despised Railway Department which they consider wants inquiring into has never lost a point, nor are they likely to do so if they are left alone. I take this opportunity of saying that the business of the railways is conducted in a manner which we should all appreciate. To confirm what I say about the authorisation and construction of railways, I would point out that early this session I asked some questions. It is very seldom that I ask questions, because, judging from the answers given to other members, I expect to be side-tracked. I was almost side-tracked on this occasion. These are the questions I asked and the answers I received—

(1) What is the number of railways authorised by Parliament but not constructed?—Five (See page 2 of Commissioner of Railways' Annual Report.)

(2) What is the length of such railways?—Three hundred and twenty miles, excluding those under construction.

It will be seen Parliament authorised the building of 320 miles of railway that were never constructed. Thank God for that! We have built a number of railways the construction of which should never have been authorised.

(3) What amount of money was authorised for same?—No provision has been made on

Loan Estimates for any funds for the construction of these railways but the authorisations are as follows:—

Then follow the authorisations.

(4) Has the money authorised and raised been used for any other purpose?—No money has been raised for those works.

If members will look at the Loan Act they will find that some of these railways appeared in the schedule that was sent to London when the Government went there to borrow the money to build them. I was not concerned about the Loan Estimates, but I was concerned about the loan schedule under which the money was borrowed. If the borrowing of those moneys was authorised, why is it we are told day after day that the Treasury is depleted and that urgent work cannot be proceeded with until more money is made available? I quite realise that members representing country electorates have to do the best they can for their constituents, but I think they have a higher duty to perform. They must reflect how their actions will affect the whole State. It is not the duty of a member of Parliament because he is returned to represent a particular locality, to vote in favour of a measure affecting that locality, whether the measure be right or wrong. I do not think that is expected of him by his constituents. It is his duty to tell his constituents if they are wrong, and not vote for the construction of railways which will not be payable and then try to shift the responsibility for them on to the Commissioner and the executive officers who are doing their best under very difficult circumstances. Now it is proposed to appoint a select committee consisting of five or six members of Parliament who will sit in judgment on the administration of the railways. If appointed, they will have to complete their task within four weeks; or, if Parliament extends beyond Christmas, they will have till the end of January, because this present Parliament must terminate then. In the meantime, however, we have the busiest part of the session before us and the Christmas holidays intervening. The committee will certainly have to terminate when Parliament does. I do not think we would be justified in appointing Royal Commissioners, whether paid or not. Some of them may be a dear bargain to the country, whether paid or unpaid. I am sorry I am, as it were, wasting so much time over this motion, but knowing what has been done

and what is likely to be done, I feel justified in referring to past experience and opposing the motion. In conclusion, let me give an instance. I understand a certain Collie coal mining company had a mine $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles distant from the Government railway. A railway had been built there previously, a timber line, and the Public Works Department—not the Railway Department—extended that line to the mine. After the Department built the railway, unfortunately they handed it over to the Commissioner of Railways, who was expected to make it pay. That railway, I understand, cost £22,000. Surely, it is the construction branch of the Public Works Department that we should get at, if we get at anyone at all, and not the gentlemen who are managing the railways and making the best of a bad job. I regret having occupied the time of the House so long, but I want to make it quite clear that we have not done much business to-day. We will not make progress at all while hon. members persistently move amendments that do not fit the bill, or motions that look very nice on the Notice Paper as an advertisement of what members are doing from day to day. I oppose the motion.

HON. SIR CHARLES NATHAN (Metropolitan-Suburban) [8.41]: I fully appreciate the motives of the hon. member who moved the motion and especially those of Mr. Seddon, who supported it. I refer to Mr. Seddon particularly because for some considerable time he has been desirous of endeavouring to remedy a state of affairs which every member of this House must know is prejudicial to the welfare of the country. For that reason I am entirely in sympathy with him and in other circumstances, would be quite prepared to support him in a movement of this kind. In the first place, the very wording of the motion is such as to preclude members from supporting it. I should indeed be extremely sorry to be associated with a commission or with a select committee which could not but help to bring in an abortive report, a report that certainly would not justify the time spent upon it. In my opinion, it would place those hon. members in a quite false position. How is the motion worded? It reads—

To inquire into and report upon the Western Australian railways' capital account with

a view to reducing the amount upon which the Commissioner of Railways is expected to find interest and running costs.

The hon. member asks this House to appoint a select committee, with the powers of a Royal Commission, which in the limited time at their disposal—Mr. Holmes has said four weeks—is to value £23,000,000 worth of assets. I think that period is far too short for such a task. The hon. member asks this House to appoint a committee of politicians, who may have had considerable experience as politicians, but who may be sadly lacking otherwise, to undertake such a task. There is also the question of reducing the amount on which the Commissioner has to find interest and sinking fund. To do all this, the committee would have to value the whole of the assets of the system. Apparently the hon. member intended this motion to apply specifically to certain railways, there being parts of this system which are not paying. The motion does not apply to railway lines alone, but to all the assets associated with the system. It applies even to the rolling stock which may or may not be obsolete and to the workshops also. On what basis is the committee to value such assets? Is the basis to be the ability of these assets to earn interest and find the running costs? I should like to ask members what would be the position with regard to certain railways. I know of at least one which is proposed. If we left out the whole of the capital cost, estimated to be £450,000, it literally would not pay for axle grease and oil. Does the hon. member desire that at this juncture railways of that description should be written-off completely?

Hon. W. H. Kitson: They have to be paid for whether they are written-off or not.

Hon. Sir CHARLES NATHAN: I will come to that. In what position would members like Mr. Thomson himself be placed as members of this committee or commission? At the moment Parliament has authorised the construction of a line running from Boyup Brook to Cranbrook, estimated to cost £450,000. Would the hon. member, after taking part as a member of the committee and having written-down the value of the asset to the extent desired, be able to stand up in this House and

advocate the construction of that railway? Rather should he move to rescind the motion which led to its authorisation.

Hon. G. Fraser: He would not do that, as it is in his own district.

Hon. Sir CHARLES NATHAN: I instance that to show the difficulty in which hon. members would find themselves if they took part in an inquiry of this kind. Such a responsible task as is proposed can only be adequately carried out by experts who know what they are doing, and who are not associated with politics. Such a valuation, if it is ever to take place, should only be made after the fullest consideration has been given to the question of the general control of the railway system. After the assets have been written down to an amount that would enable them to pay interest and sinking fund what would happen under existing conditions? More railways would be asked for. If on a balance sheet result the railways can be shown to be paying their way there will be a clamour for new railways, and at some later date the capital cost of the new railways will also have to be written-down.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: And there will be applications for reductions in freight.

Hon. Sir CHARLES NATHAN: Yes. The very fact that the railways are written-down to a figure that will enable them to pay interest and sinking fund under existing conditions would suggest an immediate call from our agricultural areas for reduced freights. I ask members whether, in view of the finances of the country, as they stand to-day, we would be justified in doing what is proposed.

Hon. A. Thomson: Do you not think we should look for a reduction in freights? Is not that what the wool commission has suggested?

Hon. Sir CHARLES NATHAN: If the hon. member succeeds in bankrupting the State, as this ill-advised motion might help to bring about, there will be no railways to run.

Hon. A. Thomson: And you will have no wheatgrowers, either.

Hon. Sir CHARLES NATHAN: There are some things which are better left unsaid. I now come to the second portion of the motion, which is that the committee is to make such recommendations to Parliament as it may deem desirable to enable the railways to meet the competition of motor

transport. The innocence of the hon. member deserves one's sympathy. Does he think that half a dozen members of this House are capable of suggesting to the Commissioner means whereby the railways would be enabled to meet motor transport competition? If there were half a dozen members capable of doing that, I am sure that the expert British committee of investigation which has sat in England for a matter of five years, would willingly pay their fares home so that they might investigate the problem in England. It never will be possible to meet the competition of road transport by the methods suggested in the hon. member's motion. The only way in which it will be possible to meet this ever-extending development of transport, which is here to stay and will continue to gather strength, will be not by writing-down the capital cost of the railways alone, although that might be essential later on, when the railways can run in competition with motor transport, but it may yet be necessary to expend large sums of public money to that end. It would be impossible to combat motor transport by legislation, short of legislation of a prohibitory nature. To ask a select committee to make an inquiry of this kind under conditions as they exist to-day is to ask members to undertake a task which they cannot fulfil with justice to themselves. Moreover it would defeat the ultimate aim which I hope later on members will assist Mr. Seddon in securing, namely, a comprehensive examination of the whole of our railway system, by those who are most capable of undertaking it. I oppose the motion.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [8.53]: I am in sympathy with the motion, and if I thought it would do any good, I would be glad to see it passed. Perhaps, however, it is on the wrong lines, and it might be advisable to have a committee of experts rather than of politicians to make the necessary inquiries. The railways are charged with the problem of carrying the goods of the country, and at the same time of paying their way. It is also their duty to render a service to the community at as low a cost as possible in order that members of that community may have a better chance to compete with the rest of the world. Unless the railways can compete with motor traffic and bring down their costs somewhere with-

in a reasonable amount, it becomes imperative that a good many of those people who use the railways must be driven out of action because of the expense entailed. For some time past the passenger service on the railways has fallen away considerably. Motors have taken possession of a good deal of the traffic which rightly belongs to the system. Fares have gone up, and members of the community have had to look around to see in what direction they can overcome the difficulty. In the case of long distance transport, two or three persons have got together and, by means of motor vehicles, have been able at their own convenience to come into the city and go out again, and save both time and money by adopting this method. The same thing applies to goods traffic. Many people have been driven to use motor transport. The railways seem to feel that they control the country, and that everyone must conform to their wishes. The system was started as a service to the community. To a great extent that has been departed from, and rules have been laid down which do not conform to the wishes of the users of the railways. In some localities there may be three or four trains running every week. When goods are ordered to be railled to a country centre, the merchant may say that as the railways decline to receive those goods except on certain days, they cannot be despatched for a week. That means, of course, that motor transport gets the business. Then there is the question of breakages on the railways. Very little consideration is given in that respect, and breakages are often occurring to machinery and other classes of goods. If anything gets lost or damaged, in the case of motor transport, there is no trouble about it. The railways do not desire to recognise claims, and will combat them as far as possible. The community feel that there are so many drawbacks about using the railways that they are turning their attention in another direction. No doubt the mover of the motion had all this in mind, and thought that by means of an inquiry the attention of the railway people might be turned to these things so that more consideration might be given to the community in general. No doubt, too, some of our railways have been laid down in the wrong places. It is claimed that the line from Perth to Fremantle should have been run further north. It is unfor-

tunate that the suggestion to place the central railway station further north was not adopted at the time when it was put forward. Undoubtedly the line has been laid in the wrong place. And as we travel inland we find difficulties in respect of the routes. The people at York wanted the railway to run direct up the Helena, while those at Toodyay and Northam wanted it to follow the course of the Swan River. But instead of either of those routes being selected, the railway was run up to Darlington on a grade rising to about 1,200 feet above sea-level and subsequently falling again to 500 feet at Northam. It was as though a man, wanting to wheel a barrowload of bricks from the front to the back of his house, wheeled it up over the roof.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: And those are the people whom Mr. Holmes says we must not criticise!

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: And they had to divert the railway from Darlington and build a tunnel at very great expense, and through some blundering the tunnel when complete was found to be two feet too small, and so at enormous cost its size had to be increased sufficiently to take the trains. In addition to that, three or four more lines have had to be laid down in an endeavour to improve the grade through the hills, involving an enormous waste of money. I was astonished when the Minister told us the railway referred to by Mr. Holmes as running out to a mine $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles from Collie had been constructed by the Railway Department. Previously I was under the impression that all these railways were constructed by the Works Department. The Minister also said the mining company had never asked permission to build the railway themselves. But I have here a letter addressed to the Premier on the 16 May, 1927, as follows:—

I have to thank you for your letter of the 12th inst. It is noted that the matter of constructing the railway to the Griffin mine will be considered when the company has acquired the property. The sum of over £10,000 has been expended on improving the value of the property and in opening up the colliery, and a considerable sum is involved in fulfilling the requirements of the Government in order to have the matter of the provision of the railway further considered. I shall, therefore, be glad if you can let me have a definite reply to the following:—(1) In the event of the company carrying out the requirements of the

Government set out in your correspondence, that is the purchase of the property and equipment of the colliery, will the Government definitely promise to build the railway? (2) In the event of such promise not being forthcoming, will the Government give its consent to my company constructing the line at its own expense, subject to the right of the Government to take over same at any time at cost price? You will readily appreciate the fact that the expenditure of further capital cannot be justified while there is a doubt as to the provision of the railway facilities. My company is now in a position to go right ahead, but must have one of the two above positions established before it can go farther.

Discussions have taken place and an engineer well used to railway construction has said he would be glad to construct the line at from £8,000 to £10,000 and make sufficient profit out of it to retire upon. It is true as stated by Mr. Holmes that the whole of that line had been used by the old timber companies and had carried many thousand tons of timber. The line was already cleared and graded, and it was considered by the Griffin Company that it would not cost more than £6,000 for relaying. The men at Collie, who were anxious to get on the job when the line was to be built, said they would be only too pleased to cut the sleepers, and the piles for the bridge also, at the side of the railway, because there was beautiful timber growing there. But when the department constructed that line they hauled the timber for over 100 miles, although when a couple of piles for the bridge needed replacing, they cut them within several hundred yards of the site.

The Chief Secretary: Why are you so much concerned in this?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I am interested in it. Mr. Willcock received a deputation of the settlers who declared that the construction of a railway from Collie down the Ferguson River would obviate the terrible grades between Collie and Brunswick, that the natural fall following the river would be a vast improvement for taking the whole of Collie coal and the whole of the wheat traffic from Narrogin and the back country down to Bunbury. It was anticipated that this line, which was only a portion of that promised by Mr. Willcock to the settlers, would be put in. The whole of the 2½ miles of railway constructed to the mine was charged to the mine as a siding. Never before has such a thing been charged against a mine at Collie. Every obstacle was put

in the way of the company in an endeavour to kill the proposition. As soon as the company was plunged into this heavy expense for the railway, it was found it had cost £22,600. The company has been charged up with that and with working expenses, including maintenance £2,519 and depreciation £1,572, or in all £4,091. Also it has been charged interest from the 8th December, 1927, on the cost of the construction of the line, £3,708, or total charges of £7,799 7s. 11d. on the cost of construction of the line.

The PRESIDENT: Order! This is a motion to appoint a select committee to deal with certain aspects of the Railways, and I must ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to those aspects which it is proposed to be inquired into by this committee.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I was giving those particulars because the Minister referred to the construction of this line.

Hon. J. Cornell: Dr. Herman will bring out all that.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: It represents a frightfully extravagant charge to the community, for £22,600 has been charged up on that paltry siding to bring coal 2¾ miles into Collie.

Hon. E. H. Harris: How do you account for the terrible cost?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: It has never been accounted for. It took them 12 months to construct that length of 2¾ miles. And the company is charged a large amount for maintenance, although the man in charge of that line has never had to do so much as drive a dogspike or remove a sleeper, because it is a new line throughout. If we had an inquiry, the probability is that we should find numbers of other instances of extravagance in the construction of railways, resulting in enormous charges against the community. Of course it may be that it was in the interests of the Commissioner of Railways to have no more railway traffic to look after, he may have preferred to let things stand still. Many years ago we approached the then Commissioner of Railways with a view to getting a reduction of freights. The remark of the then Commissioner was that they had the rolling stock and the men, and all the department wanted was that the farmer should produce twice as much as he was doing and give the department the traffic, and so make it possible to reduce freights.

Since that date we have quadrupled the agricultural produce and given the railways an enormous traffic, but the freights have not been reduced.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Has this railway been paid for?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: It has just about ruined the company. The Commissioner of Railways himself said that he never wanted it, and it was a pity it was ever opened. Why have our railways cost so much? We know well that when we started out on a policy of developing the country the railway system was used to open up the wheat areas. At that time Mr. Teesdale Smith undertook to build a thousand miles of railway for a million pounds. It was a pity the Government of the day did not accept his offer. There would have been no frills in connection with the lines he would have laid down, and the State would have been able to run its wheat into the ports by that method as expeditiously as they do in Russia and other countries by means of waterways. Here we have a State with wonderful opportunities and we have built lines at an extravagant cost and so made it very much more difficult for the settlers to ensure success. We must reduce overhead costs, or institute a method by which the railways can do their work more cheaply to the community. In that way only can we provide any benefit for the people and prevent them from using motor trucks which even with the use of the dearest fuel in the world can compete successfully with the railways.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East—in reply) [9.19]: I agree with the remarks of Mr. Hamersley, who stated that the railway men would have an opportunity to give evidence before the suggested committee. May I at this stage say that I deeply deplore the personal attack made upon me in this House by Mr. Holmes. I am grievously disappointed. When I entered the precincts of this Chamber I thought that innuendoes and personal attacks were things of the past. Apparently because I am endeavouring to do my duty to my constituents the hon. member has taken it upon himself to tell me that I have no business to take part in the discussions or the deliberations of this House.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I never said anything of the kind.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I did not understand Mr. Holmes to say that. If he had done so I would have called him to order.

Hon. A. THOMSON: He said that I submitted amendments to this House without giving them due consideration. Anyway, I am not going to deal with him any further, except to say that I was elected by the people of the South-East Province to attend to my Parliamentary duties, and that I consider it is in the interests of my constituents and also in the interests of the people of the State to give utterance to the views I believe to be correct. I intend to exercise that right and privilege while I am a member of this Chamber, and it ill becomes any member to criticise another who is honestly endeavouring to do his duty. I was grievously disappointed to hear Sir Charles Nathan's remarks. He stated that it would be impossible for a committee of Parliamentarians to give consideration to this very important subject, and that therefore the work of the committee would be abortive. If the hon. member had been sincere in his desire to get the necessary information, and if he really thought it was essential to have a committee of experts, why did he not move an amendment to the motion in that direction. I would have accepted it quite cheerfully.

Hon. Sir Charles Nathan: An honorary committee of experts?

Hon. A. THOMSON: Surely a matter of this description is of sufficient importance to be discussed by members of the Legislative Council. It is a remarkable thing that since I gave notice of a similar motion in the previous session Queensland has reduced the capital expenditure of its railways by £28,000,000.

Hon. J. Cornell: Transferred it to general account.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I will deal with that later. Next we find that New South Wales is seriously considering the over-capitalisation of its railway system, and in Victoria the matter is also receiving attention. It seems to me that Sir Charles Nathan and Mr. Holmes are afraid that if this committee is appointed it may possibly bring in a recommendation in favour of a reduction of freights. Sir Charles said, "What are you going to do if you reduce railway freights; we are bankrupt to-day."

Is it not a fact that a great majority of the farming community in Western Australia are bankrupt? Is that not one of the greatest problems that we are endeavouring to solve, the problem of reducing our working costs. May I refer Sir Charles to the finding of the Royal Commission appointed by the Commonwealth Government to inquire into the disabilities of the woolgrowers. What did that commission say? The recommendation was that there should be a reduction in railway freights. It is stated that the inflated capital cost of the railways should not be a reason for the high rates of freight on wool. What a crime it is for a man representing a country constituency to endeavour to see whether it is not possible to bring about a reduction of costs so that the primary producer might benefit.

Hon. J. Cornell: That Royal Commission also suggested that the wool freights be reduced to the level of those prevailing here.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That is so. When Mr. Holmes was in the dual position of Commissioner and Minister for Railways, what were the railway freights then as compared with what they are to-day? He did not give us that information; he was too busily engaged endeavouring to trounce a new member for voicing his opinions in this Chamber. Many railways have been constructed in this State, and the capital is out of all proportion to their value. Can we have a better illustration than that given to us by Mr. Hamersley? It would be interesting to find out what it cost to construct our railways when Mr. Holmes was Minister, and the cost in recent years. It would also be interesting to find out the additional amount imposed on us in connection with the construction of railways by the exorbitant Federal duties. It was never anticipated when Western Australia entered the Federation that the State would be penalised to the extent it has suffered.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Heavy duties even on our locomotives.

Hon. A. THOMSON: If I have sinned in asking for this inquiry; if I have sinned in asking that the capital account of our railways should be reduced, I have sinned in the company of railway experts. The conference on the economic position of Australian railways, convened by Mr. F. M. Forde, Acting Minister for Transport, towards the end of

1930 dealt with the subject exhaustively, and I would refer Sir Charles Nathan and Mr. Holmes to page 8 of the report. They will find illuminating information there and it will prove to them that there are people who think that our railways are over-capitalised.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Is Mr. Forde a railway expert or a politician?

Hon. A. THOMSON: He was the Minister responsible for calling the conference together. This is what was reported by the conference—

Under a system of private ownership "reconstruction," or in other words writing down of capital, would probably have taken place when it became apparent that the railways were no longer able to earn sufficient to pay working expenses plus reasonable interest on capital.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That is private ownership.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Let me finish. I did not interject once when I was being canned by hon. members. The report goes on—

There a process of re-organisation in order to effect a reduction of capital has of course been carried out at the expense of the shareholders. In Australia the shareholders are the whole of the public and Governments in the past, rather than face the unenviable task of writing down capital, have passed the problem on to their successors.

That is what the hon. member wants to do. The suggested committee would be in the same position as the committee that recently collected a mass of evidence on the subject of the bulk handling of wheat. There are men in the Railway Department who could give the committee valuable information that is not available at present. No one knows it better than the hon. member who has interjected. The report goes on to say—

It appears necessary in the first instance to determine the present-day value of the railways (preferably on a basis of the earning capacity of the assets) and reduce the recorded railways capital accordingly. Valuation on an earning capacity basis was the method adopted by the Ministry of Transport in Great Britain when the railways amalgamation was brought about in that country in 1921. While the reduction of capital would not relieve the position so far as State finances are concerned, it would nevertheless clarify the position of the railway accounts; it would also fix more definitely the responsibility of the railways management for the financial success of the business undertakings under their control.

That is the finding of the experts and the Royal Commissioners of Australia. Therefore, in asking that a committee should be appointed, what am I suggesting? As to experts, I would prefer a committee of experts. On the other hand, if I were to move my motion worded in that way, I would be ruled out of order because my proposal would result in the incurring of the expenditure of public money.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: Where would you get the experts?

Hon. A. THOMSON: I have already indicated that valuable information could be secured from some of the officers of the Railway Department. My motion asks that a committee shall be appointed "to inquire into and report upon the railways capital account with a view to reducing the amount upon which the Commissioner of Railways is expected to find interest and running costs." I need refer only to the two railways that were mentioned by Mr. Holmes, who chastised me for having moved the motion. The Commissioner of Railways is saddled with the control of those railways, although they cannot possibly be made to pay for many years to come. Is it fair and reasonable to ask the Commissioner of Railways to be responsible for the payment of interest on the capital involved and also for the running costs with regard to railways for which his approval was never sought? Surely the committee I advocate could submit a recommendation that we should place our railway system in the same position as the Victorian railways. In that State, if a railway is constructed upon which losses are made, the Commissioner is recouped from Consolidated Revenue. Members may not be aware that the Commissioner in this State is allowed £2,500 a year for rendering services that cost the department at least £32,000. Could not the committee investigate that matter, and indicate how savings could be effected? I can give scores of instances in support of my contention. Sir Charles Nathan referred to obsolete rolling stock. He is the manager of a big trading concern in Perth and I ask him if he would be content to run his business as the Railway Department is run. Would he take into consideration in his capital account, stock that is obsolete or has disappeared altogether? Of course he would not. All I ask is that a committee shall be appointed to go into these matters and per-

haps make a recommendation that practical business methods shall be adopted in connection with our railway system. That is what I am asking for, and yet Mr. Holmes could accuse me of wasting the time of the House! I dealt with this question when I sought election to the House, and I would be failing in my duty if I did not endeavour to give effect to my pre-election promises. I offer no apology to the House for having submitted the motion. It has been said that my proposal is absurd, and Sir Charles Nathan said that a committee of experts in England were endeavouring to solve this particular problem. We have a problem here, and it is for Western Australia to solve it. The whole attitude of the Government to-day is that the railways belong to the people and the people must use them, irrespective of whether they are penalised in doing so. A few days ago the members of the Federated Chamber of Commerce, at a conference at Bunbury, passed a motion drawing attention to the serious opposition to the railways that had resulted from motor transportation.

Hon. J. CORNELL: What did they do in Victoria about it?

Hon. A. THOMSON: In all probability the very gentleman who agreed to the motion at Bunbury travelled to the conference in motor cars. However, I shall not pursue that phase. I have asked questions in this House in order to ascertain how much revenue the State derived from motor licenses and how much money the State had spent upon the construction of roads. I desire to impress upon the House the fact that the roads belong to the people just as much as the railways do. I am not antagonistic to the Railway Department.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Quite the reverse.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I defy any hon. member to show that I have cast any reflection upon those who are administering the railway system. Mr. Holmes cast more reflection upon them than I did. He said that the trouble to-day was that political control was exercised in connection with the railways. That is a serious reflection upon the present Government and is equivalent to saying that Ministers are preventing the Commissioner of Railways from doing his duty. I did not make any such reflection. If any hon. member should feel so disposed, I appeal to him to move a further amendment to my motion so as to secure the ap-

pointment of a committee of experts to go into the whole question. In these days the object is to reduce costs. What is the position of the railways to-day? Half the people are living in the metropolitan area and the other half are endeavouring to produce the true wealth of the State in the country areas. The latter are expected to pay the whole of the running costs and interest on the railways. It is admitted that any loss on the railways has to be borne by the taxpayers as a whole. Mr. Cornell said that my motion merely meant the transferring of the indebtedness. Is it fair and reasonable that the taxpayers generally should pay the whole of the losses incurred on the group settlement scheme? I have not heard one objection raised against that. Everybody admits that the cost of the blunders of those who administered the Group Settlement Scheme should not be borne by the group settlers alone, but by the general public. Let us deal with the water supply question, the Wyndham Meat Works and other activities. In each instance we find that a certain amount of money has been written off, and the responsibility has to be shouldered by the general taxpayers.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What amount has been written off the Wyndham Meat Works?

Hon. A. THOMSON: A certain amount has been written off. I am not prepared to give the exact figures. Perhaps the hon. member knows more about it than I do, seeing that the works are in his province.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I do not know of any having been written off, but that is nothing.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The general taxpayer has to pay for such losses. Let Mr. Holmes be fair—if he can. There are other charges that have been written off, as, for instance, in connection with the State ships. We do not ask the people of the North to shoulder that burden.

Hon. J. M. Drew: The profits from the State ships were taken into Consolidated Revenue.

Hon. A. THOMSON: And that has been the position with the railways too. I will not labour the question any further. I deprecate the personal attack that has made upon me by Mr. Holmes. I hope that that sort of thing will not be repeated. I hope to do my duty in this Chamber. Young and inexperienced as I may be in connection with

this Chamber, surely I am entitled to do my duty as I see it, and I should be able to do it honestly without being attacked by any other hon. member.

Amendment put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	10
Noes	..	..	..	..	14

Majority against .. 4

AYES.

Hon. J. Ewing
Hon. E. H. H. Hall
Hon. V. Hamersley
Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. R. G. Moore

Hon. H. V. Piesse
Hon. E. Rose
Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. C. H. Wittenoom
(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter
Hon. L. B. Bolton
Hon. A. M. Clydesdale
Hon. J. Cornall
Hon. J. M. Drew
Hon. G. Fraser
Hon. E. H. Gray

Hon. E. H. Harris
Hon. J. J. Holmes
Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. J. M. Macfarlane
Hon. Sir C. Nathan
Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. W. J. Mann
(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Question put.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Am I permitted to call "aye" or "no" when I am not in my seat? After a division has been taken, it is usual for members to return to their seats before any further question is put.

The PRESIDENT: But does it matter?

Hon. G. W. Miles: I do not know, but this is the first time since I have been in the House that a further question has been put before members have returned to their places.

The PRESIDENT: I have seen it happen numbers of times.

Hon. H. Seddon: I supported the amendment, but I cannot support the motion, and therefore it will be necessary for me to cross to the other side.

The PRESIDENT: There is no reason why the hon. member should not do so.

Division taken, with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	9
Noes	..	..	..	..	15

Majority against .. 6

AYES.

Hon. J. Ewing
Hon. E. H. H. Hall
Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. R. G. Moore
Hon. H. V. Piesse

Hon. E. Rose
Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. C. H. Wittenoom
Hon. V. Hamersley
(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. A. M. Clyde-Dale	Hon. J. M. Macfarlane
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. W. J. Maue
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. Sir C. Nathan
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. E. H. Harris	Hon. L. B. Bolton
Hon. J. J. Holmes	(Teller.)

Question thus negatived.

House adjourned at 9.52 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 16th November, 1932.

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

QUESTION—COLLIE COAL, SUPPLIES TO POWER HOUSE.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Has the East Perth power house an up-to-date coal-testing plant? 2, Is the coal from each mine supplied to the power house tested to ascertain its economic value? 3, If not, why not? 4, What are the separate values of coal, including calorific value, moisture and ash from (a) Stockton; (b) Cardiff; (c) Griffin mine, for the six months ended 30th June, 1932? 5, What was the quantity supplied to the power station from

each of these mines for the same period? 6, Why was the supervision of coal to the power house taken out of the hands of the coal inspector at Collie? 7, Since the supervision was removed, have any trucks of coal containing foreign matter been refused at the power house? 8, If so, has any allowance been made, and how much?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, No. 2, It is tested as to calorific value, ash and moisture. 3, Answered by No. 2. 4, Testing is done quarterly. The averages for February and May quarters (1932) were:

	Calorific Values. Net H.T.U.	Moisture. %	Ash. %
Stockton ...	7,572 ...	28.85 ...	8.23
Cardiff ...	7,853 ...	26.56 ...	5.09
Griffin ...	8,906 ...	22.25 ...	5.51

3, Supplies received from Stockton and Cardiff mines are not recorded separately from other coal received from the Amalgamated Collieries. During the six months the Amalgamated Collieries supplied 45,692 tons and the Griffin Company 6,982 tons. 6, Because better inspection was considered possible at the East Perth power house. 7, The supervision has not been removed; it has merely been transferred from Collie to East Perth power station. 8, Answered by No. 7.

QUESTION—MIDLAND RAILWAY, SPUR LINES.

Mr. PATRICK asked the Premier: Have the Midland Railway Company approached the Government for authority to construct spur lines from their railway?

The PREMIER replied: Not recently. A petition has been received from residents of the Moora and Dandaragan districts asking that the Midland Railway Company be granted permission to construct a railway spur line from Moora to Dandaragan. The petition has been submitted to the company for consideration. Parliament could only deal with the request at the instigation of the Midland Railway Company.

QUESTION—DAIRY INDUSTRY ACT, ADMINISTRATION.

Mr. J. H. SMITH asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is it the intention of the Government rigidly to administer the Dairy Industry Act? 2, Does he appreciate the necessity of bringing all manufacturers into