

this figure shows a reduction of £74,000 in comparison with 1929-30. The receipts from income tax amounted to £340,000 in 1929-30 whilst for the last financial year, 1932-33, the collections totalled £169,000 only, or less than 50 per cent. of the amount received in 1929-30.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Were all the assessments sent out in time?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, but it was not the fault of the Government if they were not. It is estimated that the receipts for this year will amount to only £160,000. Such a serious fall in the receipts from these avenues of taxation have proved very embarrassing to the Treasurer—as it was to his predecessor—and he has naturally found it very difficult to carry on. As the purpose of the measure is simply to ensure the continuance of the present Act without alteration, I do not think that there is any necessity for me to detain members with an explanation of its clauses. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [9.9]: I have a word of praise and congratulation for the Government for bringing forward a measure that does not seek to add anything to the land tax and income tax imposed upon the people.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The Government gave that undertaking, and they are merely carrying out their word.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I am always pleased when the Government of the day, after giving Parliament their assurance that something will be done, promptly follow up their promise by introducing legislation in conformity with their declaration. For that reason, the people generally will appreciate the action of the Government.

Hon. G. W. Miles: This will be used against you some day.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That may be so. If anyone should desire to use it against me, he is welcome to do so. Earlier in the day I saw fit to criticise the Government and now, when a word of praise is due, I am glad to extend it.

Hon. G. W. Miles: What are you looking for?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Despite the difficulties of these times, when Governments throughout the world are experiencing

trouble regarding finance, I hope it will be possible for the Minister to introduce a Bill next year which, if it will not decrease taxation, will certainly not increase it. In the meantime, I trust that the Government will be able to practise wise economies in every direction possible.

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.12 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 15th November, 1933.

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

QUESTION—HOUSING TRUST.

Mr. F. C. L. SMITH asked the Premier
1. Was Senator Collett correct in stating in the Senate, during the debate on the Financial Relief Bill (*vide* Federal "Hansard" No. 23, p. 3862, October 25, 1933), that "in Western Australia there is what is known as a housing trust. Its function is to erect houses at an average cost of about £270, and let them to deserving people either on a free life tenancy or on the rent purchase system at the rate of 5s. weekly"? 2. If the statement is correct, will the Premier indicate how one of these houses can be secured?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. Housing Trust Act, passed 1930. 2, These houses are

ected under special legislation for indigent people only. They are purchased in some cases on a rent purchase contract at 5s. per week, from which all rates, taxes and insurance are paid by the Board, the balance being utilised to repay the capital cost of the property. Alternatively, an applicant may have the home granted on a free life tenure agreement, under which no payment whatsoever is made by him, and there are no rates or taxes payable on the property under the Act. Further, it is not possible for any applicants under the Workers' homes Act to be assisted under the Housing Trust Act, and before any approvals are given the Housing Trust must be satisfied that the applicants are not in a position to obtain a home by any other means.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1, Fremantle City Council Lands Act Amendment.

2, Permanent Reserve (A 1162).

Introduced by the Premier (for the Minister for Lands).

3, Health Act Amendment (No. 2).

Introduced by the Minister for Health.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1933-34.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the previous day; Mr. Slesman in the Chair.

Public Utilities:

Vote—Aborigines Native Stations, £4,377:

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [4.37]: As we have heard a good deal about the aborigines lately, we might on this Vote get a little more information. I do not believe that our aborigines are badly treated; I do believe that the State, wherever opportunity offers, gives consideration in a practical and sensible way to their needs. Moola Bulla station, I understand, was established for the care and well-being of the natives. I would appreciate a few words on the subject from the Minister, as this would doubtless have the effect of setting at rest the minds of some people who are not well informed concerning this State's treatment of its aborigines.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. S. W. Munsie—Hannans) [4.39]: Undoubtedly Moola Bulla station has done excellent work. It was established for the purpose suggested by the hon. member. The State ought to be proud of the management of the station, and of the care taken of the aborigines in that locality. Moreover, 40 aboriginal children are attending a school there, and are being taught by a white teacher. During last year 500 head of cattle were sent from Moola Bulla to the Wyndham Meat Works. As regards the hides, a tannery has been established at Moola Bulla.

Mr. Stubbs: The establishment of the station has also stopped a lot of cattle stealing.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes. The member for Swan is quite right in obtaining a statement on the subject. If any person disputes that good work is being done at the station, he should indicate what remains to be done.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—Goldfields Water Supply, £107,911; Kalgoorlie Abattoirs, £2,629; Metropolitan Abattoirs and Saleyards, £25,959; Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage, £38,851; Other Hydraulic Undertakings, £24,991; Perth City Markets, £600—agreed to.

Vote—Railways, Tramways, Ferries, and Electricity Supply, £2,421,700:

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. C. Willecox—Geraldton) [4.43]: I am sorry to stop you in your excellent run, Mr. Chairman, but perhaps the Committee would like some information with regard to the largest spending department of Western Australia. It is a remarkable fact that in most Australian States the finances of the Railway Department are an absolutely reliable indicator of the finances of the State. Where the Railway Department make a loss, it may generally be assumed that the Budget position is somewhat similar. The expenditure of the Railway Department, inclusive of Tramways, Ferries, and Electricity Supply, is estimated at £2,421,700, and the revenue at £3,585,000. The interest bills of these undertakings total £1,132,600. Taking all the concerns together, it is expected that they will get around in the current financial year. Of course the expenditure

on the railways does not include the amount expended on maintenance and repairs postponed from the three previous years. It will be necessary to spread the whole of the amount required, approximately half a million, over a series of years. This work will be carried out by unemployed men under sustenance conditions, funds for which will be made available from loan, as is done in the other States, and there will be an arrangement made similar to what has been made in previous years. This is always undertaken in periods of stress, and there will be an account started out of revenue until the arrears of maintenance are wiped out. We cannot do it all this year, of course, but the amount estimated is being made available to the Commissioner from loan funds, which will be gradually paid back, and ultimately come out of future revenue.

Mr. Latham: Is that regrading being done from revenue or from loan?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: From loan. The value of the improvements to the railway system is debited to loan. It is capital expenditure.

Mr. Latham: But not the whole of it ought to be so debited.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, not the whole of it. Similarly, in regard to relaying, we often replace 45 lb. rails with 60 lb. rails, in which case we debit the difference in cost between 45 lb. rails and 60 lb. rails to capital account, while the balance goes into working expenses. That is not done all in one year either. When there is a lot of relaying we get an advance from the Treasurer, which is paid into suspense account, and a certain amount of that has to be repaid each year. Dealing with cash receipts and disbursements of the railways alone this year, the estimated revenue is £3,000,000 and the expenditure £2,016,000.

Mr. Patrick: That means the receipts in revenue?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The estimated figures have been borne out by the first four months of the year. While members are sometimes inclined to cavil at the estimates made, the experience we have gained during the first four months of the financial year indicates that by the end of the year the actual figures will be pretty near to the estimate.

Mr. Patrick: There will be a falling off in wheat traffic.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, that seems likely. The position in regard to wheat is very difficult. For if we are to take the opinion of some members who have attended conferences in the Eastern States, they say we shall not be exporting more than approximately 16,000,000 bushels this year. However, the estimate fluctuates from day to day. A fortnight ago it was estimated that the total wheat crop of Australia would be 180,000,000 bushels. A little later that was brought down to 160,000,000 bushels, and since then it has been further reduced. The present is a crucial period for the wheat harvest, and if everything goes favourably no doubt the estimate will have to be revised.

Mr. Latham: Australia will export not less than 105,000,000 bushels.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: But if there are to be only 105,000,000 bushels exported from the Commonwealth, the quota for this State will be much lower than our average. If so, the railways will not have to shift the whole of the wheat, for it will be cheaper to store it at the sidings.

Mr. Patrick: Our crop will be down also.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, but fortunately in Western Australia we do not have those widely divergent estimates of what the crop will be. Because of extreme weather conditions in New South Wales a few weeks ago, the crop there, we are told, will be reduced by 20,000,000 bushels. Over here, fortunately, our weather conditions are much more favourable, and so we escape those contingencies. If the crop for Australia were to reach 180,000,000 bushels, our share of export would be much less than our average. Mr. Teasdale, three weeks ago, estimated that it would be only about 16,000,000 bushels. But with the aggregate production of 180,000,000 bushels brought down by bad conditions in the Eastern States, if Australia is to be allowed to export the usual quantity our quota will go up considerably?

Mr. Patrick: If the estimate is correct, we shall be able to export 100 per cent.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, in those circumstances all the wheat grown in Western Australia will be exported under this plan. But on the estimates of three weeks ago, we would have had to curtail our export by some 40 per cent., so the

Commissioner of Railways did not know whether or not to hurry on with the repairs to rolling stock, in order to be ready to deal with a harvest of average proportions. If we had a reduction made in our quota, we would have to curtail our operations, and it would be useless to get all the rolling stock ready if it were not to be used during the season. But the misfortunes of other people have reflected themselves here to our benefit, and it now appears that all the crop which in ordinary conditions we would be exporting will be exported this year. However, it did look very serious from a railway transport view three weeks ago. I had not intended to diverge into that explanation, but it is justified, because wheat does have a very considerable effect on the railway operations. When I was led aside I was proceeding to explain that our estimates this year are based on a loss of £30,700, a very considerable improvement on last year's figures. We have improved on the figures of last year by increasing the earnings by £51,000, and increasing the working expenses by only £10,000, and so our position is £40,000 better, which would indicate that the estimate made is near the mark.

Mr. Latham: Then you should get some help from the timber industry.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes it will help us considerably, because fortunately the industry has secured an order for a million sleepers, to be put into the track beyond Kalgoorlie, and those sleepers the State railways will have to carry as far as Kalgoorlie.

Mr. Stubbs: At a payable freight?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, I think it is 1.8d.; anyhow it is above the average cost of hauling. Also it is very convenient from the standpoint of economical railway working, because the sleepers will be carried to Kalgoorlie, and the trucks will have the wheat harvest for back loading. I do not know that we would worry very much about motor competition if we could have a million sleepers to haul to Kalgoorlie every year during harvest time, for that would be of immense benefit. So, while the estimate may have looked a bit roseate when the Treasurer delivered his Budget speech, the actual figures for the first four months of the year tend to bear out that estimate entirely. For the year 1932-33, working expenses and interest exceeded revenue by £164,769, so that an improvement of £133,769

is forecast for the current year. It is anticipated that the revenue will reach £3,000,000. Compared with that actually received in the previous fiscal year—£2,920,817—an increase of £79,183 will have to be collected, and there does not seem to be much doubt in this regard, as up to the end of October the cash receipts exceeded those of the corresponding period of the previous year by £32,000. The principal sources of earnings last year and the probable returns from such during the current year are as follows—

	Actual earnings.	Anticipated receipts.
	1932-33.	1933-34.
	£	£
Wheat	662,754	650,000
Local timber ..	145,145	170,000
Local coal	109,483	110,000
Wool	60,961	65,000
Passenger and parcels traffic ..	662,444	670,000
Livestock	109,077	120,000
All other goods ..	1,022,695	1,050,000
Miscellaneous rents	159,631	165,000
	<u>£2,932,140</u>	<u>£3,000,000</u>

The estimate of expenditure for the current year, namely, £2,016,000, is on the low side when compared with the actual figures of last year, namely, £2,089,353, but it is hoped by minute attention to every item of expenditure to keep within the amount asked for. There are no items in the Estimates that call for special comment, as they all provide for maintaining the service in a safe and efficient manner. As stated previously, certain urgent deferred maintenance will be provided for specially from funds from other sources which are not included in the statement now under discussion. During last year 102 miles of new railways were taken over and worked under the usual conditions, the first one from Paroo to Wiluna, a distance of 44 miles, and the second one from Lake Grace to Hyden Rock, a distance of 58 miles. These lines will, of course, add to the expenditure, but the revenue earned from the Wiluna line will more than provide for working expenses and interest. As for the Hyden Rock line, it will be some time before it can provide for both working expenses and interest. That is always expected when we build a developmental railway, and as the district becomes established it will not be long before the line will pay.

These lines are very unsatisfactory from the standpoint of the Railway Department, because they are expensive to run. The State, however, must be prepared to face the loss on the lines because of the benefit that will accrue from the development of the lands adjoining them. With regard to rolling stock, apart from 11 sheep trucks and a special truck for bulk wheat, no new rolling stock was built last year, and when the present programme for an increased number of sheep trucks is completed, making 50 in all, no further increases are contemplated. Some of the rolling stock set aside in previous years is being repaired and ample rolling stock will be available for the haulage of all traffic which is tendered for transport.

Mr. Patrick: Is that a new type of sheep truck?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. We have received complimentary references from people who deal in stock to the improved facilities for the carriage of sheep. It will be known to some of the country members that we have installed hydrants at various points for the purpose of cleaning out the trucks. This work is in connection with the unemployment scheme. Another proposal before the Treasurer for consideration is the improvement of the water supply and other facilities at Midland Junction. We shall thus be able to supply clean trucks, allowing of the delivery of sheep in a clean and proper condition, so that they can be sold to better advantage. The Leader of the Opposition is rather concerned about coal supplies and asked when the report of Dr. Herman would be available.

Mr. Latham: I have since read some of it and it is extremely interesting, especially the early part of the report.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I spoke to the Treasurer on the matter and he laid the report on the Table yesterday for the information of members. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that it is a very valuable document. It explains the whole position with regard to the coal industry. Much information is contained in it that has never before been made available to the public. We now know how we stand with respect to our coal supplies and the expenditure necessary to produce coal in this State. The price fixed by the arbitrator represents a reduction of 2s. 4½d. per ton.

The price of Collie coal, however, is still considerably in excess of the price of Newcastle coal at the pit's mouth.

Mr. Wilson: In some places.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes.

Mr. Latham: The member for Collie is always interested in coal.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The quarrel, if I may so term it, that existed between the Railway Department and the Amalgamated Collieries and others has now been settled. The difference was submitted to two independent arbitrators, who appointed an umpire, and he decided that the present price of coal is fair and equitable.

Mr. Stubbs: Do you think the breach will now be healed for good?

Mr. Wilson: I should say, no.

Mr. Latham: I should say no, also.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We will take that hurdle when we come to it. After the recent exhaustive inquiry, we are now, with the information we have, in a much better position to discuss prices than we were formerly. It should be remembered that the Railway Department are practically the only customers of the Collie mines.

Mr. Latham: Anyhow, the Railway Department now have the big end of the stick.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The reduction in the price of coal will, of course, be reflected in railway expenditure. If we could be assured that that reduction will be maintained, together with the reductions in the wages and salaries of the railway servants in pursuance of the Financial Emergency Act, the position of the Railway Department would not be too serious. But such a favourable set of circumstances cannot be expected always to continue. Those two items to a great extent account for the improvement which can be expected in railway revenue during the present year. The new standard prices for coal are 13s. 3d. for locomotive coal and 6s. 9½d. for small coal, as compared with 15s. 7½d. and 9s. 1½d. respectively as at 28th February last, and 19s. and 12s. 6d. respectively when the contract which expired on that date was entered into in 1930. When it is remembered that the Railway Department consume over a quarter of a million tons of coal per annum, and the power house 100-000 tons, members will realise what a reduction of 2s. 4½d. per ton means to those

undertakings. The latest award provides for a refund by the Amalgamated Collieries in respect of large and small coal supplied between the 1st March and the 21st October of approximately £20,000, while the basic wage reductions since 1st March will reduce the annual coal bills of the Railway Department and the Electricity Supply Department by about £30,000 and £14,000 respectively as compared with the prices paid up to the 28th February last. The award covers only supplies by the Amalgamated Collieries, but an agreement made between the Griffin Company and the Commissioner prior to the arbitration proceedings also provides for a reduction in the price of Griffin coal. The actual amount is still under discussion with that company. With regard to the permanent way, arrangements have been made for re-laying certain lines; re-sleepering, re-ballasting and re-grading will be undertaken during the current year. In fact, many of the works are now in hand and when completed will materially curtail working expenses and provide quicker transport of both passenger and goods traffic. For the benefit of those interested in railway administration, I placed on the Table of the House yesterday the report of the Commissioner of Railways for the first quarter of this year. With regard to tramways, the estimates are—

	£
Revenue	286,000
Expenditure	198,000
	<hr/>
	88,000
Interest	54,000
	<hr/>
Estimated profit . .	£34,000

About nine years ago, when I first took office as Minister for Railways, a system of re-laying was introduced, and an amount of £21,000 was provided each year to repay the cost. The re-laying has been practically completed and practically paid for, and consequently that will be reflected in the expenditure of the department. Last year the revenue actually collected was £282,000, while working expenses amounted to £222,000. After providing for interest, there was a surplus of nearly £8,000. The trolley buses commenced operations during October and have proved to be economical in working. They provide an ample service for Kensington-street and Leederville residents. With re-

gard to the ferries, the revenue which it is anticipated will be collected during the year is £9,000. Members who study the Estimates closely will see that last year the receipts from the ferries amounted to about £2,000. That is accounted for by the fact that the ferries were then part of the State trading concerns. The ferries have now been included in the public utilities. The amount actually received in revenue last year was about £8,000. With regard to the electricity supply, the estimates are as follows:—

	£
Revenue	290,000
Working expenses	200,000
	<hr/>
	90,000
Interest	63,000
	<hr/>
Estimated profit	£27,000

This position will be brought about to some extent by the reduction in the price of coal, because coal is a very important factor in the production of electric current. More than half the cost is made up of coal. I do not propose to say anything about the extension of the Power House at this stage. That matter will be dealt with when the Loan Estimates are introduced. I will say, however, that we are endeavouring to make an arrangement with people who may be able to tender for the extension of the plant and who, if successful, will be prepared to accept debentures. However, the matter has not yet been completed. The Minister for Works is dealing with it in the Eastern States and further negotiations must take place before we can put definite information before the House. We hope we shall be able to make a satisfactory arrangement to finance this urgent and necessary extension of the plant. I think I can say hundreds of factories in the metropolitan area are depending upon electricity for power, and if we can supply them with cheap power, they will be better able to cope with the competition of the factories in the Eastern States. We are now generating more current than was ever generated before in the history of the plant. This year will be a record. Three years ago, owing to the depression, it was not considered necessary to proceed with the extension of the plant on account of a reduction in the consumption of electricity. The position has so improved this year, notwith-

standing the depression, that the consumption of current is as great now as it was in the peak year of 1929. The urgency for the extension of the plant is therefore apparent; it brooks no further delay. The Treasurer no doubt will be seeing the Minister for Works on his return from the Loan Council, and it is expected when the Loan Estimates are introduced that the Treasurer will be in a position to make some definite statement in regard to this matter. The position is improving, and I am glad to be able to say so. We are not slipping, as we were for a year or two not long ago. I trust that if our Estimates of revenue and expenditure turn out as we hope, we shall soon find the railways and the other undertakings covered by this Vote in a comparatively satisfactory position.

MR. CROSS (Canning) [5.15]: It is time that a bold policy of re-organisation in the railways was adopted. They will have to advance with the times if they are to keep pace with motor traffic. People in the metropolitan area and country districts should have a faster means of transport provided for them. A good suggestion would be to construct the South River railway and divert the major portion of the country traffic to Fremantle over that line. The railway from Midland Junction to Fremantle could then be electrified. This work could be carried out at considerably less cost than is generally imagined. I believe it costs £1,000 a mile to construct a line for a trolley bus service. I would point out that the rails between Perth and Fremantle are already laid down. If this work were put in hand it would be possible to run a quick 15-minutes service throughout the day between these two points. The revenue from the tramway system for 1929 was £342,000, the working expenses were £281,000, and the interest bill £50,000. In 1930 the revenue was £349,000, in 1931 it was £304,000, in 1932 it was £285,000, and for the financial year ended 30th June, 1933, it was £281,000. In five years, therefore, the revenue fell by more than £61,000. During that period working expenses dropped by £54,000, but interest was increased by £1,184. In 1929 the tramways carried 35,000,000 passengers, but by 1933 they were carrying 29,000,000, a drop of 6,000,000 passengers. The passengers carried per car mile in 1929 were 10.47, and in 1933 the figure had dropped to 8.76. In spite of the fact that more car miles were run in 1933, fewer

passengers were carried. In his last annual report the Commissioner of Railways says—

In connection with earnings, motor competition is taking its toll on the tramways, and this combined with the lesser number of people working in and around the city accounted for the decline.

I do not think the depression is entirely responsible for the reduced number of passengers carried on the tramways. The Commissioner also says—

Although more miles were run during the year, there was a decrease in the number of passengers carried. This is largely accounted for by motor competition, and the slackening off in employment.

The fact that passengers are being lost to the tramways is largely due to the department having lost its capacity to move with the times. The officials have lost the capacity to absorb new ideas. Very few changes have occurred in the system in the last 15 years. The trams themselves are mostly old and out-of-date. The officials do not realise that they must provide a quicker service, a more frequent one, and a better type of tramcar.

Mr. Hegney: It is also necessary that the passengers should hurry themselves up too.

Mr. CROSS: I am glad the department have had sufficient foresight to adopt the newer form of transport, namely the trolley bus. I feel sure that will be a success. The route where the trolley bus is operating is probably the worst that could have been found in the city for the inauguration of the service. It runs in between a tramline service and the railway, in an area in which from Perth City to the match factory there is practically no population. There are also 23 turns along the route. Trolley buses are very mobile, and are cheaper to run than electric trams. The South Perth tramway could easily be pulled up and the track converted into a trolley bus route. That would enable the department to run a more frequent service. It is not very far from the Victoria Park terminus to Como. I am assured by a well-known doctor in that district that he can go from the terminus to Como in his car in a matter of seven minutes, but that on numerous occasions it takes a tram nearly an hour to do the distance. It is absolutely essential that the tramway system should be re-organised. I cannot discover why there is any need for the present dual control. The general manager controls

not only the tramways, but the ferries and the electricity supply.

Mr. Hegney: And he is subject to the Commissioner for Railways.

Mr. CROSS: In the tramway service itself there is a traffic superintendent, an overhead superintendent, and an electrical superintendent. Practically each department is jealous of the other. First of all, a motor-man reports to the sub-traffic inspector, who in turn makes a recommendation to the chief inspector, who makes a further recommendation to the traffic superintendent, who then goes to the general manager, and probably the request is then refused or agreed to by the Commissioner himself. The tramway service should be put under the control of one man. The electricity supply should be relegated to the present manager, who is an expert on that subject. The tramways should be managed by an expert in traffic, a man who is capable of incorporating in it modern ideas. Unless something is done in the near future motor transport will take an ever-increasing toll of passengers, and the tramways will be showing a heavy loss. Not long ago I took a deputation to the Minister asking for an improved service on the South Perth route. We were told this could not be given because the trams carried only 32 passengers per trip. Actually they carry only 24 per trip on the Bulwer-street tram, 30 on the Claremont route, and 33 on the Beaufort-street route, the most popular of all. A fair percentage of passengers, who should be patronising the South Perth tram route, are now being transported by various bus services which pass through that centre. Unless a more frequent tram service is inaugurated, the route might as well be closed down. Some time ago I asked a few questions in the House. One question was with a view to finding out for what specific reason the last tram for South Perth left the city on Saturday night considerably earlier than it did on week nights. The reply was as follows—

It has been found that between Monday and Friday the passengers carried at 11.5 are very few, and to avoid running an extra car the last tram leaves the Town Hall at 11.35 p.m., but on Saturday nights the loading is considerably increased, and to get people home earlier the last tram has been scheduled to leave at 11.25 p.m.

There are more people in the city from the suburban areas on a Saturday night than

on any other night. That is the night when most dances and other entertainments are held, and people make that a night out, but the department choose to despatch the tram ten minutes earlier. I will give the real reason for the running of that tram ten minutes earlier. It was to save the payment of a few paltry shillings in overtime. Because of that, the department deny 10,000 or 12,000 people reasonable transport facilities. On a Saturday night recently, a South Perth man took the names of all the passengers who walked from the tram line at the Victoria Park end of the Causeway to South Perth. He found that 46 residents had to walk from the Causeway to points as far as beyond River-street. When the Tramway Department failed to take action to relieve the position, a bus company intimated that they were prepared to provide two buses late at night in order to cope with the traffic. It is imperative that the department take action to effect a change for the better, otherwise the tramways will lose the service. When the deputation waited upon the Minister, we asked for other matters to be attended to, including the removal of the surcharge of a penny on holiday fares. In Great Britain the various railway companies, in order to attract passengers, have extended the summer excursion fares right through to Christmas time. In Perth the Tramway Department practically drive traffic away by increasing fares. I commend to the Minister the suggestion that ordinary fares be charged on holidays. I look for drastic changes in connection with the tramway service and hope that greatly improved conditions will apply to the South Perth line. I believe it would pay the department if they took up some of the lines where the loop system is installed, such as at South Perth and on the line to Claremont, and in place of them provide a trolley bus service. In fact, a trolley bus service operating from the Causeway to Fremantle via Canning Bridge would prove a payable proposition from the outset.

Mr. Hegney: Would that supersede the proposed railway south of the river?

Mr. CROSS: No, it would be an additional facility.

The Premier: The suggestion by the hon. member is that there is room for the two!

Mr. CROSS: Members do not seem to realise the tremendous increase there has been in the population south of the river. The time has arrived when that important part of the metropolitan area should receive adequate attention. I want to draw the attention of the Minister to one or two other complaints. Last week I asked the Minister a question regarding the delays in the Hay-street tramway service and the reply I received was just as unsatisfactory as the one regarding the late tram to South Perth. The reply the Minister gave me was that owing to traffic exigencies it was necessary to cut out one tram. On the other hand, the department claimed that between 7.50 and 8.9 three trams left the Perth Town Hall. I was in the vicinity of the Town Hall that evening, and it is a fact that so many complaints were made to the inspector on duty that at 8 o'clock he got out of the way. About 150 persons were waiting for a tram to proceed up Hay-street west, but no tram arrived for practically half an hour. I would like the Minister to make inquiries about that matter because in my opinion, at least two trams on that particular night were cut out because the service was short of men. I believe there are sufficient men walking about the streets to enable them to be profitably employed. The policy adopted by the department at present of cutting out trams is presumably aimed at effecting economies rather than to give the people the frequent service that is so necessary to attract passengers. That policy has the effect of driving them away from the trams. I hope the Minister will go into these matters closely and see to it that drastic improvements are effected.

MR. LATHAM (York) [5.35]: From time to time statements have been made publicly that the Mitchell Government left the railways in a shocking condition, due to the fact that they did not spend money to effect necessary repairs and replacements.

Mr. Hegney: And did they not?

Mr. LATHAM: If members will read the report of the Railway Department for the year ended the 30th June, 1932, they will find on page 40 the usual certificates issued by responsible officers. I will read some of them so that members will not spread rumours that are adverse to the railway system. It is unfair to the public who use the service as well as to the former Administra-

tion. This is how the certificate issued by Mr. Broadfoot, the Chief Mechanical Engineer, reads—

I hereby certify that the rolling stock, machinery, plant and appliances in use under my control have, during the year ended the 30th June, 1932, been maintained in good working order and repair.

The Minister for Railways: That applies to the portion of the railway stock that was operating.

Mr. LATHAM: I know; I shall have something to say about that later on. The certificate of Mr. Creswell, the Chief Civil Engineer, reads—

I hereby certify that the permanent way, buildings, bridges, jetties, fences, electrical and signalling appliances, and all other works under my control have been maintained in safe condition during the year ended 30th June, 1932.

The Premier: It is strange that in the first month after I had taken over the Treasury, the Commissioner of Railways asked for £500,000 for what he described as belated and necessary repairs.

Mr. LATHAM: I am not saying that that was not so, but it is not fair to the travelling public to declare that our railways are not safe.

The Premier: No one has said that.

Mr. LATHAM: It has been said.

The Minister for Railways: By whom?

Mr. LATHAM: By some responsible people. I have heard it said in this House. The Premier has held office as Minister for Railways and has held other Ministerial positions for years. He has been a member of this House for much longer than I and he knows that immediately there is a change of Government, the departmental officers approach the new Treasurer and Ministers with a view to securing money that they consider is necessary for their respective departments. That is absolutely true. Of course, I have not sufficient knowledge to pit my assertions against the word of the Premier.

The Minister for Railways: But in view of the large deficit, you know that every possible expenditure had to be cut out.

Mr. LATHAM: But there was never any grave danger to the public, such as they have been led to believe.

The Minister for Railways: Of course not.

Mr. LATHAM: During the three years the Mitchell Government were in office the railways conveyed record consignments of wheat. In one year, we carried 53,000,000 bushels,

in another year 43,000,000 bushels and again, 41,000,000 bushels. Those were the three biggest years of our wheat yield, and no complaints were received on account of delayed traffic.

Mr. Wansbrough: But you had the advantage of a class of truck that was not available previously. You had the timber trucks, the most economical of the lot.

Mr. LATHAM: What the hon. member suggests is that they were released from traffic in the South-West, which enabled us to carry that quantity of wheat.

Mr. Wansbrough: Yes.

Mr. LATHAM: At the same time, we were conveying large quantities of fruit, but there were complaints that we did not have sufficient trucks to handle the consignments. That is almost inevitable in a country where development is proceeding rapidly. I know that the previous Government did not have enough money to spend, particularly during their first year in office, when expenditure was confined to £1,800,000. The Premier had budgeted for a fairly large loan, but it was not raised, and the Government were not able to raise any more money while they were in office.

The Minister for Railways: The same applied in your second year. We sympathised with your Government because you were not able to get the necessary money.

Mr. LATHAM: I am not blaming the Minister, because I know he desires to be fair. In fact, I do not blame any of the present Ministry, but members sitting on the Government cross benches have an idea that we deliberately refrained from spending money that was required.

Mr. Tonkin: And, mind you, we know a little about it.

Mr. LATHAM: Perhaps the hon. member was responsible for some of the wild reports that have been circulated.

Mr. Griffiths: A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

Mr. LATHAM: The information conveyed by the Minister himself showed what the position really is better than anything I can say. He said that over a large number of years there had been no fatal accidents to passengers while travelling in our trains.

The Minister for Railways: That referred to paying passengers.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes. Perhaps that is not altogether right, because, if my memory serves me aright, a child was killed owing

to a carriage door being left open. Generally speaking, however, we can be very proud of our railway system. From an engineering point of view, Western Australia lends itself to railway construction. The land is flat for the most part, and there is little danger of washaways compared with the position in other countries. As a matter of fact, there is not much to worry about from the standpoint of railway construction in this State. I want to clear up the particular point, however, that it is unfair to say that the Mitchell Government deliberately neglected to provide utilities necessary for the people's safety. The member for Canning (Mr. Cross) made a statement that most of us will endorse. He asserted that there has not been sufficient progress made in our railway administration. Members must know that the same old system has gone on for 20 years past. One can patronise the country railways and realise that no attempt has been made to compete with up-to-date traffic arrangements. I do not know why that is so. It may be due to the fact that the department has not sufficient funds.

The Minister for Railways: Did you discuss that with your former colleague in the Mitchell Government?

Mr. LATHAM: Yes, and I could not get him to budge any more than I suppose I can get the hon. member to budge.

The Minister for Railways: I have not admitted the soft impeachment.

Mr. LATHAM: I do not think the Minister has much to do with it at all. I think the Railway Department is in a groove, and very often I feel that if it were within my power to arrange the time tables, I could render the public far better service than is given by the railway officials, particularly where the country districts were affected.

The Premier: The man who looks on with satisfaction always looks upon himself as superior to the man in action.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes, I know, but the man who takes advice probably proves himself the better for it, even though he takes the advice from someone whose knowledge is not as extensive.

The Minister for Railways: The coach is a better man than the captain of a football team.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes, usually.

The Premier: The chap sitting on the fence is always the better rider.

Mr. Griffiths: The onlooker sees most of the game.

Mr. LATHAM: I know that the Commissioner travels over the railway system every year, but probably he does not encounter the inconveniences that the ordinary users of the system experience. I have particularly in mind the arrangements at Merredin junction, where there is probably the worst railway service in the world. The train arrives there during the middle of the night from branch lines, and passengers have to wait for two hours on the platform. Certainly there is a structure called a waiting room.

Mr. Wansbrough: It is worse down south where one has to wait 24 hours at one station.

Mr. LATHAM: That is not so bad; because passengers can go to bed. I cannot understand why the department do not arrange a time table to permit of the trains arriving half an hour ahead of the connecting train. An island platform could be put in to take both trains. There is abundant room at Merredin for it. To-day the department run the same old coaches on the Bruce Rock line, and to my knowledge those coaches have done service for 23 years but the people are not using the coaches, and the Railway Department hold them merely for one or two passengers. Members of Parliament would prefer to ride in a truck rather than suffer the inconveniences of to-day. The department should set themselves to try and re-gain that passenger traffic. It is there to be regained.

Mr. Wansbrough: There is a lot to consider in it.

The Minister for Railways: There are crossings and junctions.

Mr. LATHAM: The trains at present cross at Burracoppin, and they could just as easily cross at Merredin. All that would be required would be merely a little acceleration. Far better would it be to have motor transport than continue the existing arrangement. During the recess I have gone to my farm on three different Thursdays. There is a train due to leave Narrogin for Merredin, and it must leave after the Perth to Albany train arrives, at about three o'clock in the morning. On leaving Narrogin the train runs through to Merredin, and I noticed on those occasions

that it had one coach and two vans for perishable goods. Not one passenger occupied the coach on any occasion. That is not surprising seeing that on arrival at Merredin a person would have to wait thirteen hours to get the connecting train. It would be far better not to run that train. Of course I know what the Commissioner will say. The train conveys fish from Denmark and Albany to Kalgoorlie, and it arrives at its destination on Friday morning, but no one uses the passenger coach. I should like the Minister to ascertain for himself whether my statement is correct. I am not anxious to find fault with the system, but when this kind of thing happens one gets annoyed. If the service were altered from Thursday to Tuesday, the Railways could pick up sheep for the market. The farmers in that district to-day have to load their sheep on Monday to arrive at the market down here on Wednesday, whereas, if the train were changed from Thursday to Tuesday, a saving in the time of transport of 14 to 16 hours would result.

The Minister for Railways: If they guaranteed the ordinary minimum number of stock an arrangement would be made.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes, but what about the two perishable trucks?

Mr. Wansbrough: Do you say that was all the train consisted off?

Mr. LATHAM: Yes; it is a fast train and does not pick up goods, nor does it load wheat or anything like that. I should like the Minister to make an inquiry into this matter. If one desires to go to Bruce Rock it would be necessary to leave here at ten past seven in the morning. The distance is 171 miles, and the train arrives there at about ten o'clock at night.

The Premier: It is more than 171 miles by rail.

Mr. LATHAM: No, that is the distance through York. I have given the railway mileage. By road one can get to Bruce Rock in five hours, and consequently there is a great temptation for people to use the road instead of the railway. By air the trip can be done in an hour and 20 minutes. The Railway Department should really do something. I make this suggestion: They should run two goods train a week instead of three, and put on one fast passenger service. If they did this I am convinced the result would be highly satisfactory. The coach that runs from Elleker to Nor-

nalup in all probability does not pay along that route, because the storekeeper disposes of all his goods along the route, and on the way back cream is carried.

Mr. Wansborough: That coach runs only one day a week.

Mr. LATHAM: It runs three days a week to Denmark.

Mr. Wansbrough: That pays.

Mr. LATHAM: But I find according to the returns that the expenditure is greater than the revenue.

The Minister for Railways: We bought that coach for the particular purpose of carrying out experiments.

Mr. LATHAM: There were three bought at the time—petrol coaches.

The Minister for Railways: I thought you were referring to the coach running to Nornalup.

Mr. LATHAM: I have not had the opportunity of finding out whether the steam coach is a payable proposition or not.

The Minister for Railways: We ordered that coach as an experiment, and if it was found satisfactory, we thought we would get more.

Mr. LATHAM: Even in the hard times when we were in office, it was possible to pick up sufficient money to get a couple of trolley buses, with which to experiment. We were most anxious to give them a trial, and run them along the route past the markets. It would be better to let all the buses have the city traffic. We were able to scrape up a little money whenever we tried.

The Premier: You were satisfied with very little; I should like to get a lot.

Mr. LATHAM: As the Minister has pointed out, wheat freights cover only a part of the year, probably six months, and we should endeavour to make the best use of the capital outlay for the remaining portion of the year. The people are willing to use the service if it is possible to use it at a reasonable cost, and if the conveniences are there. But the conveniences are not there. I venture to say that some of the officials who make up the time tables, never have occasion to use them.

Mr. Wansbrough: Would it be possible to have a faster service over the line to Bruce Rock.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes, because that line is laid with 60 lb. rails. There is one other matter to which I desire to refer before I

conclude. I presume that before we are again considering these estimates, the question of the appointment of a new commissioner will have received consideration at the hands of the Government. I have always been anxious that the men within the service should be remembered whenever the opportunity for promotion presented itself, but I do hope that when the commissionership becomes vacant consideration will be given to the appointment of a business man. I am afraid that our railway officers are steeped in railway atmosphere. They make up the time tables year after year, in the months of May and November, and as they do not themselves use the railways, they are not aware of what the position really is. There are good officers in the service, I saw one here last night; I know that he is most anxious to obtain business for the railway, but he is hemmed in by all kinds of regulations, all of which are obsolete. It is a pity those regulations cannot all be destroyed so that a new set might be framed. We have heard a good deal lately about the Eastern States competition with our Kalgoorlie service. I cannot help but believe that there is something radically wrong on our side. If it is possible to bring goods over from Melbourne and Adelaide, handle them twice, and then unload them in Kalgoorlie at a rate cheaper than that at which it is possible to take them up from Perth, then there is something radically wrong.

The Minister for Railways: But that is not so.

Mr. LATHAM: Then the Commissioner should remember that it is no use his providing work for the people in the Eastern States and keeping the people down here out of employment.

The Minister for Railways: What you have just said is not correct. The freights on all the commodities that come from the Eastern States are greater on the overland line than they are on the goldfields line.

Mr. LATHAM: Then why cannot we get the trade?

The Minister for Railways: Because the Eastern States people do not charge the prices that are charged in Western Australia.

Mr. LATHAM: Then there is something in what I said as to unfair competition because of lower wages.

The Minister for Railways: Possibly the explanation is lower profits.

Mr. LATHAM: We should try to give the business to our own people, so that work may be found for our unemployed. The Eastern States would not continue long with a losing proposition. I do not know whether the public understand the matter as I do, but to me it seems that there must be something radically wrong when trade within a few hundred miles of the principal seaport cannot be secured for this State. When in Albany I inquired whether Western Australia could not get some of the trade of that town, and I was definitely informed that goods could be imported to Albany from the Eastern States more cheaply than they could be brought from Fremantle. Sea freight must be very low.

The Minister for Railways: It is a question of prices at the other end, not of freight rates.

The Premier: It is a matter of mass production in the East.

Mr. LATHAM: That may be so in some instances. However, let us take eggs.

The Minister for Railways: The Minister for Agriculture mentioned the reason in the case of eggs. In the East there is a guaranteed egg which brings 2d. per dozen more.

Mr. LATHAM: Why are not guaranteed eggs available here?

The Minister for Railways: The quality cannot be relied upon.

Mr. LATHAM: That is another slur on the business intelligence of Western Australians. Take vegetables. Unless they come over in cold storage from the East, surely our local vegetables, with the exception of potatoes and onions, must reach the market in better condition. I fail to understand a certain notice appearing in the last issue of the "Government Gazette." Apparently the Commissioner of Railways, so soon as he finds that somebody is about to receive some benefit, puts up freights. I refer to the charge of 9d. per ton in relation to bulk wheat, which has been imposed without any trial of the system. If our farmers are to be prevented from competing with bulk shippers elsewhere, our Railway Department will suffer. The Commissioner will find himself in difficulties if he carries only highly profitable commodities. His main thought to-day should be to keep the farmers producing. He knows the trouble the Premier is having in getting the farmers another shilling or two. The Railway Department show no idea of business. They should be subservient to business, or let me say they should render services to the busi-

ness community. The Commissioner should give bulk handling a trial of 12 months, and show the Minister at the end of the year what is the result. The farming industry is important enough to justify our asking this of the Commissioner. I notice that canvas and slats are used to build up the sides of trucks for bulk handling. Those additions would have to be removed in order that the trucks might be used for the carriage of, say, sleepers: and I have no objection to the imposition of a charge under that head by the Commissioner. However, he should not step in with a charge of 9d. per ton when the farmer has the opportunity of another 2d. per bushel. It is said that immediately one gets into bulk wheat the price one receives is less, but the fact is that at present the prices of bulk wheat and bagged wheat are exactly the same. Bulk handling will help to keep in the State money that now goes out for bags. Everyone knows how hard up the farmer is, and the Commissioner should give bulk handling a 12-months run without increase of freight.

MR. NEEDHAM (Perth) [6.9]: I intend to refer to only one aspect of this vote, and that is the Government's attitude towards retiring age, long leave, and annual holidays in the railway service. These matters are giving many railway men much concern, and causing a fair amount of dissatisfaction amongst them. I understand the Government's view to be that all members of the railway service and all employees of the railway system shall retire at the age of 65. That might be all right in a system providing pensions or superannuation at the retiring age; but to establish the principle in our Railway Department, irrespective of the physical or mental condition of employees, must result in injustice. I believe that representations on the subject have already been made, and that still further representations will be made. Many men of 65 in the railway service and in other occupations are quite capable of carrying on their work beyond that age. The Government should review a policy by which a man capable of carrying on his work will be retired when he has nothing to look forward to except a small pittance. As regards alleged over-manning of the service, the shortening of hours would be a solution of the difficulty. Then as regards long-service leave and annual holiday, I understand the Government

have decided that after the close of this calendar year long-service and annual leave must be cut out before the retiring age is reached. The practice has been to let men take their long-service leave after reaching the age of retirement. I trust that the Government will allow the existing practice to continue.

MR. TONKIN (North-East Fremantle) [6.13]: I would not have spoken on this Vote had not the Leader of the Opposition made certain remarks. The hon. gentleman said that irresponsible statements were being made about the railways, and he went on to suggest that possibly I had made some. Whenever I make a statement, I can quote chapter and verse for it. However, various statements have been made about the railways, and for the most part with truth. It is well known that during the regime of the late Government there was continual drawing upon stocks in hand in the Railway Workshops without any replacements whatever. The result was that when the new Government came into office, very little stock was left.

Mr. Moloney: The cupboard was bare.

Mr. TONKIN: The Government are now faced with the necessity of replacing that stock. If verification of that statement is desired, it can be found in the report of the Commissioner of Railways, on page 19. The figures are highly illuminating. Let me take the main items. The stock of timber in 1932 was valued at £24,779. In 1933 it had fallen to £14,832.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. TONKIN: Before tea I was proceeding to give figures to demonstrate the way in which stocks of the Railway Department's material had decreased owing to the policy of the previous Government. We find in the Commissioner's report, under the heading of "Stores," the following comparison between 1932 and 1933.

	1932.	1933.
	£	£
Steel and iron ..	23,308	17,594
Engine material ..	26,713	19,407
Wheels and axles ..	16,364	12,007
Boiler tubes ..	11,648	7,970
Copper bar, sheet and plate ..	7,707	4,166
Electrical material ..	7,901	5,729

From that it will be seen that what I say is perfectly true, namely that the late Government forced the Commissioner to use up the stocks of material, to completely denude the stores of their material, instead of supplying funds for the purchase of fresh material so that the stocks could be kept up to date. That material was used only on absolutely essential repairs; where the Government could avoid repairs at all, it was done. In cases where £5 or £10 would have been sufficient to repair a truck, instead of spending that amount, the Government insisted on the truck being kicked off somewhere and stowed away. In consequence there were simply miles of trucks down near the Naval Base, and at numbers of sidings throughout the State one could find a dozen trucks here and half a dozen there, stowed away out of sight. That was the policy pursued by the previous Government. The same thing occurred amongst the locomotives. On the books of the department were shown 402 locomotives, and the report of the Commissioner discloses that last year 30 of those locomotives were stowed away wanting repairs, and the Government were not prepared to go on with those repairs. The report states that the number was six less than in the previous year. And there is accompanying that a little note which says that it had been found necessary to repair and return to traffic some of those previously stowed away. The policy of stowing locomotives away was pursued until the department became short of locomotives, and so at the last minute they had to turn round and repair half-a-dozen that had been previously stowed. The fact that they had not sufficient locomotives to do the work meant that the locomotives in commission were being overworked; and just as a human being can become fatigued through overwork, so can the metal in the engines become fatigued, with the result that breakdowns occur. I have had that from railwaymen who were driving the engines; they have given me specific cases where engines that were having a spell in order to be attended to, had to be rushed from one place to another to cope with the traffic, with the result that the metal was fatigued, and breakdowns occurred. This postponement of expenditure was followed by the previous Government wherever possible. On page 6 of his report, the Commissioner says that every avenue of postponing expenditure was exploited. Again, on page

10, under the heading of "Economies," these are the remarks of the Commissioner—

However, it became apparent towards the end of the financial year that the policy of postponement of maintenance of track and rolling stock, up to full standard, would have to be abandoned and an effort made to undertake belated repairs, etc.

They had reached the stage when they simply could not carry on any longer with that policy without imperilling the safety of the system. I suppose the Commissioner said to the Government, "You will have to take the responsibility if an accident occurs," and so the Government became frightened and did something. But that was their policy throughout, namely, wherever possible to repair nothing. No blame can be placed on the Commissioner for that policy. It is evident that the Government kept him short of funds. The system was absolutely starved. Boilermakers and fitters were sacked from the workshops and walked the streets and probably had to be paid unemployment relief instead of being engaged on the repairs which were essential throughout the system. Let us see what that policy means to the State. In the first place, the hundreds of trucks and locomotives which were laid up meant so much idle capital, so much of the State's money which had been invested but which had no opportunity to earn interest, being entirely out of commission. But that was not all. Apart from the fact that the capital invested was idle, it was decreasing because of the decay consequent upon disuse, and also because of the pilfering, which could not be prevented. So the State's asset was being wasted. Another aspect of the position is this: that because there were so many trucks and locomotives out of commission, these trucks and locomotives which were in use had to be so overworked that the repair bill on them was much higher than it would have been under normal conditions. And, what is more, when a firm is short of transport facilities, economy cannot be practised in a proper way. If the Commissioner had ample trucks at his disposal, he could keep them in certain zones and attend to the traffic offering in those zones; but if he be short of trucks he is obliged to haul trucks empty out of one zone into another, with the result that working costs go up and the margin of profit is lowered. That is the sort of policy the previous Govern-

ment pursued in regard to the railways; yet the Leader of the Opposition had the hardihood to say that irresponsible statements were being made about the position. I have given facts and figures regarding that position. I ask the Leader of the Opposition if he pursues that policy on his own farm.

Mr. Latham: Of course I do, and have had to do it.

Mr. TONKIN: Then the hon. member must be facing bankruptcy. Just imagine a man in a progressive business carrying on on those lines!

Mr. Latham: Yes, without any fresh capital.

Mr. TONKIN: Not only will it be a case of not having fresh capital, but pretty soon it will be a case of having no capital at all, no railways at all. That is false economy, and it should be evident to anybody with the slightest business acumen—and the Opposition party are supposed to be composed mostly of business men. Imagine any business man trying to carry on successfully in that way, with no provision for repairing plant as repairs become necessary. It is the same old thing. Time and time again have the Labour Government had to come along and make up the leeway. Members opposite may guffaw, but they know it is true. They do not have to rely on my statements, for the Commissioner has pointed out that also.

[*Mr. Withers took the Chair.*]

The Minister for Mines: This is the third time we have had to do it for the railways.

Mr. TONKIN: As soon as this party came into power we realised the position and promptly stopped the rot. The Commissioner, on page 10 of his report, says—

A commencement was made in the last three months, and the work is being proceeded with gradually until the arrears have been overcome.

The Premier: He meant the last three months of the financial year.

Mr. TONKIN: That is right. In effect, he says that as soon as this Government came into office a commencement was made with the belated repairs. His statement continues—

It is naturally a slow process in view of the scarcity of funds, but it is hoped that in four of five years the system will be up to the required standard.

Mr. Thorn: There will be a change of Government long before then.

The Minister for Mines. If we went out to-morrow, the railways would immediately go back again.

Mr. TONKIN: The Leader of the Opposition was talking without his book, or possibly he was doing his best to put a bold front on a bad case. In his position, that is his job, but he cannot bolster up a faulty case, and he has to realise that the policy pursued towards the railways by his Government was a suicidal one for the State and would spell ruin to any business. If he spoke truly when he said he followed that policy on his farm, it spells ruin for him too.

Mr. Latham: I do not think you need worry about that. I tell you definitely that you can only purchase material according to the money which you have available. The Government cannot turn out money by a printing machine; they have to arrange with their bankers.

Mr. TONKIN: How are the Government finding the money now?

Mr. Latham: We put things in good order when we got the money from the Treasury.

Mr. TONKIN: I am very pleased the Government realise that it is necessary to preserve the State's assets. What is being done in the Railway Department is also being done in other departments. I rose to correct the impression which the Leader of the Opposition sought to convey, namely, that everything connected with the railway system was right up to the knocker. The Commissioner says it will take five years at least to bring it up to standard.

MR. J. H. SMITH (Nelson) [7.46]: I agree with the previous speaker that the railways have been starved, but not only for the last two or three years. They have been starved for quite a number of years. The railways always will be starved until we can induce the people to use them and so provide a fund to meet the heavy interest bill. Until there is a reduction in railway freights, we cannot hope for any improvement of the position. When the present Government were in office previously, I asked the Minister on two or three occasions to what he attributed the derailments that were occurring week after week. I asked if they were due to the lack of upkeep of the permanent way. The Minister replied that the cause was sheer accident. The member for North-

East Fremantle has gone to much trouble to point out the defects of the previous Government and their lack of provision for the upkeep of the railways. If the previous Government erred in that direction, then I say they did so because they had to cut their garment according to their cloth. The money was not available; and the Commissioner of Railways was quite right in informing the Minister for Railways that he required at least half a million of money to put the railways in order again. There is a woeful lack of paint on our railway stations and railway fences throughout the system. A perusal of the Estimates submitted by the Minister for Railways will convince members that the member for North-East Fremantle is wrong in what he said. Take the traffic branch. The vote for 1932-33 was £1,555,000. The expenditure was £1,145,712, while the Estimate for this year is £1,141,190. That shows how wrong the member for North-East Fremantle is. Coming to the mechanical branch, we find that the vote for 1932-33 was £321,000, the expenditure £346,466, while the estimate for this year is £340,650, or £5,000 less than the expenditure last year. In the civil engineering branch, the vote for 1932-33 was £441,000, the expenditure being £486,000. The estimate for 1933-34 is £402,000, a difference of £84,000. Members will see that the present Government are starving the railways to the extent of almost £100,000.

Mr. Tonkin: I was dealing with the Commissioner's report.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I am quoting the Railway Estimates. Coming to the stores branch, we find that the vote for 1932-33 was £17,000 and the expenditure for that year £14,000. The estimate for this year is £16,000.

Mr. Latham: Less than the previous Government put on the Estimates last year.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Turning now to the general charges, we find that the vote for 1933 was £2,050,000, the expenditure being £2,089,000. The estimate for this year is £2,016,000, a reduction of over £70,000. And so it is right through the piece. Take the item Electricity Supply. The vote for 1932-33 was £2,468,000, the expenditure being £2,500,000. The estimate this year is £2,421,000. Our friend from North-East Fremantle is entirely wrong when he says

that the previous Government starved the railways, although I agree that they have been starved. He is also wrong when he says that the present Government are spending more money on the railways than the previous Government did. I believe the railways are essential to the interests of Western Australia and that we should all do all we can to assist to make them profitable. Today the railways have to meet keen competition from motor transport throughout the length and breadth of Western Australia. The people of the State have their money locked up in the railways and they must be loyal to the system. To secure the loyalty of the people, however, there must be a better service. I believe good results would ensue if the Commissioner of Railways were to employ an agent to explain to the people the advantage that would be derived by patronising the railways. Now, today, if a person sends a case of spirits or a case of groceries by rail he is charged 3s. 6d. or 4s. 6d., whereas if the same parcel were transported by motor lorry it would be delivered to the consignee at his door for about half the cost. What is required is to see whether it is not possible to make railway rates compare favourably with motor transport rates. The fact that the railways are not paying is our own fault. We committed suicide, as far as our railways are concerned, when we launched upon that great scheme of spending hundreds of thousands of pounds in constructing roads parallel with our railway lines. At the time I gave evidence before the Minister for Works, who was chairman of a committee that inquired into the matter. I then said that I considered it was a suicidal policy to construct roads alongside our existing railways. My evidence has since proved true. The same remark applies to passengers. The railways today are not patronised by passengers as they should be. For instance, in the south-western part of the State the population is increasing daily, but the people there will not patronise the train, because it takes so long for them to get to Perth. I am not complaining about the fares charged by the department, although the fares charged by the motor undertakings are much cheaper. The railways should be brightened up and made more attractive to the people. Take the trip from Bridgetown to Donnybrook. A person gets into the train at 9

a.m. and arrives at Balingup, 17 miles further on, at 11 o'clock. It takes two hours between Bridgetown and Balingup, a distance of 17 miles; and four hours between Bridgetown and Donnybrook, a distance of 36 miles by road, and a few more miles by rail. Stoppages at sidings is the reason. I believe the time table is made up to suit the busy part of the year, when fruit is being carried in January and February. The time table is not altered to suit other parts of the year.

Mr. Latham: Are they cooling off the engine?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I have nothing to say about that. It is not the fault of the men. They run the train according to the time table. We should be able to travel the 220 miles to Pemberton in ten hours. That is not asking too much. It is done between Picton and Perth quite easily.

Mr. Latham: It is a very heavy grade?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I am coming to that. The Minister should consider the question of the appointment of some person to act as an advertising agent for the railway department, a man who could interview business people with a view to securing their trade. To-day we are losing the trade. We did have a train at one time that left Pemberton at 6.30 or 7 a.m. and arrived in Perth at 6 p.m. That train used to run three times a week to Perth and three times a week from Perth. It gave entire satisfaction, but the railways have now reverted to the old system and run only one train a week to and from Pemberton. That train leaves Pemberton on the Saturday morning and arrives in Perth at six o'clock at night. Obviously it is not run to suit the convenience of shoppers. Possibly it is run to meet the convenience of commercial travellers, but they do not use the railways. It would not be so bad if the train ran on the Tuesday, because then people would have time to do shopping in Perth. When moving the second reading of the Transport Bill, the Minister spoke about the carriage of wheat and fertilisers and mentioned that these could not be carried by road transport. I think there would be some advantage gained if the timber freights, which are at present very high, were reduced. Practically 90 per cent. of our timber is exported from Bunbury. It is necessary that it should be carried by the rail-

ways, because thousands of loads of timber are slung direct from the trucks into the ships' holds. It is for that reason alone that timber is not being carted to-day by motor vehicles. Freights on timber should be reduced. The industry was one of the best customers the railways had when it was in the heyday of its existence. I remember the Minister saying that the timber freights yielded £100,000 more to the railways than wheat freights. It costs no more to produce a load of timber in Donnybrook or near Bunbury than it does to produce it at Pemberton. It is only because the freights are so enormous that the industry is being killed.

The Minister for Railways: Not at all.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: As we get further away from the port the freights are greater, so that it becomes impossible for those in the industry to compete for a livelihood. There are undeveloped parts of the country which continue to remain undeveloped because of the railway freights. The price of sleepers and other overseas timber is based on the lower freights. It should be possible for the department to charge a flat rate for timber.

The Minister for Railways: Do not you know that we reduced freights on timber?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: We are thankful for the reduction of 16 per cent., but that does not overcome the difficulty.

The Minister for Railways: You want a 100 per cent. reduction.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: No. The Minister has got me on the up-take. We do not want a 100 per cent. reduction, but we should have a flat freight worked on the zone system.

The Minister for Railways: Oh no.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: My argument is quite sound. The primary industries of the country will never be developed until some such scheme is adopted. Suppose the rate per load of timber from Donnybrook to Bunbury is 12s. and from Manjimup to Bunbury it is 25s. or 26s. Would it not be possible for the railways to charge a rate of 18s. for the timber from Donnybrook to Bunbury and reduce it proportionately as the haulage distance increases?

Mr. Lambert: That would apply to wheat and everything else.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: It could be done.

Mr. Moloney: That would not be a flat rate.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: It would be a differential rate. The further the timber has to

come the less should the freight per mile be. Such a system would tend to revive the industry. Parliament must do something about the interest bill on the railway service. This should be charged up to the whole community, and not merely to the users of the system. Whilst the railways have to pay over a million a year in interest, they will never make headway. Users of the railways cannot afford to pay these high freights, and while they exist there will always be serious competition with the system.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [8.5]: I was very pleased to learn of the efforts that are being made by the Government to obtain funds with which to instal the necessary electricity equipment and extensions at the Government power house. That is a matter of great importance to the outer suburban areas, whose welfare depends upon the necessary extensions of the system being made. If the money can be found I hope the needs of the producers in the outer suburban districts will receive consideration.

Mr. Lambert: Are you in favour of selling the power station?

Mr. SAMPSON: I would support the sale of the whole equipment unless the Government were able to do as they desire with the station. I am sure the hon. member is not satisfied with the mark-time policy which the financial depression caused the Government Electricity Supply Department to adopt for many years. If the Government cannot obtain the requisite funds, no doubt there are members of the investing public who would gladly go into the proposition which is showing an ever increasing advantage. The increase in profits this year over last year was £7,569, making a total profit for the year for £25,440, compared with £17,871 for the previous year. That is a very gratifying result. At Mundaring recently the Greenmount Road Board endeavoured to make provision for the purchase of current in bulk. I understand it was impossible to accede to the request because of the lack of generating equipment at the station. I should like to pay a tribute to the general manager (Mr. Taylor), the earnings of whose department show him up in a good light. The department must have experienced difficulties, as other trading concerns have done. There is a keen desire on the part

of the public to purchase current. A few years ago the people in the Hills district wanted a train run on Sundays, but were treated with something like contempt. In company with Mr. Archibald Sanderson and others, I waited on the Commissioner. We did our utmost to induce him to run a Sunday train. This was a time when there were many passengers available, but our request was not acceded to. Later on, when there was no need for a train, the Department began to run one on Sundays and continued to do so for many months. No complaint was made when the train was stopped. The department would save money if it limited the number of carriages that were hauled at one time. It must be very costly for an engine to haul empty carriages up and down the countryside. I do not agree that the department is not looking for business, but I am sure economies could be effected if the timetable were reviewed, and fewer carriages were pulled about. I hope the Treasurer will obtain the funds required from the Loan Council, and that the extensions at the power station will be made. The Minister said that no passenger travelling on our trains had lost his life. That is very gratifying. I wish the same could be said of the non-travelling public. In different parts of the State there are very dangerous crossings, particularly that at Maddington, where several people have been killed. At this place, many people come unexpectedly close to trains. They are, generally speaking, careful, sober drivers, but have been the victims of accidents, some of which have been fatal.

The Premier: No careful driver is ever killed at a railway crossing.

The Minister for Railways: And not at a crossing where the driver has an uninterrupted view of the surroundings.

The Premier: Careless men are always liable to be killed at crossings.

Mr. SAMPSON: The Minister for Lands and I were once nearly killed at a crossing.

The Premier: That is not to say that you were not careless.

Mr. SAMPSON: If the Minister were here he would silence any comment along those lines. Some engines carry kerosene lamps, and one almost requires to strike a match to ascertain whether they are alight or not. That type of lamp should be done away with. I am grateful that

the Minister listened to a request of mine that electric head lights should be installed on the engines. I offer my best thanks to the Minister and the ex-Minister for Railways for what was done in that respect. There are still many engines using these other antediluvian lights, which do not give sufficient warning of the approach of a train, especially in these days of quickly moving traffic. I hope something will be done to lessen the danger associated with the Maddington crossing. The number of accidents that have occurred there justifies one in continually referring to the subject. The people who were killed came from parts other than the Swan electorate, and in at least some cases some did not know of the existence of a crossing. They came upon a train unexpectedly, with the result indicated in the table appearing on page 47 of the Commissioner's report. The Minister might consider reducing the charges on half cases of fruit consigned throughout the State. I acknowledge with gratitude the generous consideration which has been given to the railage of single cases, and also for what was done in respect to the cash on delivery department. I am glad to know that the system is growing in favour, but if greater publicity were given to the advantages of the C.O.D. arrangement on the railways, it would be availed of to a still greater extent. I am convinced that the post office receives much business the railways could get if the facilities provided by the latter were more widely known. They could be advertised by means of posters, paragraphs in the Press from time to time, and in other directions, and if that course were adopted, I am sure the public would utilise the C.O.D. system to a much greater extent than is apparent to-day.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly) [8.16]: I congratulate the Government on their decision to call for applications from people desirous of filling the position of Commissioner of Railways on the retirement of the present occupant of that post. In saying that, I do not desire to reflect on the present Commissioner, who, I take it, has reached the retiring age and is merely to be relieved of his duties in the ordinary course of events. I hope the Government will consider the advisability of appointing someone outside the present railway service. I do not desire

to insinuate that we have not very able men in the railway service at present, because I know we have such officers. On the other hand, after watching the operations of the Railway Department for the last 10 or 12 years, I am convinced that the officials have got into a sort of rut, and it requires someone with new ideas to drag them out of it.

Mr. Hegney: Do you mean a railway man or someone without previous railway experience?

Mr. SEWARD: I do not refer to a man without previous railway experience.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: You want another Webb.

Mr. SEWARD: I would like to see a man appointed who has a knowledge of railway systems other than that of Western Australia.

Mr. Tonkin: Then you want a man to be appointed from outside the State?

Mr. SEWARD: That is so. One of the reasons that prompt me to offer that suggestion is to be found in the number of serious accidents we have had at level crossings. It should be easy to prevent such occurrences. The present Commissioner and his predecessor in office were sent overseas to make investigations and to bring back new ideas to improve our railway operations. When I was in Durban, I noticed the method adopted at level crossings there. A large boom was provided with wire netting hanging from it. It was well balanced and worked in a simple manner after the style of our semaphore signals. When the train had passed a certain point, it automatically lowered the boom, and after passing the level crossing it reached another point at which it automatically raised the boom again and allowed road traffic to pass across the rails.

Mr. Latham: In America they have run into such booms and dashed over the top of them.

Mr. SEWARD: The people do not do that sort of thing in South Africa. The first man who ran into the boom in such circumstances ought to be sent to gaol and the second man would be more careful. That system would be easily adaptable to our conditions and I commend the suggestion to the Minister. During his remarks on the Transport Bill last night, the Minister spoke of the loss of traffic that had been experienced

by the railways. There has been a serious loss of traffic for some years past, and I say definitely the fact is entirely due to the officials of the Railway Department. The railway authorities have not kept abreast of the times and have been slow in their attempts to secure and retain traffic. Before I conclude my remarks, I hope to furnish some examples in support of my statement. The Minister pointed out that in Western Australia, 2,200 miles of railway had been constructed in the interests of agriculture. He also said that the railways expected to secure trade from the towns through which the lines passed, in return for the concessions provided. I have been in communication with the Commissioner of Railways for some weeks in regard to certain matters already referred to by the Leader of the Opposition. A request was made for an improvement at Kondinin in connection with the railing of fat stock to the Midland Junction markets on Tuesday mornings. We have had consideration during the wheat season, but I will go a little more fully into the timetable than the Leader of the Opposition did. At present the train from Narrogin to Merredin leaves Narrogin on Friday mornings at 12.30 a.m. On Thursday mornings it goes at 3.30 a.m. and on Saturday and Tuesday mornings at 9.30 a.m. The request was made to the Commissioner that the Thursday morning train should run as on Tuesday at 12.30 a.m. and it would then reach Kondinin at 7.30 a.m., connecting with the Merredin train at 1 p.m. Stock could then be loaded and be at the Midland Junction saleyards in time for the sale on Wednesday morning. At present a farmer, in order to send stock from Kondinin to the Midland saleyards, has to take his stock off the pasture on Sunday, load them late on Sunday night or early the following morning, and from then until the following Wednesday they are practically without food. Members can imagine the wastage of stock, particularly of fat lambs, when they have to travel for three days without eating. In such circumstances, the farmers are forced to take advantage of more efficient services and therefore they patronise motor transport.

The Minister for Health: Will they send fat stock down by motor?

Mr. SEWARD: Yes, large quantities.

Mr. Latham: Many head of stock are brought down that way.

Mr. SEWARD: I know stock owners within 100 miles of the city who had special fittings built for motor trucks in order to convey fat stock to market, because it was found they could do the journey in two days. In one of his letters the Commissioner of Railways said—

The reason why the train referred to by you is tabled to leave Narrogin at 3.30 a.m. on Thursdays is to provide quick transit for highly perishable traffic such as fish, fruit and vegetables from the distant southern areas and to make a connection at Merredin with the "through-perishable" goods train to Kalgoorlie, which is essential to catch the Friday market at Kalgoorlie.

Therefore, the statement of the Minister that the railways were constructed in the interests of the agricultural districts was entirely lost sight of by the Commissioner of Railways because, apparently, the supply of fish and vegetables to Kalgoorlie is regarded by him of greater importance than the requirements of the people in the areas through which the railway passes.

The Minister for Railways: That is not so.

Mr. SEWARD: I can judge only by what the Commissioner himself has written.

The Minister for Railways: We did not build that line to run fish to Kalgoorlie, but, the line having been constructed, the Commissioner would be foolish if he did not make use of it for various purposes.

Mr. SEWARD: The Leader of the Opposition referred to the position regarding passengers. Trains leave Kondinin three days a week but on each day the time of departure is different. The result is that the people in that district have not only to secure time tables but have to provide themselves with calendars as well so as to know at what time and on what day the train will leave that centre. The result is that the passengers come down by means of the most convenient service, and that is why the railways are losing much of that traffic. That is why the motor trucks can compete with the railways, because they are so much more convenient. The people of Kulin interviewed me regarding the same question and pointed out their difficulties. The post office at that centre closes on Wednesday afternoon and the next train goes through at 7.30 the following morning. The result is that people have to post their letters before 5 o'clock on Wednesday afternoons so that they may be transmitted by the 7.30 a.m. train on the

following day. If the letters are not posted in time to catch the mail, the correspondence will not reach Perth until the following Saturday at 11 a.m. If the correspondence is in relation to business matters, the letters will not be delivered until Monday morning, and, at the earliest, goods required could not be forwarded until the following day and could not reach Kulin until the Thursday or Friday; over a week after the orders were posted from that centre. On the other hand, by the use of motor trucks, the goods can be supplied within three days.

The Premier: Is that not a matter for the Post Office? It should not be necessary for the State to run trains merely to carry letters.

Mr. SEWARD: No, but it is impossible to get a letter on the train that leaves Kulin on Thursday mornings. There are no facilities, and if the officials should accept a letter, it is by way of a favour.

The Minister for Railways: That has nothing to do with the railways.

The Premier: It is a matter for the postal officials.

Mr. Latham: I think there is a loose-box on the train.

Mr. SEWARD: I have been assured that that is not so.

Mr. Hegney: You had better bring this matter before the Federal member for the district.

Mr. SEWARD: This delayed service represents one reason why the Government railways are losing the patronage of the people. As to the passenger traffic mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, it is a fact that women and children who travel by some of the country lines have to put up with great inconvenience. For instance, they reach Narrogin at midnight and have to stay on the station until 3.30 a.m. before they can continue their journey. In the Eastern States, if one is travelling on the main trunk lines, when one reaches junctions from time to time, there is always the branch train waiting there ready to start straight away so that people can continue their journey without delay.

The Minister for Health: That is not so in some parts of the Eastern States.

Mr. SEWARD: I have travelled over most of the lines there and I know that there are no long delays. When people in this State endeavour to persuade the Com-

missioner of Railways to make alterations to avoid these delays, he informs them, in effect, that it is of more importance to run the trains to convey fish to Kalgoorlie than it is to serve the people in whose interests the railways were supposed to have been constructed.

The Minister for Railways: That is a peculiar construction to place upon plain English.

Mr. SEWARD: There is no question about it. I am merely placing on the wording of the Commissioner's letter the construction that must attach to his statements. I want to deal with the position regarding wool, which was another important class of traffic that the Commissioner complains he cannot get. For my part, I say that if the Commissioner were to go out to secure that traffic, he could get it. On the other hand, the farmer has to consider his business, just as the Commissioner has to consider his. Only a few years ago a farmer in one district sent all his wool by rail and refused to send it by motor truck. He shored his sheep in September, and sent the whole of his wool by rail. A week after his wool had been railed, the Commissioner, in order to endeavour to capture the business, reduced the freights on wool. The man who had always patronised the railways was unable to participate in the reduction, while others were able to benefit from it. That was wrong. Any such reduction should be spread over the season. The Commissioner was simply reducing the rates for the man who was not patronising the railways. It has been put up to the Commissioner that if he were to let contracts for the carting of the wool to the railway stations, he would get pretty nearly the whole of that traffic. Shearing is carried on towards the end of the winter or in the early spring when the farmer is busy with his cultivator, and the result is that when he has finished shearing he has to stop his teams, load his wool, and make several trips to the railway, whereas if a contract were let, the trucks could convey the wool to the station. I have never heard of the slightest delay in wool reaching stores when conveyed by rail. I wish to state that prompt delivery of wool to the stores has always been made by the Department. Wool loaded at Pingelly to-day is delivered at the wool stores at Fremantle on the following morning. On the other hand, the trucks call at the farm

and pick up the wool at the wool shed, thus saving the farmer delay in his cultivating operations that a stoppage of his teams involves. That is why in many instances the farmers prefer to patronise the trucks. I am certain that if tenders were called for the conveyance of the wool to the stations the railways would pick up most of the traffic. I should like to say a few words about the passenger traffic. Some years ago I had occasion to discuss with the Commissioner the Perth-Albany service. A dining car was attached to the train and it would be thought that the sole reason was to expedite the trip by obviating stoppages for refreshment. That, however, was not done. Exactly the same stoppages took place and there was no saving. Moreover the meals that were supplied on the dining car were so shocking that the passengers refused to go to the car a second time. The car was taken off because of the lack of patronage. If I remember rightly the charge was 3s. or 4s. for dinner and 2s. 6d. for breakfast. I patronised the train once a month, but I confess I was unable to drink either the tea or the coffee that was supplied.

Mr. Hegney: They charge 4s. 6d. on the Melbourne-Adelaide express.

Mr. SEWARD: I am not talking about the Melbourne or Adelaide express; I am speaking about the dining car on the Albany train. The passengers declared that they could not stand the food provided, and I took the complaint to the Commissioner. That we can supply satisfactory meals on our trains was proved to my satisfaction years ago when coming West on the Trans train. Travelling with friends from the Eastern States, they commented on the marked improvement in the meals when we joined the Perth bound train at Kalgoorlie. I know that it is possible to serve good meals here. It was thought that when the dining car was attached to the Albany train there would be a saving of one or perhaps two hours in the run, and that that would be an inducement for passengers to patronise the train. Unfortunately that did not prove to be so. That it is possible to expedite the journey is proved by the fact that some years ago when travelling to Perth on a very heavily loaded train, we left Brookton an hour behind time, and reached Perth on time. Of course, it is not suggested that these trains

should run at their limit of speed, but surely a reserve of an hour in the run from Brookton, just over 100 miles, is too great an allowance. The Commissioner, when asked why the trip could not be accelerated, gave as his excuse that it would not be possible to get a platform in Perth before 11 o'clock. I trust that the Minister will take notice of these few remarks in the hope that the service generally will be brought more up to date and more into line with what the people require. There is one other matter on which I desire to say a few words and that is regarding the conveyance of bulk wheat, and the additional charges imposed. One of the reasons given by the Commissioner was that handling wheat in bulk entails more shunting. That is in direct opposition to the reports submitted by the Victorian board. That board reported that actually there would be less shunting, and I think that is pretty obvious. Bulk wheat is practically at the one place at each siding whereas bagged wheat is at three or four localities, and the result is that the train has to pick it up at each stack. Similarly, at Fremantle instead of delivering the bags of wheat at several places on the wharf, the whole load of bulk wheat is delivered at one place.

Mr. Sleeman: You evidently do not know the position down there. Do you know that they will have to unload at North Fremantle and shunt it again?

Mr. SEWARD: I was talking about country sidings.

Mr. Sleeman: No, you said that at Fremantle it would be delivered at one place. As a matter of fact, it will mean a lot more handling at Fremantle.

Mr. SEWARD: The committee which investigated the matter in Victoria showed that there would be less shunting. A few days ago a question was asked the Minister with regard to the handling charges that were being imposed, and his reply was that the increase was due to the necessity for having to convert 200 trucks. But those trucks were actually converted by the Wheat Pool and therefore I do not see by what right the Commissioner adds to the freight. He has increased the freight to pay for something that has not cost him anything at all. Another matter that will bear investigation is the question of the haulage of wheat at Fremantle. At the present time the haulage from the

main line is 10d. per ton, so that on a 14-ton truck of wheat the cost is 11s. 8d. Added to that there is a charge of 9d. a ton to take the wheat from the main line to its destination, which brings the cost to 12s. 5d. For purposes of comparison I might quote the charge on a 17-ton truck of oil. That is hauled for 4s. Thus it costs 8s. 5d. more to haul a 14-ton truck of wheat. The difference is much too great and it is a burden that should be removed from the wheatgrower. That completes what I have to say with regard to the railways. I hope that the requests I have made in connection with the running of country trains will receive attention, and that the suggestions I have made regarding the wool traffic will not altogether be ignored. If some of the proposals I have advanced could be carried into effect I am convinced that both passenger and goods traffic would return to the railways instead of remaining diverted to other channels.

MR. LAMBERT (Yilgarn-Coolgardie) [8.42]: For the moment I am not very much concerned as to whether the hon. member ever got a decent breakfast on the Albany express; I am not concerned whether he got a steak and kidney pie for lunch, neither do I know whether consideration of minor subjects such as these will get us very far in the consideration of the estimates of the Railway Department. What I am concerned about, is that the State possesses an asset which has cost over 20 million pounds, and consideration should be given to the matter of control of the railways. I am not satisfied that with this great sum of money, which involves approximately a fourth of the State's total expenditure, one man should be asked to remain in control. The Government should give serious consideration to the appointment of either advisers or additional commissioners. It has been said that in other parts of the world control by three commissioners has not been successful. At the same time I think it could be beneficially applied in this State. We are now calling for applications from candidates willing to fill the position of Commissioner of Railways, which will become vacant in the near future. But I hope that before a decision is arrived at consideration will be given to the aspect of railway control to which I have referred. One man centred necessarily in his office in Perth

cannot have that intimate control of the working of our railway system that he should have, and at the same time get the results expected. This is a subject I have referred to on previous occasions and I do not know that a repetition of the views I have already expressed will get us very far. A good deal of the inefficiency that has been referred to, and a good deal of the lack of control that is known to exist but is not always voiced, is due to central control by a commissioner. This brings me to the control by the Commissioner of Railways of our electricity supply and tramways. The Commissioner of Railways knows nothing whatever—other than the purely mechanical side—of the running of our power station, and if there is one striking need in Western Australia, having regard to the future development of power, it is the need for co-ordination in that department. In many parts of the world—Great Britain, Canada, and the United States for instance—millions of money are being spent on the co-ordination of electrical generation. No Commissioner of Railways, charged as he is with the control of the lines, can have any intimate knowledge of the subject of power control. The member for Swan spoke about the necessity for finding additional funds for the development of the East Perth power house. Surely he knows that one of his main centres, Mundaring, is calling for applications from firms prepared to put in a separate power plant there. That is being done by his own road board, his own unborn child. Why does he not suggest to the Mundaring people that they should have a line of current from the East Perth power station? That aspect is not foreign to the hon. member.

Mr. Sampson: Mundaring guaranteed the Government against loss, and still could not get the current.

Mr. LAMBERT: Even Bunbury, within a few miles of our greatest known coalfield, has put in a separate power plant. All over Western Australia people called upon to administer ordinary local affairs are permitted to adopt an alternating current or a direct current, 220 volts or 440 volts. When we are all dead and gone this State will be called upon to pay the piper for disorganised power plants scattered throughout Western Australia.

The Premier: Sprawling all over the State!

Mr. LAMBERT: The question is whether the Commissioner of Railways shall control electricity supply and tramways. In passing I wish to pay a tribute to the Government for their efforts to increase the capacity of the electricity plant. At East Perth there is a fine 40-cycle plant, and it is only regrettable that the plant is not on accepted standard lines, interchangeable with Eastern States plants. I hope the Premier will realise the broader aspects of power development in Western Australia, and amend the Municipalities Act so that later the whole of our electrical power production may be co-ordinated. Of the tramways I do not wish to say anything particularly harsh. I do not use them very much, because I generally find it more convenient and more expeditious to walk. I do not know that in the closing stages of my life I can afford to indulge in the luxury of tramway travelling. The manager of the system, I understand, is a particularly efficient man from an electrical point of view. The tramways are quite sufficient for one man to look after, and they should not be subservient to the control of the Commissioner of Railways.

The Minister for Railways: They are not, technically.

Mr. LAMBERT: I suppose not. With all due respect to the Commissioner of Railways, if the manager of the tramways went to him to discuss kilowatts and all sorts of other technical matters, probably the Commissioner would ask whether he was speaking French or some other foreign language. Necessarily, such matters are not known to the Commissioner. However, the present system has continued for a number of years, and no Government have thought fit to remedy the position. All this capitalisation of our electricity supply, our tramways, and our Railway Department is due to the fact of our trying to centralise control in one single man, such a control being absolutely impracticable. Is there in private enterprise a company controlling £20,000,000 of assets and having one single man even as nominal head? The present position is unfair to the Commissioner of Railways. Having regard to the recent evolution of road and passenger transport, the Commissioner, if he is doing his job in the carriage of goods over the 2,000 miles of our system,

does very well indeed. Some time ago I communicated with the Minister for Railways concerning the sale of the whole of the department's scrap steel to a small private company in this State. The company have been given a beneficial rate in respect of electricity—I think a rate of .75d., actually only what the coal generating the power costs the State. Comparatively, the company may be described as a paltry concern. Yet the Railway Department sell them the high-grade scrap steel. Every time the steel is melted, it has a greater value. While selling our scrap steel for a few shillings per ton, we give the purchasers a favourable rate to allow them to operate an electrical furnace in a small room 12ft. square. What are they using the scrap steel for? With the present development of mining, as at Wiluna, the company avail themselves of the opportunity to purchase scrap steel at a throw-away price and convert it by means of current obtained at a highly advantageous rate, and so thousands of pounds are lost to the Railway Department. The plant at Midland Junction I understand is one of the finest plants in the Commonwealth, containing high-powered machines capable of doing all the work connected with railways from the building of a locomotive downwards. The expenditure of a few thousand pounds would instal at Midland Junction an electrical furnace capable of recasting steel scrap. The railways would not dispose similarly of any other metal in the workshops, but they do it in the case of steel. Another aspect of these Estimates calling for comment is that the Railway Department run a timber mill. I do not know why that mill was ever started.

The Premier: That mill is only for railway requirements.

Mr. LAMBERT: Quite so, but we have another department infinitely more capable than the Railway Department of running a sawmill.

The Premier: The railways run only one sawmill.

Mr. LAMBERT: That is a matter for the Forests Department. The running of a sawmill is quite foreign to railway control.

The Minister for Railways: A moment ago you said that the Railway Department ought to run an electrical furnace for the conversion of scrap steel.

Mr. LAMBERT: Yes, because they are selling the whole of their discarded steel at a throw-away price. If the Minister wants to know what the scrap steel is sold for, and what profit the company made out of it during the past five years, I can inform him.

The Minister for Railways: I could tell you more than that.

Mr. LAMBERT: I daresay you could, but I do not think the running of timber mills is a job for the Railway Department. Since we have an efficient Forests Department they, with their special knowledge of timbers, are in a better position to control such a mill.

Mr. Hegney: It is a fairly up to date mill at Dwellingup which the Railway Department run.

Mr. LAMBERT: That may be so, but the Forests Department are in a better position to control such activities.

Mr. Hegney: The man in charge would be an expert.

Mr. LAMBERT: Yes but what do you suggest the Commissioner of Railways would know about running a mill? Yet we all agree that the Conservator of Forests would know all about it. This is no trivial matter, for it represents some £20,000, and it is questionable whether we are getting the highest degree of efficiency by having the mill as an adjunct of the Railway Department.

The Minister for Railways: The costs are much lower than they used to be.

Mr. LAMBERT: I hope the Minister has been able to lessen the costs.

The Minister for Mines: The mere fact of establishing the mill shows that the department know how to run it.

Mr. LAMBERT: But if it were established and run by the Forests Department I do not know but that the cost would be even more effectually lessened than it is to-day. Would we say that the Commissioner should run a soup kitchen merely because the member for Pingelly has complained that the rump steak on the Albany express is not too good?

The Premier: One of the best run refreshment services in Victoria and in New South Wales is run by the railways.

Mr. LAMBERT: I do not wish to go into the running of our dining cars and refreshment rooms, because it is rather a painful subject for me, and I might get more kicks than half-pence if I entered into

such a discussion at this juncture. If the Commissioner of Railways considers that one individual can run all the soup kitchens and dining cars and refreshment rooms on the railways, if he thinks that is an efficient way to run them, that is his pigeon, and I am not bothering about it.

The Minister for Mines: There has been a vast improvement on the Albany line since the railways took over the refreshment rooms.

Mr. LAMBERT: I do not know that my philosophy is greatly concerned with the value of the feeds I have.

The Minister for Mines: You complain more than anybody else if you do not get the best.

Mr. LAMBERT: Probably like the Minister, I eat to live, not live to eat. With the introduction of the Transport Co-ordination Bill, and the co-ordination of our services throughout the State, we can expect a good deal. I hope that as one result, much of the unfair competition against the railways will be eliminated. As the Minister for Railways has said, we must use our railways as an instrument of development. It is just as necessary as the Treasurer's deficit that we continue the development work in this State. Not only have the farmers fallen on bad times, but there are other people as well. If the State is to be developed, even to the point of developing our mineral resources, it can only be done in one way, by using the railways to carry the minerals to the ports at a price which will enable us to compete in the world's market. If that cannot be done, we might just as well close up the Mines Department. We have enormous deposits of minerals that are essential to the national life of the State. If war were to break out to-morrow, and we were called upon to become self-contained, we should have to utilise some of the mineral resources we possess. But unless it is part of the policy of the State that we use the railways as an agency of development, it is impossible to develop our mineral resources. Assuredly the time will come when our minerals will be as essential to the life of the State, as an army marching on a full stomach. I hope that as a result of the introduction of the Transport Co-ordination Bill and its subsequent operations, it will not only be made possible for the railways to show a

profit, but our mineral wealth will become equally as valuable as the wealth of other industries in Western Australia.

MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [9.10]: I am sure the multiplicity of suggestions made to the Minister will give him something to think about for days to come.

The Minister for Railways: I have had something to think about for the last few days.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: If there are in the House two Ministers who have problems which will keep them thinking a good while to come, it is the Minister for Railways and the Minister for Lands. The Leader of the Opposition referred to the appointment of a new Commissioner of Railways. I hope the Government will not go outside the service for the new appointee. We have had an illustration in South Australia, where an imported Commissioner, Mr. Webb, cost the State a tremendous amount of money. He set out to bring their railways up to date, and he did so with a vengeance.

Mr. Patrick: They have a nice railway station at Adelaide.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Yes, as a result of the expenditure of a vast amount of money. Both our present Commissioner and his immediate predecessor have had to face a very difficult position in trying to make the railways pay. The Leader of the Opposition spoke of certain by-laws and regulations which serve to hamper them. Possibly it would be as well if they could get a fresh set of regulations. Certainly a railway commissioner having to contend with things as they have been in this State has a big task in front of him. When the Government are looking for a super man to put things right, I would suggest that the men who have graduated in the service and shown ability should be given a chance, rather than we should look outside of the State. One thing is certain, that in our search for a Commissioner we should not go beyond Australia. The Premier a little while ago remarked that there must be some places where the traffic starts in the middle of the night. At Merredin a passenger arriving from Narrogin to catch the Perth train has to wait two hours and ten minutes. One from York has to wait two and three quarter hours, and one from down the loop has to wait two and a half hours. I have had painful experience of

the long waits that are met with on the Great Southern line. The Commissioner could well direct his attention to the co-ordination of these services, so that they can connect up better either with Kalgoorlie or Perth. One other point I would mention is the bulk handling of wheat. Someone said by way of interjection that additional shunting would be necessary. Probably, until additional silos are erected and proper facilities provided at the port, some additional shunting may be necessary there but I have seen trains loading on the Dowerin loop from one silo and there has been no shunting at all. There was no dodging from stack to stack, as was done in the past, when three or four agencies were operating there. With regard to the extra 9d. per ton proposed to be charged, we have been urging that there ought to be a reduction in the cost of production; every effort should be made to reduce costs wherever possible. This matter was ably dealt with by the member for Pingelly (Mr. Seward), but I would like to add that I think the Commissioner should consider this matter from a national standpoint. If we reduce costs by bulk handling, then the Commissioner should not impose an additional cost by increasing the freight. In conclusion, I would once more stress that a Commissioner should not be appointed from outside the railway service. Preferably, he should be a Western Australian, and in any case he should not be appointed from outside the Commonwealth. Do not let us make the mistake of bringing a man in from outside Australia who will come here with big ideas, but without a knowledge of our requirements. This matter was brought forcibly under my notice by the member for Northam when he told me what took place in South Australia. We want to guard against anything of that kind happening in this State.

MR. HAWKE (Northam) [9.18]: The appointment to be made in the near future of a new Commissioner to take charge of the railway system of Western Australia is of the utmost importance. It is to be hoped that those charged with the responsibility of selecting the new Commissioner will have an opportunity of choosing him from a number of capable men. If the right man be chosen, then the railway system in Western Australia may be placed upon such a basis

as will enable great progress to be made in the future. Our railway system, in common with those of the other States, is a very big concern and its management is charged with greater difficulties than most people imagine. Some doubt exists as to whether the management of the railways should be vested in one man or in a number of men, each of whom would exercise equal power and accept equal responsibility. A suggestion was made that a business man should be appointed to the position. If the persons making that suggestion were to give us their definition of a business man, we might possibly be able to pronounce judgment upon the suggestion. Not so many years ago the New South Wales Government appointed as Commissioner of Railways a successful business man who had had no practical experience of railway management. His appointment was hailed as the turning point in the New South Wales railway system. The people and the newspapers who for so many years had advocated business control of the railways led the people of New South Wales to believe that within a very short period the railway problems of that State would be solved, that prosperity would come to the railways, and, through the railways, to the State. That business man carried out his duties for a few years and then the Government saw fit to terminate his appointment. Therefore, if there are business men without practical experience of railway working and management applying for the position, I feel inclined to suggest that they should be overlooked, and allowed to apply their business ability to the ordinary avenues of trade and commerce where they have been trained. In my opinion, it is essential that a man with wide railway experience should be appointed to the position, and I think that within the Commonwealth there must be more than one man who has the necessary qualifications to enable him successfully to manage our railway system. I certainly oppose the importation of a person from outside the Commonwealth to fill the position.

The Minister for Railways: You can be sure that that will not be done.

MR. HAWKE: I am not very much afraid that it will, but it has been done to the great detriment of the States that have been responsible for doing it. The member for Avon (Mr. Griffiths) referred to the tragedy that occurred in South Australia, the Government of which appointed a Yankee com-

missioner and gave him complete control of the task of rehabilitating the railway system. He certainly did so, but almost plunged the State into hopeless bankruptcy in the process. The question of the capital indebtedness of our railway system is important and has a very strong bearing upon the management of the system. No one will deny that in this State, as in others, many lines of railway have been constructed that should never have been laid down. Some of the lines so constructed are an absolute reflection upon the sanity of those who were responsible for authorising their construction. As a result, those charged with the management of the system to-day find themselves loaded with responsibilities of a very grave nature. To suggest that inquiry should be made into the desirableness of reducing the capital indebtedness of the system is not to put forward anything new. I feel, nevertheless, that that is the fair and commonsense thing to do. It is most unfair to expect those in charge of the system to carry it on and at the same time balance accounts when they are compelled to work those highly unprofitable railways that have been constructed in certain districts. If by some miracle we could relay the whole of the railway system, much of the problem of railway finance would disappear, because the lines would be laid in different districts. That, however, is impossible, and it is no use bemoaning the fact that in past years pressure of one kind and another was responsible for the construction of railways in districts where they never had any hope of paying at all. Many people do not realise the great difficulty that does exist in managing the railway system. Each year £1,000,000 out of the £3,000,000 revenue obtained has to be set aside to meet the interest charges upon the capital indebtedness of the system; £1 out of every £3 has to be earmarked in order that interest payments may be met on the due date. That is a tremendous sum to set aside from the revenue of the system in a State like ours, where the population is so small. Sooner or later the Government will be compelled to readjust that position: the sooner the problem is settled the better. It may be contended that the writing down of the capital indebtedness of the railways, while it will reduce the interest bill of the railways, will only transfer the liability to the State Treasury, and through the Treasury to the shoulders of the taxpayers

as a whole. That contention is correct and there is every justification for action of that kind to be taken. The construction of railways in Western Australia does not benefit only those who pay freights and fares to the department. Without railways this State could never have been developed to the extent that it has. The city of Perth, whose residents pay little in the way of railway fares, could not have grown to the remarkable extent that it has had it not been for the railways. Every person in the community has benefited either directly or indirectly by our railways, and so should be called upon to bear some portion of the interest payable on the capital expended upon the system. I see no injustice whatever in reducing the capital indebtedness of the system and by so doing transferring a portion of the interest liability from the Railway Department to the shoulders of the taxpayers. I am afraid it will be necessary for me to descend—as the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie would say—to the level of talking about tiddley-winking things such as cups of tea, rump steak, etc. I am greatly concerned about the railway refreshment services. One of the great losses from which the railways suffer is the loss of passenger patronage. The motor car has to a large extent been responsible for this, but other factors also enter into the situation. Very little consideration is given to people who have to travel over long distances on the railways, in the matter of refreshments. No one would be more pleased than I if the Government decided to take charge of all railway refreshment services. In other States these services are a credit to the railways and the Governments concerned. They have done a great deal to popularise the railways in the eyes of the travelling public. A few days ago I was under the painful necessity of travelling from Northam to Pemberton. In order to reach Pemberton in time to address a meeting at 8 o'clock on Monday evening I had to leave Northam by train at four o'clock on the previous Friday afternoon. It was also necessary to catch a train at Bridgetown on Monday morning at six o'clock, and catch another at Pemberton on Tuesday morning at 5.30 in order to arrive in Perth at eight o'clock that evening. In the journey from Perth to Pemberton, which takes many hours under most uncomfortable travelling conditions, no provision anywhere is made for passengers to obtain a meal. One can obtain light refreshments at several places.

The Premier: Of a kind.

Mr. HAWKE: Compared with a trip I made many months ago, the refreshments and the conditions under which they were served were much improved. That applies particularly to the Pinjarra rooms, which two years ago were a disgrace to the management. There can be no satisfactory settlement of the position until the whole activity is placed under the direct control of the department and the Government. Something in that way may be attempted when the new commissioner is appointed, particularly if he is an up-to-date and wide-awake individual. Some months ago I approached the department through the Minister, and suggested that a refreshment room could well be established at Northam. This is a town of considerable size and importance, through which many trains pass every day in the week. The present refreshment service is totally inadequate.

Mr. Cross: You get the best tea there along the line.

Mr. HAWKE: But the service is paltry, not because of the failure of those responsible for the service, but because it is a tiddley-winking show all through. It is an out of date method of providing refreshment for train travellers to have a lad roaming up and down the platform with bottles of tea.

The Minister for Railways: It is good tea.

Mr. HAWKE: I am not complaining about that, but it lends an atmosphere of paltriness to the whole thing.

The Minister for Railways: There is no doubt about that.

Mr. HAWKE: The establishment of up-to-date dining rooms at Northam and other big inland centres would do a great deal towards affording the travelling public a proper service. The express travels through Northam on its way to Perth or Kalgoorlie. Every night a dining car is attached to it. This is of tremendous weight, and has to be hauled over the Darling Ranges on its way to Northam, hooked off at Cunderdin, returned to Northam, picked up by the express the following morning, and hauled back to Perth.

The Premier: Those cars have now been abandoned in the Eastern States.

Mr. HAWKE: The sooner they are abandoned here the better will it be for all concerned. Travellers are entitled to a much better service than can be given by the dining cars. It would pay the department in view of the long haulage from Perth to Northam, to establish an up-to-date dining room at the Northam station, where a first class meal could be provided under comfortable conditions. Some of the railway officials, who are in a hopeless rut, may argue that the whole of the time-tables would be thrown out of gear. Surely it is not beyond the capacity of those in charge of them to re-arrange them in order to make possible the adoption of this idea.

Mr. Piesse: Would not Spencer's Brook be as serviceable?

Mr. HAWKE: I would not raise an objection to that place.

The Premier: There is an elaborate station at Chidlow's Well.

Mr. HAWKE: Spencer's Brook may be the best place for a dining room. I have approached the department through the Minister on the question of the present centralized policy for the carrying out of repairs to engines, trucks and other rolling stock. So far the reply received has been unfavourable, but we hope to return to the attack in the near future and trust that consideration will be given to inland towns in this matter. Where up-to-date and scientific machinery is established for effecting repairs, most of the work should be done there particularly the major work, but in the case of minor repairs, the work could be more economically carried out in some of the larger inland railway towns. Some expansion in this direction could well be made at Northam, where the loco. shed and railway workshops are in urgent need of attention. I understand that the matter is receiving the consideration of the Minister and the departmental officers. I hope the choice of a new commissioner will be the wisest one possible. Provided that reasonable protective legislation is granted by Parliament, I feel sure that our railway system will in future make further progress, and will play an increasingly important part in the development and wealth production of Western Australia.

MR. PATRICK (Greenough) [9.42]: The Minister is slightly optimistic in respect to the increased revenue for the current financial year, even though the takings for the first four months may to some extent justify his remarks. Apart from the fact that we will now probably be shipping our full quota of wheat, there is going to be a fall of upwards of 200,000 tons of wheat compared with last year's figures, on the estimated harvest, and this will mean a loss of approximately £100,000 in freight. That is a lot of money to make up, in addition to the increases shown on the Estimates. I agree to a large extent with the remarks of the member for Northam as to the necessity for writing down the capital value of the railways. If they had been operated by a private company, they would have been written down long ago. To some extent the railways, which used to be regarded as a permanent asset, are, owing to modern forms of transport, largely a wasting asset, and probably there is a definite term to their existence. It is interesting to note the remarks of the Railway Commissioner in South Australia, in his last annual report. He said—

In my last report I drew attention to the need and justification for a considerable reduction in railway capital, and I again emphasise the desirableness of this course. I am, of course, fully aware that the mere transfer of capital from the railway balance sheet accomplishes nothing in the direction of extinguishing the liability of the State as a whole. I contend that the very material appreciation of land values, and the increased taxable capacity both rural and urban, as well as the many millions of pounds which have been received by the State through the sale and release of Crown lands, all of which have resulted from railway construction, places the State in the position of being indebted to the railways rather than the reverse, and furnishes a very strong case for a large measure of relief for railway finance.

That largely follows the very sound argument of the member for Northam. In addition, the Railway Department have to carry numerous non-paying lines. So it is hardly fair to expect the management to make the system pay under such conditions. In the circumstances the management are putting up a fine show. Last year the railways earned 3.29 per cent., while the interest on the capital invested in them amounts to something over 4 per cent. This situation compares more than favourably with that of any other Aus-

tralian railway system, as well as with the position of the railway systems of Great Britain and the United States, which earn only about 2 per cent. Considering the nature of our railways as an asset, it is a pity that in connection with them there was not a sinking fund system like that which obtained in connection with the gold-fields water scheme, ensuring the extinction of the debt after a definite period. Under such conditions our railway system would now be in a thoroughly sound position financially. In moving the second reading of the State Transport Co-ordination Bill, the Minister mentioned that the average freight on our railways is 1¾d., adding that wheat was carried at a loss, the rate being about 1d. There is a fallacy about that argument. The process of lumping all freights with non-paying railways and partially loaded trucks yields so high a rate that wheat could not possibly be carried at it. It is recognised in most systems that wheat is a profitable freight. The Midland Railway Co. find the carriage of wheat profitable at a low rate. Whereas other goods are moved in small quantities, wheat is transported in full train loads. I am glad to know that the burden which the railway system has to carry in connection with the Collie coalfields has been reduced to the extent of some £40,000 per annum. The nursing of Collie coal has also to some extent restricted enterprise in our Railway Department. Most other States, even those having coalfields, run railway cars with petrol and crude oil, whereas here the policy is to restrict everything to Collie coal. Western Australia has experimented almost entirely with the steam-driven car, which I understand has not proved a great success. As regards the motion of the member for Collie calling for the use of 100 per cent. of Collie coal by the State railways, the Minister has already pointed out that on certain lines this is an impossible proposition in summer, because on steep grades Collie coal sets fire to practically every yard of the country traversed. Under the Government Railways Act, if a State locomotive sets fire to grass or a crop, there is no remedy against the department. In my electorate there was an instance of the kind which I took up with the Commissioner of Railways, who called for a report. His men admitted that they had set a crop on fire, but the Commissioner stated

that under the Government Railways Act he had only to prove that there was on the locomotive an up-to-date spark arrester in good condition. The position along the Midland railway is entirely different. It will be remembered that some years ago there was a strike at Newcastle; and during that strike the Midland railway was forced to use Collie coal. As a result, the Midland company were involved in thousands of pounds for damages caused by fires lit along the line. If the member for Collie wishes to increase the output of local coal, I would recommend him to point out to the Collie Companies that they are losing a large customer in the Midland Company. Surely there must be something wrong with the price charged or with the quality of the coal when the Midland Company find it pays them better to import Newcastle coal. Of that coal they use 100 per cent. on their line, and their manager is a business man who does not do that kind of thing for fun. Apparently business principles have governed the Midland Company, but not the Collie coal companies.

The Premier: The Collie coal companies have been run on excellent business principles.

Mr. PATRICK: The State being practically the only customer for Collie coal, it would have been well for the Railway Department to have its own coalfields as well as its own timber mills. I now turn to a subject mentioned by the member for Pingelly and also by the Leader of the Opposition—the extra impost on the carriage of bulk wheat. I regard that impost as unjustifiable. Owing to the condition of the wheat industry those engaged in it have been making desperate efforts to reduce costs. Since there was a State compulsory pool there has been a considerable reduction, I am pleased to note, in the amount of handling charges outside the railways. In the days of that pool the cost was 3¾d. per bushel; now, under the Western Australian pool, the cost is 2.4d. To show the desperate position of farmers in a neighbouring State, I may mention that some time ago a South Australian paper stated that last year farmers carted wheat, along a road bordering a railway line, no less than 25 miles to the port in order to save a railway freight of 1½d. per bushel. If farmers are up against it, they will cart at high cost along the roads to save a low railway freight. The State has to realise that while every other industry concerned has been handling wheat on a quan-

tity basis, the farmer has had to work on a price basis. There has been little decrease in the cost of handling wheat, while there has been a terrific decrease in the price of wheat. As regards the additional impost on bulk wheat imposed by our Commissioner, let me point out that the converting of trucks to handle bulk wheat has not cost the department one penny. New South Wales spent many thousands of pounds on new trucks to handle bulk wheat, and the rate charged there for bulk wheat is exactly the same as that charged for bagged wheat. In New South Wales, Victoria, and in the wheat districts of South Australia the problem is not so difficult as it is here. In New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia there are broad-gauge lines, and the ordinary trucks are quite high enough to handle bulk wheat. Ours being narrow-gauge lines, we have narrow trucks, and it is necessary to raise their sides in order to carry wheat in bulk. The preliminary work done at five sidings which have been operating bulk handling has cost this State nothing. The Wheat Pool spent £1,900 in raising the sides of trucks. In addition they are spending £7,000 or £8,000 on 2,000 trucks to be used for bulk wheat. When those trucks are returned after the wheat has been unloaded, the additional gear is simply taken off, and the trucks are then available for other purposes. The only ground the Commissioner has for claiming additional freight is the slight extra tare on the trucks due to the raising of the sides and the carrying of the canvas frame, which cannot amount to much. In other countries which have bulk handling it is recognised that the gain in transportation greatly offsets this tare. Under the old system a locomotive would pick up so many trucks for Dreyfus, so many for Bunge, and so many for the Wheat Pool; and on arriving at their various destinations those trucks had all to be shunted out, so that they could be handled separately. To-day a train load of bulk wheat is taken as one consignment, without any shunting whatever. The Leader of the Opposition has stated that the present quotation for bulk wheat is the same as that for bagged wheat. In a way that statement is slightly misleading. As a matter of fact, the quotation for bulk wheat is a long way higher than that for bagged wheat, because the bulk wheat is carried at 7½d. per bushel, which pays the cost of in-

stalling the scheme at different sidings, $\frac{3}{4}$ d., and the additional charge of $\frac{1}{4}$ d. made by the railways. Actually to-day buyers are quoting $\frac{7}{8}$ d. more for bulk wheat than for bagged wheat, which fact in my opinion justifies the contention as to the large saving to be made. In addition, there is the saving of the cost of bags. Hitherto the five sidings operating the bulk system have been getting $\frac{3}{4}$ d. less for bulk wheat than for bagged wheat, and nevertheless considered that they were saving 2d. or 3d. per bushel. As against bagged wheat the facilities for bulk wheat are being put in at no charge whatever, which I regard as a fine thing from the aspect of reducing costs. Further, bulk wheat can be transported with less rolling stock, quantity for quantity, than bagged wheat, because the trucks carrying bulk wheat can be both loaded and emptied at greater speed than trucks carrying bagged wheat, and therefore can earn freight at a far quicker rate. Another advantage of the bulk system, which has been pointed out previously, is that instead of tending towards monopoly it brings additional buyers into the field. We have now an independent buyer from the Eastern States here, and he is buying nothing but bulk wheat. Probably his presence is largely the cause of the rise in price. The organisation of the other firms is not required for simply buying certificates, and the buyer from the East probably needs nothing but an office and a clerk or two. Thus the introduction of the bulk system has created extra competition here. I hope the Commissioner of Railways will modify his apparently antagonistic attitude towards bulk handling. It is an attitude that cannot be justified. South Australia appointed a sub-committee consisting of the Commissioner of Railways, the Chairman of the Harbour Board, and the Director of Agriculture to deal with the subject of bulk handling. Those gentlemen unanimously reported in favour of a system somewhat on the lines of the system here, though with some modifications: and this is a great tribute to the economical features of the system in Western Australia. I repeat, I trust the Commissioner will change his attitude, because, after all, he cannot maintain the position he has assumed when it is evident that the Railway Department of another State have charged themselves with the whole cost of providing trucks for bulk

handling and are still carrying the bulk wheat at the same rate as the bagged wheat.

MR. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [10.0]: Last September I asked a few questions and the Minister replied at the time it was inadvisable to make the information available. For that reason, I desire to get some information from him when he replies to the debate. Dealing with the bulk handling of wheat, the member for Greenough (Mr. Patrick), said that the Commissioner of Railways was antagonistic to the scheme. I do not think that he can claim that officer is extremely antagonistic, because he granted to the Wheat Pool, leases at the various sidings. One of the questions I would like to ask the Minister is: What was, approximately, the date the leases were granted to the Wheat Pool by the Commissioner? A little while ago it was public property that the Commissioner was opposed to granting the leases, but I understand that, prior to the last elections, pressure was brought to bear on him by the former Premier, Sir James Mitchell, with the result that the leases were granted.

Mr. Patrick: I do not know anything about that, but if it is correct, the ex-Premier did a very fine thing for the State.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I do not think so. A debate took place in this House last year regarding bulk handling of wheat in connection with the railway system, and members indicated quite definitely that they did not desire any monopoly to be granted.

Mr. Patrick: There is no monopoly.

Mr. SLEEMAN: There is practically a monopoly granted to the Pool. The sites were not advertised and the Pool secured the leases under the lap.

Mr. Patrick: That is not so. Notes were sent to all the firms, and it was open to them to take action.

Mr. SLEEMAN: That is not my information. I do not make the statement myself, but it is made by a representative of a body of farmers of this State. Two or three weeks ago, I attended a meeting at Fremantle that was held by farmers who claimed to represent 5,000 agriculturists throughout the State.

Mr. Latham: They are the friends of Mr. Fox.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I do not know whose friends they are, but they called themselves

the Farmers' Union, and as we stand for preference to unionists, I reckon they should have a little preference. There is considerable diversion of opinion regarding bulk handling among the farmers of this State. Many of them consider the scheme will not prove successful.

Mr. Patrick: Those men can still use bags. Bulk handling is not compulsory.

Mr. SLEEMAN: That is not the point. The people I refer to claim that that bulk handling will not pay. They debated the matter publicly in Fremantle before a large number of people, and they contended the scheme was not what was claimed for it. They certainly are convinced that it will not be successful.

Mr. Patrick: Time will prove that.

Mr. SLEEMAN: They had a scheme themselves, and claimed it would be more successful. In the circumstances, it would be interesting to know the date on which the leases were granted to the Pool, in order to enable them to proceed with the bulk handling of wheat. I suggest that if the Commissioner of Railways were coerced in granting the leases to the Wheat Pool, he would be justified in taking advantage of the clause in the agreement by giving three months notice of cancellation. Several members have referred to the shunting operations. Irrespective of what shunting will be done in the country areas, quite a lot will have to be undertaken at Fremantle where the bulk handling of wheat will be carried out for the present. In my opinion, much of the wheat will be handled to a far greater extent than was customary when it was bagged. In fact, I am convinced that it would be interesting to farmers if they could visit Fremantle and see the position for themselves. I want to know who is responsible for the cost of the deviation of the railway line to the Leighton wool sheds. That work is being undertaken at the present time, and I want to know whether the cost will be a charge against the bulk handling scheme, or whether the Government will have to pay for it. Under the scheme as it will operate at Fremantle, some of the wheat will be taken straight to the wharf, but a large proportion of it will be side-tracked to the wool sheds at Leighton, dumped there and held in the shed. Later on, it will have to be re-loaded into trucks and shunted to the wharf at Fremantle.

Mr. Wansborough: And while those trucks are being used they will not be available in the country districts.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I know it involves double handling. In my opinion, the sheds are not at all suitable for the storing of wheat. I do not know whether the health authorities have taken any action, but I recommend the Minister for Health to see to it that the interests of the people are conserved. I have seen the sheds and am convinced that they are not at all suitable for the storage of the people's food supplies.

Mr. Latham: Is the wheat likely to become affected?

Mr. SLEEMAN: If the Leader of the Opposition were to inspect the sheds, he would agree with my contention.

Mr. Latham: I asked for information.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I think the wheat will become affected. If the Leader of the Opposition were to visit the sheds, he would agree with me that there is every chance of that resulting from the storage of wheat there.

Mr. Latham: By what would it be affected?

Mr. SLEEMAN: By rats, mice, vermin, and dirt of every description.

Mr. Patrick: Vermin cannot get into bulk wheat.

Mr. SLEEMAN: They can get into the wheat stored in the wool sheds.

Mr. Patrick: Buyers are still offering more for bulk wheat than for bag wheat.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I do not know what they are offering, but if the farmers were to inspect the sheds at Leighton they would agree with me that those sheds are not suitable for the storage of wheat. I am not indulging in exaggerated assertions. The very firm that will store the wheat in the wool sheds at Leighton, wasted thousands of tons of wheat on the wharves at Fremantle. When I issued an invitation to members of this House to inspect the condition of the wheat stacks for themselves, the member for Avon (Mr. Griffiths), and the former Minister for Works (Mr. Lindsay), accepted my invitation. They inspected the wheat, and agreed that my statements were anything but exaggerated.

Mr. Patrick: When the whole thing was cleaned up, the loss was insignificant.

Mr. SLEEMAN: The persons immediately concerned were so much exercised in mind when I commenced asking ques-

tions about damaged wheat, that a deputation was despatched to interview me at the House with a view to asking me why I was making such a fuss about the matter. They explained that the trouble in Western Australia was that we did not get enough moisture into the wheat, and that if we did that, it would be better for the farmers and for the State. They wanted the wheat to be more moist, so that it would increase in weight, with the result that the farmer would get a greater return, and more money would be circulated. It was good business for the company.

Mr. Patrick: No, for the farmer.

Mr. SLEEMAN: That is so.

Mr. Patrick: The advantage of any added weight went to the farmer.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I admit that, but that sort of thing is not in the interests of the trade. Certainly it will not be in the interests of the wheat export trade if the wheat that is to be stored at the wool sheds becomes affected, and I think the Health Department should take the matter in hand and see that something is done to correct the position.

Mr. Latham: They cannot do anything to see whether the wheat is going to be infected until the wheat is put there.

Mr. SLEEMAN: The health inspector is not to worry until he sees the wheat in the shed. I would prefer that he came down there before that happened, and gave us the benefit of his experience. Once the sheds are filled with wheat, there will be considerable difficulty in removing the defect. The Leader of the Opposition will agree that a qualified health inspector can tell at a glance whether there is any danger of infection from storing wheat in those sheds. I understand that in the country silos where wheat is stored, provision is made for turning the wheat.

Mr. Latham: In all up-to-date methods that is not provided for at all now.

Mr. SLEEMAN: If the railways are going to do all they can to encourage bulk handling, thousands of workers will be thrown out of employment. It has not yet been shown that bulk handling will benefit even the farmer. Those people who debated the question on the platform were divided in their opinions, and were not at all satisfied that it was going to benefit the farmer. But even if it will benefit the farmer, the

railways should think twice before encouraging something that is not going to be of benefit to the whole community. There may be other ways of benefiting the farmer, without throwing thousands of men out of employment. Already the country is suffering from labour-saving appliances, and I hope the railways will not encourage bulk handling until they are satisfied that it will be of benefit to the whole community. May I compare the attitude of the Railway Department here with the attitude in other parts of the world. I have here a pamphlet containing an article entitled "Science steals the Baby's Milk." Let me read this extract from that article—

It is becoming progressively more difficult to rejoice in the invention of a new labour-saving machine or process when it is so obvious that the new discovery, instead of adding to man's happiness, brings the demon of unemployment into his home. The scientist is beginning to realise that, instead of playing the part of the hero and benefactor, he is actually engaged in a process which, under capitalism in its present stage, steals the bread from the workers' cupboard and the milk from the baby's bottle. Science in other words is the father (now not quite the proud father) of what the Americans call technological unemployment—in other words, unemployment due to invention. The Nazis have recently driven the point home in another way. The International Labour Office has published particulars of some orders (which ought to interest scientists) issued by the Nazi Government placing restrictions on the use of machinery. In consequence of increasing technological unemployment in the cigar industry, the German Government issued an Act on 15th July, 1933, prohibiting the installation of any further machines for rolling tobacco leaves, and the re-starting of any established machinery which had ceased working. It appears that in its preamble the Act states that machinery has made superfluous about 80,000 of the 96,000 cigar workers living in villages and small towns. The output of a rolling machine is from 1,000 to 1,200 cigars an hour, while that of the hand worker is only 70. The consequence is that, under the Act, even factories using leaf rolling machines are not to be allowed to extend their production above the quantity manufactured in 1932-33.

So in other parts of the world the effect of these new labour-saving devices is better understood.

Mr. Patrick: Bulk handling is not a new system, for it has been used in Canada for the past 40 or 50 years.

Mr. SLEEMAN: It does not matter. It is a labour-saving device and in most countries of the world it is new. Are we to

throw out of work thousands of people in this country, and take the bread from the cupboard of the worker?

Mr. Patrick: Bulk handling will put more into work.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Nothing of the sort; it will not put anybody into work, but it will put thousands out of work.

Mr. Latham: Bulk handling will save money for our farmers, who will not have to employ people in other countries.

Mr. SLEEMAN: What would the Leader of the Opposition say if the workers declared to the Railway Department that if bulk handling were encouraged the railways would have to reduce their hours by 50 per cent.?

Mr. Patrick: Why did you encourage the bulk handling of oil at Fremantle?

Mr. SLEEMAN: I did not encourage it. In any case, that did not cost the State a penny. I was not in favour of the installation of grabs on the wharf for the handling of super.

Mr. Latham: You attended the big function the oil people gave.

Mr. SLEEMAN: What has that to do with it? I have attended a Governor's function, but I am not in favour of State Governors. As representative of an electorate, if I am invited to go along it is my duty to go. Suppose the Governor came to Fremantle and I refused to be in attendance, the Leader of the Opposition would say I was disloyal.

Mr. Latham: I remember the nice things you said on that occasion about the bulk handling of oil.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I did not say any nice things on that occasion. When the grabs came on to the Fremantle wharf to load the trucks with super, I told some of the people there that they would rue the day. What happened? The super was unloaded by the grabs, and hundreds of men were thrown out of work, while the super manufacturers, not the farmers, got the benefit.

Mr. Latham: There have been two reductions in the price.

Mr. SLEEMAN: No, only one, and that a short time ago, when they thought an inquiry was to be made. The oil people also, when they thought the Federal Government were going to hold an inquiry into the price of oil, granted a reduction. When this Government were returned and promised to inquire into the price of super, a small reduction was

granted. After the grabs came on to the wharf at Fremantle to unload super, we had other grabs come to unload the coal. Now we are to have the bulk handling of wheat, and the Leader of the Opposition says it will make more work. The people responsible for trying to bring in bulk handling are not satisfied with doing away with the workers on the wharves and at the sidings, for they were amongst the first to instal labour-saving devices, such as adding machines in offices, so that they might reduce their employees.

Mr. Latham: If farming is so lucrative, let us put the workers on the land.

Mr. SLEEMAN: The Leader of the Opposition knows that all the farmers are going bankrupt, notwithstanding which he wants to put the workers on the land. I hope the Railway Department will not encourage bulk handling. If the Government decide to assist the Railway Department to do it, then they must do something to provide for those people who will be thrown out of employment. Will the Railway Department agree to place those men in work by reducing the hours of the railway workers to, say, 24 instead of 48? If they are prepared to do that, they will show they are genuine in their attempts to help displaced workers. I would like to know whether anything is to be done to the bridges across the Swan River at North Fremantle. We have there a railway bridge and a traffic bridge. It was at one time proposed that they should be combined.

The Minister for Railways: We will not do it out of railway revenue.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Then I must bring this matter up when the Loan Estimates are before the House. I hope when they do come before the House, something will be done in connection with the bridge.

MR. HEGNEY (Middle Swan) [10.22]: We have listened to-night to some very interesting speeches on the administration of the Railway Department; some deal with serious matters, while others dealt with tiddley-winking matters, such as cups of tea and pounds of steak.

Mr. Clothier: You are not likely to get a pound of steak on the railway.

Mr. HEGNEY: At the moment I am merely concerned with some matters that affect my electorate. Some time ago representations were made to the Minister that a siding should be placed about midway between Bayswater and Maylands.

The Minister gave a favourable reply, but said the main point would be the matter of cost. The road boards and others concerned are considering the advisableness of helping to defray some of the cost of the maintenance of the proposed siding. If it is put in, it will attract population to that locality, which is within four miles of Perth. At present people there have to walk a considerable distance in order to secure transport facilities. A little later, when things improve and we have turned the corner—

Member: Turned the corner?

Mr. HEGNEY: I understand from the Federal Government that we have turned the corner. In six months or so perhaps the Minister will be able to construct the siding. Another matter brought to my notice was the putting in of a siding between Bayswater and Bassendean, at a place called Ashfield. The people who own that estate, when they started their building campaign, did so because they believed that if they sold land to people in that district a siding would be built. Considerable revenue would accrue to the department if it were put in. For instance, there are the men who work for the Cresco Company who at present have to use the bus service. In the busy season a considerable number of men work at Cresco's and they have to get there by their own means of transport, or by bus. The people at Ashfield have from time to time requested me to try to secure the stoppage of trains there, at least during the peak period. However, that matter has been before the Commissioner and I have no doubt he will give it further consideration. Another matter which was recently revived by a deputation that waited on the Minister for Railways is the subway on the main road at Rivervale. That question was discussed by the Perth City Council, the Belmont Park Road Board and people of the district who were interested in the proposal. I would like the Minister to inform me whether any progress has been made in that connection. If the subway is constructed, it will certainly minimise the danger existing at that point; it will provide employment, because the cost will be principally for labour, and it will certainly be advantageous to the travelling public. There has been an agitation in my district to secure the extension of electric current to Helena Valley, in the Greenmount Road Board area, and to Wattle

Grove, a little further out. The progress associations in those places made representations to me which, in turn, I submitted to the Minister. I urged upon him the necessity for supplying electric power to those districts. The member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) has also mentioned the matter to-night. The proposal, however hinges upon the question of whether funds can be raised abroad for the extension of the power house. I hope that work will be proceeded with, because it is essential to the progress of the State that cheap current should be made available in all parts for the development of industry and for the provision of electric light. Some observations have been made on the running of the tramways. To some extent at least, the public could expedite the tramway service. Any person who uses the trams knows that many seconds are lost after a tram stops because people are not opposite the door waiting to get on or to alight. That would not be tolerated in Sydney; the trams would not wait and the person would be obliged to board the next one. On the Inglewood route, time has been saved because of the duplication and extension of the line. It is a matter, of course, of educating the public. If the Sydney trams were to wait like our trams for the public to get on and off, there would be chaos in the tram service there. There has also been an agitation for the extension of the tramway service to Garrett-road. When the Minister for Railways was in power three or four years ago, the member for Guildford-Midland (Hon. W. D. Johnson) introduced a deputation to the Minister, who went out and inspected the route. He was on the verge of extending the trams to Garrett-road when he went out of office. Then the depression came and the trams have not yet been extended to that place. The tramway should either be extended from there or a trolley bus service inaugurated. When the Garrett-road section is finished, a circular route could be established from Maylands round to Belmont and back to Perth. That would give a service to the people on the other side, and would be a great asset to them. If a trolley bus service cannot be installed as far as Garrett-road, perhaps the Minister would give consideration to an extension of the tramway to Garrett-road if rails are available, seeing that we have a tram track extending already to Ferguson-street. Some time ago I made

representations for the erection of a shelter shed at the Salisbury-street tram terminus. There is no shelter there for women who use the service either in the summer or in the winter. A shed would not cost very much, and I suggest that the Tramway Department should consider the erection of one there. The bus people provide sheds for the use of their patrons, and the department should do likewise. I hope all these matters will receive the attention of the Minister.

MR. RAPHAEL (Victoria Park) [10.32]: There are one or two matters I desire to bring before the Committee. The first is the need for dressing sheds at the termini of the various tram routes. By this I mean the provision of lavatories and other conveniences for the tramway men. This has been a sore point with the union concerned for some time past, and the subject of numerous requests. I hope the Minister will accept the suggestion and do his best to provide these very necessary facilities.

Mr. Cross: Why not ask the City Council to do this?

Mr. RAPHAEL: Why did not the hon. member bring up the matter when he was speaking? The member for Middle Swan (Mr. Hegney) suggested that a subway should be built at the Rivervale crossing. In this connection I would suggest that the Minister should take into his own hands the appropriation of the necessary amount from the traffic fees.

The Minister for Railways: I wish I could do so.

Mr. RAPHAEL: I introduced to the Minister a deputation from various road boards to point out the dangerous nature of this crossing. The road boards and other bodies represented at that deputation were prepared to accede to the request that the requisite money should be deducted from the traffic fees. The Perth City Council, on the other hand, who are at all times prepared to take money from the Government but fail to play their own part with respect to the unemployed, stood aghast at this suggestion. If the matter were put up in the right way by the Minister to the City Council, perhaps something could yet be done. Failing that, a warning bell or some sign should be erected at the crossing for the protection of the public. In the Eastern States protection is always given to the public by the railways, but on every occa-

sion when the Government of this State or the Commissioner have been approached on this subject the reply has been that it is the people's own fault that they are killed. It can hardly be suggested that people would choose this form of death. I hope the Government will make themselves responsible for the provision of some protective sign or warning bell at this crossing. The tramway extension to Victoria Park has been wanted for a long time. I am sorry only a single line is to be laid down, and that it will traverse only two-thirds of the distance we require. Nevertheless, it is a move in the right direction. The tram service to Victoria Park is the best paying portion of the whole system. I hope it will not be long before the full extension is made. During the next few months a new Commissioner of Railways will be appointed. I hope it is not the intention of the Government to choose a man from outside the State. My earnest hope is that the new Commissioner will carry out the job as it ought to be carried out. There are many wild rumours in circulation in the department as to who will fill the position. Several little ceremonies have taken place amongst the heads of the department as if someone was being congratulated on being chosen for the position.

Mr. Hegney: Were you there?

Mr. RAPHAEL: I was not invited. I hope when the appointment is made, the railways will be run better than they have in many cases been run in the past. In days gone by Governments have not had much say with regard to railway matters. A new railway service through Victoria Park and Carlisle is a dire necessity. At present hardly any trains are run for the convenience of workers there, and the bus people who are catering for them are getting the business. I hope better arrangements will be made in respect to the time table, and that this will result in the business to which they are entitled going to the railways. If the Minister had a little more say in the administration of the department, there might be a different story to tell concerning its financial position. I hope when the new appointment is made the Commissioner will take it upon himself to see that the department is run as it ought to be. Extensions at the East Perth power house are sorely needed. The City Council are making huge profits through the

sale of electricity. That is a matter which should be debated in this Chamber. The manager of the electricity branch does not cater for the workers. If a man leaves the service of his department, or dies, or is retrenched, the position is always filled by a young girl. If under the agreement between the City Council and the Government it is possible to bring the municipality to its knees, and it can be forced to supply power and light to the workers at a price that is commensurate with their earnings, I would be prepared to stand behind the Government every step of the way. The Perth City Council is supposed to supply power to the people of the metropolitan area at a reasonable rate. The rate charged is a little more than threepence, which means that customers on the minimum rate have to pay $3\frac{1}{2}$ d. The big firms get the power for about $1\frac{1}{4}$ d. While I have been a member of the Perth City Council it has been my endeavour to get those prices altered, but I have been unsuccessful. I hope the Government will bring pressure to bear with a view to ensuring that persons on the minimum wage shall be supplied with electricity at a reasonable price, at a price not involving a profit of 240 per cent. I desire to thank the Minister for what he has done with regard to tramway extension in my district. It is the first extension which has taken place there for about ten years.

MR. PIESSE (Katanning) [10.42]: Before dealing with the Vote I wish to express my appreciation of the services rendered by the Commissioner of Railways, his executive officers, and his staff generally in the control and management of the system. It was to be expected that there would be a good deal of criticism from members of this Chamber, and also from the general public, because no State undertaking in any part of the world has had to meet so many difficulties as our Railway Department. We know that the system has failed in some directions—to our way of thinking, somewhat seriously. At the same time we should remember that all the complaint and criticism ought not to be levelled at the Commissioner and his officers. The railways should long ago have been removed from political control.

The Premier: Every speaker to-night has expressed a desire to bring them entirely under political control.

Mr. PIESSE: That control is largely responsible for the present troubles of the system. I do not believe that the Commissioner and his executive officers, who I know are painstaking and have the interests of the system at heart, have sat down idly, allowing road transport to eat into the revenue of the railways to the point of making them unprofitable. Had the Commissioner received the support of past Governments in the direction of meeting that competition the railways would now be in a different financial situation. I shall not labour that aspect, as I know that under our present laws the railways must remain under political control. Until the law is altered, that state of things must prevail.

The Premier: The law need not be altered. It prevents that now.

Mr. PIESSE: I fail to understand why during all these years Governments have failed to introduce transport legislation to protect the railways. Other States have had such legislation for two or three years. Why has Western Australia been so slow in the matter?

The Minister for Railways: Tell us something done by the Minister against the Act governing the railways.

Mr. PIESSE: Since the Minister has asked me, I will go so far as to say that past Ministers have lacked the courage to support the Commissioner and to ask Parliament to grant him the necessary protection.

The Minister for Railways: You were saying that Ministers had too much courage and interfered too much.

Mr. PIESSE: It seems to me that as a simple business proposition the last two Ministers for Railways should have conferred to give the Commissioner some temporary protection.

Mr. Latham: We tried.

Mr. PIESSE: It should not have been impossible to do that.

Mr. Wilson: There was a Minister for Railways named Piesse.

Mr. PIESSE: Perhaps the Commissioner is responsible to some extent, but he is not wholly to blame. From the contact I have had with the Commissioner and his executive officers, I know that they are most anxious to meet the situation, but they have been frammelled by the fact that Parliament has not granted the necessary authority. It

is late in the day to bring down a Bill for the co-ordination of transport.

The Premier: We shall see what treatment the Bill will get from Parliament.

Mr. PIESSE: I do not know why with all the unemployment in this State and the expenditure of Loan Funds, attention could not have been given to the strengthening, the maintaining, and the ballasting of the railway lines.

The Minister for Railways: That is being done.

Mr. PIESSE: Many of the lines we know to be almost unsafe. Such work is long overdue.

The Minister for Railways: There is £100,000 being spent on the work this year.

Mr. PIESSE: I am pleased to hear that statement, but half a million of the money now being spent on relief works for very little return could be more profitably spent on the strengthening of the permanent way. Only a few months ago, I was told by an officer of the Railway Department that the permanent way would soon reach the danger point, unless heavy expenditure was incurred.

The Minister for Railways: I think there are 500 extra men on that particular work at present.

Mr. PIESSE: It seems to me absurd to be spending a lot of money on work that will show so little return. That money could be spent in other directions to greater advantage. There is no work apart from road operations from which better results could be obtained than in the strengthening and improving of the permanent way.

The Minister for Railways: I did not provide the Committee with details but you can read them in the report of the Commissioner of Railways, which has been laid on the Table.

Mr. Hegney: At any rate, the permanent way on the Government lines is better cared for than the permanent way controlled by the Midland Railway Company.

Mr. PIESSE: I am satisfied that a lot of this work is overdue.

Mr. J. H. Smith: The most important work that could be undertaken relates to the regrading of some of the lines.

Mr. PIESSE: There are two railway lines in my electorate that are certainly overdue for re-ballasting and I suppose there are many other agricultural lines in a similar condition. I was pleased to hear the member for Northam (Mr. Hawke) deal so fully

with the inadequate refreshment room provisions on our railways. That is one complaint that may very well lie against the Railway Department. The position is exceedingly unsatisfactory. The dining cars are very badly controlled. The lunch served on the car attached to the goldfields express is a disgrace. People have to pay 3s. 6d. for a meal that is not worth 1s.

Mr. Raphael: They charge 1s. for a piece of toast and a cup of tea.

Mr. PIESSE: I know that the position is similarly unsatisfactory in connection with the smaller refreshment rooms. Even at the Perth Central Station, the refreshment room arrangements are very poor. Knowing that many unfortunate people have but little money to spend in these days, I went there for refreshments to see what they would obtain for their money. I found that for 8d. I got a small cup of tea and two very small sandwiches. I could hardly see the meat in the latter. The whole thing was an imposition, a fraud and a disgrace. In Victoria the railway refreshment room arrangements are carried out by the Government and the conditions are much more satisfactory.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: Is the price to be charged under political control?

Mr. PIESSE: The conditions here are disgraceful. In Victoria one can get a cup of tea twice the size of that provided in this State, and two full rounds of a loaf cut into sandwiches.

Mr. Raphael: Here they even charge men who jump the trains 9d. for a sandwich.

Mr. PIESSE: I hope the Minister will take these matters into consideration. The railways should be made attractive for those who patronise them, and one advantage gained by those who travel by motor car is that they can arrange the stages so that they can get adequate refreshments at the proper time. The member for Northam suggested that up-to-date refreshment rooms should be provided at that town. I have always thought it would be wise if proper refreshment room accommodation were provided at Spencer's Brook. If the train were held up so that people could obtain a meal at the refreshment room, no time would really be lost on the journey. The dining cars have proved a failure and the sooner the Government consider the provision of better refreshment facilities, the better it will be for all concerned. As to the filling of the Commissionership on the retirement of the present occupant, I hope it will not be necessary to

go outside the State to secure an officer fit to hold the position. The work of the Commissioner and the officers of the Railway Department is purely technical and the knowledge they gain is the result of experience over many years. They deal with conditions that do not always prevail in other parts of the world and even are not present in the other States. If one Commissioner is to be appointed, or more, I hope due consideration will be given to the claims of executive officers who have done so much to place the railway system in its present position.

MR. BROCKMAN (Sussex) [10.57]: I desire to deal with the railway arrangements between Busselton and Perth, and more particularly between Nannup and the city. The Government should make the railway service more attractive to the people, who largely travel by motor car because the railway service is inconvenient and too slow. When I leave Nannup to come to Perth each Tuesday, I can give the train five hours start and pick it up at Picton. Under such conditions we cannot expect the public to patronise the railways, and the present arrangement should be considerably altered to meet the convenience of the public. The Transport Bill, which was introduced by the Minister for Railways, will penalise the people in the country districts. At Nannup we have a train service twice a week and it is absolutely necessary to get our cream to the butter factory every second day at the very outside. If we cannot get our cream to the factory in the proper time, it is graded as of second quality, which is detrimental to the men on the land at Nannup, Augusta, Margaret River and elsewhere. I hope the Minister will consider that phase. If he unduly penalises the motor traffic, that form of transport will be driven off the road, and the producers will be further penalised.

The Minister for Railways: If you read the Bill, you will see that provision is made to deal with cream cans.

The CHAIRMAN: But do not deal with that to-night because the hon. member will be out of order.

Mr. BROCKMAN: There are some other matters requiring attention. We are in need of one or two fast trains a week so that people can arrive in Perth by 6 p.m., instead of 8 p.m. Such alterations will popularise the railway service and help to regain

patronage that has been lost. The jetty at Busselton urgently requires renovation, for it is in a very dangerous condition.

Mr. Hegney: There is an amount of £148 on the Estimates for that.

Mr. BROCKMAN: And it might as well be left there, for it is totally inadequate.

Mr. Hegney: It is better than the £112 that was on the previous Government's Estimates.

Mr. BROCKMAN: The jetty requires a great deal of attention, and I hope that will be provided for in the Loan Estimates. Also the grading in the Nelson electorate requires urgent attention. I hope it will not be necessary to go outside the State to get a new Commissioner, for there should be one or two within the service quite capable of carrying out the duties.

The Premier: Judging by the speeches to-night, one would not imagine there was anyone in the service fit for the job.

Mr. BROCKMAN: I hope the Minister will be able to make some further reductions in the freights on timber, for the timber industry is of great importance to the State and will employ a great deal of labour.

The Minister for Railways: Gratitude in expectation of favours to come.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. C. Willecock—Geraldton—in reply) [10.2]: I do not think any member will expect me at this hour to reply in full to a six-hour debate. Most of the matters that have been raised during that debate will be inquired into and, I hope, with satisfaction to those who have brought them up. I am afraid some members do not realise that our railways are in a unique position in that we have fewer than 100 persons to every mile of railway. In more thickly populated States and countries the figures are much higher. In Victoria, for instance, there are about 400 persons to each mile of railway, and in England about 1,000 persons. With such a population it is easy to give great facilities for the convenience of the travelling public. The railways in this State are doing most excellent service considering that we have only 97 persons per mile of line, which renders it very difficult to give the service that is rendered. As to the new Commissioner, I can only say I regret that Mr. Evans, the Commissioner, has reached the age when, in conformity with Government policy, he must retire. Mr. Evans

has given excellent service to the State. He has been in charge of the railways during the most difficult financial period we have ever had in the history of the department. He has been a very valuable officer, firm when firmness is required, tactful when tact is required. I do not wish to make any comparison between successive Commissioners, but I can say with sincerity that Mr. Evans has been equal to the very best we have had. On behalf of the railway service and the State generally, I regret that his advancing age prevents the Government from again offering the commissionership to Mr. Evans. It seems that, contrary to Act of Parliament, the Minister is expected by some members to take an active part in the control of the railways, which under the Act is vested in the Commissioner. While the Government are actively concerned in various matters of railway policy affecting the well-being of the State, when it comes to the management of details, that is entirely for the Commissioner, without any interference by Ministers. The member for Perth said something about the retirement of railway employees. That is definitely a matter of Government policy. That policy is not applicable to the Railway Department alone, but has been extended to all departments of State and has been reviewed on a couple of occasions. We think the policy is in the best interests of the State, and at present we have no intention of again reviewing it. In conclusion, I thank members for the consideration they have shown. There has been no serious criticism of policy, and while there has been some criticism of details, that can always be attended to.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—State Batteries, £93,479. Cave House, etc., £6,014—agreed to.

Vote—Sale of Government Property, Trust Account, £1,026:

Item, Sustenance Workers' Homes—Erection and additions, £50:

Mr. HEGNEY: When speaking on the Estimates and dealing with the matter of workers' homes, I said houses could be made available for workers at a cost less than that at which they were being made available today. Skeleton houses could be made available costing about £250. Such houses could be completed by the workers them-

selves as and when they had the money available. I would like the Treasurer to state whether further amounts will be made available for the purpose I suggest.

The PREMIER: The small amount of £50 appearing on the Estimates is provided merely to clear commitments owing on some houses which were erected by the late Government at a cost of about £20,000. The money was expended under an Act which was passed in 1930. It was made available as a donation through the generosity of Sir Charles McNess. I am sorry to say there is not any money available to carry out the suggestion of the member for Middle Swan (Mr. Hegney).

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Appropriation of interest in Suspense Trust Accounts, £713,807 11s. 10d.—agreed to.

This concluded the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year.

Resolutions reported.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES—STATE TRADING CONCERNS.

In Committee.

Mr. Withers in the Chair.

Divisions—State Brickworks, £11,233; State Hotels, £38,350; State Implement and Engineering Works, £19,531—agreed to.

Division—State Quarries, £11,831:

Mr. HEGNEY: I have received many complaints with respect to the administration of the State Quarries at Boya, and I have brought them to the notice of both the Minister and the manager. One of the complaints was that the only way in which men could secure employment at the quarries was by interviewing the foreman at the Bellevue Hotel. When the Labour administration went out of office on the last occasion, the incoming Government were not long in dismissing the then foreman of the quarries. At that time the depression visited us and many of the workers were retrenched. Some were put off because they were good unionists and because the manager and others concerned in running the quarries had become antagonistic to them. A policy of victimisation was instituted. During the past three

years I made representations to Mr. Baxter, when he was Minister, on two occasions in particular, trying to get a man who had been definitely victimised reinstated at the quarries. I have gone through the process of victimisation myself by unscrupulous managers opposed to trade unionism. One man, because he was the representative of the Australian Workers' Union on the job, was definitely victimised. He would never have got back had it not been that I was able to get the Minister to have him reinstated. This is a matter to which the Government should give consideration. Not long ago, the then manager of the quarries, Mr. Starr, was got rid of. Whilst he was living on the property at Boya, he was out of work and the department did everything possible to make things difficult for him, and force him off the land. The management kept on pressing until they got him off the job. Many of the workers have complained to me from time to time of the manner in which people are picked up for employment. It was said that if a man would go down and drink with the foreman he could get a job. The qualification of a man for a position ought not to be that he is "well in" with the boss, but that he should be able to do the work. I hope the Minister will give serious consideration to this particular activity.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: This is the first I have heard of the complaint referred to by the member for Middle Swan. I will bring the matter under the notice of the Minister in control of State quarries.

Division put and passed.

Division — State Shipping Service, £185,250:

Mr. TONKIN: I have been informed that during the last couple of years, when the motor ship "Kybra" has been docked, the cargo has been loaded by scab labour or voluntary labour. The Labour Government of this State should be careful to see that only unionists are engaged for this work. In South Australia most of the work goes to volunteer labour. I understand that the volunteers get three jobs to every one a unionist gets. We should encourage unionist labour as much as possible. I hope if there is any loading to be done when next the "Kybra" goes into dock, the Government will see that only genuine unionists are employed. It is wrong that a State-owned

vessel should be loaded by other than union labour.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: This is the first time I have heard of the matter.

Mr. Latham: I have never heard of such a thing before.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The position in Adelaide, where the boat was docked, is different from that which prevails in this State. When the wharf trouble occurred in the Eastern States Federal legislation was introduced to legalise volunteer labour on the wharf. If we have any control over those who load the vessel when she is next docked, we will see that it is not volunteer labour that is employed for the loading.

Mr. COVERLEY: I should be pleased to hear from the Treasurer that the Government are negotiating for another State vessel to run on the North-West coast. There has been considerable controversy in the past concerning the shifting of wool from the pastoral areas. This goes to show that there is room for another vessel. Having so few ships available the State service is at a disadvantage. An extra vessel would be of great benefit to people along the coast, especially if it led to the installation of a fortnightly service. Another one like the "Koolinda" would fill the bill. I am aware that this service is not as popular with some members as it might be, though it is exceedingly popular with the North-West people. We have heard a great deal to-night about the necessity for railway extensions and improved tramway services, in the southern portion of the State. I would point out that the State Shipping Service is just as important to residents in the North as existing transport facilities are to those in the South. If a more frequent shipping service could be given along the coast there is a possibility of a considerable trade being done between Darwin and Fremantle. We are losing most of that business to-day because of the competition from vessels passing round the eastern side of Australia. If a monthly service could be maintained between Darwin and Fremantle this State would gain possession of a great deal of that trade, as freights would be on a better basis for shippers than they are around the other way. I hope the Treasurer will give serious consideration to this important question. I have nothing to say in criticism of the State Shipping Service. I should, however, like to refer to the tourist traffic into which it seems to have drifted.

Lately the management appear to have been catering for tourist traffic, which I regard as of little or no use to the service from the financial aspect. I do not know either that the traffic is a good advertising agency for the State. It takes the vessels off the coast just at the hottest period of the year, when they are needed for the convenience of our own people. I hope the Minister controlling the service will go into that question closely, and determine whether the method is good or bad, and whether it should be continued. Personally I see no benefit accruing to the service from the tourist traffic. Again, I noticed recently that the general manager has adopted the peculiar idea of advertising the service by turning a vessel into a jazz hall at Fremantle. I do not know the reason for that step, unless it is publicity. In any case, I do not agree with it. Does the Minister know the extra cost entailed in supplying foodstuffs and catering for the jazz proceedings recently held on the "Koolinda" at Fremantle? Further, does he know what was taken away from the boat by way of souvenirs?

The Minister for Mines: I admit I have no information on that point.

Mr. COVERLEY: I am not concerned about what was souvenired, but about what was not souvenired. I wish the visitors had souvenired the general manager, but unfortunately they left him behind. I hope the Treasurer will take into consideration the question of giving us another boat for the North-West.

Hon. P. COLLIER: On the main point raised by the hon. member, another ship for the North-West, the Government have not yet had time to consider the matter. I do believe, though, that we could more efficiently meet the requirements with the existing ships if another service were there to co-operate. I am glad that the "Koolinda" has functioned effectively. If her trips to Singapore interfere in any way with the purpose for which the ship was secured in the first place, I shall also bring that before the Minister. I look upon the "Koolinda" as my own, because I arranged for the purchase and finance while in Melbourne. I regret that she has degenerated into a jazz hall. That matter, too, will have to be considered. I am quite sure that if an opportunity presents itself to find the money to finance another ship, that proposal will be unanimously endorsed by the members of this Chamber, because our

friends of the Opposition, when I was on the North-West coast last year, were the most enthusiastic supporters of the State Shipping Service that I ever heard; so that the work will be able to go forward with the unanimous support of all hon. members.

Division put and passed.

Divisions — State Sawmills, £372,886; Wyndham Freezing, Canning and Meat Export Works, £240,000—agreed to.

This concluded the Estimates of the Trading Concerns for the year.

Resolutions reported.

House adjourned at 11.35 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 16th November, 1933.

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

QUESTION—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT, CONSOLIDATION.

Hon. J. CORNELL asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Has the consolidation of the Road Districts Act been completed and printed? 2, If so, when will copies be made available to road boards throughout the State?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1 and 2, The consolidation is completed, but it is not desirable to print it while there is an amendment before Parliament which, if passed, should be incorporated in the consolidation (Road Districts Act Amendment Act, 1933, No. 2).