

BILL—COMPANIES.*Assembly's Message.*

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to refer the Bill to a select committee of four members and requesting the Council to appoint a select committee with the same number of members, with power to confer with the members of the Assembly.

House adjourned at 11.56 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 3rd December, 1940.

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

QUESTION—AGRICULTURE.*Junior Farmer Movement.*

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Bearing in mind the success achieved by the New Zealand Government by the appointment of a permanent officer of the Agricultural Department to control the Junior Farmer Movement of the Dominion, has he considered the question of appointing an officer of the Agricultural Department to develop this movement in Western Australia and ensure leisure-time training for the youth in the farming industry? 2, If not, will he consider the appointment of such an officer?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1 and 2, This matter is under the control of the Education Department. An officer of this department is executive officer of the Junior Farmers' Federation and he arranges with teachers in various centres to assist the different clubs. Co-operation of the Agricultural Department exists and technical officers deliver lectures to members of the various clubs when requested.

QUESTION—RAILWAYS.*Special Rates.*

Mr. HILL asked the Minister for Railways: Is the Western Australian Government Railways administration the only important railway administration in Australia that refuses to grant special railway rates:—1, to meet interstate competition; 2, to meet road or shipping competition; 3, to secure traffic; and 4, to encourage industry?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, 2, 3, 4, Consistent with business principles, the Railway Administration takes all possible steps to meet competition and secure traffic.

QUESTION—PETROL RATIONING.*Tickets for January.*

Mr. CROSS (without notice) asked the Minister for Works: 1, Has he seen a paragraph in to-day's "West Australian" relative to January petrol ration tickets, in which the Chairman of the State Liquid Fuel Control Board (Mr. R. L. Millen) is reported to have stated yesterday that instructions had been received from the Commonwealth Liquid Fuel Control Board that only persons with traffic licenses covering January would be able to obtain January petrol ration tickets this month? 2, Is he aware that post offices will not issue petrol rationing tickets after December 14th until January 4th? 3, Is he aware that cars licensed for the first half of this year cannot be re-licensed until December 15? 4, Does he know whether arrangements can be made for cars not yet re-licensed for the second half year to receive petrol ration tickets between the 14th December and the 4th January?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: All I can say is that the State Transport

Board merely acts as agents for the Commonwealth Liquid Fuel Control Board, which determines the policy. A conference has been convened for next Tuesday in Melbourne at which matters of policy will be discussed and which will be attended by the chairman of the State Transport Board, to whom I will refer the hon. member's questions.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Lient.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Civil Defence (Emergency Powers).
- 2, Electoral Act Amendment (No. 1).
- 3, Police Act Amendment.
- 4, Feeding Stuffs Act Amendment.
- 5, McNess Housing Trust Act Amendment.
- 6, Mine Workers' Relief Act Amendment.
- 7, Royal Agricultural Society Act Amendment.
- 8, Road Closure.
- 9, Harbours and Jetties Act Amendment.

BILL—LOAN (£1,730,000).

Message.

Message from the Lient.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the 28th November of the debate on the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1, 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Authority to pay £75,000 from Metropolitan Traffic Trust Account to Consolidated Revenue Fund :

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Minister gave an assurance at the second reading stage that when appropriation was made from the traffic trust account it would be offset by a contribution from the main roads grant. Is it the intention to bring down a measure to that effect?

The Minister for Works: There is a Bill before the Council at the present time.

Hon. N. KEENAN: This matter has not been attended to.

The Minister for Works: That can be put in order. The Bill can be suitably amended.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. H. Millington—Mt. Hawthorn) [4.40]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco) [4.41]: I would not have spoken on the third reading of this Bill but for the receipt of a letter dated the 2nd December. This communication is from a metropolitan road board, and I should like to take the opportunity of reading it.

Mr. Cross: Is that from your South Perth friends?

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: Yes. The letter is as follows:—

I wish on behalf of my board to place our position, and incidentally the position of every other local governing body before you, in connection with the Bill which will reach you shortly, to amend the Traffic Act 1919-1935 with a view to taking £75,000 of the traffic fees into Consolidated Revenue.

These fees, after certain deductions, have been paid to local authorities for many years past and now the Government suggest that they have a right to the bulk of them, wishing to arrange for us to get what they call a quid pro quo from the petrol tax, which is an unknown quantity and at present a steadily reducing one. This, in addition to the fact that not only do we expect less from this source, but it leaves us dependent on the Commonwealth Government for payment as against the State concern for traffic fees. Further, all money disbursed from the petrol tax under

the Main Roads Act restricts the purpose for which money shall be spent, viz. construction, reconstruction and maintenance of roads. You will observe this does not cater for path construction, and we, who administer this work, believe that in these days of fast moving and heavy motor traffic, when a road is built there should, at least in the busy section, be a corresponding footpath for the safety of the public and the peace of mind of the motorist.

The local authorities' contributions from the petrol tax would not allow this, and while the Minister very glibly says we would not lose one penny (this is a red herring which needs close examination), the local authorities would have to certify that the money has been spent on roads only, failing which the money could not be obtained.

Traffic fees unencumbered as they are at present are the very life-blood of our existence and while this is a prosperous board, it would not feel the loss as keenly perhaps as others not so fortunately situated. Here I may state, that the first payment of traffic fees is overdue and several authorities had to write to the Government for their share. This has been granted but is hedged around with an agreement, all bodies are asked to sign, to the effect that if the proposed legislation is carried and the fees do not come up to the amount offered local authorities, they must refund same. This plainly indicates the Government anticipates that the local authorities will receive smaller contributions under the amended Acts.

I may say that in the matter of road boards, whose financial year ends in June as against November for municipalities, we have already budgeted for and allocated money for works up till the end of June, 1941, and if this proposed altered legislation is carried we will have to re-cast our schedule and further, so as to obtain the grant from the Main Roads Act, we will have to build roads where they are not necessary for some years perhaps, and ignore path construction which I will classify as our safety valves. It may, and possibly will mean the curtailment of certain labour which would be disastrous in this critical time, as all our men are married and in some cases with considerable families. The whole thing boiled down is that the Government want the substance and give us the shadow.

Whilst reading all this, which I hope you will, I will be glad if you make a review of the very important work local governing bodies are performing in a strictly honorary capacity, and I contend it is unfair to harness them in the proposed manner. I would point out that in many road districts the tax in the pound is very high and any further taxation on top of that for war purposes is unthinkable.

I am reliably informed that the Minister, in introducing the suggested legislation, stressed the fact that those local authorities who signed the agreement to refund any existing payment in case the Bill becomes law, thereby expressed their consent to such proposed alteration. This is far from the truth. I may remind you that with the exception of one board in the metropolitan area, the Local Gov-

ernment Association is unanimously opposed to the alteration and to show that not only the Local Government Association is, the Road Board Conference of one hundred and fifty delegates, after the Minister had spent twenty minutes explaining why they, and we, should allow the Government to take these fees, unanimously, without a city representative speaking, voted against the desire of the Government. Similar action took place at district conferences at Wagon and Merredin and one other, after the Minister had addressed them. This Act definitely shows the city and country are combined in this opposition.

The expressed desire to have this proposed alteration for one year only, then subject to further continuance by the wish of Parliament, is viewed by us as the "thin edge of the wedge," and if adopted we would be thrown back at least twelve months in the development of the district.

Since writing the above, I now ascertain that the proposed Bill provides that the Government intend to take £75,000 in lieu of as previously, 75 per cent. of the traffic fees. This adds insult to injury, as it is anticipated owing to war conditions and petrol restrictions, fewer registrations will be made. In this case the local authorities will get the leavings only after the Government have taken the £75,000.

I should like to place the letter in question on the table of the House so that members may be in a position to read it.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 14:

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I move an amendment—

That in line 7 of paragraph (b) after the word "applicant" the words "upon the terms set out in the provisos to this subsection and" be inserted.

The proposed new Subsection 6, which is embodied in paragraph (b), will enable the Government to make regulations to fix the rates of interest, the conditions of advances and the conditions governing the repayment of those advances. In order to give effect to the suggestions I made during the second reading debate, I wish to provide some control over the making of regulations,

which will be promulgated while Parliament is in recess. Members will, therefore, have no opportunity to question them or to deal with them in any way. I wish to conserve the rights of clients who do not happen to be under the Industries Assistance Board. I have three other amendments I propose to move in order to give effect to what I have in view.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I oppose the amendment, which presupposes that the Leader of the Opposition will be successful in securing approval for the provisos he intends to move later on. My firm view is that the provisos will be defeated on their merits. Paragraph (b) includes what will be known as Subsection 6 of Section 14 of the principal Act, and deals with the making of regulations. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition is not afraid that the terms and conditions to be prescribed by regulations, which will be tabled when the House next meets—

Hon. C. G. Latham: That will be too late.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: —will contain anything that will not ease the burden and make the terms and conditions as reasonable as possible. I think the Leader of the Opposition really believes that will be the position.

Mr. BOYLE: The object of the amendment and those yet to be moved is to make a murky position a little clear. The proposed new subsection contains the germs of future trouble. We are asked to give the Government a blank cheque.

The Premier: No, not a blank cheque.

Mr. BOYLE: What else?

The Premier: In view of the undertaking we gave—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Avon need not pay any attention to interjections.

Mr. BOYLE: The object of the amendments is to fill in the blank cheque. The Government has been provided with £570,000 for drought relief and the Bill contains nothing to indicate how the money is to be distributed. I have a letter from a farmer in my electorate who is a client of the Bank of New South Wales. His bank manager has refused his consent to that man obtaining any advance under this legislation. I am sure the Minister cannot reasonably adopt an attitude opposed to any attempt to build up the measure. If he were to adopt such an attitude, it would

not appeal to the 2,000 men the Premier said would be brought under this legislation. The amendments on the notice paper have received much attention and have been framed in order to make the Bill workable. We have had no assurance from the Minister that the heads of financial institutions will consent to their clients adding to their indebtedness or agree to abrogate their position as first mortgagees. The Bill represents an attempt by the Government to secure the right to promulgate regulations under the Industries Assistance Act and to shut off all opposition until Parliament reassembles, possibly next August. The amendments are logical.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am sorry the Minister was unavoidably absent when we discussed the Bill, which represents the worst type of legislation that can possibly be introduced in that it interferes with the rights of people.

The Premier: Well, discard this legislation and we will act under the old law.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That would be far more honest. The Act provides all sorts of limitations and the Government seeks power to promulgate regulations the effect of which will be to override protective sections of the Act. What is the use of our passing laws if the Government will not observe them? That is why we are getting into disfavour.

The Premier: No.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It is so. As the member for Avon pointed out, the Government asks us to give it a blank cheque. We know the worst form of legislation is that by regulation. It takes away the power of Parliament. The Minister could pass an Act containing a clause to the following effect:—"Notwithstanding anything in the Industries Assistance Act contained, empowering the Government to make advances upon certain conditions, the Government may make advances from the Commonwealth advance of £570,000 and provide for interest and repayment." Had the Minister desired to take the House into his confidence, he would have tabled the regulations.

The Minister for Lands: I cannot. We have not got the terms and conditions from the Commonwealth.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I presume the money is here.

The Premier: No.

The Minister for Lands: We do not even know the terms.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Perhaps the Treasurer will inform me, if I may be permitted to ask him, through you, Mr. Chairman, whether the State Government proposes to make advances in anticipation of receiving this money from the Commonwealth.

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Otherwise I would suggest that we adjourn this matter and wait until we know what the conditions are.

The Premier: That will be next January.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Premier will not know until after the flotation of the present loan?

The Premier: No.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We know that £570,000 has been advanced to the State and that no interest is to be charged to the State for the first year.

The Premier: We do not know even that.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I know it. I know that the Commonwealth Government, provided there is not a change in the Government between now and January, has given an undertaking that it will pay half the interest for the remaining six years. Certain moneys will be repayable during the last four years of the term of seven years, when the money will be repaid by the State to the Commonwealth Government, unless other arrangements are made. It is because of that fact that I raise these objections. We had a full-dress discussion on the point during the second reading. I am concerned about the farmer whose property is already encumbered, and about the farmer who finds himself unable to raise new money, but whose property is unencumbered.

The Premier: There are not many such.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Unfortunately, that is so, but there may be some. My desire is that they should get such assistance as they may require. They will be able to obtain some credit, but not credit for feed for stock or for fertilisers. They will not want credit for water, I am pleased to say. It looks as if that difficulty has been overcome. I trust the Minister will reconsider his decision; it is a wise man who will, if necessary, alter his decision. We are as well aware of the difficulties as is the Minister.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is idle for the Leader of the Opposition to suggest that terms and conditions have been decided upon, when in fact they have not. We do not know under what terms and conditions the money will be lent to the State for the purpose of being lent to the farmers, notwithstanding what has appeared in the Press on the matter. Since the publication of the terms referred to by the Leader of the Opposition, the matter has been discussed by all the Premiers; and the outcome of that discussion was that nothing definite could be decided upon until the Premiers met again in January. It is not known whether the money will be raised by the Commonwealth under its loan programme, or obtained from the Commonwealth Bank, or whether it will be an ordinary loan raising, subject to the terms and conditions of repayment set out in the Financial Agreement. It is useless for the Leader of the Opposition to say that he knows the terms and conditions. We do not know them and therefore cannot prescribe them.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I will give them to you in a minute.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Leader of the Opposition may have read something in the Press.

Mr. Hughes: The Commonwealth Government might speak with a new voice to-morrow.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Leader of the Opposition cannot say with accuracy that the terms and conditions have been prescribed.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Near enough!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They cannot be prescribed yet. A discussion upon the loan arrangements will take place at the next Premiers' Conference.

Hon. C. G. Latham: We will have the reply from the Minister to-morrow in the Legislative Council. I am determined on that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Good! The Leader of the Opposition is endeavouring, by his amendments—I presume we are discussing both—

The CHAIRMAN: I suggest to the Minister that, as one amendment is contingent upon the other, discussion on both may be allowed, provided it is relevant. I will not permit any irrelevant discussion.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The purpose of the amendments is to relax certain interest conditions which are to be found in Section 14 of the Industries Assistance Act. That is the first intention. Instead of making hard and fast rules, we desire to give the farmers every benefit the State gets with respect to the borrowing of this money; in fact, more benefit than the State gets, because the State will accept the responsibility for administration charges.

Mr. Boyle: What security does the farmer give?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The security mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition in his speech, which I have read very carefully. He said, "All we are asking for is that the farmer should give such security over his crops or stock as he can offer."

Mr. Boyle: A first mortgage.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is definitely what the Leader of the Opposition said—"All we want to do is to take as security the stock or the crops that the farmers put in."

Hon. C. G. Latham: For which the money was advanced.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But the effect of the hon. member's proviso will be to give a prior claim to the institutions holding a mortgage. I do not know whether the Leader of the Opposition realises the benefit he is proposing to confer upon those institutions. He says that Governments of any colour are prepared to treat farmers' affairs much more leniently than are institutions; but the effect of these amendments is to give to the institutions not merely a prior claim over current proceeds and current debts, but to allow them to make repayments to themselves of past debts and interest that have been owing for years.

The Premier: Out of this money.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. The Leader of the Opposition proposes to give to the Minister a second mortgage only. That is the effect of the amendment. I have no particular objection to the first proviso, which in my opinion is innocuous and does not alter any existing practice. But the second proviso would have the effect of placing the Government in the position of a second mortgagee.

Mr. Seward: Except with regard to land.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: As I say, the second proviso takes away the right of priority under Section 15 of the Industries Assistance Act, while the first one confers upon institutions holding a first mortgage the right to take all the proceeds. Surely that is not the intention of the Leader of the Opposition, who I think has not realised the effect of his amendments. If he did, I think he would say, as the Government says, that it is incumbent upon the Government to accept this responsibility as a loan to be repaid to the Commonwealth. We are expected by the Commonwealth to repay the loan. Needless to say, we pressed the Commonwealth to consider making an outright grant; and we said that if the Commonwealth Government did not do that, the least it could do was to share with us the loss of any money which might prove to be uncollectable.

Hon. C. G. Latham: If that is the case, why all this fuss?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I cannot understand why the Leader of the Opposition objects. Perhaps the reason is that he does not understand just what we are hoping for to-day. Acting in the best interests of the farmer, we waive the provisions of Section 14 of the Industries Assistance Act. We further say that we will make regulations prescribing terms for repayment in accordance with the terms upon which the money is lent to us. I would not object to a proviso that the rate of interest to be paid by borrowers shall not exceed the total paid by the State.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I am prepared to accept your word for that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We are prepared to make the repayments as simple, convenient and easy as possible. What happens to-day? When the crop proceeds come to the Agricultural Bank Commissioners as repayments under the I.A.B. and there is a bank or firm with a lien over which the State has priority, the State stands aside. It does not interfere with the course of business if the bank or firm has a legitimate claim. The bank takes its reasonable share and returns the balance of the proceeds. That is what is intended under this Bill. The Leader of the Opposition should understand that at this stage we cannot prescribe for repayments, because we do not know the terms and conditions on

which the money will be advanced to us. If he is prepared to take my word in regard to the interest, the other matter as regards security is collateral, and the intention is to do what is best in the interests of the farmers.

Mr. BOYLE: The Minister has said that we are missing the basis upon which the Bill has been framed. We are endeavouring to make the approach to this money equal for all. We want to put the farmers financed by the Associated Banks on the same footing as the Agricultural Bank clients.

Mr. Raphael: Whose money is the Government advancing?

Mr. BOYLE: Commonwealth money loaned to the State for equal distribution among all victims of drought. The Act provides that farmers under a first mortgage to financial institutions must secure the consent of those institutions before they can make application. The Minister's ideas would be quite all right if the distribution of this money was restricted to clients of the Agricultural Bank, but about 50 per cent. of our wheatgrowers are financed by the Associated Banks and financial institutions. The Minister must admit that applications will be made under the second schedule to the Act which includes the undertaking—

I am willing to give an assignment of successive seasons' crop until the whole of the money advanced has been paid off; also a mortgage on demand.

How can a farmer give a mortgage on demand in defiance of the first mortgagee? Several farmers in my district have not been able to submit applications because their first mortgagee will not sign the consent. Now we have the position that regulations will be framed and 50 per cent. of the wheatgrowers will be debarred from applying for relief. In spite of this, the Associated Banks are not willing to carry them on. Members on this side of the Chamber contended that a separate measure should have been introduced and administered by an authority such as the Rural Relief Fund Trustees.

The Minister for Lands: We explored all those possibilities.

Mr. BOYLE: Then I regret the result of the exploration. The Minister is arguing a case for the Agricultural Bank and its

clients, and is entirely disregarding the claims of the farmers not financed by that institution.

The Minister for Lands: You are arguing the case of the financial institutions.

Mr. BOYLE: No, I am arguing the case of all victims of drought. One farmer I know requires relief to the extent of £300 and the Bank of New South Wales, as first mortgagee, flatly declined to give consent. I am not arguing the case of the financial institutions, but members of this side of the Chamber have a duty to ensure that all drought-stricken farmers are treated alike.

Mr. HUGHES: What difference will the words make to the proposed new subsection? To say that the subsection will be operative upon the terms set out in the provisos will not alter the meaning of the subsection in the slightest, but will merely add a number of words that are redundant, thus making the section of the Act more complicated. If the amendment is defeated and the other provisos of which notice has been given are adopted, they will have the same force and effect as if these words were not inserted. If there is anything wrong with our legislation, it is that too many superfluous words are used to express it.

Hon. C. G. Latham: And the Government is assisting that by proposing to legislate by regulation.

Mr. HUGHES: I am just as much opposed to legislation by regulation as is the Leader of the Opposition, but that has no bearing upon the verbose manner in which we express the law. I suggest that the hon. member should withdraw his amendment and proceed with the provisos. I shall vote against the amendment.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Minister said he was unaware of the conditions on which this money would be advanced. In the "West Australian" of the 28th November last, the following appeared:—

LOANS TO STATES.

Allocation Announced.

Canberra, Nov. 27.—Allocation of the £2,770,000 approved by the Loan Council for distribution to the States was announced to-day by the Minister for Commerce (Sir Earle Page) as follows:—New South Wales, £750,000; Victoria, £600,000; Queensland, £250,000; South Australia, £600,000; Western Australia, £570,000; Tasmania, nil.

Sir Earle Page said the money would be repayable by the States at the end of seven years. No repayments would be made for the first three years but the States would be required to make four annual payments commencing with the fourth year. The Commonwealth Government would bear the whole of the interest for the first year and half of the interest for the remaining six years.

The States, he added, had already submitted their plans to the Federal Government for the distribution of their allocations and would distribute moneys to farmers in accordance with the plans which had been approved.

I have not seen any contradiction of that statement and therefore we can say those are the conditions. I have given notice of these amendments because of the doubt created by past happenings. Grants have been made to the State to help necessitous farmers and in some cases the money has been advanced to Agricultural Bank clients mainly and very little to anyone else.

The Premier interjected.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: How many farmers on marginal areas were clients of the financial institutions?

The Premier: They did not take securities in marginal areas.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: They did.

The Premier: Very little.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: They took such securities and are regretting it.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is getting away from the subject matter of the amendment, which does not deal with previous loans.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am pointing out why I have doubts regarding the present loan.

The CHAIRMAN: If the hon. member does not lead up to the terms of the amendment, I cannot permit him to continue.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I shall do so. Because of past experience, I am doubtful what will happen in future. We desire to give the Government full power to take the necessary security to cover the amount of money advanced.

The Minister for Lands: And you would take it away by your amendment.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We do not want to hamper the Government in the direction of having to provide more money than is necessary. Some farmers will be able to get some credit, and we do not want to debar them from doing so, but immediately an application is made for a portion of the £570,000, the whole of the assets of the

farmer will come under a lien and the farmer will be unable to get one penny of credit outside, except when release is granted by the Agricultural Bank Commissioners. When one comes to consider the number, one realises that there will probably be a good deal of chaos. My object is to assist the Government, and to relieve the farmer from some of the difficulties involved in the lines on which the measure proceeds. We do not want a secured creditor to come along and grab all the proceeds of the first harvest. I regret that this is the only means the Government has been able to devise for carrying out what is desired. Will the Government give an undertaking to submit the contemplated regulations before Parliament adjourns? If there were a change of Government in the Federal sphere, I believe these obligations would be honoured.

The CHAIRMAN: There is no reference to change of Government in the clause.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: This is not a highly ingenious piece of legislation; it merely asks power to do by regulation anything the Government may desire to do. In legislation of this kind there is grave danger. Were I to introduce such a measure, I should consider myself guilty of carelessness and want of consideration for the farmer and many other evil things.

The PREMIER: I get rather tired of this sham-fighting. I have stated clearly and without any ambiguity or attempt to deceive that under existing legislation the Government is bound to treat everyone alike in regard to any advance made, whether for drought relief or any other purpose. The Loan Council has not yet determined the conditions of the necessary loan. The Leader of the Opposition is aware that the present Federal Treasurer has not had either time or opportunity to make himself fully acquainted with all the details of the subject, as he has been all but exclusively engaged with budget matters. The Federal Treasurer said he could not give details as to the raising of the necessary funds because he had not had an opportunity to study the matter, the budget having occupied all his time.

The CHAIRMAN: I hope the Premier will not drift out.

The PREMIER: A cogent reason why all details cannot be prescribed by regulation is that they have not been decided on yet.

The chairman of the Loan Council has not been able to give the matter the necessary attention. We as a Government could, without consulting Parliament, have relied on the Industries Assistance Act as it stands to-day to do all that is necessary in regard to drought relief as we have done in the past, and with excellent results to farmers coming under the supervision of the Industries Assistance Board. We could do that on this occasion, were it not for the fact that there is something to be decided. I have no doubt that what the Leader of the Opposition read from the Press will be carried out, but as yet it has not been definitely arranged. Still, the promise has been made, and I am prepared to stake my existence on its being carried out honourably. I had to submit to rejection of the proposals which were made on behalf of Western Australia. I have heard members opposite rail at actions of private banking institutions. The Union Bank has been made the subject of questions in regard to its actions and lack of consideration towards farmers.

Mr. Stubbs: Those statements are quite true.

The PREMIER: I agree with that. Government institutions, however, have never got down to that type of business. Everything in connection with the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board has been done in a reasonable spirit. The measures establishing those two institutions were described as harshly drawn, but no difficulties were experienced when they were put into operation. The Government, however, will not surrender its right to receive repayment of this fund by permitting private financial institutions to enrich themselves with money found by the State. We want to give their clients every assistance by way of reduced interest and easy repayment if the private institutions will permit us to do so. In many cases the farmer has only a nominal interest in the farm, which the private financial institution could take possession of at any time if it so desired. However, the majority of banks are anxious to help the agricultural industry through the present crisis. In this instance they can do so without throwing good money after bad as appears to have been done. Whatever money is advanced on agricultural securities in this instance will have more than a reasonable chance of being repaid.

Of course if we continue to strike droughts, that cannot be helped; but such has not been the experience in Western Australia. During the last 26 or 27 years this State has known only three droughts. After a drought the farmer has not known whether he should put in a crop or not. He was asking himself, "Why should I take worry on myself and put in a crop, and then be offered 1s. 3d. a bushel? Is it worth while putting in a crop at all?" Fifteen or 16 months ago wheat could not be sold at all anywhere in the world. Private financial institutions were still carrying on farmers in a business with those hazards. All those hazards are now gone. I have no fear that the banks in their dealings with clients will not agree that the farmer shall have something which they cannot afford to give him—namely, money at 1½ per cent. They could do that, of course; but they have other securities offering at 3 or 4 per cent. In this instance they would say, "If you can get that money to improve our security, we will stand aside to let you get it." In their own interest as well as that of the industry, they will agree to do the fair thing.

What we propose to do we are doing with full responsibility. The members of the Country Party say they do not like the Bill, and do not want it, that in fact they want to see it defeated. Well, the Government will withdraw it. Really, the Bill will make the position easy; we will be able to say to the farmers, "We will give you £200 and you will pay less than 2 per cent. for the money, and get it for nothing in the first year. Then if you can pay it back after the first year, so much the better." They will realise that it is their duty to pay it back as quickly as possible. That is all that we want to do and we should not be sham fighting in this way much longer. The object of the Bill is to give concessions and members opposite are opposing it. We should not have hampering provisos such as have been moved, provisos that will not get the people into any better position to produce their crops. I do not remember that the Premier of a State has ever given a solemn assurance of what the Government policy is, that that solemn assurance has not been kept. Nobody has ever been able to say, "You have deliberately hoodwinked us." The Government has a full sense of its responsi-

bility and so I repeat that the object of the Bill is to grant concessions which otherwise the farmers would not get. Consequently, it should be accepted by the House. We are not out to do any injury to the farmers; we are out to help them as much as we can over a critical period. I am sorry the Leader of the Opposition has moved the amendment, which, if carried, would make us surrender some of our rights in respect of taxpayers' money for which all the people in the State are responsible. The probable effect of what the hon. member proposes would be that we would put money advanced for drought relief into the coffers of some financial institution. I hope the Committee will not agree to the amendment.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I object to the Premier referring to this as a sham fight.

The Premier: That is my opinion.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am going to accept the Premier's challenge to withdraw the Bill. He should withdraw it because there is no need for it. In any case, there will be no money repaid until after next harvest, so that there will be plenty of time to give consideration to the matter. I understand that all concessions will be passed on to the farmers, irrespective of whoever they may be, and after that we can come along, when the conditions are known, and do everything in a decent manner by introducing legislation with which we can deal. As I said, there will be no repayments until after next harvest and by that time the elections will be taking place. I accept the Premier's challenge and ask him to withdraw the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is not much doubt that it is the Leader of the Opposition who is engaged in a sham fight. Over last week-end an irresponsible member of the Country Party put over the air that the Government had sent the Minister for Lands to the country, or rather that he had gone away to evade responsibility in connection with the introduction of this measure. That was not merely a misstatement but a deliberate and unnecessary lie. Now the Leader of the Opposition declares that in spite of responsible statements made by the Premier that this money will be accepted as a loan for which the State will be responsible and distri-

buted under the best terms, he declares, "No, you must not do that." This is an enabling Bill for that purpose. Its object is to waive the essential provisions of the Industries Assistance Act, which will not permit us to give the best terms to the farmers. Yet the Leader of the Opposition declares that we must not do that. If we are to lend this money under the existing law, we must lend it under the terms and conditions set out in that law, and we must collect 6 per cent. interest for it. The Leader of the Opposition contends that not merely are we interfering with priority claims and rights under the existing law, but in his short proviso he sets out that for all future advances there must not be priority claims. So he puts out of joint every advance made for seasonal reasons. Is it not a fact that no matter what institution makes such advances, whether they be for drought relief or anything else, the mortgagee has the right—and it is the usual practice—to make collections from crop proceeds. But the Leader of the Opposition by his proviso removes that right and says, "No, you shall not." Let us try to be reasonable. It is all very well for the Leader of the Opposition to say that it does not need a genius to produce a Bill of this nature. I assure him, however, that it needed a lot of research to eliminate the undesirable features which could have been included. Have a look at the Queensland Act.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Have a look at your own Act, under which you are going to operate.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Let us ease the burden, where it is a burden, by saying that the provisions of the Act shall not apply, and that the regulations to be framed shall prescribe conditions that will be fair and reasonable. The Leader of the Opposition knows that is the desire of the Government; he knows that we want to make it as easy as possible for the farmers. We are modifying the Act in the manner proposed in the sincere desire to lend this money under the best possible conditions.

Mr. STUBBS: Before the question is put, there are one or two questions I should like the Minister to answer. The Act of 1914 was passed during a strenuous period through which the agricultural industry was passing, a strenuous period brought about

by a severe drought. When the measure was going through the House, its consideration occupied considerable time because the desire was to make it workable. Unfortunately, however, anomalies crept in and those anomalies have never been removed. There was a schedule which gave preference to quite a number of industries and persons, and to my mind they should never have appeared in the legislation. Let me give one illustration. No. 8 of the preferential creditors was the storekeeper who provided the necessities of life for the farmers. I merely mention that to ask a question. Will the Act and its amendments help only the man on the land who is not under the Agricultural Bank? The member for Avon has asked the Committee to consider the position of many people in his electorate. I have in my electorate many who are not clients of the Agricultural Bank, and I should like the Government to say whether the intention is to protect the interests solely of the Agricultural Bank clients. I do not contend that they are not worthy of every consideration at the hands of members of this House. If it is intended solely to protect the interests of the Agricultural Bank, then I can visualise a number of people being driven from the land. Where will they go? They will probably join the ranks of the unemployed in the city. My plea is that not only Agricultural Bank clients but those who are under the Associated Banks—and some of the men who control the private banks in the State are not as sympathetic to the man on the land as they should be because they do not understand the conditions under which he is living—should receive the benefits of this Act. I am concerned about a number of men in my electorate who are not clients of the Agricultural Bank, and I want to know whether they will be assisted under this measure.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, definitely.

Mr. SEWARD: If the outside mortgagee could possibly calculate what priority of security he is going to give under this Bill, there might be some reasonable chance of his giving consent, but it is impossible. A man may have an advance of £1,000 or £1,500 and under this Bill he may seek to obtain £200 or £250 to carry him on. He goes to the mortgagee and asks his consent to give priority of security to the Government. That mortgagee is not content to

think that £250 will be the limit of the liability. The Premier and the Minister know perfectly well that the trouble will not arise now but in 12 months' time when the man has to carry on for the succeeding year. Suppose he cannot do so.

The Premier: Suppose he has a good crop.

Mr. SEWARD: In those circumstances, the outlook would be all right, but we are not concerned with what happens when things go right but with what happens when they go wrong. People outside the Government cannot say, "This section or that will not be enforced; we are going to be sympathetic." The outsider is concerned only with what appears in the Industries Assistance Act. The conditions appearing therein are the conditions he assumes will be enforced. If the provisions of the Act are not to be enforced, the fact should be made explicit in the Bill itself so that people will know exactly where they are. In those circumstances, mortgagees might be prepared to give their consent. But the position might be that at the end of seven years the first mortgagee, who holds security for a debt of £1,000, might have another debt of £700 or £1,000 owing, in addition to his loan and would not consent to give priority of security in respect of all the assets. On the other hand, the advance might be for £4,000 or £5,000, and the mortgagee would not be able to find any more money to assist the man. The farmer thereupon goes to the Government to obtain money to carry on and is told that he must give the Government first call on assets worth from £5,000 to £7,000 for an advance of £200, which is out of all proportion. The Leader of the Opposition's amendment stipulates that the security of the land should be sufficient. Under the Industries Assistance Act, if a man accepted £200 advance, he could not sell a few poultry or sheep or anything else unless he obtained the consent of the Industries Assistance Board. From past experience we know that by the time the unfortunate farmer established contact with the Commissioners and obtained consent for the sale, the market would be gone and his chance of selling would be lost. We need to have conditions clearly set out in the Bill so that the farmer and the mortgagee will know exactly what they are. The Minister said he regretted that up to date the farmers had been tardy in applying for relief. An Agri-

cultural Bank inspector came to me on Saturday and said, "The Commissioners want to know why I do not send in applications for drought relief. As a matter of fact, the farmers will not sign these forms. They will not bind themselves to these conditions, to the provisions of the Industries Assistance Act, thus mortgaging cattle, poultry, sheep and land owned by their wives as well as their own land." That is what I said the other night. Many of these men have not been under the Act.

Mr. Watts: And do not want to be.

Mr. SEWARD: That is so; but they may have to come under it in order to get this relief. That is our reason for pressing for explicit terms to be included in the Bill. I am not worrying about the terms of interest. Both the Premier and the Minister have stated that whatever interest the Commonwealth Government charges will be passed on to the farmers, and that so far as can be gathered it will not be more than 2 per cent., because the Government will pay half. I am not worried about the repayment conditions, because they are dependent on the terms laid down by the Commonwealth Government, but I am concerned as to what will be prescribed by regulation. With a view to ascertaining the position, a telegram was sent to Mr. Prowse, M.H.R., asking under what conditions the money was being made available to the State Government. His reply was as follows:—

With reference to your wire, the Minister advises that the position is that the Commonwealth Government gave the States discretion as to the terms and conditions under which the money would be advanced for drought relief. Each State Government would know better than the Commonwealth Government its own particular circumstances. The money, of course, has been loaned to the States.

We are not worried about the rate of interest and the terms of repayment. I am prepared to accept the public statement of the Government that they will be in line with those imposed by the Commonwealth Government. We are concerned about the provisions of the Industries Assistance Act under which a man is bound hand and foot. Those provisions will influence private mortgagees to refuse consent to waive their security in favour of the Government. That is why to a great extent the proposed assistance will be confined to Agricultural Bank clients instead of being made available to others. It is because of those conditions

I am opposing the Bill. It is not a sham fight on my part or on the part of other members on this side of the House. We are anxious to have this money made available under the best possible conditions. The only effect of the Bill will be that private mortgagees will not give their consent and farmers will be forced to secure private assistance at a charge of 5½ per cent. instead of receiving the drought relief money provided by the Commonwealth Government at a lower rate of interest.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	16
Noes	..	..	..	21

Majority against 5

AYES.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. McLarty
Mr. Berry	Mr. Patrick
Mr. Boyle	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Hill	Mr. Seward
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Latham	Mr. Warner
Mr. Mann	Mr. Willmott
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Doney

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Coverley	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Oross	Mr. Pantou
Mr. Fox	Mr. Raphael
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. F. C. L. Smith
Mr. Holman	Mr. Triat
Mr. Hughes	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Wise
Mr. Leahy	Mr. Withers
Mr. Millington	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Needham	

(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. J. H. Smith	Mr. Collier
Mr. Watts	Mr. Hawke
Mr. North	Mr. Styants
Mr. Stubbs	Mr. Tonkin

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. McDONALD: I move an amendment—

That a new paragraph to stand as 6 (b) be added to proposed new Subsection (6):—

(b) Notwithstanding anything in the principal Act contained, such regulations shall provide that in any case where the Board is of opinion that it is desirable to do so the Board may at any time agree in writing with any applicant or with any creditor of an applicant for the waiver or postponement of any charge arising under the principal Act wholly or in part or to any basis or method of application or division of the proceeds of the realisation of any property the subject of any such charge.

The intention of the amendment is to make sure that the Industries Assistance Board has a certain power, namely, if it thinks fit to do so, to waive or postpone the statu-

tory lien which is created by the principal Act and also to agree with the farmer or with any creditor of the farmer who might be a mortgagee as to the application or division of the proceeds of the realisation of any property that the farmer owns. If a crop which is under lien is to be realised, the board, if it so desires, can arrange with the private mortgagee that the proceeds shall be shared on whatever basis the board prescribes.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. McDONALD: I discussed this matter with one of the bank managers. He informed me that he was able to work with the Agricultural Bank Commissioners, in regard to seasonal advances, on very satisfactory terms. Under Subsection (4) of Section 51 of the Agricultural Bank Act it is provided that the Commissioners may at any time agree in writing with any borrower, or any creditor of the borrower, to waive the statutory charge, wholly or in part, in any case where the Commissioners are of opinion that it is desirable to do so. My amendment is similar in wording and it has an enabling power only. It will not require the Industries Assistance Board to waive or postpone any lien, or make any agreement as to the proceeds of the crop or other property, with any private mortgagee or other creditor, but will give it power to do so if it thinks that is desirable. The amendment will confer a useful power upon the board; it will also give the board some elasticity, and help to remove some of the apprehension that has been expressed by members regarding the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is nothing new in the amendment as it affects the practice of to-day. It will make it mandatory upon the Industries Assistance Board to give consideration to certain applications or claims, and to consider the waiving of its own rights, as well as the giving of priority to other claims. Since that obtains in actual practice in every year, more particularly in connection with superphosphate purchases, machinery parts, etc., there is no objection to suggesting to the board that it shall consider any application made in writing in the manner proposed.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 3, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—ESCHEAT (PROCEDURE).

Message.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the 28th November of the debate on the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Justice in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 4—agreed to.

Clause 5—Notice to be published:

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 after the word "Gazette" the following words be inserted:—"and in a newspaper published in Perth and circulating in the district in which the property is situated."

The clause provides for the insertion of the requisite notice only in the "Government Gazette." That publication is not extensively read. Those who may be interested in property should be given notice through other sources, such as would be provided if my amendment were agreed to.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The amendment will improve the Bill. Newspapers are more widely read than is the "Government Gazette."

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 6 to 12, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—FISHERIES ACT AMENDMENT.*Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the Assembly's amendment made to the Council's amendment No. 4.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

- 1, Municipal Corporations Act Amendment.

With an amendment.

- 2, Mental Treatment Act Amendment.

Without amendment.

BILL—BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT.*Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of 10 amendments made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 5.—Delete the words "thirty-first day of May" in line 10, and substitute the words "thirtieth day of April."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Council's amendment reverses the decision arrived at by this Chamber and restores the original provision in the Bill. The object is to extend the burning period and, in view of the debate in the Legislative Council, I do not think that point was clearly understood. The department desired as a concession, that permission should not be necessary throughout the year but fixed a date that was reasonable at a time when bush fires were not so prevalent. The Council suggests the 30th April as the better date. When the Bill was considered in this Chamber, the member for Pingelly thought the safer date would be the 31st May, and the Committee agreed with him. In this matter I am prepared to be guided by country

members who have had experience. Perhaps the increasing of the period for a further month may be warranted, but I would like to hear members on the point. In the meantime I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Mr. SEWARD: There seems to have been complete misapprehension in the Legislative Council regarding the effect of the Bill. In this particular instance the provision applies to prohibited areas of which there are only two, and these are situated in the South-West. The objection in the Council was raised by members representing South-West Provinces, and they seem to regard the 31st May as rather late. In the prohibited areas, permission from the Minister is necessary for the lighting of fires at any time. I shall not take strenuous objection to the date proposed by the Council.

The Minister for Lands: In a dry year it might be desirable to have the advantage of this provision.

Mr. SEWARD: Yes, after the shocking bush fires that occurred in Victoria, officials were sent from that State to examine the position in Western Australia, and they spoke highly of our precautionary measures. We have a good Act, and I do not think the precautionary measures should be undermined. We know that from time to time agitations arise against this or that restriction. We have valuable timber in our forest areas, and we cannot be too careful in safeguarding that asset.

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

No. 2. Clause 6.—Delete the word "ten" in line 5, page 4, and substitute the word "six."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In this instance the provision relates to the fire breaks necessary before a person is permitted to set fire to grass lands. The Council proposes to reduce the width of the break from 10 feet to 6 feet. Since the provision applies to the 15th December, the burn must take place between 8 a.m. and midnight and the approval of the local authorities is required, I can see no serious objection to the Council's amendment. More particularly is that so since there is provision for two fire breaks so that the reduction from 10ft. to 6ft. does not seriously matter. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 3. Clause 7—Delete paragraph (a).

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The provision in the Bill does not prevent burning but increases the period during which certain precautions are necessary. I am not sure that the Legislative Council is quite aware of the effect of the proposed alteration. If I interpret the debate in that House correctly, the amendment was regarded as consequential. Extra precautions are necessary in dry years, and it may be that adequate provision is made in the date suggested by the Upper House. While I am not particularly strong in my opposition to the proposal, I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Mr. SEWARD: This is an entirely different matter from that previously considered. The members of the Legislative Council seem to have adopted an extraordinary attitude. The Chairman of Committees of that House indicated that the amendment was consequential upon the alteration of the previous dates, although Clause 7 has nothing whatever to do with the matter contained in the previous clauses. In this instance the application is State-wide, but imposes no additional hardship. The burning off season extends from November to the end of February or the beginning of March, during which certain precautions are necessary, one of which is that a man must advise his neighbour of his intention to burn. Originally the proposal was that that should be done up to the 30th April, but we extended the date to the 31st May. Experience in the Great Southern and Eastern districts suggested that the latter date was more reasonable as the conditions in May are more often dry than wet.

The Minister for Lands: And this provision imposes no hardship.

Mr. SEWARD: None at all. I ask the Committee to disagree to the Council's amendment.

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

No. 4. Clause 7—Delete paragraph (e).

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Here again the indications are that the Legislative Council did not quite understand the

position. The clause does not provide any new rights for the Forest Department or local authorities, but merely ensures that existing rights are maintained. We should preserve those statutory rights. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

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

No. 5. Clause 8—Delete the words "thirty-first day of May" in lines 2 and 3, page 6, and substitute the words "thirtieth day of April."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This amendment concerns the depositing of live coals or refuse from producer gas containers and has reference to dates once more. In extremely dry years it may be necessary to insist on a space of 20ft. during May as well as April. That is all that is involved. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Mr. SEWARD: I support the Minister's point of view. Last Thursday a prominent official of the Road Board Association told me of three fires that had been caused by a gas producer plant when the vehicle was proceeding down a hill in the Great Southern districts. It is easier for such plants to cause fires when travelling down hill than when going up hill. In the Great Southern I have seen gas producers that were suggestive of a darktown fire brigade. They were extraordinary contraptions and comprised oil drums, standing in trays of water and bound together with wire and so on. Unless we are careful about these gas producers, half the countryside will be set on fire. The Council's amendment should not be accepted.

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

No. 6. Clause 9—Delete the words "thirty-first day of May" in lines 27 and 28, page 6, and substitute the words "thirtieth day of April."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The amendment deals with the period during which an occupier must extinguish fires upon his land. For the same reason, if in certain districts in certain years it is necessary to give consideration to seasonal circumstances, it would be much safer to resist this amendment and have the period extended. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

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

No. 7. Clause 11—Delete the words "thirty-first day of May" in lines 17 and 18, page 7, and substitute the words "thirtieth day of April."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This amendment deals with the period during which a fire may be started in the open. It does not impose any hardship and I think the date should be that originally submitted by this Chamber. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

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

No. 8. Clause 11—Delete paragraph (b) of proposed new Subsection (1) of Section 14.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This amendment is one that, without question, the Committee should not agree to. The striking out of paragraph (b) will prohibit the burning of garden or orchard refuse during the prohibited period. That is not what the Council intended, although it is the effect of the amendment. There is no restriction on the burning of prunings or garden refuse outside the prohibited period, but during the prohibited period, the precautions set out in the Bill must be taken in order to protect the countryside. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

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

No. 9. Clause 11—Delete paragraph (c) of proposed new Subsection (1) of Section 14.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The amendment makes the conditions much more onerous than those contained in the Bill as submitted to the Council. If agreed to, all the provisions of Section 10 of the Act will become applicable, and these include a 10 ft. firebreak. Although on the surface the amendment may appear simple, it means that persons, during the prohibited period, must conform to all the conditions set out in Section 10. We do not desire that. Our intention is to permit people to burn refuse during the prohibited period, and also outside the prohibited period, provided a 10 ft. radius is cleared. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

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

No. 10. Clause 11—In paragraph (d) on page 8: Delete the word "and" after the word "feet" in line 15 and substitute the word "or."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This amendment deals with charcoal burning and says that a 20 ft. firebreak shall be provided where fires are lighted for the conversion of logs into charcoal. The Bill provided that for a distance of 20 ft. the land had to be cleared of all scrub and branch wood, and also that the directions and requirements, if any, of a fire control officer had to be complied with. This amendment simply deletes the word "and" and substitutes the word "or."

Mr. Seward: They may do either one or the other, not both.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the amendment is passed, a person might not be able to do either. In the interests of the charcoal burner himself, as well as of the countryside, the land within a radius of 20 feet of the charcoal fire must be cleared; and, if necessary, the charcoal burner must follow the advice and instructions of a fire control officer. The officer may decide that it is necessary to clear the land within a radius of 30 feet, should weather circumstances so dictate. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

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

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of Mr. Seward, Mr. Withers and the Minister for Lands drew up reasons for not agreeing to certain of the Council's amendments.

Reasons adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT (No. 3).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 28th November.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. E. Nulsen—Kanowna) [8.17]: This Bill is necessary. Under Section 66a, a member of the State Parliament has the right to resign his seat in order to contest a Federal election and, if he fails to win the Federal seat, to be returned to the State Parliament

without a poll being taken. The fact of his being a State member, however, disqualifies him under Section 70 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act from sitting in the Federal Parliament. That is all the Bill contains, and I believe that the repeal of Section 66a will release us from a complication.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [8.18]: Unfortunately I could not hear the remarks of the Minister for Justice very clearly, but according to the previous debate I understood that, in making this amendment to our electoral law, we were adopting what was already the law in Victoria and Tasmania. According to the statement of the then Premier, Sir James Mitchell, we were amending our law in identical terms. If this provision is still the law in Victoria and Tasmania, we should not rush in to make a change here. True, it blocks a member of the State Parliament from the opportunity to offer himself for election for a Federal seat, but I do not know that there is any great advantage in reserving to State members the right to offer themselves for Federal seats. There is too much of a desire to keep all the good things for ourselves and ensure that outsiders shall not come in except upon certain terms. Of course any member of this House or of another place may offer himself for election to the Federal Parliament provided he first resigns from the State legislature within a period which is not likely to arise except in the matter of extraordinary vacancies. Certainly it would never occur in the case of a general election. The date of a general election would be known for a long time beforehand, and it would be quite open for any member of the State Parliament, if he considered himself a person who should shine in the Federal sphere, to resign from our midst and prepare himself legally for election as a Federal member. I have great sympathy with the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe in the handicap under which they laboured, but that is only a handicap under extraordinary circumstances.

Mr. Warner: But extraordinary things do happen.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The date of any general election is known for months beforehand.

Hon. C. G. Latham: It was not known on the last occasion.

Hon. N. KEENAN: How long beforehand was it known that a Federal election would be held?

The Premier: Five weeks.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Nomination day would be approximately if not definitely known for weeks beforehand. Undoubtedly the amendment made to our statute in 1921 would block members of this House and another place in the case of an extraordinary election. This happened on two occasions recently. Still, it is not desirable to rush a measure of this kind through. I have not had an opportunity to read the speech made by the present Premier in 1921, but I believe he was a supporter of the amendment.

The Premier: We were under a misapprehension.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Federal authorities want State members to get off their own horse before they have a shot at the Federal horse.

Mr. Marshall: They want us to fall off our horse.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Whether a member descended from the horse of his own free will or was chucked off does not matter, we should not rush this measure through. I should like to read the debate and see what grave reason existed in 1921 for the unanimous vote of the House in favour of the amendment. The Parliament of the Commonwealth has provided that if we are going to hedge ourselves in as candidates for Federal seats, we will have to shed our State positions, either as lords of the Upper House or members of this House, sufficiently long to provide a safeguard. As I remarked, we must not try to make a preserve of these seats for ourselves. We must not say, because we have been elected to this House or to another place, that at any time a favourable opportunity occurs, we shall use that seat as a stepping-stone, hop out, and get into the Federal Parliament. The electors want to have a chance as well. While I do not offer any strenuous opposition to the Bill, I do not like to see it being rushed through in this easy fashion after a few remarks by the Minister for Justice that nobody heard. I certainly could not hear them, though I understood him to say something to the

effect that the Bill was necessary. That is all the consideration this measure has received, and I say it should not be disposed of in that summary way.

The Premier: The Leader of the Opposition introduced it and explained it.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I am quite aware of that, but I should have thought that the Minister for Justice would remind the House of the reasons why, in 1921, we altered the law which we are now proposing to restore to its original form. No reason that I could hear was given by the Minister; he merely indicated that he had no objection to the Bill.

The Premier: The Leader of the Opposition gave all those reasons on Thursday night.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Leader of the Opposition is not the Minister.

The Premier: The Leader of the Opposition introduced the Bill.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Leader of the Opposition has no responsibility whatever.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Thank you!

Hon. N. KEENAN: No member sitting on the Opposition side of the House has the same responsibility as has a Minister. The Minister is expected to consider all these matters very carefully. I admit that the Leader of the Opposition gives every question the greatest possible consideration, but he cannot give it the same consideration as the Minister can. I regret that the Bill has been dealt with so summarily by the Minister.

MR. HUGHES (East Perth) [8.28]: Are not we approaching this matter from the wrong angle? Should not members of the State Parliament make representations to the Commonwealth Government requesting an amendment of the Commonwealth electoral law to remove the disabilities against State members contesting Federal seats while holding their State seats? If I remember rightly, the question was raised 12 or 18 months ago and the Prime Minister, Mr. Menzies, almost promised to have the Commonwealth electoral law amended. The argument of the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) would be quite all right if members entered Parliament exclusively for their own benefit.

Hon. C. G. Latham interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has the right of reply.

Mr. HUGHES: Will the removal of Section 66a from our Electoral Act entitle State members to contest Federal seats while still members of the State Parliament?

The Premier: No.

Mr. HUGHES: There are two aspects of the matter that deserve consideration. The first is the question whether a member of Parliament is elected to serve the people or to serve himself. Perhaps there is a little of each. Let us consider the question from the first angle, namely, that it is the desire of the people of the Commonwealth to get the most efficient and best-trained Parliament possible. If that is so, to achieve that object all restrictions should be removed from candidates presenting themselves for election. Just imagine what people would think if somebody were running a business employing an accountant and a sub-accountant, and for years the sub-accountant understudied the accountant and familiarised himself with accountancy principles and business procedure generally, and then the accountant died and the employer said, "I certainly cannot make a sub-accountant an accountant. He is disqualified because he has been under a special course of training for years to fill the job of accountant. Therefore I will definitely exclude him, and go outside to get somebody who has no training at all for the position." That would be absurd, and no business or organisation could possibly survive if the concern were conducted on such lines. It should be everyone's desire to have the most efficient Federal Parliament obtainable. What better training ground for the Federal Parliament can be got than a State Parliament? The fact that a man has served an apprenticeship in a State House should be a sign of efficiency to the Federal electors. If that is not so, we should say to the electors, "You have spent a lot of money in training people in the art of government, in training them how to study the science of statute making, and now that you have a highly important position to be filled where such qualifications are of the utmost importance, we are going to disqualify such persons from standing for election on pain of forfeiting the positions they at present hold." If it is said that being a State member gives a candidate an advantage over a Federal mem-

ber, the same thing applies in the case of State members relatively to members of municipalities and road boards.

We do not say, "Because you are a member of a municipality or of a road board and are active in the district, because you occupy a quasi-governmental position and are getting a training in one form of government—though not as important as the State legislature, nevertheless important—because you are undergoing a course of training to fit yourself for the State Parliament, we shall not allow you to be a candidate for the State Parliament unless you submit to certain penalties, unless you give up your municipal position or give up your occupation." In point of fact, members of Parliament exist who are also members of municipal councils, and not being ornaments in either sphere, should be pitched out on their ears. Candidates put it forward at election time that it is the hallmark of efficiency to have undergone an apprenticeship in a less important sphere prior to submitting themselves for election to a higher sphere. I suppose it is an advantage to a person who contemplates entering the legislative sphere of the State to have served a term of apprenticeship in a municipal or local governing body. For instance, for more than 20 years we have had the benefit in this House of the enormous experience gained in the municipal sphere by the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert), who started out by serving an apprenticeship in local government. We do not place disabilities on such men. Therefore, from the point of view of efficiency of the national Parliament, I say there should be no restrictions at all. If I had my way, I would not place any restrictions whatever on a man by reason of his being a member of this or any other State Parliament. I should say that the electors have the right to elect a person who suits them, and that it should not matter to this House whether in years gone by the successful candidate had committed a felony or was an undischarged bankrupt. I should say to the Federal Parliament and to State Parliaments: "Any person who has served a period here as a private member, and then a period as a Minister of the Crown, would be an acquisition to either the Federal Parliament

or a State Parliament, because he will take to either of such Parliaments an immense knowledge of the affairs of the State which he proposes to represent." He would bring his knowledge to bear, and would be in a much better position to speak as a State representative in the Federal Parliament than a person starting off at the beginning in the higher sphere of the Commonwealth Parliament.

On the authority of Sir Harrison Moore I believe that it was the original intention of the Commonwealth Parliament that members of that Parliament should also be members of the various State Legislatures, so as to establish a closer alliance between Federal and State Parliaments. I believe now that it would be an advantage if every member of the Federal Parliament was also a member of a State House, because he would be in close touch with the problems of States and State Parliaments would be in closer touch with what was done in the Federal Legislature. Therefore, from the first angle, the Australian people are now deprived of the right to select the best Federal Parliament from the best talent available, and this is a negation of all democratic principles. As a State Parliament we should ask the Federal Parliament to lift that disability. Looked at from the second angle, that one enters Parliament for the benefit of oneself, of course there are always exceptions, and there is no need for me to voice them since they bob up on their own account. I do not agree with the too prevalent view, that a man enters Parliament for the sole purpose of benefiting himself. I do not believe that any member ever came here with that sole objective.

Mr. Withers: Anyone who did so would soon be disillusioned.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes. I think the majority of members come here imbued with a strong reforming spirit and intending to do things. When they get here they find many obstacles in the way. It is not so easy to reform this place from within as it appears to be from without. I think it took me about three months to make that discovery.

Mr. Sampson: What would you do about it?

Mr. HUGHES: Nevertheless, if a man succeeds in getting elected to the Legislative Assembly, why should he be deprived of the right to stand for the Federal Parliament? Why should that disability be placed upon a member of this Assembly in common with all other members of State Legislatures? Because one submits oneself to election by the people, and because people elect one, is one then to lose certain citizen rights? I hold—and I know this view is shared outside Western Australia—that it is an unfair disability to put upon members of State Legislatures to say to them, "If you serve in one sphere, you shall not be allowed to seek promotion to the higher sphere unless you first give up the position you are occupying."

Mr. Lambert: Many men in the Federal Parliament are rejects from State Parliaments.

Mr. HUGHES: That is a harsh way of putting it. What business would lay down such principles for the conduct of its affairs? What business would say to its employee, "If you seek a position of minor importance in the firm, that will definitely debar you from being raised to a higher position"? That would be unbusinesslike. It is unfair to the electors, because restricting their choice. Let me say that the question whether Section 66a definitely compels a State member to resign his seat before contesting a Federal seat is a point that has never yet been decided by the Federal High Court.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That was the intention.

Mr. HUGHES: If the Bill is passed and we remove Section 66a from our own Act, will that clear up the apparent doubt whether a member can resign from this House to contest a Federal seat and take advantage of that section? It will not get over the major difficulty and the major disability put on electors and on members of the Western Australian Parliament by "placing them on the same footing as a man who has committed a felony" is something I might say, but it would be incorrect. I believe that under the Federal Constitution it is possible for a man to walk out of prison after serving a sentence for cheating and, if elected, take his seat in the Federal Parliament. We should as a State Legislature make representations to the Federal

Government and ask it to raise our status at least to that of felons, if that is not asking too much. I do not think it wise to remove the section until we know more clearly what we are doing. It may be that this section does not prevent State members from resigning their seats and standing for the Federal Parliament. I should say also there would be no shadow of doubt that if a member of a State Parliament resigned his seat and won a Federal seat, and the Federal Government ejected him from the Federal Parliament because of taking advantage of this clause, the electors would go on electing him, as was done in the old British Parliament in the case of Charles Bradlaugh. The electors would go on re-electing him until the matter became so apparent that the Federal Government would amend the law. Although I do not hold strong views on the matter, I think we ought not to rush to strike this section out of the Act. We ought to go about the matter in another way, by making representations to the Federal Government to amend the Federal electoral law. That view is shared by people outside Western Australia. As a matter of fact, a leading newspaper circulated in every State of the Commonwealth published within the last 12 months an article on this subject in which it advocated an amendment of the Federal law in order to make talent in State legislatures available for the Federal Parliament. We ought not to pass the Bill at present; the matter is not urgent and we would not be assisted in the near future. It can well await further consideration.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [8.46]: I was somewhat astonished to hear the observations of the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) on this measure. Had it not been for his remarks, I would not have contributed to the debate. The hon. member appeared to have the impression that the intention of the Bill is to make things more favourable for members of the State Parliament who desire to stand for a Federal seat. But surely that is not so. Under Section 66a of our Electoral Act, if a member resigns his seat in the State Parliament 21 days before nomination day, he is entitled—if not elected to the Federal Parliament—to be re-elected to the seat that he held in the State Parliament without a poll being taken. So were it possible for State members to contest Federal seats under

those conditions and lose the election concerned, they could then simply walk back to their State seat without a poll being taken. Surely, then, State members are in a favourable position, because they can contest a Federal seat whenever they feel like it and having failed to succeed can simply resume their seats in the State Parliament and await a further and better opportunity. That was the intention of Section 66a when it was passed in 1922.

Hon. C. G. Latham: In 1921.

Mr. WATTS: But the Federal Parliament, immediately after that was done, came to the conclusion that it did not favour the section, and so it provided that if a member had a right to go back to his State seat without taking a poll, he was not to be allowed to nominate for the Federal Parliament.

Member: In other words, he would still be a member.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: Is that what the Act provides? I think it says that a member is not allowed to take his seat.

Mr. WATTS: The member cannot be prevented from nominating, but the result is the same. If the member cannot take his seat, his efforts have been wasted. So the Federal Parliament by its legislation destroyed—to a very large extent at all events, and far from beyond doubt—the benefit that the State Legislature sought to give State members of Parliament. I know it is doubtful whether the provisions of Section 66a do provide a complete bar when taken in conjunction with the Federal section if a member does not resign in the 21 days period.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: Fourteen days.

Mr. WATTS: The State Act provides for a clear 21 days before nomination day, in order that a member may take advantage of his right to resume his seat in the State Parliament without a poll. The point has arisen whether, if a member does not take advantage of that by simply refraining from resigning until he is nearer nomination day than 21 days, the provisions of the Federal section do constitute a bar to his taking a seat in the Federal Parliament. As the member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes) said, and as far as I know, there has been no decision on that point. I do know, however, that the Federal legislation makes it hard for a State member, even if he does take advantage of that section, to take his seat

in the Federal Parliament. I refer to the circumstances of the Swan by-election. The late Mr. Gregory died a fortnight ago last Saturday, and nomination day is fixed for next Saturday, exactly 21 days from the moment of his death. Therefore, a State member of Parliament could not take advantage of the provision relating to 21 days in Section 66a of the State Act, even if he wished to do so. Even although Section 66a gives him the opportunity to come back to the State Parliament without taking a poll if he does not win the Federal seat, the Federal Government, or those in charge of the Federal elections, have made it perfectly certain that it cannot be done. It seems to me that it would be far better to pass the Bill than to leave the position as it stands. I agree with the member for East Perth that it is entirely wrong that a restriction such as this should be in existence. I agree with him that there is much to be said for the experience that can be gained in this Parliament, particularly if a member has had the opportunity of acting as a Minister of the Crown. That experience would be of great assistance to him if he took a Federal seat. Rather than leave the situation as it stands, rather than make every State member of Parliament who at any time might consider contesting a Federal seat wonder whether he will be allowed to take the seat or not if the electors return him, I would pass this Bill. It seems to me it would be better for us, until such time as we can favourably take the opportunity to approach the Federal authorities to amend their law, to pass the Bill and place our State members in the position of resigning more than 14 days before nomination day, there being no Section 66a of the State Electoral Act to raise doubts and possibly involve a High Court decision. Then there would be no doubt whatever. It would be a benefit to remove that doubt for the time being; but I also commend the suggestion of the member for East Perth that we, as a State Legislature, should approach the Federal Government with a request that it remove all bars to State members of Parliament contesting Federal seats, because there is little justification for refusing electors the widest choice that is available to them.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—COMPANIES.*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 26th November.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [8.55]: I am afraid I cannot at this juncture say that I am entirely satisfied with the Bill introduced by the Minister, and, in my opinion, I have good and sufficient justification for expressing that view. If I remember rightly, the Minister told us in the course of his introductory remarks that a similar piece of legislation had taken the Government of South Australia six years to deal with.

The Minister for Justice interjected.

Mr. WATTS: The Minister has had the advantage of the assistance rendered to him by his advisers. Unfortunately, I have not had, in the space of one week or thereabouts between the introduction of the measure and the present time, the opportunity to go into this Bill in detail. It would have been impossible to do so in that period. I will say that much of the measure is commendable and well worthy of support. One or two items can be the subject of much discussion, but the Minister has told us that before the Bill is dealt with in Committee he proposes that it shall be referred to a joint committee of both Houses. With that proposal I heartily concur, because it will enable an examination to be made of the controversial matters to which I have referred, as well as a thorough investigation of all points that may be raised. So, on the understanding that the Bill will be referred to a committee of that nature, I support the second reading.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [8.57]: The Act under which this State is now operating regarding companies first saw the light of day in the English Parliament more than three score and ten years ago; and, in view of the tremendous development of company law and the ramifications

of commerce since that time, a review of the company law of this State is certainly overdue. It is not necessary to say much about the contents of the Bill, or, indeed, anything at all about it at this stage. Everyone is agreed that the time has arrived to put a new Companies Act on our statute-book. The Bill, I understand, is to be referred to a joint committee. When it comes back to the House, there will be an opportunity in the Committee stage to deal with it clause by clause; and that is the time when the House will be able to make the most useful contribution to the Bill in order to facilitate the work of the commercial and financial community. I commend the Bill to the House and will reserve any further comments until such time as the mercantile community has been able to submit its view to the joint committee and the report of the committee on the Bill is before the House.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [8.59]: I would like the Minister in his reply to tell the House whether he proposes to circulate the report of the proposed joint committee before Parliament reassembles after the session ends. I presume the joint committee will be appointed a Royal Commission.

The Premier: That will not be necessary if we do not prorogue.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I would like some undertaking that the report of the committee will be circulated at the earliest possible moment. I do not mean that a copy should be sent to each member, but that a number of copies should be made available in the library for perusal by those interested in company law, because the particular form of company most suitable to Western Australian conditions must be given consideration. For instance, in Victoria special legislation was passed to deal with proprietary companies. In Western Australia there are companies purely and simply concerned with mining, and therefore usually no liability companies, and for them we need special legislation, local legislation, and not legislation based on statutes passed in Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales or even Great Britain. We need statutes based on our local conditions; legislation that will encourage our local

industries and will enable them to be pursued with prospects of success. If the select committee's report is circulated at an early date, every member of Parliament will have an opportunity to peruse it and make out any case that it appears wise to make out for submission to the Minister and for subsequent consideration by this House when the Bill is further discussed. Merely to place the Bill before a select committee with a view to that committee examining it and ascertaining whether certain clauses correspond with certain sections of South Australian, Victorian, New South Wales, or even English law, which of course is now out of date, will not solve the problem of company law in this State. We need a company law to suit our conditions and I hope therefore that the report will be made available at an early date, in order that proper consideration may be given to it.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [9.3]: I congratulate the Minister on introducing this measure. Of all Acts in existence, the one relating to company law is the most antediluvian in the State. The Minister is facing a monumental work which indicates a period of intense industry. I am hopeful that as a result of the appointment of a select committee a useful and dependable Act will be evolved. For many years past members of this House and of the legal profession have complained about the out-of-date set of sections that has constituted the Companies Act. Now there is evidently to be a forward move. I can perceive that the Minister will have quite a busy period during the interregnum, and when in the fullness of time we meet again next year, I look forward to an introductory speech—I suppose there will be another one—that will be something in the nature of a leviathan effort. I am pleased the Act is being amended and glad the Minister has shown that in spite of the tremendous volume of matter contained in the measure, he is prepared to concentrate on it and give it his best consideration and study. I support the second reading.

MR. F. C. L. SMITH (Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [9.51: When members of this Chamber see a Bill of this size and a proposition is put forward to refer it to a select committee,

that proposition naturally commends itself to them. I would like to point out, however that for years past all interested authorities in Perth and in Western Australia have made representations to the Government as to the lines upon which they think the Companies Act should be amended. The Crown Law Department has had all that information at its disposal in the preparation of this Bill. In those circumstances the appointment of a select committee is not warranted. Nothing can be submitted by the Chamber of Commerce, institutes of accountants, public executors or other authoritative persons or organisations in this State that has not already been put forward. If their representations have not been given attention in the provisions of the Bill, they will have an opportunity to make further representations to members of this House so that their viewpoint can be given voice here. In the circumstances the expense of a select committee is not justified. We have here a report on the pastoral industry that cost £465. That Royal Commission was probably justified because this is a comprehensive report dealing with an industry that has not been so exhaustively inquired into on previous occasions, and those engaged in which have not had an opportunity to make representations such as people interested in company law have had during the last 15 to 20 years. I think I can safely say that for 20 years interested public bodies have been making representations to the Crown Law Department in connection with our company legislation. Each and every one of those bodies, or representatives of them, will have to obtain a copy of the Bill and go through its provisions to see whether they are in conformity with their views. I venture to say that so far as they have impressed their opinions on the Crown Law Department, the provisions of the Bill are in conformity with the representations made, and to appoint a select committee will lead to needless repetition of representations made over the years by interested parties. Consequently I oppose the reference of the Bill to a select committee.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. F. Nulsen—Kanowna—in reply) [9.9]: I hope the Bill will be referred to a select committee. True, as the member for Brownhill-Ivanhoe (Mr. F. C. L. Smith) has said, we have collected quite a lot of in-

formation from various organisations in this State appertaining to the peculiar circumstances that might arise. On the other hand, it is necessary for us to obtain up-to-date information from parties directly concerned, and I propose to give every person and organisation interested an opportunity to submit their views for the betterment of the Bill.

This is an important measure affecting every section of the community. It has the very good foundation of the best brains of England and embodies features of laws in operation in other States of the Commonwealth and in New Zealand. Though the Bill has a reasonably solid foundation, however, it can be improved and the idea of appointing a select committee is to discover how it can be so improved. Evidence will be taken from all concerned. I would be very glad to accede to the request of the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) but under the standing orders the report of a select committee must first be submitted to the House and be printed before it can be distributed.

Hon. C. G. Latham: It will be available as soon as the House meets.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes. It is not necessary for me to say much more. I gave members a fair idea of the contents of the Bill when moving the second reading and I can assure them that the Solicitor General spent quite a lot of time on it and has given every consideration to the local aspect, stressed by the member for Nedlands, and to the development of our primary and secondary industries, as that development is affected by company law.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Referred to Select Committee.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. E. Nulsen—Kanowna [9.12]: I move—

The Bill is referred to a select committee consisting of four members.

Question put and passed.

Select Committee Appointed.

Ballot taken and a select committee appointed consisting of Messrs. Abbott, Nulsen, Rodoreda, and Watts.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I move—

That the select committee have power to call for persons and papers, sit on days on which the House stands adjourned, and report on the first day of the re-assembling of Parliament in 1941.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I draw attention to the fact that if the Premier desires to reintroduce any Bill that has been introduced this session and may have been lost, the motion now before the House may prevent him from doing so, if the House merely adjourns. On the other hand, if Parliament is prorogued I do not know that the motion will be of any benefit. No doubt the Government has given consideration to the matter.

Question put and passed.

Request to Confer.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I move—

That a message be transmitted to the Legislative Council notifying that the Assembly had agreed to refer the Companies Bill to a Select committee of four members, and requesting the Council to appoint a committee of the same number of members with power to confer with the committee of the Assembly.

Question put and passed.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1940-41.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 28th November; Mr. Withers in the Chair.

Public Utilities:

Vote—Railways, Tramways, Ferries and Electricity Supply, £3,294,750:

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. E. Nulsen—Kanowna) [9.25]: In introducing the estimates of the undertakings, namely, Railways, Tramways, Ferries and Electricity Supply, which are under my administration, I realise that they affect the final financial results to a greater extent than does any other department of State. It is essential, therefore, as far as is humanly possible, that the figures submitted should come as close as possible to the results that will be achieved on the 30th June next, otherwise the Treasurer's budget statement will be materially altered. Unfortunately, estimates of earnings for the previous year fell short of the estimate by

£182,000, whilst the expenditure increased by £56,000. With regard to earnings, the decline was due to the non-haulage of 300,000 tons of wheat, which it was anticipated would be hauled when the estimates were framed. Actually there was 528,000 tons of wheat in the country on 30th June and from the information we had it was anticipated that the carry-over would not have been more than 230,000 tons. Had this 300,000 tons been transported the revenue would have increased by over £200,000, or £18,000 greater than the estimate. It is not possible immediately to reduce expenditure to meet a decline in earnings: it is a gradual process. Staff has to be available to run trains when traffic is consigned and maintain a service, but with the decline in wheat haulage advantage was taken to retire leave, and members of the staff who enlisted and retired were only replaced in exceptional cases. Maintenance of rolling stock was continued to a greater extent to overtake arrears. The estimate submitted last year provided for a reduction of expenditure to the extent of £158,000 when compared with the year 1938-39, but it was possible to make a reduction of only £102,000. When the basic wage increase and the incidence of Arbitration Court, etc., awards are taken into consideration it will be seen that this reduction was of no mean order.

The estimates now before members provide for a revenue of £4,252,000, and to earn this sum £3,305,750 will be required by way of expenditure. It is expected that the cash receipts and disbursements of the railways for the year ending the 30th June next will be:—Revenue £3,500,000, Expenditure £2,732,000, leaving a balance of £768,000 to meet interest charges of £1,044,000, or a loss from a Treasury standpoint of £276,000.

From the revenue standpoint the figure submitted is the same as the amount received last year. The harvest prospects are not at all bright and, in any case, little, if any, of the wheat harvested will be transported in the current year. If all the wheat which was stored in the country on the 30th June, 1940, is brought to ports or to some vantage point near the seaboard, that will represent about the full extent of wheat haulage that can be expected. This predicates that revenue from this source will be ap-

proximately £100,000 less than last year. Increases are anticipated in the passenger and parcels traffic and also in general goods following upon the introduction of petrol rationing from the 1st October and the full twelve months' operation of the increase in rates which were introduced on 1st October, 1940. The cumulative effect of these will equal, if not eclipse, the loss of revenue on wheat haulage. However, the first three months of the fiscal year show that the revenue was better than for the corresponding period of last year by £42,000, and it is thought that the figure estimated will at least be realised if not exceeded.

Expenditure.—The amount included in the Estimates for railways is £2,732,000 as against £2,801,000 actually spent last year, or a saving of £69,000. This does not represent a great saving in comparison with the large amount involved, but it has to be remembered that the recent rise in the basic wage will add £57,000 to expenditure, so that, on a comparable basis, a real saving of £126,000 has been forecast. Economies already in operation, together with those forecast will, it is anticipated, enable the anticipated result to be realised. The economies which have been introduced are: The non-filling of vacancies caused by enlistments, retirements, etc., except where absolutely necessary; reduction of 20 per cent. in the number of sleepers to be put in the road; diversion of workshop personnel from maintenance to munition work; reduction of special maintenance and less long service leave payments, consequent upon the heavy retirements in the previous year. Another saving will be affected by the easier grades consequent upon the re-grading on the Merredin-Kalgoorlie section and between Bridgetown and Manjimup. This will permit of greater loads, which will reduce train mileage.

When speaking on the Estimates, the Leader of the Opposition mentioned that in 1935-36 the revenue was £73,000 more than in 1938-39 and that expenditure had increased by £304,000. Unfortunately the whole story was not told. During the intervening years, arbitration and basic wage awards involved the Railway Department in increased expenditure amounting to £350,000. Rates were reduced on the 1st January, 1935, which represented £105,000 per annum. True, an increase was made in October last, which brought in additional

revenue of £30,000 for the year 1939-40. Therefore it will be seen that, unless rates are increased to counteract increases granted by the Arbitration Court, there is no possibility of making earnings meet expenditure and interest.

Rolling Stock.—The construction of 10 "S" class locomotives to replace old engines, which had reached the end of their useful life, was carried on during the past year, and the programme is being continued. It is hoped to have the first engine available in October, 1941, and one per month thereafter. Slight alterations were made to 10 class "P" locomotives to permit of their hauling a greater load consequent upon the strengthening of bridges. The six trailers for the Diesel-electric coaches are now in use and form an excellent mode of transport to the country, being unequalled in any other system in Australia. During the year 50 "Cxa" sheep waggons, 11 "Ea" cool storage vans and 56 "Ka" four-wheeled goods waggons were completed.

Improvements.—Continuation of improvements as far as funds would allow has been carried out. The trailers for the Diesel-electric coaches were completed and have improved this service very considerably. Improved drawgear has been fitted to all long distance passenger trains. With regard to the dining service between Perth and Kalgoorlie, two dining cars have been placed on the "Westland" and the call system introduced for meals. This has overcome the difficulty of long waits and enables meals to be served in a much more appetising condition. Improvement to second-class travel has been undertaken. Ten first-class coaches have been converted to second class, and five of the older type of first-class sleepers have been dealt with similarly. A continuation of the alteration of the seating accommodation in second-class suburban coaches was effected during the year.

The regrading of the line between Merredin and Kalgoorlie was completed during the year and necessitated several deviations. These added five miles to the distance between Perth and Kalgoorlie, but the alteration has permitted of greater loads being hauled, thereby lessening train mileage. Another regrading work was undertaken and completed between Manjimup and Bridgetown. These works, after providing

for interest on the capital expended, will enable a saving in working expenses of over £6,000 annually.

Tramways.—The estimated results for the tramways are:—

	£
Revenue	312,000
Working Expenses ..	253,000
	<hr/>
	59,000
Interest	44,000
	<hr/>
Leaving a balance of	£15,000

The actual revenue for 1939-40 was £304,856, or £856 more than was forecast. It is anticipated that the earnings will increase by £7,000. Expenditure fore-shadows an increase of £3,000, this being necessary to earn the increased revenue. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned the trolley buses. If he refers to paragraph 72 on page 37 of the Commissioner's annual report for 1938-39, he will see the record of the operations for the three years ended the 30th June, 1939. With regard to the results for the year 1939-40, these were: Earnings, £63,337; working expenses, £47,865; net revenue, £15,472. interest £4,359, which leaves a balance of £11,113.

It is expected that with the advent of petrol rationing, there will be a greater number of passengers using trolley buses as well as trams. In this connection it has been stated that there was insufficient rolling stock to cope with additional business. At peak hours, as is usual in every mode of transport, there is some overcrowding, but it would be waste of money to have more vehicles than necessary just to relieve any overcrowding for an hour in the mornings. The fact is that in the peak period of 1929-30, 35,500,000 passengers were carried with equal to 188 four-wheeled tram cars, whereas in 1939-40 31,669,000 passengers were carried with equal to 189 four-wheeled trams and 22 trolley buses. If the number of passengers carried by trolley bus is excluded, namely, 5,648,000, the total number of passengers carried by trams—26,021,000—was less by almost 10,000,000 than in the peak year with one tram car more. It is true, however, that the trolley buses on both routes are overcrowded at peak periods, mainly in the mornings. To overcome this, six buses, fitted with gas producer units,

are being built to relieve the position, and a further six trolley bus chassis have been ordered.

Ferries.—There is little alteration in the estimate of this undertaking, the figures being as under:—

			£
Revenue	..	..	8,000
Expenditure	..	..	7,750
			<hr/>
			250
Interest	..	..	200
			<hr/>
Balance	..	..	£50
			<hr/>

The new ferry is now under construction and work on this is progressing very favourably.

Electricity Supply.—The estimate of revenue and expenditure of this concern is:—

			£
Revenue	..	..	432,000
Expenditure	..	..	313,000
			<hr/>
			119,000
Interest	..	..	78,000
			<hr/>
Balance	..	..	£41,000
			<hr/>

Various extensions of transmission lines have been approved, but, unfortunately, the work is being held up for supplies of the necessary copper wire. Action has been taken to secure quick delivery but on account of priority of munitions manufacture, some delay will result. I now submit the Estimates for this department for the consideration of the House.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly) [9.41] : I thank the Minister for his helpful remarks in introducing his Estimates, because they serve to confirm what has long been my conviction that the financial results of the railway system are of far more importance to the Government and to the department than is the convenience of the public served by that utility. For a long time I have contended that the railways were run from the standpoint of a paying proposition rather than for the purpose of serving the people who live in the country districts. My belief received support in the remark of the Minister that the results of the operations of the railways should, as nearly as is humanly possible, be made to coincide with the Estimates because if that is not so, the Treasurer's figures will be adversely affected. Cer-

tainly, the Minister's remarks confirm the opinion I have always held. If the Minister were to travel by some of the ordinary trains that the public have to patronise, I am certain that he would come to the conclusion I reached long ago, that the time is overdue for a radical alteration in the methods of the department. I find it rather amusing to hear, and also to read in the annual report of the Commissioner of Railways, when the anticipated returns are not realised, that the receipts from wool, wheat or other primary products have not been up to expectations. Every time we ask for some concession or assistance to primary producers, we are met with the reply that the Railway Department is already providing a service at a loss and therefore our request cannot be granted. I was particularly struck by an answer I received a month or two ago regarding an application I made to the Commissioner for the repair of the yards at Hyden. The bulk bins at that centre are situated in the railway yard and the continued use of the road between the weighbridge and the bulk bins has caused it to get into a state of disrepair. Farmers are carting wheat to Hyden from distances upwards of 50 miles and it is particularly annoying to such men, after carting wheat for such a distance, to break an axle or otherwise damage a truck while traversing the road in the railway yard. I had a complaint that the track was in a particularly bad state. I passed the complaint on to the Commissioner and asked him to verify the accuracy of the statement and, if it was found to be correct, to have the track repaired in time for the present season. Members can judge of my amazement when I received a reply from the Commissioner stating that the condition of the track inside the railway yard from the weighbridge to the bulk bin was no concern of his but was the responsibility of Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd. I venture to express the opinion that if anyone entered what is to all intents and purposes private property and was told that he would have to repair a rough track there before he could use it, it would cause slight amazement.

I voice my opposition to this continual evasion of responsibility by the Railway Department, particularly where the wheatgrowers are concerned. The department has loaded the wheat traffic with every possible charge. When Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd., introduced the new method of handling

wheat, the department realised that it would be faced with large expenditure in order to provide trucks to carry the wheat in bulk. The company showed the department how the ordinary rolling stock could be used with the aid of hessian linings and canvas extensions. One would have thought that the department would have been thankful to the company for its suggestions, but it is a well known fact that the wheat grower is charged freight on that material every time it is carried up or down the line. Then, too, the department imposed that other iniquitous charge of 9d. per ton for handling bulk wheat, notwithstanding that it could be handled in a much more efficient manner. Owing to the continued use of the road in the railway yard the surface has fallen into a bad state of disrepair, but the Commissioner now expects the company to maintain the surface. In Pingelly we have asked times out of number for repairs to be made by means of a pipe drain in order to give easy access to the station. The train leaves there on some mornings at 3.30 and other mornings at 4.30, and people strike this infernal gutter with their cars and are liable to do their vehicles considerable damage. It is not a fair thing that the road should be left in that condition.

The Minister pointed out that he had received requests to reduce the staff commensurately with the reduction in the traffic handled. This, of course, cannot be done at a moment's notice; it is being done gradually. While the Minister was speaking, however, I turned up the figures to ascertain the number of staff employed in recent years. The following are the figures—

1940, 8,385; 1936, 8,734; 1934, 8,040; 1933, 7,337; 1932, 7,163; 1931, 8,096.

Thus there has been an increase of 300 in the last ten years, but I am satisfied that a considerably greater volume of traffic was handled by 300 fewer employees in 1931. I have no wish to see the staff reduced; I do not want to see anyone thrown out of employment, but I maintain that when traffic has seriously declined, there should not be any necessity to maintain the same number of staff to handle the reduced volume. The Minister repeated the Commissioner's excuses for ending the year with a deficit, and another deficit is expected for the current financial year. The Commissioner was unfortunate in giving

as excuses the rise in the basic wage and arbitration award conditions. It is rather illuminating to turn to the reports of some of the other States. Some years ago I quoted figures from South Africa, but they were deemed to be inapplicable because South African conditions were different. In other States, however, we find that the basic wage and arbitration awards tend to bring about an increase of working expenses, just as they do here, but this has been offset by increased business. On referring to the Queensland report for the latest year available, I find the following:—

The year has been one of record traffic. Country travel earnings increased. Suburban traffic also increased. Parcels traffic increased. Goods traffic reached record high level. Timber trade markedly good. Cane and sugar trade decreased. Diesel rail motors number 17, rail motors 53, a total of 70.

Despite the increase in basic wage costs, Queensland has been able not only to maintain its traffic but also to increase it. In New South Wales the following was the position:—

Passenger traffic has increased. Parcels traffic has increased enormously. Additional goods train services were necessary to cope with the traffic offering. Livestock traffic increased considerably.

Victoria is the State that has had to contend with the most intense motor competition, because the Railway Department there has not the protection that is given the railways in some of the other States. In the year under review I find the following facts:—

Goods traffic—The volume of steam-hauled business was 7 per cent. greater than in the peak year 1926-27. Passenger traffic—While the volume of business during the slack hours is substantially less, traffic at peak hours on some lines now exceeds that prior to the depression and is steadily increasing.

Thus in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, though the same difficulty of increased costs through basic wage and arbitration conditions has had to be contended with, the railway authorities do not sit down and wait for traffic to come to them, as we do here. They go out and get the business, and the result is reflected in their railway returns.

I am pleased to note that there has been a change in the management of the railways this year. I had begun to despair of any change being made, but apparently the

case was not hopeless because a publicity branch has been started. This matter was raised in the House several years ago and commended to the attention of the Minister. I am particularly pleased that Mr. Hickey has been appointed to take charge of the new branch. I have known him for a number of years and am satisfied that he is interested in his work and will make a success of it. I certainly wish him well. Again, there has been a change in the Chief Traffic Manager's office. I had the pleasure of meeting both of the gentlemen appointed to this department, and from the conversation we had, I feel sure they will rise to the occasion and do something to place the railways in a better position. I am firmly convinced that if they employed a little publicity, it would be to the advantage of the railways.

Talking of publicity, I should like to mention that recently the summer timetable was issued, and on perusing it I found that a change had been made in the running of the diesel car that previously travelled from Perth through York and Bruce Rock to Merredin. It is not now run to Merredin; it goes from Bruce Rock to Corrigin. The point I make is that the public has to buy a guide and wade through it in order to find out that the alteration has been made. This has been the burden of my complaint for years: one has to wade through all the details in order to ascertain what changes have been made. The department should be seized with the fact that any alterations of the kind should be made known to the travelling public, and I am not aware of any more effective method of making them known than by broadcasting. If more consideration is not shown in this direction, the department cannot expect to receive the patronage of the travelling public.

I usually travel home to Pingelly by the Friday morning train, and recently I have noticed several people on the Diesel whom I had not seen travelling by that train before. In conversation with them, I learnt that the Diesel was more convenient for them than the train by which they used to travel before the Diesel was put on the run. However, passengers still have to make the long waits at junction stations. I have in mind particularly the Diesel car that leaves Perth at 9 a.m. and arrives at

Katanning at 6 p.m. People who travel by that train for Wickepin alight at Narrogin at 3.30 p.m. and have to wait until 11.30 the next morning before they can get a connecting train. This means that they have to devote two whole days to travelling from Wickepin to Perth, a distance of 140 miles and to make the return journey, another two days' travelling is necessary. People travelling on the Kondinin line leave Narrogin at 9.30 a.m., but on both journeys they have to spend a night at the hotel and are put to unnecessary expense in that way. I have been stressing the inconvenience of this arrangement for years. The train used to leave Perth at 7 a.m. for Katanning, but when the fast Diesel car was put on, the hour for leaving Perth was changed to 9 a.m. and the car reaches Katanning at 6 p.m. If the car left Perth at 7 a.m. and arrived at Katanning at 4 p.m. people who wished to travel to Gnowangerup or Kojonup could reach their destination in the hours of daylight. There is some inducement to travel by rail if the branch line trains get people to their destination on the same day on which they start the journey.

In the other States instances are given of how the railway authorities have reduced the time occupied on journeys by accelerating the running. This is of great advantage to users of the trains. According to the latest New South Wales timetable, the time occupied by the fast passenger train from Sydney to Newcastle has been reduced by 27 minutes. Between Sydney and Tamworth the day passenger train has been accelerated by 29 minutes and on the return journey by 18 minutes. Between Waratah and Kempsey 44 minutes have been cut off and 15 minutes on the return journey. From Sydney to Murwillumbah the journey for the mail train has been reduced by 29 minutes and the return journey by 30 minutes. The new timetable schedules many important train services throughout which, concurrently with the general betterment of passenger rolling stock, the times for the journeys have been reduced. Between Sydney and Newcastle an hour has been saved by express train. In Victoria this saving of time has been improved upon, as the following figures show:—

Melbourne to Serviceton reduced by 282 minutes.

Melbourne to Swanhill reduced by 260 minutes.

Melbourne to Warracknabeal reduced by 200 minutes.

Melbourne to Yarrawonga reduced by 132 minutes.

Melbourne to Mildura reduced by 154 minutes.

Melbourne to Bairnsdale reduced by 135 minutes.

Melbourne to Hamilton reduced by 115 minutes.

The saving of time has been achieved, not by increasing the speed of the trains, but by cutting out unnecessary stops at railway refreshments stations. This has been made possible by attaching to the trains dining and buffet cars. We had such cars on our trains years ago, but they proved to be a failure. Everybody knows why they failed. On the dining cars 6s. was charged for dinner. People here cannot afford to pay so much for a meal and, what is more, they do not want an elaborate dinner of that kind. A grill or something warm in winter, and something cold in summer, served at a charge of 2s. or 2s. 6d., would be better. If provision were made in this way, we could overcome the loss of time occasioned by stopping at so many refreshment stations—Spencer's Brook, York, Beverley, Narrogin, Wagin, etc. Years ago the department provided dining cars and let them to the man who was running the station refreshment rooms, and he could not be expected to be interested in making the cars a success. He did not provide a good meal, patronage declined, and the cars were taken off. Yet, in every report of the railways in other States that I have been able to peruse, comment is made on the large increase in the returns from buffet cars, dining cars and railway refreshment rooms. Surely something of the kind could be done here! We ought to study the convenience of the travelling public and induce people to make greater use of our railways. At Spencer's Brook in the morning one may get a nice cup of tea and some toast, but later in the day one is served with a cup of tea and a greasy pie or scone so large that it has to be broken. But apparently the Commissioner of Railways is not sufficiently interested to bother himself about that. I have been a member for eight years, and the matter was mentioned as far back as that by the member for Northam, the present Minister for Labour, as well as by several other members. It is not a fair thing. If ever there was a time when the railways had an opportunity

to benefit themselves, that time is now, with petrol being rationed and the reduced incomes of the people. The people are only too anxious to patronise the railways provided the department will give them the service required. In the Queensland wool report there is a note by the Commissioner which verifies an opinion I have held for many years. The report states —

It is always difficult, moreover, to induce a public department to accept, and put into operation, a reform that is urged on it by someone outside the department. It is only when the head of the Government interests himself in the reform, and is strong enough to get his way, that alterations in the viewpoint of several departments can simultaneously be achieved.

Undoubtedly that largely influences the point of view of Wellington-street. If a suggestion originates within the department, it may be adopted; but if it comes from outside, that is sufficient to condemn it. Now let me refer to what I advisedly call the disgraceful arrangements of the railways for the transport of soldiers on leave. At all events until recently, on every Friday night when the ordinary train reached Spencer's Brook, there used to be accommodation for 10 or 12 additional passengers on the train and anything from 30 to 40 were jammed into it, to the inconvenience of everybody, including the soldiers. I had to come down on the midday train last Monday week. There was one carriage on the train. When we got to Beverley, the coach was stuck full. The soldiers were coming back from their week-end leave. Let me remark, too, that they are not being charged a shilling a week for railway fares, but the ordinary fares. Surely they are entitled to a seat on the train. Moreover, the present lack of system is not fair to other travellers—for instance, women accompanied by children, the women having to take the children on their knees in order to make room for the soldiers coming in. The railway authorities ought to consult with the military authorities as to the number of soldiers travelling and returning. Then arrangements could be made to supply sufficient carriage accommodation. The present state of affairs is a disgrace to both departments, and I hope the Minister will take the matter up.

The hon. gentleman mentioned some general improvements that were being effected. They are enumerated in the Commissioner's report, page 10: Diesel-electric rail cars, im-

proved drawgear, "Westland" dining cars facilities, and accommodation for second-class passengers. All those improvements are confined to the Westland express, the Kalgoorlie line, and suburban passenger traffic. Not too much improvement is being made on country lines. Yet, upon turning to the traffic report we find that there has been an increase of £34,782 from country passengers, against a decrease of £8,298 from suburban traffic. It is not the country people who are letting the railways down. They are using them, and they would use them to a considerably greater extent if they were given the facilities to which they are entitled.

I am sorry the member for Canning is not in his seat, because I have some information I would like him to receive. Going through the report of the Victorian Railways Commissioners recently, I came upon an illuminating fact. The Victorian railways transport their passengers at a more rapid rate than trolley buses or trams. For a distance of four miles the railway takes 11 minutes, trolley buses and trams 20 minutes. For a distance of six miles, the railway takes 16 minutes, and trolley buses and trams 30 minutes. In the case of eight miles, the respective times are 22 minutes and 40 minutes. In the case of 10 miles, 27 minutes and 50 minutes. So there is another little bit of an urge for the Commissioner to make closer investigation into the running times here. I am aware that some of the Victorian lines are electrified, but if electrification can be carried out there I see no reason why our Commissioner could not do the same.

Mr. Needham: The population in Victoria is much greater.

Mr. SEWARD: Population has nothing to do with running times of trains.

Mr. Needham: Gauge has something to do with it.

Mr. SEWARD: I do not think so.

Mr. Needham: It has a lot to do with it.

Mr. SEWARD: If the service were supplied here, the people would patronise the railways. A matter I wish to revert to is the reply of the Minister to a deputation earlier in the year with reference to those open corridor coaches which the Commissioner will insist on using in the Albany express, particularly in the winter months. I forget the particular railway designation for these coaches, but they are a most unfortunate kind of coach. The unlucky passengers huddle

in them trying to get warm. When the door opens, the wind whistle through the coach. The coaches have been on the lines for years. In point of fact, every time one travels on the Albany train one seems to encounter a different coach—one day a closed-up coach, another day a coach with a glass window in the corridor, and so on. Surely half-a-dozen of these carriages could be got together and kept to run on that particular line. It is a long trip. One morning I got to Pingelly, where one passenger alighted from a second-class carriage and said, "If it is the last shilling I have, I will take a first-class carriage and get a little comfort." These people are entitled to a little more improvement on their trains, instead of all the improvements being confined to the Great Western and Kalgoorlie lines and the metropolitan-suburban railways. That is one of the main points I wish to bring under the notice of the Minister for Railways on this occasion. I hope that some notice will be taken of these complaints, because conversations I have had with country people make me feel perfectly certain that they would patronise the railways if only the Commissioner would give the service required.

I again suggest that the Diesel cars, instead of being run on the main line from here to Katanning, where fast steam trains can be run, could be more usefully employed elsewhere. Moreover, when there are too many passengers for the Diesel train, an ordinary train is put on and does the distance as rapidly as the Diesel. There is one other matter I particularly wish to mention. Some time ago, when the Diesel train first came in, I suggested to the Commissioner that these trains might occasionally pull up when passing a man's property instead of carrying him on to the siding three or four miles further.

Member: That is done in South Australia.

Mr. SEWARD: It is done here but not for the man who has a stake in the country. I was surprised when a Diesel train stopped about a mile and a half outside a town recently. I thought, "This is an innovation." But it was a Main Roads Board employee who was put down. It was not a farmer. Undoubtedly it was quite right to let the employees down there, but surely if it could be done for one it could be done for the other.

The Minister for Railways: We would have to let everyone down similarly.

Mr. SEWARD: Not everyone, because the train does not pass everybody's property. The train does occasionally pass a property, and if there were no inconvenience to the schedule the train should be stopped. I have been told that a seat cannot be reserved on the Diesel. I do not want to reserve a seat for myself, but I was recently surprised to see a seat on a Diesel train marked "Reserved" and at Midland Junction a couple of railway employees taking the seat. But it cannot be done for all passengers. I object to that. I have no objection to the employees getting reserved seats, but they should not be granted more privileges than the paying public. I hope the Minister will inquire why that was done and whether it is not possible to do as much for other people.

As regards the tramways, I will only mention that the Minister declares our Diesel cars to be the best in Australia—I do not know whether they are or not. If they are, I do not mind saying that our trams are the worst in Australia. I am tired of waiting for a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes for a car and then finding two or three cars coming up together. Surely a little commonsense could be exercised and one of those trams permitted to go ahead and the others then allowed to proceed.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [10.13]: A few days ago a friend from the Eastern States said he had travelled a good deal about Australia, mostly in the East. I said I should be glad to know how our trains compared with Eastern Australian trains. He replied, "The worst feature of your trains is that they are so often late. On the Perth-Albany outward journey there were a number of hot boxes. The first occurred at Chidlow, which is not very far from Perth. Another train, a Midland Railway Company train, due in Perth from Geraldton at 9.41 a.m., arrived at 10.25 or 10.30."

Mr. Cross: That was a Midland railway train.

Mr. SAMPSON: On the 27th November, 1940, from a similar cause, my friend missed an appointment which he had made to visit Ynnchep.

Mr. Cross: The Midland railway is run by private enterprise.

Mr. SAMPSON: A train from Perth, my friend also states, arrived at Albany about two hours late without any apparent effort to make up for lost time. That was on Friday, the 22nd November.

Mr. Hill: It was two hours late on the following day, too.

Mr. SAMPSON: It creates a bad impression and does something towards spoiling a holiday. The arrangements of my friend were upset by the late running of the train. He said he was impressed by the spirit of indifference exhibited; it seemed as if it did not matter what time the train got in. I asked him whether the carriages were clean and he said, "Yes, but the engines gave one the impression that there was a shortage of cleaners. The engines were not clean." These matters, small in a way, are nevertheless bad from the standpoint of popularising our railways. I paid a tribute the other night—and I do so again—to the office staff for its efforts to obtain business. Perhaps that does not apply to the cash-on-delivery system. I think I was responsible for the introduction of that system several years ago.

Mr. Cross: On the railways?

Mr. SAMPSON: I thought the hon. member would make a remark; one does not need second sight to know what the hon. member will do. The system is a most useful one and I am sorry to note that the business is decreasing. In 1935-36 the receipts for the cash-on-delivery system amounted to £872; in 1936-37, £843; in 1937-38, £756; in 1938-39, £701; and last year, 1939-40, they dropped to £673. The advantages and usefulness of this system should be made more generally known. As I say, it is most useful.

Mr. Cross: Better than the cash order system.

Mr. SAMPSON: This matter has nothing to do with money lending.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. SAMPSON: The system is an adaptation of the Queensland one. I hope the department will make it more widely known, because while business people may be aware of its existence, many private people do not know of it. I am glad the Premier is present.

The Premier: I introduced the system.

Mr. SAMPSON: The Premier must feel regret that the business is dropping off; it should be increasing. The department gives excellent service in that connection, but wider publicity is essential. I notice that the Electricity Department has a surplus for the year of £38,000, compared with £24,000 in the previous year, an improvement of £14,000. This affords additional proof that it pays to provide electric current. The earnings increased by £9,800, and working expenses decreased by £12,000. That surely reflects much credit on one or more people; because in a period when usually wages and costs are increasing, the fact of this improvement is worthy of note. In the report with regard to electricity, reference is made to the fact that the new plant at East Perth is in full operation and that the department is in a position to meet increased demands for electricity both in districts already served and in areas where residents have made application to be served. We read in the report that, unfortunately, non-supply of copper wire is retarding the work of extension, but that it is hoped the necessary supplies will be obtained in the near future. I know the Minister would not mislead either the Committee or myself, but within the last six weeks I have received from a firm of papermakers in London a circular, together with samples of paper and quotations, asking if the firm could supply my requirements. This at a time when England is being pounded with bombs! From a centre in Lancashire I have also received a circular stating that type could be supplied. It is amazing to think that type can now be supplied from England, when she is facing the greatest war of all time. Yet we cannot get copper wire!

Mr. Cross: Surely we want copper wire to make shell-bands.

Mr. SAMPSON: Pardon me, I was really addressing the Minister for Railways.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. SAMPSON: The Deputy Minister for Railways is interested, I am glad to say.

Mr. Cross: Yes.

Mr. SAMPSON. It is pleasing to know he is trying to do something.

Mr. Cross: We want the copper for ammunition.

Mr. SAMPSON: May I proceed, Mr. Chairman?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr. SAMPSON: Is it not remarkable that England can supply the materials I have mentioned? It must be borne in mind that type is made from lead, tin and antimony; at least, those are the main constituents. I would urge that further efforts be made to obtain copper wire, not necessarily from the Old Country, as we ought to be able to obtain it elsewhere. England has a terrific job on hand; and not even for the sake of the people of the outer suburban areas would I add to her difficulties. However, the work has been started and the report says that the need for copper wire is retarding it. As the Minister knows, that is a polite fiction, because the work has not yet been started. I would like to see it commenced and carried out, because it is urgently needed. Perhaps if we persisted in our endeavours we might be able to obtain the wire from some other country. Beyond that, I have nothing to say. I thank the Minister and the various officers of his department for the courtesy they have extended to me. I say again—I cannot repeat it too often—that trains should run to time. The short runs and long stops that characterise our Western Australian trains discredit the whole system. I feel sure that if a genuine effort were made an improvement could be effected.

MR. LAMBERT (Yilgarn-Coolgardie) [10.25]: In speaking to these Estimates, one can reasonably appreciate the many outstanding difficulties connected with the operations of our railways. We have very long distances and a scant population. Much material has to be conveyed at a price that is unprofitable; it hardly covers operating cost, while the charges for smaller items must be regarded as more or less exorbitant. The Commissioner of Railways controls our railways, tramways, ferries and electricity supply. I have always felt it to be a distinct anomaly to ask a railway Commissioner—even nominally; I daresay his control is nominal, unless he intrudes his knowledge or lack of knowledge—to control the electricity supply of this State. For many years past I have felt and have expressed the opinion that the administration of the Railway Department, electricity supply, tramways and ferries ought to be definitely separated. Western Australia has three major problems—transport, power and water supply. Two of these major problems come under the control of the Com-

missioner of Railways. A useful purpose could be served in this State if Parliament saw fit to get a closer grip on our water supplies, but I shall speak on that point at some future time. I desire to deal now with the questions of transport and power. We should have in this State a standing railways committee, that is, a Parliamentary committee, as well as a power committee, to advise Parliament from time to time upon these subjects. I know that some years ago an attempt was made to bring this about, or that it was suggested. I thought then it would take practical shape, but nothing was done. I do not know that much has been done since to bring our railways and electricity supply into closer relationship and closer alignment with the economic and commercial life of the State. Almost every industry—agricultural, pastoral, mining and mineral—must remain dormant unless there is an altered attitude towards our railway charges. We have to make up our minds whether industries will be developed in Western Australia with the assistance of our present transport system or whether they will remain undeveloped. I will not deal with the farming industry; enough has been said of that though much more could be said of the assistance that ought to be given to the production of wheat and wool and other commodities in this State. Let me turn to minerals.

Recently articles have appeared from Professor Bayliss of the University in connection with the minerals of this State. I would remind the professor that except for two or three minerals of a fairly valuable character, minerals cannot be commercially operated in Western Australia. I recently had figures showing the production in Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia with Government assistance. Here the Government, desirous of developing similar industries, is giving a certain amount of help. Indirect assistance, however, is no good. The Government must realise that unless minerals can be produced and put on board at Fremantle or some other shipping port in this State at world's parity they must remain undeveloped. Possibly much good will eventuate from the fact that the Railway Department has had the advice of people who have been constantly in touch with Western Australian industries and who have been able to inform it as to the direction in and the extent to which concessions should

be given with a view to bringing some of our industries within the four corner pegs of commercial usage and value.

I hope the Government will give attention to the separation of the electricity and railway departments. No useful purpose can be served in having the Commissioner of Railways in charge of power production in Western Australia. Power production will extend by leaps and bounds. It has improved in recent years and with up-to-date machinery and the utilisation of labour-saving appliances, we shall subsequently have a greater production of power at a lesser cost. Power plays a very important part in the development of secondary industries, particularly in the metropolitan area. Within reasonable limits we must have power comparable with that being used in the Eastern States, if we desire to establish secondary industries here. Industrially Victoria has gone ahead by leaps and bounds. An Electricity Commission was established and using only brown coal it has spread electricity and power from Yallourn over three-fourths of the surface of Victoria. That must be done in Western Australia. The Government of South Australia has spent millions of pounds at Whyalla, Iron King and Iron Knob and in six or 12 months as a result of the forward policy that is being pursued, will have established not only iron and steel works but also ship-building and other enterprises. It is absurd to contemplate that in this State we have in charge of the Electricity Department a Commissioner of Railways with nothing but a general knowledge of electricity. That department should be separated from the Railway Department and administered by a Commissioner or Commissioners with a forward policy covering the next 50 or 100 years. What is the good of running a tin-pot lighting system to some far away village in the hills represented by the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson)? Does that get us anywhere? Of course it does not.

Mr. J. Hegney: They are not tin-pot villages up that way.

Mr. LAMBERT: Comparatively they are. The hon. member lives where he is forced to live. I do not know that I need say any more about the matter. A lot that is said on these questions is merely a waste of time.

Mr. Sampson: Yours is the best example of a waste of time that we have had tonight.

Mr. North: You spoke on this subject 10 years ago.

Mr. LAMBERT: I daresay if I am here in 15 years' time—and if I so elect I will be—I shall be speaking on the same question. That is the rottenness and the curse of our Parliamentary system. All the intellect and capacity for greatness is supposed to reside in a few officials and no matter what any man either inside or outside of Parliament may say, no attempt is made to give effect to his suggestions.

The Premier: Your interesting speeches have had a great influence on the public life of this State!

Mr. LAMBERT: I do not know whether that is reality or sarcasm. However, whatever it is it falls gently on my back. I am not a bit perturbed. The passenger and goods traffic of our Railway Department call for a much closer inspection. We need more inspectors travelling on the railway. The comfort of passengers was mentioned by the member for Pingelly (Mr. Seward). If such inspectors as I suggest were appointed, many pinpricks and irritations suffered by the travelling public would be eliminated. I suggested that to the Commissioner. Recently in another place a question was asked concerning the cost of jaunts around this country enjoyed by the Commissioner and some of his officers. I suggest to the Commissioner and his immediate subordinates that no good purpose is served by their undertaking such jaunts. What he and his officers require is to get into a second-class carriage. Some of the people who are controlling the traffic should be placed in a second-class carriage and sent to Kalgoorlie and back even if they have to be locked in. Let them be put in a second-class carriage and sent to Meekatharra and back. Possibly then the Commissioner or some of his subordinates who ride so comfortably and so supremely in the Commissioner's carriage on every possible occasion will have a clearer conception of the improved service that could be given to the travelling public of this State who have been suffering so long.

Some time ago I made uncomplimentary references to the railway refreshment rooms provided in this State. It fell to

my lot, however agreeable or disagreeable I might have found it, to heap anything but eulogy on the caterer running those refreshment rooms. I have since been impressed by the fact that, as the Premier has stated, my voice appears to have made an impression on the public life of this State, for only six months ago a person named Betts, who has always been in charge of the Ministerial car, and is a very good caterer too, and an awfully good chap, was appointed a travelling inspector with a view to determining whether those refreshment rooms are being conducted in a decent manner. To his credit and that of the refreshment room caterer who is still on duty, there has been a marked improvement in the food supply. So that if I have not reached out and touched the moon as the Premier desired me to believe, I have been the indirect means of having an inspector appointed to see that the pies, pasties and sandwiches to which the Premier made reference are up to date and eatable. I commend to the new Minister for Railways the need for additional inspectors. I do so because a new broom always sweeps clean or should do so. I hope the Minister will make inquiries as to whether it would not be a useful service to appoint inspectors to discover whether the transport system is as much as 75 per cent. perfect; whether the provisions for the travelling public, particularly those in the second-class carriages, are all that they might be; and whether the behaviour of the conductors is always correct. The Minister has travelled sufficiently to know that there is only one way to ensure that a big organisation like this, embracing £22,000,000 of the people's money, is handled in a proper and efficient manner.

I am glad that when appointing the present Commissioner of Railways the Government did not follow precedent and choose a man near the retiring age. I have no great desire to make reference to commissioners who have been appointed in the past, but I contend that advanced age ought not to be a sine qua non to such appointments. Officers should not be appointed from political motives. Some of those appointments have been outstanding and have represented a political scandal. A few years ago that sort of thing led to a railway deficit of approximately half a million a year. I

once had a skirmishing knowledge of a railway. I spent some ten or 15 years in association with it and received no remuneration. I refer to the Meekatharra-Horse-shoe line, which was pulled up by the Government of the day.

The Premier: The vandals!

Mr. LAMBERT: The shareholders of the company were practically all Western Australians, and subscribed £180,000 for the construction of the line.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the hon. member going to couple his remarks with these Estimates?

Mr. LAMBERT: Yes. The Government bought 80 miles of rails at a cost of £108,000. The shareholders, as I have said, spent £180,000. The rails were new at the time they were put in. When the railway was resumed the 6,614 tons of rails were valued by the Railway Department at £42,757. They were, however, sold to us under hire purchase agreement for £117,000. When they were pulled up two or three years after they were valued at only £42,757. There was a go-slow policy in vogue at the time. It did not matter to the Government what the rails had cost or would fetch, because it was only shareholders' money that was concerned! Anyone was employed to go into a matter of that sort. The cost of pulling up the rails was £19,794. The Kurrawang Firewood Company with a lifting gang of 16 men was able to pull up a mile of rails per day, and yet it cost the Railway Department £19,794 to do this particular work.

Mr. Marshall: Why did the rails depreciate so much in value?

Mr. LAMBERT: There was no traffic upon them, with the exception of about half a dozen trucks. I wish to show the foolishness of allowing the construction of railways to be taken from the Public Works Department and placed in the hands of the Railway Department, as was done a few years ago. The department simply juggled with figures and material. The number of sleepers taken over was 120,879 at a cost of £5,769. Other sleepers were sold as second-hand and as being unsuitable for railway purposes. Those sleepers had cost £54,000 delivered in Meekatharra and the rail-age alone was 2s. 6d. per sleeper. They were taken into railway account for the reconditioning of such lines as the

Sandstone and others, at a ridiculously low figure, namely £5,769. That sort of juggling was possible when the department was able to build its own lines, make its own alterations, and resume its own material. The Auditor-General reported that the company owed the Government a considerable sum of money. As a matter of fact, the Government by a specious act filched from the shareholders of the company about £120,000.

Mr. J. Hegney: Are you making a claim on the Government on behalf of the company?

Mr. LAMBERT: I am giving the facts. The time has long since gone when we might make a claim. We should have put in a writ at once, but did not do so.

Mr. J. Hegney: I thought you would be barred by the statute of limitations.

Mr. LAMBERT: No. The Railway Department does some things economically and exercises discretion here and there. I was along the line the other day and asked a station master how things were going. He said the department was tightening up in the matter of expenditure, and called my attention to a circular that had been sent to all station masters. The document stated that the department desired station masters to gather up all empty bottles, as such work would mean considerable revenue to the railways. Is it not possible to find fault with a department that gives such instructions to its station masters, which of course means converting them into bottle-ohs and marine merchants in the process of gathering bottles along the railway line? That work deprives a number of poor children, who used to gather four or five dozen bottles beside the line, of a little pocket money. I draw attention to this very foreeful economy on the part of the department. I hope it will extend in other equally useful directions. In the circumstances we have not much to growl about.

MR. HILL (Albany) [10.52]: It is obvious to anyone who studies transport problems that the deplorable condition of our transport services is due to the fact that we have not, and never have had, sound transport administration. I am aware that we have a Parliament. In Parliament it used to be a case of, "If you vote for my railway I will vote for yours." We are

paying for that to-day. On more than one occasion I have drawn attention to the fact that the Federal Transport Committee in 1929 recommended the placing of all transport under one ministerial head. When speaking on the Address-in-reply, I referred to the recommendation that had been put forward in South Africa. I have here the report of the Railway Commissioner on transport in South Australia dated 1938. On page 41 of that document the following appears:—

Organisation and co-ordination of all transport activities within the State: Apart from the activities of the Transport Control Board under the Road and Railway Transport Act a little has been done to organise and co-ordinate all transport activities within the State. One of the means by which the Railways Commission recommended that this should be effected was by the establishment of a Ministry of Transport. Such a portfolio exists in many other countries, and in some other Australian States, and there is much to be said in its favour. Since the appointment of this Commission changes have been made that have resulted in the portfolios of the Commissioner of Public Works, Minister of Railways, Minister of Marine, and Minister of Local Government being held by one Minister. This has in practical effect, brought all transport activities under one control. We respectfully express our approval of this course.

I have also the latest report of the Federal Grants Commission from which I propose to quote an extract referring to Tasmania as follows:—

In our last report we explained that a transport Commission had been appointed to co-ordinate and control the various transport services of the State. The new Commission assumed control on the 1st July, 1939, and this year we heard evidence from the Commissioner for Transport (Mr. M. W. S. Wilson). As we have pointed out in previous reports, the finances of the railways were drifting in an alarming way. Losses had grown to over £500,000 a year, and on the 1st July, 1936, the capital of the railways was written down by £4,738,000 to £1,860,000. The powers of the new Commission are comprehensive and include—

- (a) Management and operation of the State Railways.
- (b) Control and regulation of commercial road transport and aircraft.
- (c) Administration of the Motor Vehicles Act with respect to taxation of motor vehicles.
- (d) Registration of motor vehicles, licensing of drivers, control of traffic, etc.
- (e) Administration of Roads and Jetties Act, 1935.
- (f) Control of funds for Federal Aid Roads and Works pursuant to the Federal Aids Roads and Works Agreement.

The revenues available to the Commission include railway earnings, land tax, license fees and charges in respect of public utilities, motor tax, motor registration fees, drivers' license fees, and petrol duty payable to the State under the Federal Aid Roads and Works Agreement.

The Commission is much impressed by the manner in which the Transport Commission has approached a difficult task. Already there are signs of improvement in the railway finances despite increased costs due to war conditions, the coal strike, and wage increases.

I am satisfied that a sound transport administration is one of the greatest needs of the State. We have a very fine agricultural department to help us overcome our production problems, but we have no department whose duty it is to keep our transport costs at the lowest level. A few weeks ago I had evidence to show the need for such transport administration. Western Australia does not lend itself to a coastal shipping service. We had a coastal steamer called the "Kybra," trading between Fremantle and Albany. She used to make a monthly trip to Albany, taking about 220 tons of cargo, 30 tons of oil, and other oils from the companies. The Commonwealth authorities commandeered the "Kybra" and she was taken off the service. I had the pleasure of introducing a deputation to the Minister for Railways and State Shipping asking for a rail service to replace the vessel. We put forward proposals for a special train, or some other arrangement that would provide us with a service, comparable with that previously given by the "Kybra." I am sorry to say the Commissioner and the Government refused our request.

Mr. Doney: The Minister seemed rather favourable to the proposal.

Mr. HILL: I thought so, too. A few days after introducing the deputation I went to South Australia. Whilst there I met one of my relatives, a senior officer in the Railway Administration. He took me on an inspection tour, and quoted several instances of how in South Australia they had to meet motor competition and attract traffic. He provided me with a good many instances, but I shall content myself by referring to one. Mt. Gambier is 306 miles from Adelaide, or practically the same distance that Albany is from Perth. Mt. Gambier is situated fairly close to Melbourne. In order to encourage the people at that centre to secure their supplies from Adelaide rather than from Melbourne, the South Australian Railway Department provided a

special rate of £2 10s. per ton on goods railed from Adelaide, and that included the cost of transferring consignments from the 5 ft. 3 in. to the 3 ft. 6 in. gauge. When we placed a somewhat similar request before the railway authorities in this State, we did not receive a favourable reply. The railway authorities may find satisfaction in the fact that they are sticking to their rate book. The members of the Perth Chamber of Commerce are much concerned about the position. Had it not been for the illness of the Minister for Labour, I would have introduced a deputation to him to-morrow from the Chamber of Commerce, the members of which are gravely concerned because the Albany people are being forced to procure their requirements from Adelaide. Albany does not desire to become a suburb of Adelaide, but if the Railway Department has its way, that is what will result.

Mr. Doney: It simply means that more goods will be obtained from Adelaide.

Mr. HILL: That trade will increase. The Albany shopkeepers have to compete with other firms and are being forced to procure their supplies from South Australia. When the M.V. "Kybra" was in commission, the shipping freight from Fremantle to Albany was 30s. per ton. The cost of conveying consignments by motor truck worked out at 35s. per ton. The freight over the railways is £4 10s. a ton, as against a cost of 35s. a ton on goods obtained from Adelaide.

Hon. C. G. Latham: What was the minimum freight over the railways?

Mr. HILL: I cannot say; we were not concerned with the minimum rate.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Have you worked out the maximum rates?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Albany is making the speech.

Mr. HILL: The Albany people offered to provide sufficient goods to warrant the running of one train, but our request was not approved. I mention these points to indicate how the Railway Department is losing traffic, and the State itself will lose trade if the department persists in its present attitude.

Mr. Doney: The Minister for Industrial Development cannot agree with that policy.

Mr. HILL: Certainly it is not in accord with the professed policy of the Government to assist State industries.

Mr. Cross: Why say "professed"?

Mr. HILL: When I was in New South Wales recently, I had lunch with the Minister for Transport. In that State practically all forms of transport are under one Ministerial head. During my conversation with him, I said that I thought the ports should also be brought under the control of the Minister for Transport. He did not agree with me and if hon. members had an opportunity to study the report of the Maritime Service Board of New South Wales, they would understand why the Minister adopted that attitude. The port of Albany is under the control of the Railway Department, and I am sorry to say the world over port people realise that the control of a port by the railways is most undesirable. We have a striking example of that at Albany. When the Bulk Handling Committee visited Albany recently they gave consideration to the charges levied at the port compared with those applying at other ports. As the Minister for Lands was not in the Chamber last week, I would point out to him that the losses at out-ports during 1938-39 were approximately: At Geraldton, 3s. 6d. per ton; at Bunbury, 2s. per ton; while at Albany the charges just about met the expenditure. If the cost of bulk handling were added, it would be found that Albany constitutes the cheapest port in the State. We have a jetty which is under the control of the Railway Department. It is about 50 years old and costs £1,700 a year for repairs. In my opinion it would be better to scrap the jetty and make use of the £1,700 per year for the payment of interest on the money required to construct a decent wharf. If that were done, with the bulk handling terminal there, the Government would be able to cope with all the requirements for the Great Southern portion of the State much more cheaply than the work can be done at the two existing ports. One of the greatest living authorities in the world on transport matters is Sir David Owen, who was associated with the Port of London Authority and was president of the Institute of Transport. He pointed out that we had to consider the problems of transport as a whole and we would secure satisfaction only when all forms of transport were centred in one administration, by which means only would we be able to provide sufficient transport to meet the requirements of the producers and provide that service at the lowest possible cost.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington) [11.7]: I have not much to say about the Railway Estimates, except to mention that when we have approached the Commissioner of Railways and his officers, I have always found a very apparent desire to render assistance and to listen to requests I have made. There is also the desire wherever possible to meet the requirements that have been set out. I hope the Commissioner will not be influenced by the speech of the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) regarding the visits he and his senior officers make to railway centres throughout the State. The hon. member referred to them as jaunts. For my part, I know that the visits of the Commissioner and his officers are greatly appreciated throughout the country districts. By this means road boards and other public bodies in the country areas are able to meet the Commissioner and discuss matters with him on the spot. Very often difficulties are overcome in a practical manner because the position is explained on the spot. The country people are always glad to welcome the Commissioner and his officers for that reason. I certainly hope the Commissioner will not accept the views of the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie as representing those of this Committee.

I would like some information from the Minister regarding the extension of the electricity supply to portions of my electorate. Some time ago the Minister, who was accompanied by Mr. Taylor, visited the Serpentine-Mundijong district, where the people are clamouring for the supply of electric current. The people were under the belief that both the Minister and Mr. Taylor were greatly impressed by their visit and that it would be only a short time before the mains would be carried out to the district. In consequence a number of the settlers made preparations thinking that they would be able to work certain machinery by electric power. They are still waiting for the required facilities and are uncertain as to whether they should make other provisions. I hope the Minister will give some indication of the prospects. The same applies to the settlers in the Oaklands area near Byford. That is a closely settled dairying district and the

extension of electric power is necessary. I know the department is confronted with difficulties and that there is a shortage in copper wire supplies. I presume that, as soon as a consignment is received, attention will be given to this matter. Perhaps the Minister will be able to give me some information on the point.

[Mr. Marshall took the Chair.]

MR. CROSS (Canning) [11.9]: A careful scrutiny of the report of the Commissioner of Railways is necessary to elicit information regarding some of the figures, but some details that should be included are not available. For instance, the deficit on the undertakings is shown as £278,000. The deficit on the railway operations is given as £300,000, on the tramways £15,000, and on the ferries £1,028, while there is a surplus of £38,082 on the electricity supply. The deficit on the tramways is not strictly correct. My statement can be verified by a reference to page 33 of the Commissioner's report, where members will see some particulars regarding trolley buses. The takings in 1937 are shown as £7,752, whereas in 1940 they represented a return of £63,337.

Hon. C. G. Latham: What was the increase in the number of buses?

Mr. CROSS: There was an increase in the buses, but the point to which I wish to draw attention is that in 1937, after paying interest and working expenses, the trolley buses showed a surplus of £714. In 1940, after paying working expenses and interest charges, the surplus was £11,113.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Was sinking fund provided for too?

Mr. CROSS: Yes—working expenses, interest and sinking fund charges. That shows that the loss on the Tramway Department was not £15,000 but £26,000. The report should disclose details of the running expenses of the trolley bus system. The working expenses per mile are disclosed with regard to tramways and I know that those associated with the trolley buses are considerably less per mile than the tramway costs. If members accept those figures, they will agree with me that there should be no further extensions or duplications of tramway services but rather a hastening of the conversion to the trolley bus system in the greater metropolitan area. Repeatedly

during the last three or four years, I have drawn attention to the urgency for special attention being given to the conversion to the trolley bus system. The Commissioner's report contains a reference to the ordering of more trolley buses. My attention has been drawn by the South Perth Road Board to a recent statement by the Minister for Railways in which he said that the Government wished to provide better transport facilities for South Perth as soon as possible. We have been told that for the past five years.

Mr. Warner: And you will be told that for the next five years.

Mr. CROSS: The Minister said that the cost of installing a trolley bus service for South Perth would be about £100,000, and that there would be considerable delay in procuring the necessary chassis. He said that the Government would have to consider the provision of producer gas-driven buses or Diesel engine buses. I hope in no circumstances will Diesel engine buses be provided for South Perth.

Mr. Warner: Are you advocating the scrapping of the trams?

Mr. CROSS: If Diesel engine buses are procured for the South Perth service, they will be dependent upon imported oil for fuel, whereas trolley buses could be propelled by means of electricity generated from coal produced within the State. The shipping position is getting worse and we may have great difficulty in procuring oil and petrol. On the other hand, it is possible to get further trolley buses from Great Britain, provided they are ordered at an early date, and with them we would be independent of outside power fuel supplies. I wish to direct the Minister's attention to the need for a new service in South Perth. Owing to the difficulty created by war conditions and scarcity of money, the Government might not be able to do all it deserves, but six new trolley bus chassis are expected to be delivered early in the new year, and the Government might well run those buses through the centre of South Perth, continuing the trams as at present until additional trolley buses can be obtained. The people of South Perth will not tolerate the present service much longer. Members of the South Perth Road Board want to know what line of action I propose to take because it appears that nothing has been done

by myself or by the board to secure any improvement. I have interviewed the Premier and the Minister repeatedly on this matter and have directed attention to it time and time again in this Chamber.

Hon. C. G. Latham: What did they say?

The Premier: I reminded the hon. member that there was a war on.

Mr. CROSS: I concede that we cannot expect to get everything while war conditions prevail, but there are some things that ought to be done even in wartime. Six new trolley bus chassis will be delivered shortly, and I do not think it would cost anything like £100,000 to provide the first instalment of the improved service. I do not think we shall ever make our transport facilities satisfactory to the public so long as the various concerns are working under different sets of management. We have the bus companies and the tramway system, and though there is a co-ordination board, I cannot see that there is much co-ordination. We shall never get satisfaction in the greater metropolitan area until the whole of the services are brought under the control of one transport authority similar to the London Passenger Transport Board. There has been an improvement in the tram service in South Perth since petrol rationing came into operation. A few small cars have been run at intervening periods, but the South Suburban Bus Co. has put on additional buses which are carrying thousands of passengers every week for whom the trams should cater. When the Government takes delivery of the new trolley buses, a line should be run down Carington-street to South Como in order to provide a service long desired by the residents of the district. Those people have no transport service at present; they reside between the bus route and the tramway, and have a considerable distance to walk. The Minister and the Transport Board know of the need for this service. Past Ministers have been there and all have agreed that something should be done, but they have been saying this for the last five years. The South Perth Road Board is entitled to know when a service will be provided.

I listened with interest to the remarks of the member for Swan about the shortage of copper. I know that nearly the whole of

the copper supplies of the Empire are needed for munition making. The member for Swan said he had received circulars from Great Britain stating that firms in Great Britain could supply type. Type is not made from copper, and white metal cannot be used for shell bands. Britain is hard-pressed to secure sufficient supplies of copper, and our resources of copper are in demand in the Eastern States for the making of munitions. I am as anxious as is the hon. member to secure extensions of the electricity lines. Some extensions have been promised in my electorate, and five or six miles of wire would do all the work that is needed, but it is hard to get the copper. Knowing that this is one material that cannot be easily obtained because of the demand for war purposes, people are prepared to wait for the extensions, but trolley bus chassis can be obtained, and the Government should order more with a view to providing facilities for South Perth, and also increasing the services to Wembley and Claremont.

There is another reason why it would be unwise to introduce diesel buses to augment the tramway system. If that were done, a fresh set of mechanics and technicians would be required to service them. The present staff is accustomed to the electrical equipment and the motors, which are similar in trams and trolley buses, but to introduce diesel buses with different engines, gears and differentials would involve the employment of men with different knowledge and the setting up of a new department. We would be wise to keep the system standardised as far as possible. If we had fifty different types of machines, we would probably require fifty sets of men with varied knowledge to service them. I hope the Minister will give favourable consideration to the request for a trolley bus service for South Perth.

MR. HOLMAN (Forrest) [11.22]: Last session I had occasion to mention one or two items regarding the railway system. I regret to say that nothing has been done and I am wise enough to expect nothing to be done in the near future. I refer to the appointment of attendants at Worsley and Holyoake. I also had occasion to call the attention of the Minister to the advisability of eliminating the distinction between the

first and second-class passengers on our suburban and country railways. I wish to quote some remarks made by the Premier last year in favour of the elimination of this distinction—

I see by the Press that the New South Wales Commissioner of Railways has decided to abolish the system of two classes of accommodation in and around Sydney. About three per cent. of the people use the first-class carriages, thereby monopolising 33 per cent. of the accommodation; the rest of the train is overcrowded by people paying second-class fares. It is now recognised in New South Wales that making two classes is a retrograde step in the metropolitan area. After all, in travelling from Subiaco to Perth, what is the difference between travelling first-class and travelling second-class, so long as either accommodation is clean? In London, for instance, the whole of the underground system is one class. In Japan and other countries there is only one class of accommodation. Trolley buses, although first-class, charge only second-class fares.

Those were the remarks of the Premier on that occasion. I followed them up by suggesting that the Minister should consider having one class on trains in our metropolitan area. When I lived at Bassendean, I often had to stand in a second-class carriage while first-class coaches on the same train were practically empty. I noticed in the report of the Railway Department that although the traffic has increased, that is the earnings per train mile, the increase has been most marked in second-class fares. For this reason there is added incentive for urging this necessary reform. From the point of view of the department it would be better to have additional second-class compartments occupied than to be running first-class carriages empty. What with petrol rationing and economies being practised at present, I do not think anyone has been harder hit than the worker, and further consideration should be given to the working class travelling public in the way of added comfort. This could be provided by the elimination of class distinction on the railways. If we adopted this reform, we would not be taking the initiative but would be following in the footsteps of older countries and benefiting from their experience. I have heard it said that train travelling in New South Wales is comfortable as compared with Western Australia.

The Minister for Mines interjected.

Mr. HOLMAN: I have travelled on some of the railways in New South Wales and I

know what service is provided there. I agree with the policy of the New South Wales Government under which class distinction has been eliminated. Here we have first and second class coaches on our railways, but no such distinction is drawn on trolley buses or trams. If we had two classes on trolley buses and trams, we would probably have the same "snobocracy" as prevails on our railways; half of the second-class passengers would be standing while the first-class compartments would be almost empty. Judging by the increased revenue of the department in the year just closed, the percentage of second-class travelling public is probably greater than it was in the previous year when the Premier made the remarks I have quoted.

Another point I wish to touch on refers to the Railway Mill. That mill is included in the report of the Commissioner for Railways, which on page 32 gives certain statistics. There is a statement that the timber mill represents a very efficient section of railway work. I quite agree with that remark. The mill is in my electorate, and is a highly up-to-date proposition. I should have liked to see in the departmental report the balance sheet of the working of the mill. I have been right through the report studiously in an endeavour to ascertain how the mill stands with regard to costs and earnings or profit or loss, as the case may be. There is nothing to show those things. Probably, had the balance sheet shown a profit, I would have been more enthusiastic in regard to some things I want for the mill. I have said before that the approaches to the mill are a disgrace. As regards the road, unfortunately because of the concession attached to the mill the Murray Road Board denies any responsibility. Also unfortunately, I have to travel along that road in the same way as the mill workers, and therefore know the exact state of disrepair into which it has fallen.

The CHAIRMAN: There is no vote here for roads.

Mr. HOLMAN: Unfortunately not. However, there is a vote referring to the Railway Mill.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not entitled to discuss road making under the vote. There is no provision here for road making. I cannot allow him to discuss that phase.

Mr. HOLMAN: Is not the money expended on the concession as regards the Railway Mill included in that vote? For that reason I would consider that any workings connected with the mill must necessarily be discussed on this vote, the Railway Department having no other means of carrying out its work in that respect.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must not discuss either roads or the making of roads under this vote. There is no provision for either. The hon. member must not proceed along those lines.

Mr. HOLMAN: I have yet to discover whether that is the reason why the roads are in such a state of disrepair, there being no means of getting money for them.

Mr. Doney: There might be moneys under some other vote.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member has opportunity to discuss that matter during the session, without any vote; but there is no provision here for it, and I cannot permit him to proceed along those lines.

Mr. HOLMAN: Getting off roads and getting on to overhead bridges in railway yards, let me refer to the Donnybrook area. For many years Donnybrook has been endeavouring to secure an overhead bridge for its railway yard. In many country districts facilities exist for the general public to cross railway property; but in Donnybrook, which, as I have mentioned previously in this Chamber, is a flourishing centre, no such facilities have been provided. There the goods shed is on the opposite side of the railway to the station. If a person wants a goods note, he should—legally—go right around the town—anybody who knows Donnybrook knows what that means—to a crossing in order to reach the station. Of course people rarely do that, but as a rule just walk across the station yard. The responsible body at Donnybrook has frequently made representations to the Railway Department concerning this matter. I sincerely hope the subject will receive the consideration it deserves.

I desire to thank the Minister for the expenditure by the Railway Department on the new station yard at Brunswick. This is another milestone in the progress of the South-West. Brunswick is a highly important junction, and the Minister and his officials have seen fit to expend approximately £30,000 on a new station yard and a new trucking yard there. This is going to be one of the nicest looking stations in country

areas. The department deserves every praise for the construction of this work.

I should be failing in my duty if I did not congratulate the Minister on giving to the relief workers between Wokalup and Perth facilities in the form of a special train. Up to a few months ago relief workers from Stirling Dam, Samson's Brook, Wokalup and many other places along the Bunbury line had to wait for hours for the ordinary train to come through, or as an alternative had to pick up any mode of transport that was passing, and incidentally often had to secure such transport illegally, against the Transport Act. However, a movement was set on foot and the position was placed before the Minister for Railways. It was pointed out that the Railway Department would make a profit, or at all events pay expenses, by putting on another train for the people specially needing it. The Minister did put on a special train, and my latest information is that it has proved satisfactory both to the department and the men concerned. On behalf of those men I have to thank the Minister and the department.

A point I wish to emphasise is one the people at the Railways Mill at Banksiadale have brought before me. In common with many other country centres, the Railways Mill has lost many men by enlistment. In enlisting, those men have necessarily been compelled to leave their families in their home town, the only alternative being to transfer them and their property to the metropolitan area or some other convenient city. On their behalf I approached the Railway Department to see whether it was possible for the families to retain their homes at the Railway Mill while the menfolk were on active service. The Minister replied that he would not eject any person from his home unnecessarily, but that if it was found that a home was required for an employee taking the place of an enlisted man, it must be vacated. I then was asked to check up on Commonwealth legislation in respect of enlisted men and their homes. From the War Service regulations I saw that the Minister was quite within his rights in asking that cottages be vacated in the circumstances indicated. That removed the possibility of retaining a cottage when it was required by another employee, and involved the possibility of hardship to families of enlisted men. After all said and done, in

mill centres workers often do not receive more than the basic wage. If after enlistment of the husband or father the family had to vacate the cottage, and be transported with the furniture to wherever was convenient, heavy expense would be involved. In all probability most of the people would migrate to the city. I was then asked by them to approach the department with an inquiry whether, if it was necessary for them to vacate their cottages, the department would allow free transport for them and their furniture to the place to which they would have to go. To that request I am sorry to say I received a negative reply. The letter stated that whilst it was recognised that the families of all men who enlisted were deserving of every consideration, it was not possible that any special assistance extended to one section should be withheld from other sections; the employees of the mill were not entitled to any privileges or concessions on the railways by virtue of their being employees, and in this respect they were on the same footing as members of the general public. With those statements I do not agree, because I regard the matter from the standpoint of the employee. The trains necessarily run from Banksiadale to Perth and other places. A person who enlists is, as the Minister's letter states, deserving of every consideration. Whilst those trains are running, consideration should be granted to the families of enlisted men, and room—which would probably be available in any case—should be found for them for the purpose of free transport of those families and their furniture. I hope this is not the last word on the subject. I have listened to the debate on free transport for soldiers and have heard what various members consider should be done for our men who have enlisted. I have also listened to another debate in this Chamber upon what ought to be done for the families of enlisted men. I add a contribution for a further section, and request that the Railway Department should provide for the families of railway servants who have enlisted, free facilities on our railways for themselves and their belongings if they must be ejected from their cottages at the railway mill. It seems abhorrent for one to talk about these people being ejected from their cottages; but that is due to force of circumstances. I am willing to concede that point, because

when one of these workers enlists, his place must be taken by some other person who would have to live close to his work. I fully appreciate that point. After all, the Railway Mill is part of the railway system and the mill people are entitled to the consideration that I ask for them. It is no greater than the consideration of a free pass extended to members of Parliament, no greater than the privileges enjoyed by men employed in the workshops, and no greater than the consideration of concession tickets granted to other workers in the Railway Department. The least we can do for the families of mill workers who have enlisted is to provide them with free transport.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: What about the soldiers' dependants' fund?

Mr. HOLMAN: I have had dealings with that fund and have the utmost admiration for Mr. Mather, who controls it. He is a fine person and will do everything he can within reason; but the people to whom I refer should not have to apply to that fund for assistance of the kind that I am asking for. It would be absurd to do so. The railways are a Government concern. Surely to goodness, the soldiers' dependants' fund is provided by people who are big-hearted enough to contribute to it.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must not drift from the matter before the Chair.

Mr. HOLMAN: Another matter deserving of consideration concerns a section of our primary producers. I have been in touch with the department with regard to the establishment of a central potato sorting shed in Perth. Unfortunately, I have not received a reply from the department agreeing that it is willing to assist in this matter. I could have gone further and asked that sheds be established in various districts. For instance, we could establish a shed at Donnybrook and another in the Bengier district. At the present time, the potatoes, or most of them, are sent to Fremantle for examination before export. When they reach Fremantle they are almost out of the control of the growers, because the place where the potatoes are condemned is so far away.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not want to be continually stopping the hon. member. This vote provides nothing with regard to pota-

atoes, other than their transport, or it may be that there has been some failure on the part of the administration to cater properly for the transport of potatoes. The hon. member must try to keep within the limits of procedure.

Mr. HOLMAN: Would this not apply to the money—

The CHAIRMAN: Potatoes have nothing to do with the Minister for Railways nor with the administration of his department.

Mr. HOLMAN: Would this not apply to the upkeep of buildings?

The CHAIRMAN: I did not stop the hon. member when he was talking about buildings over which the Commissioner of Railways has control; but he is now talking about potatoes and the Minister for Railways does not control them. Therefore, the hon. member cannot proceed along those lines.

Mr. HOLMAN: The Minister definitely has different ideas, because he has replied to my correspondence with regard to the establishment of a shed in the railway yards under the control of the department. That is the reason why I touched on the matter. The Agricultural Department agreed that these sheds should be erected and referred me to the Minister for Railways. It is not my fault that I was so advised. I hope the Minister will give the matter his consideration. The primary producers have been often referred to as the backbone of the State and for that reason I ask the Minister once again to establish a potato sorting shed in the central railway yards. When he is big-hearted enough to do that, then possibly I may ask him to erect such sheds in the country districts.

MR. J. H. SMITH (Nelson) [11.53]: I do not propose to take up much of the Committee's time at this late hour, but there are one or two matters to which I wish to refer briefly. I was much impressed by the remarks of the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert), but I do not propose to deal with all the ramifications of our railway system in the way he did. I do agree with his remarks in regard to second-class accommodation, more especially outside the metropolitan area. To my mind, it is an absolute disgrace that the Railway Department should ask country women and children to

ride in the second-class carriages provided for them. These are not better than dog boxes. In the metropolitan area, the second-class accommodation is more than favourable.

Mr. Holman: Abolish classes altogether.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I would like to do so. I advocated their abolition 20 years ago, when I first became a member of this House. There should be no classes on the railways. There should be a distinction: if people desire it, they should pay for it; but there should be no difference between the accommodation provided for the poorer people and that provided for those who can afford to pay for distinction.

Mr. Cross: Should people get first-class accommodation for second-class rates?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Yes, the rates should be the same. If certain people desire to travel with only six in a compartment, they should pay accordingly. I would impress upon the Minister the absolute necessity for providing a better transport service between Perth and the important parts of my electorate, namely, Pemberton and Manjimup. When we take into consideration the large population settled in those districts, and when we realise that the South-Western railway pays better than does any other part of the system, while for years we have had only three trains per week to Pemberton and Manjimup, members will understand why the people in those districts are clamouring for increased facilities. I want the Minister to bring this point forcibly under the notice of the Commissioner. The people are crying out for a better transport service. Is it any wonder? Some 12 months ago the roads from those districts were full of motor transport bringing people from Pemberton and Manjimup to Perth in four hours, for the same amount as that charged by the railways. To combat that competition, the department put Diesel engines on the run, in that way trying to provide a better service. We are getting a better service, but what I want the Minister to do is to make it widely known, so that the people will use it. Now that we have petrol rationing and road transport is no longer possible, the railways have a golden opportunity to capture this business, provided the transport facilities are reasonable. Could not a daily service be provided from Pemberton to Perth occupying six hours on

the run, instead of 12 hours? If that were done, the people would patronise the railways. I doubt whether there is a more thickly populated district of the State than is the district surrounding Pemberton and Manjimup, yet we have only three trains to Perth per week. It is only reasonable that these people should have a daily service. They receive a mail only three times a week. So we ask that they may receive the benefit of a daily service. The Railway Department runs a train from Bridgetown on Saturdays. It leaves Bridgetown at 10 o'clock and arrives in Perth at six o'clock at night. The ordinary train leaves Bridgetown at nine o'clock and arrives in Perth at eight o'clock, taking 11 hours on the road. The time occupied from Pemberton is 14 hours. That time should be reduced to seven or eight hours, and if that were done the people would patronise the railways. At present, the trains stop for 15 to 20 minutes at each siding to enable the guard to load milk and fruit, while the passengers must perforce be delayed. Is it any wonder that in such circumstances the railways are not patronised? If the facilities were improved I am sure the people, who are loyal, would use the railways. I would not ask for a daily service to Northcliffe. If my requests can be granted, my constituents will be grateful to the Railway Department.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS

(Hon. E. Nulsen—Kanowna—in reply) [11.59]: I thank members for the way in which they have received these Estimates. I assure them that the Commissioner and I, as Minister, welcome constructive criticism, and to-night most of the criticism offered has been constructive. I do not intend to reply to all the points that have been raised, because were I to do so we would be here till morning. The suggestion was made by the member for Pingelly (Mr. Seward) that Diesel coaches should stop anywhere for the convenience of people. But that is the trouble with the Railway Department to-day. There are slow services because we try to meet the convenience of people throughout the State. At most of the stations where refreshment rooms are situated, shunting is done and water is taken aboard and other essential tasks are performed, and the time lost at those places is not nearly as great as the layman thinks. If we had to stop

for the convenience of every farmer on the track or for a man who wanted to get off to go kangarooing, we could not keep to a timetable at all. Comparisons have been made between rail and motor transport. If a motor leaves Bridgetown it runs straight through to Perth in two or three hours, whereas a train has to serve all the people along its particular line. Consequently, the comparison is not a fair one.

The Commissioner is doing his best to serve everybody and where a concession can possibly be made, he makes it. The wheat farmers in particular are receiving a marvellous concession from the Railway Department which has helped to develop Western Australia and made the wheat farmers of this country. The department has carried wheat under cost.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Do not tell us that yarn.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The charge to the farmer is 1.09d. per ton per mile, whereas the cost of running the train is about 1.98d.

Mr. Seward: You have full loads.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That does not matter. Full loads cannot be carted profitably under cost. The same applies to super. We carry super from December to May and often up to June for under a half-penny per ton per mile. That is the cheapest freight in the world. For a while I think New Zealand carried it for nothing, but found that that did not pay even indirectly. Country Party members are sometimes a little unreasonable. If we considered the cost of carrying a ton per mile and what is actually charged to primary producers, we find that the concession to the farmers amounts to about £500,000 or £600,000 a year. That is a big concession. Those figures are correct because I went into the matter last year.

Mr. Seward: I would like you to publish them.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If the hon. member visits me some day, I will go into the figures and show him definitely that that sum was saved to the primary producers last year in the cartage of wheat and super alone. Apart from that, quite a number of other commodities are carried under the average rate necessary to make the

railways pay. On the other hand, people on the goldfields pay high rates on such things as groceries.

Hon. C. G. Latham: So do people in the country.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Most of them are more or less self-supporting; if they are not, they should not be farmers.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You need to learn something about the position.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I know a number of farmers well and from experience on my own farm I know that the cost of the transport of commodities is greater for men on the goldfields than it is for men in country districts. The Commissioner would like to do a lot but he has only a limited amount of money. With regard to renovations to the rolling stock he does the best he can with the money available. Often he submits suggestions for concessions to the farmers, but money cannot be obtained from the Treasurer. The member for Pingelly spoke of the wonderful service given in Queensland. Does he know that in 1938-39 Queensland raised its freights and fares to cope with increased expenditure?

Mr. Seward: It is getting record traffic.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We increased freights by 10 per cent. on "C" class goods and our increased revenue was £30,000 last year. That was a very small sum in comparison with the concessions amounting to £105,000 which we made in 1934-35, when the Transport Co-ordination Act came into force. The services in this State and in Victoria and New South Wales cannot be fairly compared. Here we have only 106 persons to every mile of railway, whereas in Queensland there are 156, in New South Wales about 190, and in Victoria just under 400. It is just like running a business. Where the turnover is small, there is a smaller profit than in the case of a concern with a big turnover. In Western Australia our working costs are lower than anywhere in Australia.

Mr. Seward: Then your returns should be better.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We have not the population, nor the turnover. As a banker, the hon. member knows that there must be a reasonable turnover. With our small population, that is a different

proposition, particularly as we have to carry such a high capital per head of population. The Commissioner is taking every advantage of petrol rationing to educate the people as to the service provided by the railways and to satisfy customers. He has created a commercial department which is doing a wonderfully good work.

Reference was made to trams. The member for Pingelly wanted to know why all went out together. The point is that each goes to a different district, and there are many termini. I have spoken to the manager and he assures me that it is unavoidable. Consideration has been given to the matter. At times congestion occurs through breakdowns. There was a breakdown the other day and there were 12 trams in a line. The member for Middle Swan (Mr. J. Hegney) complained about late trains. The Commissioner has given serious consideration to getting trains to run to schedule. He has made every effort with regard to trains, not only on the south-west, but also on the goldfields line. I have had to complain on behalf of electors in my district. He went into the matter very thoroughly and as a result two or three officials lost their positions.

Much has been said about the electricity supply. All possible consideration has been given to the requests for extensions. One of the reasons why extensions have not been made is that supplies of copper wire are not available. We have the most efficient electricity service in the whole of Australia. I was looking over the figures recently, and I noticed that our old "A" station never got higher than 13 per cent. thermal efficiency, whereas the thermal efficiency today is 24.55 per cent., which is the highest in Australia. In comparison with the stations in England ours ranks sixth. For one month we had a thermal-efficiency of 27.6, which was beaten only by one station in England. The manager's recommendation to use high pressure and powdered coal, coupled with the general design of the station, has proved itself by results, and gives the Government the distinction of owning the most efficient power station in Australia. I have heard some criticism of our electric station; the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) criticised its efficiency. The figures I have quoted are an effective reply to him. Last year we

made a saving of 27,000 tons of coal and so, in addition to reducing costs, we are getting better returns, though this saving of coal may have the effect of putting out of work some of the men engaged in other industries. I wish to refer to Mr. Farrow.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister is not entitled to deal with any matters other than those raised in the course of the debate.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: All I wish to say is that he is the first-aid man, and I wish to thank him for his services to the department. The member for Albany (Mr. Hill) referred to transport administration. The hon. member has read quite a lot on the subject, but if he was placed in charge of our railways, I doubt whether he would be able to improve the position in any way. However, I welcome the expression of opinion from him, though I should like to have something more practical to work on. South Australia has only 2,550 miles of railway, and how can any comparison be drawn between that mileage and Western Australia's 4,376 miles? To draw a proper comparison is impossible, because South Australia has a larger population than we have, averaging 230 persons to every mile of railway compared with 106 in this State. I think most of the comparisons given were merely quoted from book figures without giving proper consideration to the difference in conditions. Regarding the m.v. "Kybra" and the Albany trade, I point out to the hon. member that the Commissioner of Railways is only a common carrier.

Hon. C. G. Latham: But not when it comes to a matter of liability.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not think it would be reasonable to request him to give Albany a service better than is provided for Kalgoorlie. From a railway point of view, Kalgoorlie is a much better customer than is Albany.

Hon. C. G. Latham: But the railways have only one-way freights to Kalgoorlie.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Albany has not much return traffic, either. It would not be fair for the Commissioner to discriminate between a town on the coast and an inland city like Kalgoorlie. I say definitely that the Commissioner is a common carrier and consequently cannot discriminate in the way suggested. We are told that the Commissioner should seek busi-

ness for the railways, but it would be futile to do that if the business was not payable. Certainly the railways cannot compete with water-borne traffic. When all the facts are taken into consideration, I maintain that the Commissioner was quite right in the action he took.

The member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. McLarty) spoke of the extension of electric power to Mundijong and one other place. I visited Mundijong and felt sympathetic towards the request. Due consideration has been given to the question of making extensions there. The cost will be about £14,000, but the Treasurer must find the money before we can proceed with the work. The residents are deserving of consideration. They are prepared to guarantee 5 per cent. interest on the capital outlay, and so it is only a reasonable proposition to provide the current as soon as that can be done. The member for Canning (Mr. Cross) complained of the transport facilities at South Perth. About 12 months ago I visited the district and there is no doubt that it is deserving of increased facilities.

Mr. Cross: We want the six new trolley buses for South Perth.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We have gone so far as to investigate the cost of providing a service, including a barn necessary to house the buses, and the estimate is about £100,000.

Mr. Cross: What about putting the six new buses into that central run?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not propose to make any promises beyond saying that consideration will be given to the matter. A service is necessary and will be provided as soon as possible. Doubtless promises have been made in the past, but we cannot do more at this stage than promise to consider the matter and endeavour to carry out the work. The member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) complained of the condition of second-class railway carriages. That complaint has been general. The department is fully aware of the fact that the whole of the rolling stock requires renovating, but to do those things is impossible simply because we have not the money. The lack of funds seems to be an awful worry to every department. There are many improvements we would like to effect, but until funds are available, it will be impossible to carry them out.

The CHAIRMAN: Will the Minister resume his seat? I have repeatedly called members to order, but as constantly as I call them to order they flout my call. I warn them for the last time. Any further breaches of decorum will be dealt with according to the standing orders. Members must be mindful of that fact. I will not constantly call them to order. Some sense of decency ought to be displayed by members and due regard shown for whoever may be addressing the Chair. Any further breaches of decorum will be dealt with severely.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We are anxious to give the best transport service we can. The member for Nelson complained about a train taking about 12 hours to travel from Bridgetown to Perth instead of four hours. The sooner we get our trains through, the better it is for all concerned. It is more economical to get them through well. Expedition will help to balance the railway budget. We are mindful of the railway deficit last year of over £300,000. That materially affects the State's deficit. Every effort is made to secure efficiency and economic running, and, the quicker we get our trains running, the better for all concerned. The department does not purposely hang up its trains. Its officers have a great deal of experience, and I think their intelligence will compare with that of members. I am sure they are earnest in their endeavours and are doing the best they can. I remind members of the concessions given by the Railway Department. The concessions to pastoralists are considerable. In the case of fodder for starving stock a rebate of 25 per cent. is allowed. A great deal could be added by way of rebates to primary producers. These are being given notwithstanding the deficit the railways are showing. Most of the freights that are charged are below the average that would be required to make the railways pay. Starving stock when transferred to other pastures are conveyed free on the outward journey, and then there are concessions for the restocking of properties with cattle and sheep.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister is not in order in breaking new ground. He may reply only to such matters as have been raised during the debate.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I wanted to outline the very important concessions that are given.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister should have known about them, when he was introducing his Estimates.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The concessions given by means of rebates amount to over £25,000. I am pleased at the reception accorded to the Estimates, in that the criticism has been neither prejudicial nor antagonistic. I trust that the same consideration will be given to them next year, and that members will come forward with suggestions whereby we may be able to effect important improvements.

Hon. C. G. Latham: And you will take no notice of them.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We certainly will. Suggestions that are impossible from the economic point of view cannot, of course, be acted upon. The Commissioner could not be expected to take notice of everything that has been brought forward to-night. Were he to do so, I do not know what would happen to the railway system.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—State Batteries, £112,050; Cave House, £12,272—agreed to.

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

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

In Committee of Ways and Means.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER

(Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [12.25]: I move—

That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the service of the year ended the 30th June, 1941, a sum not exceeding £6,868,540 be granted from Consolidated Revenue fund.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

BILL—APPROPRIATION.

Message.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

All Stages.

In accordance with the resolutions adopted in Committee of Supply and Ways and Means, Bill introduced, passed through all stages without debate and transmitted to the Council.

STATE TRADING CONCERNS ESTIMATES, 1940-41.

Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the State Trading Concerns for the year ending the 30th June, 1941, now considered, Mr. Marshall in the Chair.

Divisions—State Brickworks, £27,160; State Hotels, £50,650; State Implement and Engineering Works, £57,960; State Quarries, £24,000; State Shipping Service, £220,000; State Sawmills, £470,177; Wyndham Freezing Works, £340,000—agreed to.

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

Resolutions reported and the reported adopted.

House adjourned at 12.38 a.m. (Wednesday).