

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 13th December, 1945.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 11.30 a.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

BUTTER STABILISATION BOARD.

As to Administration Expenses.

Mr. WITHERS asked the Minister for Agriculture:

1, How much of the butter levy by the local stabilisation board is being used for administration expenses, i.e., chairman and each member of the board?

2, What becomes of the balance?

The MINISTER replied:

1, No stabilisation contributions levied by the Dairy Products Marketing Board are

used for administration. Members' fees and expenses paid from an Administration Account amounted to £408 17s. 2d., being made up of fees:—Chairman 2 guineas per sitting, and members 1 guinea per sitting plus expenses.

2, Copy of the annual balance sheet and statement of accounts has been laid upon the Table of the House, and further details may be obtained therefrom if desired.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

As to Methods for Securing Constitutional Amendments.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Justice: In view of the attitude of the Legislative Council—

(a) Will he have investigated the practicability of approaches being made to the British Parliament for the purpose of securing amendments to the Constitution Act, 1889, and the Constitution Act Amendment Act, 1899?

(b), Will he consider requesting the Commonwealth Government to include in the next Federal referendum a section which would guarantee to the people of Australia adult franchise in all parliamentary elections?

The MINISTER replied:

(a) and (b), Whatever may be considered to be the appropriate action will be taken by the Government.

BILL—MINING ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—JUSTICES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Mr. SMITH (Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [11.35] in moving the second reading said: This Bill comes to us from another place, where it was introduced by a private member, and was passed by a large majority. It proposes to provide that justices of the peace shall not sit in a judicial capacity in the courts of the State after reaching the age of 70 years. It would be presumption on my part to labour the case for the desirability of this legislation, particularly to the Legislative Assembly, which has already agreed to and legislated for the retirement of judges at 70 years of age, the retirement

of stipendiary magistrates at 70 years of age, and the retirement of the President of the Arbitration Court at 70 years of age. Under the Justices Act, justices of the peace are vested with powers that give them important jurisdiction. They can hear almost any kind of case, in some circumstances, except some cases that are especially exempted by legislation. I know that some objection can be raised to the age of 70 years. Some think that is far too late to prohibit justices of the peace, or even judges, from hearing cases, while others think it is far too early.

There are exceptions on both sides, and cases can be quoted where men retain a certain amount of mental alertness and a great deal of mental vigour after reaching 70 years of age, but we have to fix an age where it can reasonably be presumed that mental alertness and vigour are beginning to decline. The age of 70 years is that which has been agreed upon by Parliament in the past in similar cases. It is not proposed, under this legislation, to take away the other prerogatives of justices of the peace; their right to sign documents or to be members of the Justices Association, or to retain during their lifetime whatever honour attaches to the position. It is proposed to confine the legislation to the question of their acting in a judicial capacity after reaching the age of 70 years. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Seward, debate adjourned.

BILL—CHILD WELFARE ACT AMENDMENT (NO. 2).

Second Reading.

Mr. SMITH (Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [11.38] in moving the second reading said: This is a matter similar to the last. Under the Child Welfare Act, justices of the peace can, in some circumstances, sit on children's courts. I do not think it is usual now, but under the Act it is possible, and the Bill before us provides that, after reaching 70 years of age, they shall not be permitted to sit in jurisdiction on children's courts. The same arguments apply to this Bill as applied to the last. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Seward, debate adjourned.

BILL—MILK.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 11th December. Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair; the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

Clause 11—Constitution of board:

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Kaitangata had moved an amendment to insert after the word "members" in line 1 of paragraph (a) the following words:—"one of whom shall be a member of the Health Inspectors' Association of Australia (Western Australian Branch)".

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I oppose the amendment. There is no more necessity to have a health inspector on this board than there would be for a mining company to have an engineer on its board of directors. The services of technical men will be available to the board when required and health inspectors will be employed as officers of the board.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of paragraph (b) the words "Two members as representatives" be struck out with a view to inserting other words.

I am not permitted to move to increase the strength of the board, and my object is to secure representation for retail dairymen so that, instead of having two representatives of dairymen, one representative will be elected by dairymen and one by retailers. There is no need to repeat the arguments in favour of retail dairymen having representation on the board. The amendment might be opposed on the ground that it would reduce the representation of the producers and would necessitate the abandonment of the proposal for having two groups of districts with one representative for each. I cannot see why we should not have one district for the State.

Mr. McLARTY: The amendment would reduce the representation of the producers to one on a board of five. We have accepted the principle that the producers are entitled to at least two representatives on the board, whereas under the amendment there would be one producer for the whole of the State. The acceptance of the amendment would create wide dissatisfaction amongst the producing section, and that would be undesirable.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The only question is: Are the retailers entitled to representation on the board? If they are, the only means of giving them representation is to substitute one for some other existing member of the board. The retailers have subscribed to the fund £19,000 out of £33,700, and will subscribe an equal amount with the producers in the future, and yet have no representation on the board. It is only equitable that they should be given representation.

Mr. SHEARN: If it is the intention of the Minister to oppose the amendment I hope he will tell us why on several occasions on which Bills before us have dealt with the question of the representation of retailers, he did not voice his opposition. As the member for Nedlands pointed out the retailers have made a greater contribution to the funds of the board than has any other section. It is undemocratic not to give that section of the industry direct representation on the board, seeing that it is obliged to accept great responsibilities and make great contributions to the scheme.

Mr. McDonald: We lost the American colonies through that sort of thing.

Mr. SHEARN: Whilst no one wants to see the representation of the producers reduced, we suggest that here is an important section of the industry that is entitled to some representation. I support the amendment.

Mr. TELFER: I oppose the amendment. The producer should have at least two representatives on the board, although I regret that no provision has been made for a representative of the retailers.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: This is a proposal to give retailers representation on the board at the expense of the producers. For that reason I oppose the amendment.

Mr. NEEDHAM: The member for Murray-Wellington says that if the amendment is carried it will cause a great deal of dissatisfaction amongst the producers. I point out that for many years there has been great dissatisfaction amongst the retail dairymen because they have been denied representation on the board. We would not get very far with our milk supply but for the retail dairymen. Those are the people who distribute it and they have a

great interest in the industry. Evidently the member for Murray-Wellington wants all the representation for the producers and none for the retailers.

Mr. HOLMAN: I oppose the amendment. The producers should have at least two representatives on the board. The money the retailers have paid has come back to them in many ways, and their money will come back to them in still more ways when the Bill is passed through an improvement in the quality of the milk and an increase in its consumption. The member for Perth referred to dissatisfaction amongst the retailers because of the absence of representation on the board. I point out that the two producer-representatives have been engaged in retailing milk, and that the retailers as a body could at any time have placed their case before those gentlemen. Never have I heard criticism concerning those two members. I am satisfied that through them the retailers have had representation. In the definition of "milk vendor" it is laid down that the person who is retailing milk can still be a producer. Because of that he can be elected to the board.

Mr. McDONALD: I feel that the vendors should have representation on the board. The difficulty could be overcome if the Minister would recommit the Bill, and provide for the board to be enlarged so that there could be on it the two producers and one representative of the vendors.

Mr. BERRY: I oppose the amendment. I do not know why the member for Perth did not move to increase the number of members of the board. It could then have consisted of a total of seven and could have provided for all the parties interested.

Mr. McDONALD: No indication has been given as to the extent to which retailers have suffered as a result of the composition of the board. I have not heard of any specific instance of hardship suffered by the retailer. If there are hardships they should be brought before Parliament. This Bill will extend the provisions of the Act. We shall therefore have a larger number than before of producer-vendors covered by this legislation. Because of that position they will probably have representation on the board. I should like to know from the Minister how it is

proposed to divide up the areas. There are to be two representatives on the board for the producing section.

The Minister for Agriculture: Let us deal with that at the proper time.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I am surprised at the attitude of the Minister. Apparently he favours the representation of retailers on the board.

The Minister for Agriculture: I did not say that at any stage.

Hon. N. KEENAN: That is his language. He said that the only opposition he offered to the amendment was that it would reduce the representation of the producers.

The Minister for Agriculture: I said that this amendment proposed to give retailers representation at the expense of the producers.

Hon. N. KEENAN: That means that the Minister would not oppose the amendment if it did not reduce the representation of the producers.

The Minister for Agriculture: I gave you my strongest reasons, but not all my reasons.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Minister said that he objected to the retailers' representative only because it meant reducing the number of producers' representatives. The cure for that lies in his own hands because he can bring down an amendment to increase the numbers on the board, but no private member can do that. The member for Perth is, therefore, driven to the course he has taken. His proposal is an excellent one. It is of no use the member for Murray-Wellington saying that he has not heard of complaints from retailers. We have not heard of any from the producers, except the complaint of the member for Irwin-Moore who wants the whole board to be comprised of producers. Surely no member would deny the right of those who contribute a very large proportion to the compensation fund to some representation.

Mr. WITHERS: I oppose the amendment, although I have full sympathy with the idea of retail representation. We should not give the retailer representation to the detriment of the producer. In the metropolitan district there is no irrigation and the conditions of production there are different from those of the South-West, which is under

irrigation. I think that the retailers are entitled to representation, but I hope it will be given to them by some other means.

Mr. READ: I strongly support the member for Perth. The retailers' livelihood is bound up in milk in the same way as that of the producers. The two consumer-representatives appointed by the Governor will be mainly concerned with the quality of the milk and the health of the public.

Mr. WATTS: I oppose this amendment. I have not the slightest desire to injure the retailers, but this amendment would place the producers in a minority.

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

Ayes	..	..	9
Noes	..	..	26

Majority against . 17

AYES.

Mr. Graham	Mr. Read
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Leahy	Mr. Wilson
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Triat
Mr. Needham	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Berry	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Brand	Mr. Seward
Mr. Doney	Mr. Smith
Mr. Fox	Mr. Styants
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Telfer
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Hill	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Holman	Mr. Watts
Mr. Leslie	Mr. Willecock
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Willmott
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Wise
Mr. Nulsen	Mr. Withers
Mr. Panten	Mr. Mann
	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. McLARTY: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of subparagraph (1) of the proviso to paragraph (b) after the word "Act" the words "and who are actually engaged in the production of milk" be inserted.

This amendment will ensure that those actually engaged in producing shall be entitled to sit on the board. A license may be held and the person holding it may not actually be producing.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. HOLMAN: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of the proviso to paragraph (c) after the word "milk" the words "and who are not interested in the vending or retailing of milk to consumers" be inserted.

This amendment will do away with the retailer-producer representation on the board.

The argument has been put forward that the retailer has not direct representation. If we insist that the producer-representative shall be a producer only and not interested in retailing, we shall do away with that objection. In the past the producers' representative has been a producer-retailer. As late as this week a large meeting was held in my electorate, and a protest was made against a retailer being able to represent the producers simply because he held a license as a dairyman. At present a retailer can be the representative of the consumers.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: A producer should not be precluded from being a representative on the board merely because he is a retailer as well, and that is what would happen if the amendment were agreed to. I oppose the amendment.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. McLARTY: I move an amendment—

That in line 4 of the proviso to paragraph (c) after the word "paragraph" the words "or act as members" be inserted.

This is really consequential following upon the amendment agreed to earlier.

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

Clauses 12 to 14—agreed to.

Clause 15—Elections:

Mr. McLARTY: I would like the Minister to explain the method of election to be adopted with regard to producer-representatives. The clause merely sets out that elections shall be held in the manner prescribed.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is proposed that, as nearly as possible, dairymen who are carrying on under like conditions will be in one district. A dairyman carrying on business on the Goldfields would not be operating under the same conditions as dairymen at Harvey or Waroona. Thus, we intend to fix the districts as nearly as possible so that the dairymen included in the districts will be those carrying on under similar conditions.

Mr. McLARTY: You will find that very difficult.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, but not impossible.

Mr. McLARTY: Who will define the boundaries of the districts—the board or the Minister?

Hon. N. Keenan: There will be no boundaries.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Of course, there will be boundaries. Two districts will be defined and within those districts, will be, as nearly as possible, dairymen carrying on under similar conditions. I do not pretend it will not be found that outside one district there will possibly be some dairymen who could quite properly be included in it. There will be such instances, but in the majority of cases those carrying on under similar conditions will be included. It would be impossible to devise a scheme whereby that would be completely obviated. We will endeavour to carry out the scheme so that those in the respective districts will be carrying on under similar conditions.

Mr. McLARTY: Whom do you refer to as "we"—the Minister or the board?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Minister.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 16 and 17—agreed to.

Clause 18—Meetings:

Mr. McLARTY: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of Subclause (3) the word "three" be struck out and the word "four" inserted in lieu.

I wish to ensure that a representative of the producers shall always be present at meetings.

The Minister for Agriculture: I will accept this amendment.

Mr. McLARTY: Then I shall not labour the point.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: I would like to hear some reasons for the amendment. I have had experience with various committees and organisations, and I know how easy it is for someone who may desire to do so to nullify proceedings simply by staying away from meetings.

The Minister for Agriculture: That could not be done indefinitely.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: The business of the board should not be held up for perhaps a matter of weeks. These representatives are elected for a definite purpose and if they do not attend it is their own fault. I do not believe that such representatives should be able to hold up the business of the board.

From my experience, I know that at meetings there may be the necessary quorum but, should anything crop up that affects one of the individual members and he has a personal interest, he can leave the meeting and there is no quorum.

Hon. N. Keenan: That could happen at any time. The amendment will not affect that situation.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: I am opposed to any proposition that will enable an individual by absenting himself from a meeting, to nullify the proceedings of the board. By merely staying away, a member of the board could prevent momentous decisions being made, such as those dealing with the slaughtering of cattle, the quarantining of an area, and so forth. Because his interests might be affected, a board member could stay away, and that would prevent any action being taken. I have seen that done often, and I will not allow the amendment to go through without registering my protest.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I admit that the point raised by the member for Geraldton can be made. It would be possible for the consumers' representatives or the producers' representatives to stay away and hold up temporarily the business of the board. I have discussed this amendment with the chairman of the Milk Board, and he can see no difficulty in connection with it. It is certainly desirable to have at board meetings at least one representative of each of the interests concerned, and the amendment will ensure that. If the Bill were left in its present form it would mean that the chairman and the two consumer-representatives, or the chairman and the two producer-representatives could carry on the business.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: All board members would have received notice of the meeting.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, but it could easily happen that the two producer-representatives might be absent from the State attending a conference concerning the production of milk. With the amendment, no meeting of the board could be held in their absence. I think at least one representative of the producers or of the consumers should be present when matters are discussed and, in view of the advice received from the chairman of the

board, I can see no danger in the amendment, which I am not disposed to oppose.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

I move an amendment—

That is lines 4 to 6 of Subclause (4) the words "when presiding at the meeting shall have a second or casting vote in addition to his ordinary or deliberate vote" be struck out and the words "such question shall be deemed to be resolved in the negative" inserted in lieu.

The amendment will ensure that the chairman shall have one vote only instead of two, as provided for in the subclause.

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

Clauses 19 to 23—agreed to.

Clause 24—Officers of the board:

Mr. McDONALD: I had intended to move an amendment, but the Minister has placed one on the notice paper which covers the point I desired to deal with.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

I move an amendment—

That at the end of Subclause (2) the following words be added:—"if and so long as such officer or officers possess the qualifications necessary for appointment as a health inspector under the said Act."

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

Clause 25—agreed to.

Clause 26—Powers and functions of the board:

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

I move an amendment—

That in line 6 of subparagraph (i) of paragraph (b) of Subclause (1) the words "from the Board the requisite certificate of competency" be struck out and the words "a certificate of competency from the Department of Agriculture" inserted in lieu.

Persons to be engaged in the treatment of milk should be given a certificate of competency by the Department of Agriculture, and that certificate will be acted upon by the Milk Board.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. HOLMAN: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of subparagraph (b) of paragraph (i) of Subclause (1) after the word "rates" the words "plus a specified allowance for cartage" be inserted.

This amendment will give the producer the added cost for the cartage of his surplus milk. The producer keeps his surplus milk in order that it may be distributed during a lean period. This surplus could be termed whole milk. Transport costs are necessarily involved and the producers should be allowed such costs.

Amendment put and a division called for.

Hon. N. Keenan: Is one voice entitled to a division?

The CHAIRMAN: I thought I heard more than one voice.

Division resulted as follows:—

Ayes	..	..	..	3
Noes	..	..	..	30
				—

Majority against	..	27
		—

AYES.

Mr. Holman
Mr. McLarty

Mr. Graham (Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Brand
Mr. Doney
Mr. Fox
Mr. Hawke
Mr. J. Hegney
Mr. Hill
Mr. Keenan
Mr. Leahy
Mr. Leslie
Mr. Mann
Mr. Marshall
Mr. Needham
Mr. Nolsen
Mr. Pantor
Mr. Perkins

Mr. Read
Mr. Seward
Mr. Shearn
Mr. Smith
Mr. Styants
Mr. Telfer
Mr. Thorn
Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Triat
Mr. Watts
Mr. Willcock
Mr. Willmott
Mr. Wise
Mr. Withers
Mr. Wilson

(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause, as previously amended, put and passed.

Clause 27—agreed to.

Clause 28—Prohibition against carrying on business as dairyman or milk vendor, or treating milk without license:

Mr. HOLMAN: I move an amendment—

That a new paragraph be added to Sub-clause (1) as follows:—“(d) Transport milk intended for sale to consumers—except under the authority of the appropriate licenses issued by the Board under this Act.”

At the present time there is some sort of agreement between the Road Transport Board, the Health Department and the Milk Board; but I think that the Milk Board should have complete power to revoke the license of a person who is transporting milk and not playing the game. Milk can be very

seriously affected during transport and its quality, when supplied to the consumer, might be greatly impaired.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: There is no need for the amendment, as the Bill gives adequate powers to the board to control of the transport of milk. The chairman of the Milk Board has not indicated that the board requires any additional powers in relation to the transport of milk. I oppose the amendment.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 29—agreed to.

Mr. HOLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment, which appears on the notice paper, to Clause 29.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member should have risen in his place to move it. His chances now are gone.

Clause 30—How licenses obtained:

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of Subclause (5) after the word “license” the words “or a treatment license” be inserted.

This is a small amendment. It will ensure that the holder of a treatment license will have obtained a certificate from an inspector of health that the dairy complies in all respects with the requirements of the by-laws of the local health authority.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of Subclause (5) after the word “issued” the words “or re-issued” be inserted.

This means that where, after the license has originally been issued, the necessity arises for it to be re-issued in the following year, the same certificate shall be required.

Mr. WATTS: I think the provision for inspection prior to the issuing of licenses is a reasonable and proper one, but there should be some guarantee that an officer will be available at the proper time to inspect the premises. Unless the license can be re-issued at the proper time, it would impose considerable hardship on the owner of the premises.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Leader of the Opposition need have no fears. It is foreseen that when this measure

becomes operative there may be some difficulty in having the premises examined and the licenses issued, and for that purpose the Health Department will make officers available to expedite the work. It is expected that once licenses have been issued the premises will be kept in proper order. Having obtained a license, the holder of the license cannot afford to let the premises slip back. The local authorities will have the whole of the year in which to know whether or not the premises have slipped back, and in most cases it will be a matter only of writing out the certificate, when required, the officer knowing that the premises have been kept in proper order. I think the provision a very necessary one.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. McLARTY: I move an amendment—

That in line 4 of Subclause (5) after the word "Board" the words "if considered necessary by the Board" be inserted.

I hope the Minister will accept this amendment. Hundreds of licenses will be required by producers under this legislation and the producer will require to have a certificate before he can obtain a license. This amendment, if carried, will save time and expense and will allow the board to act on the advice of its own inspectors. It will in no way prejudice the rights of the Health Department or health inspectors, and they will still be able to inspect dairy premises and condemn them if considered necessary. In many cases the health inspectors in country districts are road board secretaries, who are busy men, and the board in those cases might have to wait an indefinite period for the inspection to be carried out. The inspectors in the employ of the board are practical men who are in constant touch with members of the board, and are anxious that conditions appertaining to health should receive every consideration. I see no reason why the amendment should not be carried, as it will mean that the board will be able to carry out its work more expeditiously.

Mr. READ: I strongly oppose the amendment. This clause makes it mandatory on the person wishing to produce milk to obtain a certificate to show that the premises have been inspected and comply with the conditions laid down. There must be a mandatory clause under which inspection by a qualified health inspector can be carried out at least annually.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The member for Victoria Park has put his finger on the spot. The idea is that the health authority shall be brought into this matter, and before the board issues a license it will have the guarantee of the local health authority that the premises are in proper condition. The member for Murray-Wellington thinks a certificate should be necessary in some cases and not in others, for the issue of a license, but I say that Parliament should require in all cases that the local health authority should issue a certificate to say that the premises are such that the board is entitled to issue a license. I do not think we should discriminate in this way.

Mr. CROSS: I oppose the amendment. Even if premises do not quite comply with the requirements, the board will be reasonable and will probably give time for the matter to be put in order.

Mr. McLARTY: The amendment would not take any power away from the health authorities. The inspectors employed by the board would be health inspectors under the Act.

The Minister for Agriculture: You are dispensing with the necessity for a certificate in certain cases, at the discretion of the board.

Mr. McLARTY: That is to expedite matters in order that producers might get their certificates. I have explained the delay that will occur in dairying districts where there are part-time inspectors. The amendment would mean that the producers would get their licenses much quicker. If members could move about the dairies and see the improvements that have been made under the jurisdiction of the board, they would have no hesitation in accepting this amendment.

Progress reported till a later stage of the sitting.

BILL—SUPERANNUATION AND FAMILY BENEFITS ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

Sitting suspended from 1 to 2 p.m.

BILL—BUILDING OPERATIONS AND BUILDING MATERIALS CONTROL.

Council's Further Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the

Assembly's request for a conference on the amendments insisted on by the Council and had appointed Hon. C. F. Baxter, Hon. J. A. Dimmitt and the Honorary Minister as managers for the Council, the Council Committee room as the place of meeting, and the time 1.30 p.m.

BILL—INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (RESUMPTION OF LAND).

Council's Further Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the Assembly's request for a conference on the amendments insisted on by the Council and had appointed Hon. W. J. Mann, Hon. H. Seddon and the Chief Secretary, as managers for the Council, the Chief Secretary's room as the place of meeting, and the time 1.30 p.m.

Sitting suspended from 2.3 to 4.30 p.m.

BILL—BUILDING OPERATIONS AND BUILDING MATERIALS CONTROL.

Conference Managers' Report.

The PREMIER: I beg to report that the conference managers have met in conference on the Bill and have reached the following agreement:—

Amendment No. 3, not agreed to, amount to remain at £100.

Amendment No. 4, amount to be altered to £50.

Amendment No. 5, amount to be altered to £50.

Amendment No. 6, amount to be altered to £50.

Amendment No. 7, amount to remain at £100.

I move—

That the report be adopted.

Question put and passed, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (RESUMPTION OF LAND).

Conference Managers' Report.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I beg to report that the conference managers met in conference on the Bill. In connection with amendment No. 1, they agreed to accept and recommend the alternative amendment to Clause 4, as made by the Legislative Assembly. This will mean that the Chamber

of Manufactures will have a representative on the committee, and that the three Government officers proposed to be appointed originally will still be appointed. The committee will therefore comprise the Director of Industrial Development, the chairman of the Town Planning Board, the Surveyor General and a representative of the Chamber of Manufactures. Conference agreed not to insist on the Council's amendments Nos. 3 and 4. These two amendments asked that any approval of an application for land should also be approved by Parliament before being finalised. Therefore, those two amendments made by the Council dealing with that one principle will not be insisted on. Conference agreed to accept amendment No. 5. This amendment will insert at the beginning of Subclause (2) of Clause 11 the words, "Subject to approval by Parliament." The subclause will then read, in effect,—

Subject to approval by Parliament the Governor may from time to time on the recommendation of the Committee if adopted by the Minister and with the approval of the Treasurer purchase or acquire compulsorily land and reserve it for the purpose of industrial development.

Members will notice that this amendment by the Council will not deal with individual applications for land, but will only concern the compulsory resumption of land by the Government where that land is to be set aside and reserved for the purpose of industrial development in the future. I move—

That the report be adopted.

Question put and passed, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—SUPREME COURT ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Conference Managers' Report.

Mr. McDONALD: I beg to report that the conference managers have met in conference on the Bill and have reached the following agreement:—

Clause 2, line 15, page 1. After the word "competent" insert the words "subject to the next succeeding section."

The subsection will then read—

Any married person domiciled in Western Australia may present a petition to the court praying that his or her marriage may be dis-

solved and it shall be competent subject to the next succeeding section for the court to decree a dissolution thereof

under certain conditions. The next amendment is—

In line 19, page 1, delete the word "ten" and insert the word "five."

This means that the period of separation to qualify for a divorce would be five years instead of ten. The next amendment is—

Clause 3, line 36, page 2. Delete the letter "A" and insert the letter "(a)."

This is a mere textual amendment. The other amendment is—

In lines 39 and 40, page 2. Delete all words after the word "case" in line 31, and insert the words "It shall be competent for the court to decree dissolution of the marriage as provided by Subsection (6) of the last preceding section."

This means that the amendment of the member for Kalgoorlie passed by this House and requiring that the court shall not decree a dissolution of marriage if the petitioner has been guilty of any matrimonial offence, except desertion and non-compliance with a decree for restitution of conjugal rights, will remain. If the petitioner is guilty of desertion or of non-compliance with a decree for restitution of conjugal rights, the court then has a discretion as to whether it grants the petition or not; but as to a petitioner who has not been guilty of any matrimonial offence during the five years preceding the petition, the court has a like discretion as to whether it grants the petition or not on the ground of five years' separation. The agreement between the managers leaves the Bill as it was, in substance, when it left this House, with this exception: In view of the amendment of the member for Kalgoorlie requiring the petitioner to be substantially free of any matrimonial offence during the five years preceding the petition, it has been thought desirable that the period of separation should be the same period, namely, five years. Therefore five years' separation will ground a petition if the court thinks fit, unless the petitioner has been guilty of certain offences under the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act. Section 69A, as now amended, will provide—

If upon any petition on the grounds set out in Subsection (6) of the last preceding section it shall appear to the court that the petitioner

has at any time during the period of five years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition been guilty of such conduct as would have enabled the respondent, had he or she so desired, to present a petition for dissolution of marriage on any ground other than the ground set out in Subsection (6) of the last preceding subsection the court shall dismiss the petition, excepting that in every case where the ground on which the respondent might have presented a petition is one of those specified in paragraph (a) of Subsection (3) or Subsection (4) of Section 69 of this Act and the petitioner has proved his or her case, it shall be competent for the court to decree a dissolution of marriage as provided by Subsection (6) of the last preceding subsection.

I move—

That the report be adopted.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not ask the House to refuse assent to what has been agreed to at the conference, but I express considerable disappointment at the principal ground, on which we accepted the Bill, having been varied. When the Bill came to this House the principal ground for its acceptance was the 10-year term, as compared with various other Bills that have come down to this House with lesser terms. That was very properly stressed as being a strong ground for accepting the Bill. I doubt whether, if the Bill had come before the House for a second reading with a term of five years instead of ten years, it would have received the assent of the House.

Mr. STYANTS: I did not intend to speak at this stage, had it not been for the remarks of the member for Nedlands. As the mover of the amendment to the original Bill, I say that the principle on which the amendment was carried is still retained, and that is that the injured or innocent party can still get relief, but there has not been any condoning of offences against the matrimonial laws by the petitioner. I do not agree with the member for Nedlands that the principle was the period of separation, either ten years or five. I took the view, which I expressed on three occasions during the second reading and Committee stages, that when a couple had made an unfortunate marriage that had turned out unhappily, if the parties decided to live apart and were prepared to live decent and respectable lives for that period, to ask them to live apart for ten years was altogether too much, and I would have been prepared to reduce it to the period mentioned in the divorce laws,

three years, which constitutes the period for desertion. As it is now, the period has been reduced from ten years to five, and that is the only alteration to the measure as amended in this Chamber.

When the Bill first came to this Chamber it provided for a ten-year period to constitute the ground for divorce, and also provided that a person who had left the marriage partner could indulge in any form of profligacy and could go to the court and use the period of separation as ground for divorce. Though the Bill provided that the court should have some discretion in the matter, I believe the court would have had no discretion. It would have said, "The legislators of this country have provided that after a period of separation for ten years that should constitute ground for divorce." That was the principle then in the Bill, and that has been defeated. The principle agreed upon by this Chamber, and on which I was adamant in the Committee stage, was that the innocent or injured party should be able to get redress, and that there should be no condoning of an offence by the guilty party. I claim that the principle that actuated members of this House in agreeing to the amendment moved by me to the original Bill is preserved in its entirety.

Question put and passed, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

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

- 1, Land and Income Tax Assessment Act Amendment.
- 2, Supreme Court Act Amendment (No. 1).
- 3, Mine Workers' Relief (War Service) Act Amendment.
- 4, Supply (No. 2) £1,800,000.

BILL—INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (RESUMPTION OF LAND).

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the conference managers' report.

BILL—BUILDING OPERATIONS AND BUILDING MATERIALS CONTROL.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the conference managers' report.

BILL—SUPREME COURT ACT AMENDMENT (NO. 2).

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the conference managers' report.

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council with amendments.

CONFERENCES BETWEEN HOUSES.

As to Suspension of Other Business.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gaseoyne) [4.47]: May I ask your ruling, Mr. Speaker? Standing Order No. 249 deals with the conduct of the business of the Assembly during any conference, and says—

During any Conference the business of the Legislative Assembly shall be suspended.

I am aware that in the course of debates contentious matters may be raised, which might require a division, in which case a true vote would not or may not be recorded. To avoid such a contingency, would it be competent for me to move the suspension of Standing Order No. 249 to enable the business of this House to proceed during the sittings of conferences?

MR. SPEAKER: Provided the Premier has an absolute majority of the House it is possible to do many things, and this is one of them. If Standing Order No. 249 is suspended there is nothing to prevent conferences going on while the House is sitting, as has been done in other Dominion Parliaments.

MR. THORN (Toodyay) [4.49]: I would like to draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, and that of the Premier, to the fact that it was understood, when we adjourned at 1 p.m. today, that we would not be proceeding with the business of the House until 7.30

p.m. The Premier has already introduced one or two innovations that have facilitated the business of the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is the member for Toodyay going to move a motion?

Mr. THORN: I want to clear the position because a number of members are absent who would probably be present had they known the business would be proceeded with. There are members who are interested in the Milk Bill and should any division be called for on amendments that may be moved in Committee, members not able to participate might feel rather aggrieved. I have every desire to co-operate and facilitate the transaction of business.

The Premier: I will not move as suggested before the tea adjournment.

Mr. THORN: Very well! I understood the Premier intended to move in the matter straight away. We are anxious to see the Milk Bill dealt with this session, but I felt I must draw attention to the fact that members are absent because they understood the business would not be continued until this evening.

The PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne—in reply) [4.50]: I shall not move to suspend the Standing Order, but ask members to proceed with the consideration of the Milk Bill in Committee while we are waiting for messages from the Council.

BILL—MILK.

In Committee.

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting. Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair, the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

Clause 30—How licenses obtained:

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported on this clause after the member for Murray-Wellington had moved an amendment to insert in line 4 of Subclause (5) after the word "board" the words "if considered necessary by the board."

Mr. McDONALD: On a point of order, like the member for Toodyay, I am very anxious to facilitate the business but it has occurred to me that, in view of the fact that a notice was circulated among members yesterday that the sitting of the House would be suspended from 1.30 to 7.30 p.m. today—

The Premier: We are only waiting for the messages to come down from the Council.

Mr. McDONALD: Quite so, but if we proceed with the business, even with the best of intentions, in the absence of members who thought their presence would not be required until 7.30 p.m., they may feel aggrieved and, in fact, the proceedings of Parliament might be open to challenge.

Hon. N. Keenan: Does not the fact that we are awaiting messages from another place amount to the transaction of business?

The Premier: We are waiting for them now.

Hon. N. Keenan: Does that mean that we have to wait here till 7.30 p.m.?

The Minister for Lands: Yes, If the messages do not arrive before that.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Amendment put and negatived.

The CHAIRMAN: I feel that I must draw the attention of the Premier to the fact that the Leader of the Opposition has on the notice paper an amendment that he wishes to move to this clause.

Mr. Thorn: I do not think he intends to move it.

The CHAIRMAN: Then I will put the clause to the Committee.

Clause, as previously amended, put and passed.

Clauses 31 to 33—agreed to.

Clause 34—Revocation of licenses:

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:
I move an amendment—

That a new subsection be inserted as follows:—“(4) Where the Board revokes a license and the licensee does not appeal against such revocation, or having appealed the revocation of the license is confirmed by the Minister, notice of such revocation of such license shall be given by the Board to the local authority in whose district the license which has been revoked was exercised.”

Cases have occurred in the past where the Milk Board has revoked a license and the local authority has not been aware of the fact, and the dairyman concerned has continued to supply milk. That is most undesirable and it is intended that, after the revocation of a license, the supply of milk by the

dairyman concerned shall cease. The amendment is moved with that object in view.

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

Clause 35—Penalty for mixing milk for treatment:

Mr. McDONALD: Again I rise to a point of order. I feel that in all the circumstances these proceedings are irregular.

The Premier: Then move to report progress, and we can continue at a later stage.

Mr. McDONALD: I feel that that is the best course to adopt.

Progress reported till a later stage of the sitting.

BILL—ROAD CLOSURE.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 11th December.

Mr. THORN (Toodyay) [5.0]: This is a Bill of the usual type that is brought down annually. I have perused the remarks of the Minister and also the plans. The alterations have been recommended by those in authority, and I claim that if any particular proposal interests a member, it is his duty to give it consideration. So far as I have been able to observe, everything is in order, and I have no opposition to offer to the Bill.

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—RESERVES.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 11th December.

Mr. THORN (Toodyay) [5.3]: The same remarks apply to this Bill. There is provision for the alienation of some land from a children's playground in the district of the member for Nedlands in order to establish a veterinary laboratory, and another clause makes provision for the local branch of the R.S.L. These proposals have been submitted

by the proper authorities and I have perused the plans and recommendations. To my mind, the measure is in order, and I have no opposition to offer to it.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 to 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—Reserve A4813:

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: I should like to know why the Permanent Reserve (Point Walter) Act, 1921, is to cease to have effect. Point Walter has been reserved for the recreation of the public and has been used for about 50 years by the people of the metropolitan area generally and by the people of Fremantle particularly. Some further information ought to be given.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Point Walter reserve, which is a Class A reserve for recreation, was at one time under the control of the Melville Road Board. Prior to the coming into operation of the Land Act, 1933, there was no power to lease a Class A reserve or any portion thereof. The road board desired to lease the tearooms at Point Walter, but to enable them to do so it was necessary to put through a special Act. An Act was passed in 1921, termed the Permanent Reserve (Point Walter) Act, 1921, to enable the Melville Road Board, with the approval of the Governor, to lease a portion of this Class A reserve 4813 not exceeding one acre, for the purpose of public refreshment rooms. In 1929, the board expressed the wish to be relieved of the control of this reserve, and on the 2nd July, 1929, it was placed under the control of the State Gardens Board. That board now desires to lease the tearooms at Point Walter for a period of five years and could normally, since the coming into operation of the Land Act, 1933, be given power to do so by Executive Council minute vesting the land in the board, with power to lease. The Crown Law authorities, however, rule that this cannot be done while the Act, No. 23 of 1921, is in existence. This clause, therefore, provides for the repeal of that Act to enable the State Gardens Board to lease the tearooms.

Mr. LESLIE: Under the Act of 1921, the the area that could be used was to be a certain distance from the foreshore.

The Minister for Lands: That is where the tearooms are.

Mr. LESLIE: If we repeal the Act and leave the matter in the hands of the State Gardens Board to lease any portion of the area without restriction, we shall be widening the scope considerably.

The Minister for Lands: That is not intended. They are the same tearooms and will be on that one acre. The board has no power to lease them to anyone at the moment.

Mr. LESLIE: The board could occupy most of the beach.

The Minister for Lands: The board is under me, and I give an assurance that it will not shift the tearooms.

Mr. LESLIE: The board might erect tearooms somewhere else.

The Minister for Lands: No, they will be the same tearooms.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 7 to 11, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING.

As to State of Business.

The PREMIER: On a point of explanation, I would not break faith with the House in any way and would not wish that anything other than formal business be dealt with while awaiting the conclusions of the conference. It is forty minutes since the Council re-assembled to deal with three messages and I would prefer, rather than deal with business which some members believed would not be touched before 7.30 p.m., that the sitting be suspended, if only for a short space of time, until the ringing of the bells.

Sitting suspended from 5.12 to 7.30 p.m.

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT FUND.

Auditor General's Report.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received from the Auditor General a copy of his report on the

Members of Parliament Fund. I propose to lay the paper on the Table of the House.

BILL—MILK.

In Committee.

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting. Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair; the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported after Clause 34 had been agreed to.

Clauses 35 to 41—agreed to.

Clause 42—Dairy cattle to be tested for disease:

Mr. McLARTY: I move an amendment—

That in line 7 of Subclause (1) the words "Chief Inspector of Stock" be struck out, and the word "board" inserted in lieu.

My intention is to give the board control over veterinary officers who will carry out the inspections of dairy herds in order to deal with tuberculosis. The board will find the money with which to pay the inspectors from the subsidy provided by the Government, and it is only fair that the officers should be in full time employment under the board. They will be in much closer touch with the board than with the Agricultural Department. I am aware that there is a shortage of veterinary surgeons in Australia, but the time will come in the not far distant future when that difficulty will be overcome.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: There is a very serious weakness in the proposal. It could not be expected that the Milk Board should have control over the veterinary officers attached to the Department of Agriculture, who are under the direction of the Chief Inspector of Stock. There are no veterinary officers available to carry out the inspections apart from those departmental officers, and if the amendment is agreed to it will mean that the inspection of herds will be held up indefinitely. There is nothing wrong with the Chief Inspector of Stock directing his officers to test the herds for tuberculosis. There is no suggestion that the board should control the officers of the Health Department nor yet those of the local authorities. The necessary tests will be carried out by the experts of the Department of Agriculture under the direction of the Chief Inspector of Stock whose business, as an expert, it is to fulfil that function. He will use the resources at his disposal

to the best advantage and direct his officers to carry out the work as required by the board.

Mr. McLarty: Who will decide what expenditure is to be incurred?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The board will decide that. The Chief Inspector of Stock will have no control over the board's funds but will furnish an account for work done and the board will pay accordingly, just as it would have to do if it employed veterinary surgeons itself.

Mr. MANN: I support the attitude of the Minister. I realise the seriousness of the position that would arise if the amendment were agreed to. The work of herd-testing must be supervised by qualified men.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. McLARTY: I move an amendment—

That in line 7 of Subclause (3) the word "administration" be struck out and the word "compensation" inserted in lieu.

It is fair that the expenses incurred in connection with inspections and tests of dairy cattle should be paid from moneys in the compensation fund and not from the administration fund, which was established for the purpose of administering the Act.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not think it is competent for the member for Murray-Wellington to move such an amendment. The compensation fund is comprised of contributions from the producers and retailers, together with an appropriation from the Government. The amendment would impose a charge upon a fund that is being provided by the Government, and I submit the hon. member cannot do that.

The CHAIRMAN: In view of the Minister's explanation, I rule the amendment out of order.

Amendment ruled out.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 43 to 51—agreed to.

Clause 52—Persons trafficking in diseased cattle with a view to compensation:

Mr. LESLIE: The Bill is largely designed to protect the interests of the public and to remove from herds cows suffering from tuberculosis. The clause will make it hard for the department to carry out what is desired. It sets out that in the case of any

person who buys or sells, or attempts to do so, any dairy cattle knowing, or having reasonable cause to suspect, that the animals were diseased, with a view to making a claim for compensation, before conviction could be secured it would be necessary to prove that such a person had knowledge, or reasonable cause to suspect, that an animal was diseased and therefore that he acted with the intention to defraud. It would be extremely hard to prove in a court that a person knowingly offended against the law. To protect our dairy herds we should prohibit the sending of diseased cattle to a dairy area. Cattle entering a dairy area should be accompanied by a certificate of cleanliness.

Mr. Abbott: What about taking those cattle there to be used for meat?

Mr. LESLIE: But they are not taken to a dairy area.

Mr. Mann: Of course they are.

Mr. Holman: There are numbers of them at Brunswick Junction.

Mr. LESLIE: But Brunswick Junction would not be classed as a dairy area.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Mt. Marshall will kindly address the Chair and disregard interjections.

Mr. LESLIE: I do not know what the intention of the department is with respect to prescribing dairy areas. A man may take an infected animal into a dairy area not knowing that the animal is infected. If he obtained it from a breeder, he might go to that breeder and say, "Your dairy herd is infected with disease; and the only way you could get compensation for them would be to take them to a dairy area." How could it be proved that the cows were taken there? I had thought of an amendment which would have the effect of making the stud-breeder sell only clean cattle, but I do not know whether it would fit in with the measure. Will the Minister give consideration to the aspect that I raise?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The intention of this clause is to prevent people from making money out of the compensation fund. As the amount of compensation is only £20 for each beast slaughtered, it would hardly be worth while for a man to purchase an animal at a very cheap price and then have it slaughtered and col-

lect the compensation money. Such an offence could be easily detected. If he could not purchase the animal at a low price, he would make very little out of the dishonest transaction. The case would arouse suspicion and lead to further inquiry. The provision is a deterrent.

Mr. LESLIE: I agree with the Minister that the clause will act as a deterrent. What I am aiming at, however, is the cleaning up of our dairy herds by some measure of compulsion.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 53 to 57—agreed to.

Clause 58—Contribution by licenses to Compensation Fund:

Mr. McLARTY: I move an amendment—

That in line 5 of paragraph (a) of Sub-Clause (1) the word "produced" be struck out and the word "sold" inserted in lieu.

All milk that is produced is not sold. The producer requires some milk for his own household. I do not see how it is possible to ascertain the quantity of milk produced. It would be unjust to impose a levy on milk produced. I hope the Minister will agree to the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have no objection to the amendment, but point out that this is the wording in the existing Act. There is no necessity for the amendment. For the purposes of this measure, the quantity of milk which a producer delivers is regarded as the quantity produced.

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

Clause 59—Provisions relating to claims for compensation:

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That at the end of paragraph (j) the following proviso be added:—"Provided that the Minister may for good cause direct that a sum greater than £20 shall be paid in respect of any one head of cattle or in respect of each head of cattle of a type to be specified by the Minister."

The limit of compensation provided by the Bill is £20 per head of cattle. A valuable bull or a valuable cow of the stud variety may have to be destroyed if the purposes of the Act are to be carried out. In such a case I think someone should have authority to decide what is fair and reasonable to be paid by way of compensation. The proper authority would be the

Minister, on the advice of his officers. If the amendment is carried it would have the effect of preventing possible injustice.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I can well understand the reason for this amendment, and I think it is a good one, but it would be extremely difficult to implement. It is an open invitation for a person who has a beast destroyed to try to get more than £20 for it. A man would be foolish if he did not. A man might have a beast worth £25, another £26 and another worth £22, and he might apply to the Minister to get more than £20 out of the fund. Now, £20 is a fair average figure, and the full compensation is to be paid and not a proportion. While some people will have animals worth more than £20, and they will lose, others will have animals worth less than £20, and they will gain. If this figure were much lower, I would be inclined to agree to giving this discretion to the Minister.

Mr. Thorn: Do you intend to pay on a flat rate of £20?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes.

Mr. Thorn: Some animals are not worth £10.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Having regard to that, the Committee should not support this proposal.

Mr. MANN: I am astounded at the Minister's remarks about a dairyman trying to suggest, every time a cow dies, that it is his best beast. Whilst I agree that £20 a head is a reasonable figure, a stud breeder might lose an animal worth £150. Surely he is entitled to some protection.

Mr. Triat: It is worth nothing if it is dead!

Mr. McLarty: There are few bulls worth £150.

Mr. MANN: If the stud breeder received full compensation, he could replace such an animal.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I unintentionally misled the Committee when I stated that the full amount of compensation would be paid in every case. If a claim for compensation is made and admitted, then the full value of the animal is paid. The construction I put upon this point was that in every case £20 would be paid, but that is not so. My attitude to

the amendment, however, is still the same for the other reasons I advanced, namely, that every man who has a beast destroyed and feels that it was worth more than £20 would have a shot at getting more, and that applications for additional compensation would be numerous.

Mr. Watts: You have already provided for that in the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Not many animals would be worth more than £20. To include this provision would create all sorts of difficulties.

Mr. WATTS: The Minister has explained his error in announcing that £20 would be paid in every case, but he has not explained away his contention that there would be a continual stream of people coming to him seeking £22 or £25 or some other sum. Applications of that kind to the Minister are already provided for in the Bill. If, under the Bill, a man puts in a claim for £20 and the board rejects it and says that the beast is worth only £10, the dairymen can appeal to the Minister against that decision. If the Minister is not prepared to accept this amendment, he should delete paragraph (i) of Clause 59.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Leader of the Opposition seems to have set his heart on this amendment.

Mr. Watts: I am much more determined about it now than I was ten minutes ago.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It would be extremely difficult to decide the value of a stud animal. It might be worth, to a breeder who is breeding a particular type, many times what it would be worth to another breeder or owner. Members know that if they purchase animals from certain studs they are purchasing the name. If that animal went to another property, it would not be worth anything like the same amount. Some persons, because of the name attaching to their place, might get better compensation than other people who lose a more valuable—by being a better producer—beast. In addition, I submit that as the Leader of the Opposition's proposition is one which imposes an additional burden on the compensation fund, it is out of order.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have been considering the matter of this amendment being out of order. I ruled out of order the endeav-

our of the member for Murray-Wellington to change the administration of the compensation fund, and I do not see that there is a great deal of difference here, because both these funds are supported by money from the Treasury and the question of changing one to the other does not appear to me to be of real importance. The Minister has made a point, namely, that if this provision were included, it would, not necessarily but might, impose an extra burden on the Treasury. For that reason, I have no recourse but to rule the amendment out of order.

Point of Order.

Mr. Seward: On a point of order; is not half of this compensation found by the fund subscribed by the producers? Could not the extra burden be put on that fund?

The Minister for Agriculture: No.

Mr. Seward: It is a pretty fine point of order.

The Chairman: I advise the member for Pingelly and the Committee generally that when the amount in the compensation fund is not sufficient for its requirements it has to call on the Treasury. No one can say what will be the position in the future or when the fund may have to call on the Treasury. I must therefore rule the amendment out of order.

Committee Resumed.

Amendment ruled out.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 60 to 73—agreed to.

New Clause:

Mr. McDONALD: I desire to add a new clause, which the notice paper suggests should stand as Clause 63, but I propose to move it to stand as Clause 61, which I think is a more appropriate place. I move—

That a new clause be inserted as follows:—

“61. The board through its officers may undertake scientific and technical research for the purposes of improving the purity of milk supplies and generally for the improvement of milk production, treatment and distribution.”

The Minister drew my attention to Clause 60 of the Bill which says that the board may at any time and from time to time cause to be prepared any scheme for improvement of the production, supply, delivery, distribution

and quality of milk for consumers, and submit the same to the Minister for his consideration. If the board under Clause 60 prepared a specific scheme and included a department of research it could carry out what I have in mind, but I think that, apart from any such scheme, it would be in the interests of the industry and the people if the board were given power to use this fund to establish a laboratory and carry out such research as it thinks fit into the technical and scientific improvement of the purity of our milk supplies and the production and distribution of milk generally. This is an enabling clause. It need not be acted on, but it gives the board power and authority, which it may find useful and in the public interest, to use that money.

The CHAIRMAN: I hope the Minister will not take objection to this as imposing an extra burden on the Crown.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have no objection to the clause, but I think the position is adequately safeguarded in paragraph (f) of Subclause (1) of Clause 26. I see no objection to the wording of the amendment.

New clause put and passed.

Schedule—agreed to.

Mr. McLARTY: I have on the notice paper an amendment to insert the word "transport" after the word "production" in line 2 of the Title. The object of the amendment is to ensure that the board will have full control of all transport, which is necessary, as transport is one of the most important phases of a good milk supply.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think there is any provision in the Bill for the control of transport of milk.

Mr. McLARTY: Does not "distribution" cover transport?

The CHAIRMAN: If that is the case I will accept the amendment to be dealt with by the Committee.

Mr. McLARTY: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of the title, after the word "production" the word "transport" be inserted.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We cannot, in this Bill, give the Milk Board complete control over transport. That is the function of the Transport Board, which is charged with the responsibility of co-ordinating transport of all types in Western Aus-

tralia. The Bill makes provision to enable the board to arrange transport for milk and to pay for it, but we cannot give the board complete control over the transport. I do not think anything would be gained by agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. McDONALD: The insertion of the word "transport" in the long title would not enlarge the powers of the board, which would depend on the body of the Act.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Title—put and passed.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILLS (4)—RETURNED.

1, Mining Act Amendment.

2, Road Closure.

3, Reserves.

Without amendment.

4, Workers' Homes Act Amendment.

With an amendment.

BILL—STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it did not insist on its amendments.

BILL—WORKERS' HOMES ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Amendment.

Amendment made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

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

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment reads—

After Sub-paragraph (iii) in the proposed new sub-section (2) the following words be inserted:—“(iv) Three members shall form a quorum.”

The PREMIER: The amendment provides that out of a board of five, three shall form a quorum. There is no objection to the amendment. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

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

Resolution reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 11th December.

Mr. SEWARD (Pingelly) [8.30]: This Bill is designed to give the landholder the opportunity of utilising the services of railway employees to burn a break on his property under certain conditions. The conditions are that he must comply with the provisions laid down in Section 9 of the Act, and in addition he must have two firebreaks on his property 6 feet wide with a chain between them. The only aspect of the matter that troubles me is the time during which this extra burning may be carried out. In some parts of the State, for instance in the South-West, it would be quite safe to do the burning then, but the regulations that appear in the "Government Gazette" fixing the prohibited time include places from Kalgoorlie to Gnowangerup with practically the same burning period. One might burn with perfect safety at Gnowangerup when one could not burn at Kalgoorlie, Dalwallinu and such like places. If the Bill be passed, it will mean that this burning may be carried out during the period that is gazetted and will enable railway employees to assist with the burning.

According to the dates in the "Government Gazette," the extra burning by the Commissioner of Railways may be carried out between the 29th October and the 23rd December in places such as Beverley, Brookton, Broome Hill, Bonnie Rock, Corrigin, Cunderdin, Cranbrook, Cuballing, Dalwallinu, Dowerin, Dumbleyung, Dundas, Esperance, Gnowangerup, Goomalling, Kalgoorlie, Kattanning, Kellerberrin, Kent, Kondinin, Koorda, Kulin, Lake Grace and Leonora. Obviously the conditions are totally different in many of those places.

I have a vivid recollection of one night in December a year to two ago when I happened to be in Narrogin. During the afternoon railway employees arrived at Cuballing and burnt along the line. When I was returning home after dark that night, there were fires everywhere along the line. Trees, stumps and logs were burning, and a howling

south-easterly wind was blowing, and harvesting was in progress, one might say, in the adjoining paddocks. With a hot sun, members can visualise what is likely to happen the following morning. This is a most dangerous provision, although it has been requested by the Road Boards' Association. In the places I have mentioned, the time for burning breaks around a property is October, and I do not like the measure for that reason. Take the different dates—the 29th October to the 23rd December—in places like Kalgoorlie, Kondinin and others I have enumerated. Yet the dates for Kojonup, Upper Blackwood and West Arthur are the 30th October to the 24th December, and on the Midland line burning may be carried out by the railways at Irwin, Mingenew, Three Springs, Carnamah, Moora and Victoria Plains from the 25th October to the 20th December. Yet at a place like Chittering, the period is from the 15th November to the 20th December—practically the same closing date.

The effect of the measure seems to me to enable the Railway Department to delay still further taking action effectively to control locomotive sparks. I had a question on the notice paper for today, but unfortunately the answer was postponed. I wanted to ascertain what action the department had taken to prove the theory advanced by Mr. Fox over 18 months ago for taking back and consuming the smoke in the engine by altering the engine. Mr. Fox asserts that he could not only add to the hauling capacity of the engine, but could also effectively deal with sparks without any other spark-arrester. I would like to see the department taking action to cope with the spark menace rather than asking for co-operation in carrying out burning operations right up to the 24th December in districts where the harvesting will have been practically completed.

The Minister for Lands: The Railway Department has that right now.

Mr. SEWARD: Yes, but the desire is to extend it to the farmers' paddocks and so expand the operation.

The Minister for Lands: If the farmer wishes to burn, the department is willing to co-operate, and it has to be approved by the road board.

Mr. SEWARD: Yes, and certain safeguards have to be observed, such as employing three men. I do not say I shall oppose

the second reading, but I am explaining to the House some of the risks that will be run. Generally speaking, if a man ploughs a couple of firebreaks, he will go out late in October or early in November at night time and burn the intervening space. When it comes to the middle of December, he is too busy with his harvesting operations to give attention to further burning. I would sooner see other measures taken by the Railway Department to cope with the spark menace than depend upon such measures as these. The railway employees do the burning during the daytime and return to the depot at night, and when a strong wind springs up, the burning logs and stumps are fanned into big flames, and so fires are started and damage is caused.

Mr. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington) [8.39]: I support the Bill. I do not think there is any risk of danger. The Commissioner of Railways has first to obtain the consent of the local authority, and it is not likely that any burning would be done on the property of a farmer if he objected to it. Consider existing conditions: The prohibited period is after the 15th December in my electorate. We have had a considerable quantity of rain during the last day or two which would prevent any burning. Because of that, it will probably be necessary for a number of farmers to avail themselves of this provision in order to protect their properties.

Mr. Watts: The Commissioner of Railways is not required under the Bill to get any approval.

Mr. McLARTY: There is something to that effect.

Mr. Watts: The owner of the land, not the Commissioner, has to get approval.

Mr. McLARTY: At any rate, permission has to be obtained from the local authority and so there are three parties concerned, and the Commissioner and the land-owner have to guard against any damage being caused. I feel sure they will do so. I have no doubt that this Bill seeks to protect land-owners and that its provisions will give them some added protection.

Mr. WATTS (Katanning) [8.41]: I am in entire agreement with the member for Pingelly that there is danger attached to

this measure. In fact, I can almost go further and say I do not think it ought to be passed in its present form without receiving further consideration. When I first heard of its coming on to the notice paper, I gained the impression that it was designed to minimise the risk of fires starting on railway property, but I cannot find that it makes any substantial contribution at all to that end. In fact, to be perfectly honest, I cannot find that it makes any contribution. All it appears to do is to give the owner of land adjoining a railway line the right to burn the bush when otherwise he would be prohibited from doing so if the Commissioner's employees happened to find it convenient at that time to burn the railway line and the local authority approved of the bush or grass being set alight on the adjoining land.

All the measure will do will be to impose a further risk upon the land-owner of setting fire to his neighbour's property, and he will be inviting the local authority to give him approval to take that risk. So the local authority, if it has any sense, will say, "No, we will give you no such approval". Then the farmer, if he sets fire to the bush or grass on his property, will do it without the approval of the local authority, because the local authority will not approve of something which might easily contribute towards setting the whole country alight. It will, if it has any sense, say, "Let the Commissioner of Railways and those attached to him be responsible for this or let the owner of the land do it at his own risk." I cannot see that it will minimise the risk of bush fires. Admittedly it will not help in the control of fires originating on railway property and I ask, "What is it going to do?" The answer is that it will create more risks than exist at present and it does not seem worth supporting.

Mr. ABBOTT (North Perth) [8.43]: As the law stands and quite irrespective of time, if a man lights a fire, he is responsible for any damage that it might do. It does not matter whether he has taken every precaution and has not been in any way negligent. He is still responsible for all damage. I doubt whether this Bill will give him any additional protection. A farmer might light a fire and think it perfectly safe, but it might get away and burn 20 miles of country.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville—in reply) [8.44]: I do not wish the House to be under any misapprehension. The Government is not greatly concerned whether the Bill be carried or thrown out.

Mr. Doney: Then in that case what was the object of bringing it down?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was brought down at the unanimous request of the Road Boards' Association.

Mr. Watts: I am sure that the association could not have understood it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: And the association was backed up by the Bush Fires Advisory Committee, three of whose members are members of the Road Boards Association Executive. All that this Bill purports to do is that, when the Commissioner of Railways is burning along a railway line—he has the right to burn on his land at any time, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out—and is doing so during certain prohibited times when the farmer may not burn, the road board will have authority to allow an adjoining farmer to take advantage of the presence of the railway gangs, if he so desires, to burn on his own side, and those men will be available to help him. That is all that the Bill is trying to do. It was brought down at the unanimous wish of the Road Boards Association, and the Railway Commissioner has sent out a circular to all and sundry offering his assistance.

Mr. Abbott: Will he be responsible for any damage?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He accepts no responsibility except that he wishes to assist the farmers who desire to burn a larger break during a prohibited period while his men are on the spot. The Government will not be hurt, neither will the Commissioner, if the House does not like the Bill. I suggest, however, it will be of considerable benefit to some farmers. The road boards themselves will decide whether it is safe or not to burn at that particular time outside railway fences.

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.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 6th December; Mr. Fox in the Chair.

Vote—Railways, Tramways, Ferries and Electricity Supply, £1,613,500:

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. W. M. Marshall—Murchison) [8.50]: In submitting these Estimates, I apologise for their belated presentation having regard for the importance of the department concerned. I assume it was my personal fault that such is the case because I have a very low priority in the Government. I am the last addition to the Cabinet, and the Estimates always follow the ministerial priority. Although I am particularly sorry for the belated presentation of these Estimates, I have to accept the responsibility, and declare that it is due to the fact that Estimates are delivered according to ministerial priority.

Mr. McLarty: You are ahead of the Public Works Estimates.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They were postponed; the Minister had priority but did not take advantage of it. His berth was temporarily cancelled. The Government fully realises the low standard of efficiency that is rendered by the service so far as publicly-owned transport is concerned. It realises that the service is below that which the public is entitled to expect.

Mr. Mann: You never said a truer word.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is far below that standard which the Government would like to offer immediately. In consequence the Government proposes to take immediate action and do all that is humanly possible, sparing no effort, and to a great extent sparing no finance, in the endeavour to rehabilitate the position of the transport services controlled by the Railway Department. In my humble

judgment the low standard of efficiency experienced at the moment is a legacy left to this Government that I suggest is not of its own making. I well remember the time about 20 years ago when reading the then Commissioner of Railway's report, wherein he drew attention to the arrears of maintenance apparent in those days both in our permanent way and in our rolling-stock.

Mr. North: We had a Royal Commission in those days.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Prior to that we had a Royal Commission. In 1922 we had Commissioner Stead's report on the railways. That was the commencing point of depreciation in the standard of the services rendered to the people by the railways. It is due to that report, and because it was acted upon, that we adopted what is known as the pooling system with our engines. It gave the Commissioner and the Government of those days the opportunity to cut down expense in the manufacture of traction power. Commissioner Stead argued that it was not advisable to over-capitalise the service by having engines idle while the men who worked them rested, and by the introduction of the pooling system engines could be constantly kept running while the crew took periods of leisure.

Mr. Styants: Even engines wear out.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There was a cessation in the manufacture of engines then because there was no necessity to have engines allocated to crews. It was from that point onwards that a general though gradual deterioration in the service commenced. In order to inform myself of the actual position, I looked up the report of the Commissioner for Railways for the years 1928 and 1929. I desired to have confirmation of the opinion I held. I took those two years because we had allegedly passed through a period of prosperity. They were the days when industry was active and money was plentiful, and it was assumed that the commercial and industrial life of the State was experiencing a period of good times. That being the case the year 1929 should have seen our railways right up-to-date and reaching the point when they could almost be described as perfect. I refer members to the report of the Commissioner for those two years. They will find he was most concerned both

in regard to the arrears of maintenance of our rail roads, the depreciation in the number of our engines, and the lessening of efficiency.

Notwithstanding the position that prevailed, it was faced up to from 1930 to 1938 or 1939. I need not recount what happened in that period, particularly between 1930 and 1936 when practically the whole of the artisans and the workshops that carried on the maintenance and construction of our rollingstock were virtually at a standstill. I am not one of those politicians who proposes to go for a joy ride on a political hack. The position was intolerable, but nevertheless the Government had to face up to it. It was denied the wherewithal to continue the necessary maintenance and provide the necessary additions to our rollingstock and traction power. It was during that period that we reached the point when much of our rollingstock had depreciated to a particularly low level, and we were faced with an abnormal position without being able to make any effort to overtake the lag.

Mr. Watts: When did the position fall to that low level?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In 1929 the Commissioner was perturbed in regard to the standard of efficiency that could be rendered to the public because of the deterioration both of the rollingstock and traction power. The period to which I refer presented no opportunity for overtaking the lag, but rather aggravated the position. I do not blame the Government for that period. It was placed in the invidious position of having to cut down on all expenditure. It was compelled to accept that position by virtue of factors over which it had no control.

What I want to point out is that it was not until 1935 or 1936 that a dribble of loan funds was made available to the Government which rendered an already difficult position almost equally intolerable. We were only commencing to regain our position and picking up the lag that was so apparent in the depreciation of our utilities when we were faced with the outbreak of war. Again I need not recount what happened during the war period. I point out, however, how hopeless the position has been for many years past and I state quite frankly that the present Government recognises its responsi-

bility to improve the situation and to render to the public the service it justifiably demands; but the Government is not altogether responsible for what obtains. It has accepted the position and intends to face up four-square to the obligation with a view to taking all necessary action that is possible to regain a satisfactory system. We may be able in the course of a year or two to restore to the people the standard of service that they quite rightly ask the Government to provide.

Mr. Triat: You are optimistic.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It will involve time and expenditure, but the Government is not sparing anything in that regard and every action possible is being taken. It proposes to take still further action in order as speedily as possible to rejuvenate or, to use a word that is more commonly resorted to these days, rehabilitate the system so that a service may be rendered by the railways that the people of Western Australia may be proud of rather than of which to be so very critical.

Mr. Triat: How will you be able to rejuvenate your old engines?

Mr. Thorn: That will be the day!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am not particularly concerned about the rejuvenating of old engines but rather with the fact that we have reached the stage when we may possibly be able to replace old engines. The engineering branch of the Railway Department is fully cognisant of that necessity and the need for the establishment of a form of standardisation to replace, instead of relying on, obsolete and worn-out engines. Some of those engines have been on the road for 40 or 50 years, so that little of the original engines remain. To talk about rejuvenating such engines is to suggest something that, even to the extent of reconditioning, would not be worthwhile because of the heavy maintenance and running costs that would inevitably result.

Mr. J. Hegney: Those engines have paid for themselves long ago.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: To aggravate the position, on the declaration of war—no-one would complain bitterly about the matter—the Commonwealth Government out of sheer necessity to prosecute the war to the best advantage, impressed 15 or 16 of our best engines together with other units of

our rollingstock. Under those conditions we were obliged to carry a terrific obligation and burden imposed upon the railway system throughout the war period. Without the necessary manpower and machinery available even to arrest to any appreciable degree the depreciation and decreasing efficiency of our rollingstock, little could be done. We are now confronted with the very grave problem of trying to redeem the position. The Government fully realises that today the railway system has grown in magnitude so that it feels the job is beyond any possibility of control by one man.

Mr. Seward: We have been telling you that for years.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I shall not be in a position to inform the member for Pingelly more about that phase for some time. Nevertheless I can state that a committee has been making a very thorough investigation and had it not been for certain obligations arising out of pressure of business, the committee would have submitted its report, and I could then have made a declaration to members regarding the Government's attitude on this question. A huge amount of work has had to be done by responsible men who are on the committee. They have not been able to meet to carry out their investigations and to submit their report to the Government in time for me to make the statement I have mentioned, at this juncture. The Government appreciates the fact that a change in the method of control is absolutely essential and no doubt, when the report is presented, will take the necessary action to effect some alterations. Just exactly what they will be and what form they will take, I cannot state at this juncture.

Mr. Triat: We were promised a board of management some time ago.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am not responsible for promises made by anyone else. I am informing the Committee as to what is likely to be the position in the future.

Mr. Thorn: We will remind you about that twelve months hence.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Let us assume that it will be 12 months hence! The last section of the community that ought to be over-critical in the matter consists of members of Parliament who are well-inform-

ed respecting the position. It is passing strange that when the Government takes the necessary action with a view to effecting a change that is desirable and announces what is being done or is under consideration, members opposite interject, "It ought to have been done long ago."

Mr. Thorn: We are merely hoping that your dream comes true.

The Minister for Justice: It will come true all right.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is not a very encouraging position to be in.

Mr. Thorn: I know it is not.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Government is doing the very thing that members seem so desirous of securing.

Mr. Mann: The Government or the Minister, which?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Government! Let me inform the member for Beverley that the committee I refer to was in existence before I became a Minister of the Crown.

Mr. Thorn: Then I think you have wakened the committee up.

Mr. Mann: You stirred it up.

Mr. Watts: Or did the committee stir you up instead?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I can assure members that the report and recommendations of the committee would have been in the hands of the Government prior to this had it not been for the fact that the members of that committee had other obligations that necessitated their being out of the State from time to time, and it was not practicable for them to devote the attention necessary for the preparation and presentation of the report. The Committee need have no fear that the Government is not earnestly endeavouring to solve the problem in the best, most logical and surest way. What changes are made will certainly be to the advantage of the railway system rather than its disadvantage. I feel I can confidently state, and I give the member for Toodyay my assurance now to that effect, that at least one branch of the activities under the control of the Commissioner of Railways will be transferred from his jurisdiction.

Having regard to the fact that the Deputy Premier has been successful in secur-

ing the passage of legislation through both branches of the legislature, when that Bill is assented to the East Perth power station will be controlled by the electricity commission that is to be set up. To that extent the obligation upon the Commissioner of Railways will be relieved. The Government realises its responsibilities and is making a serious endeavour to replace the worn-out rollingstock, particularly the tractive power, at the earliest possible date. Inquiries are being made in and out of Australia as to where the Government can secure engines suitable for service here. For some time it has been endeavouring to find out whether it can have engines built in, or outside, Australia and if so, how long it will be before the engines could be delivered.

In order to augment the service six Diesel electric coaches are due for delivery in the near future. I would not suggest that that is as important as the securing of a number of engines suitable for the railway service itself. I simply refer to the fact as indicating that the Government is doing everything it possibly can, apart from activities I shall mention later in connection with our own railway workshops. The Government realises that it has obstacles to face up to and judgment will be necessary as to what shall or shall not be done in connection with the rehabilitation of the railway system. Personally, I feel that the coming of road and air transport is inevitable. I consider that in the future transport by rail will not be nearly as popular as it has been in the past. This Government does not propose to adopt a dog-in-the-manger attitude in that respect; it intends to develop road transport, and I hope that in the very near future we shall have some of the finest buses in Australia on the road.

Members: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They will be equal to any buses in Australia; we have nothing comparable with them in this State. However, I do not propose to deal further with that aspect at the moment. I wish to inform the Committee that, although nothing has been definitely decided as to the standardisation of the railway systems of Australia, we must bear in mind the possibility of that being brought about. I stress that, no matter what happens about the broad gauge problem, which will be

solved in the near future at a conference of the Premiers and Treasurers of the respective States and the Commonwealth, no matter what it may cost, the Government feels that something even more important to this State is the rehabilitation of our own 3 ft. 6 in. gauge system. Our system must be brought up to date. In passing, I point out that Sir Harold Clapp has not provided for the complete conversion of the railway systems of Western Australia and Queensland; but he said that at some later date surveys and estimates might be made with a view to their ultimate conversion. In his report he says, dealing with Western Australia, that plans for a standard-gauge line from Fremantle to Kalgoorlie should be prepared. Should that line eventually be laid down, it will follow in the main our 3 ft. 6 in. line.

Mr. Mann: Is that definite?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No.

Mr. Mann: From Northam to Kalgoorlie?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I would not even say that. It might only be from Merredin. It might be further east again. However, it does not matter so much what route the line takes; it will compete with our own 3 ft. 6 in. gauge line and duplicate the cost, without helping to develop Western Australia very much. I cannot anticipate what the outcome of the next conference on this matter will be and therefore I do not wish to comment further on this subject, except to say that we are under an obligation to provide liberally for the re-conditioning and bringing to a higher standard our own 3 ft. 6 in. gauge system, whatever may be the outcome of the discussions on the standard gauge.

Mr. Thorn: You mentioned other forms of transport, and rightly so. Road and air transport must be taken into consideration.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We must be prepared to face competition both by road and air.

The Minister for Lands: They will not carry much wheat and wool.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, but I wish my colleague to understand that that form of transport will carry the more lucrative freight, leaving the railways to carry the low-freight goods, the taxpayer having to make up the loss.

The Minister for Lands: Let us get our own aeroplanes and buses!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: My colleague should not run away with the idea that air transport is insignificant. It can carry much in the way of heavy freight. Aviation has not yet been weaned; it is still suckling its mother. The performances of aviation during the war were stupendous, and yet it is in its infancy. No-one can prophesy what can yet be done in the way of air transport. In America aeroplanes now carry hundreds of passengers and tons of merchandise; yet air transport is still in the experimental stage. It is no use closing our eyes to that fact. We have an example in the internal combustion engine. We did not realise what road transport meant until it was too late.

Mr. Triat: The internal combustion engine is going out of date.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is hard to say what will remain in date, having regard to atomic power. We have had some remarkable revelations of its effect. I remember reading some years ago a work by Professor Soddy, in which he prophesied that all forms of fuel known to us and commonly used today would be out of date in a few years. The atomic bomb is an indication of what he referred to.

Mr. Thorn: Do not give away the secret tonight.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I wish I knew it. It is no use our saying we know what will happen, that air transport is insignificant and that engineers and scientists cannot improve it and that consequently we need not fear it. We must face up to realities. Our war experience has taught us that aeroplanes can transport Army personnel and machinery, the latter from the site of its manufacture to the war front and behind it. The possibilities of air transport must be watched with deep concern by those who will be in competition with it. I shall now deal specifically with the revenue and expenditure for the current year. The receipts from the four undertakings, railways, tramways, ferries and electricity supply are estimated to reach £5,372,000, while the expenditure is estimated at £4,613,500. The interest bill is £1,189,350, thus showing a loss for the four undertakings as a whole of £430,850. I suppose my friends opposite

will realise that our public utilities, like the primary producers, are staggering under the burden of interest payments. We could have enjoyed a profit of £500 000, but unfortunately it has been converted into a deficiency. As time goes on, it will increase and become still more burdensome, until eventually a climax will be reached. However, that is the position. Until there is some change in the fiscal policy, in the method of financing national requirements, this burden must be carried. It will retard the Government, for it stifles industry and staggers individuals. This colossal burden is being felt by all people in the State and by our industries and organisations generally. The cash receipts and disbursements of the railways are estimated to be as follows:—

	£
Revenue	4,250,000
Expenditure	3,712,500

Leaving a balance of .. 537,500

to meet an interest bill of £1,060,000, or a loss from the Treasury standpoint of £522,500. This has been caused by giving effect to Government policy, in assisting to develop both our primary and our secondary industries. We could have shown a profit of £537,500, but unfortunately the interest bill converted it into a loss. The actual earnings last year were £4,271,288. A reduction of only £21,288 is forecast for the current year. This reduction is expected in coaching passenger earnings, owing mainly to the falling-off of Defence personnel transport. Of course, that is to be expected; although even today the railways are transporting large tonnages for the Defence Department in addition to Army personnel. This must be a declining source of revenue and probably in the next 12 months or so it will vanish altogether.

On the goods side, reduced earnings are expected from livestock and wool traffic, owing to the poor season. We regret that that should be so, because the farming industry has had a bad time and a great percentage of the stock died. We also expect to lose £100,000 owing to the reduction in the haulage traffic for the Defence Department, as the result of the cessation of hostilities. I might point out that the Defence Department traffic was very lucrative for the railways and that we are losing that profit-

able transport. However, it is anticipated that shortly in almost every direction things will be returning to normal. For instance, the goldfields are becoming livelier, and merchandise of all sorts, including timber and mining requisites, is being transported by the railways for the mining industry. That traffic is greatly in excess of the traffic during the war period. It is expected that there will be an increase of approximately 8,000 tons in superphosphate haulage this year. That is to be expected in view of the possibility of securing these particular commodities and the lively activities that farmers will experience during the year.

Wheat, including the carry-over of last year, is estimated to increase by 150,000 tons whereas a reduction of about 16 per cent. in wool is anticipated. We also anticipate a reduction in livestock. We naturally expect greater activity in the matter of local timber. Homes are required on the goldfields, the mining industry requires timber and industry generally on the goldfields requires large supplies of timber so that it is expected that haulage of this material to that and other centres will increase considerably. We expect flour to remain almost static. General traffic is expected to be slightly higher than last year, while Defence traffic will greatly decline.

During the past few years traffic reached a high level. We realise that most of it was due to the war and while we cannot expect that to continue we are hopeful that much of the business that has been experienced by the railways, and other means of transport, will remain. On the other side it is estimated that the expenditure for the year will be £3,712,500, while the actual expenditure last year was £3,652,094. There is an estimated increase there of £60,406. This expenditure is mainly due to the activities which the Government is under an obligation to assume to rehabilitate the rollingstock, generally, and to improve the assets for which the department is responsible.

Mr. Triat: You are about £1,000,000 short of what is required!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: As I go along the figures will be revealed more accurately. With the return of men and materials we will be able to make a start on picking up some of the considerable leeway, particularly in the engineering branch. We

are too far behind in these activities and, apart from the endeavour to overtake the leeway, our immediate problem is to arrest the drift. Until we can secure the necessary labour, not only tradesmen and artisans, but also labourers, I fear that we will not be able to make any great headway. However, it is hoped that we will not for long experience such a shortage as we did during the war period. Much of this expenditure, too, is due to the fact that there has been an increase in payments for certain services under awards and agreements, and also for night work. In addition, other extra costs have come upon the Railway Department, through factors over which it has no control.

The Traffic Branch is estimated to expend about £14,000 less than last year. This branch has the virtue that its expenses, in connection with staff, coal consumption and other items, can be curtailed in proportion to the volume of traffic handled. It is one of the few departments that can be dealt with in that way. The mechanical branch is estimated to spend £33,511 more than last year. With the practical cessation of work for the Defence Department and the possibility of improvement in the manpower position more work on the maintenance of rollingstock is proposed with a corresponding increase in expenditure. Provision is made for the expenditure of £10,000 on new machinery to replace that which is worn out and obsolete in the Midland Junction workshops. Here again the department finds that due to obsolete machinery it is difficult to meet the responsibilities imposed upon it.

At a later stage I will be able to explain just what the department has in mind in regard to that particular aspect. The civil engineering branch is estimated to spend £23,108 more than last year. In this branch heavy renewals of sleepers, rails and fastenings have long been necessary but the shortage of manpower and material in recent years has precluded their being effected. Improvement is hoped for in the current year both in respect to the availability of material and the release of labour. A big deferred maintenance programme, covering the activities of both the civil and mechanical engineering branches, must be put in hand. I think the estimated cost of picking up the leeway is in the vicinity of £750,000. That is merely to pick up arrears of maintenance. That gives the Committee an op-

portunity to realise just how far the standard of our system has drifted. I quote that as the figure being necessary to make up the leeway.

Mr. Seward: That is about half what Mr. Raynor said.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Under general charges, £40,500 is provided for special maintenance and replacement of rollingstock. Of this amount £15,500 is for special maintenance and £10,000 represents expenditure on the new S class locomotives under construction which, when completed, will form portion of the plan for rehabilitation of locomotive stock. The balance will be spent as circumstances dictate. An amount of £2,000 has been provided for expenditure on amenities for staff, and £30,000 is included as this year's contribution to the cost of 25 Australian Standard Garratt locomotives obtained from the Commonwealth Government, the cost of which is being spread as a charge to railway expenditure over a period of 10 years. To give the Committee some idea of the acute position that has been in evidence over a period of years I point out that our permanent way gangs have been reduced by approximately 245 men. The position was made still worse because of the fact that many of the men engaged on this work were beyond the physical capacity to give the best results—some were very old men—but their services were retained because of sheer necessity. It is little wonder that our permanent way maintenance has fallen off to the extent that it has. I want to correct the figure I just quoted. The correct figure is £570,000 not £750,000.

Mr. Seward: That is worse.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not know why the hon. member smiles.

Mr. Seward: Your officer, in giving evidence before the Grants Commission, said that the figure was £1,500,000.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We have a lot to do. This is merely an estimate of arrears.

Mr. Seward: That is what he said.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There will be a great deal more expenditure necessary than this. In the mechanical branch, following the outbreak of war, and in conformity with the State Government's desire that every possible assistance should be given to the war effort in the manufacture

of munitions and other allied items in Western Australia the workshops were converted almost into a branch of the Commonwealth Munitions Department. Many of our skilled tradesmen, along with other men, were called on to give service in the war effort and in consequence the maintenance of our rolling-stock generally had to be left in abeyance. The extent to which this was done is obvious now when we note the state of our rolling-stock and traction power. Rollingstock proposals at present under consideration by the Government envisage the construction of 62 improved passenger and goods locomotives, 36 coaches, 640 high-sided wagons, 50 brake vans, 20 bogie covered vans, 80 bogie wagons, 30 coal hoppers and 20 water-tankers during the next five years.

Substantial additions and improvements to the workshops and new machines and equipment are necessary in order to increase the impetus of the output and to enable full effect to be given to these proposals. I will probably have something to say about the workshops in a few moments. Apart from this programme, 25 new Australian Standard Garratt locomotives, 6 DM improved suburban type engines and three S class heavy goods engines have been placed in traffic since 1939, while 2 DM and 7 S class are in hand, and a commencement has been made on 10 DD—a further improved type suburban engine. Six new AY suburban coaches—a popular saloon type providing seating accommodation for 82 passengers each, and consisting of three semi-enclosed compartments with sliding doors, improved half-lift windows and modern lighting fittings—are under construction and nearing completion.

Some work has also been done on six modern sleeping cars, whilst construction of additional goods vehicles is also proceeding. This rollingstock is being built from working expenses, as a replacement of stock that has been written off from time to time, and from funds made available from the sale of rolling-stock to the Commonwealth during the war. Regarding track and buildings, as already mentioned, there is a big leeway of deferred maintenance to be made up and it is hoped to make an early start on this work. Other works envisaged in a schedule of post-war works include relaying with 60 lb. material on various sections and metal ballasting to give better traffic working conditions, and

duplication of track between Armadale and Pinjarra and Picton Junction and Bunbury.

Mr. Withers: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Also additional crossing loops to obviate the delays which frequently occur on this section owing to the heavy loading experience; extension of automatic signalling on the Midland Junction-Northam section to increase the track capacity; water treatment plants to improve water for locomotive use and thereby obviate the heavy damage through bad water; a new telephone exchange at Perth and new houses for railway staff in country areas. On the traffic side, post-war planning embraces faster and more frequent suburban passenger trains, improved country passenger and goods services and the elimination of mixed trains wherever possible. In the new timetable operating from November, 1945, country passenger services have been reorganised and a number of new Diesel-electric rail services introduced on branch lines.

As I pointed out earlier, six new Diesel-electric rail trains are on order. The propelling units of these cars will be more powerful than those in the existing rail cars, and the cars will each have two trailers. When received, these new rail cars will be utilised on routes where the density of traffic justifies the larger unit, and the smaller cars will be released for service in the less populous areas.

Mr. Perkins: Will they have a better weight ratio than the old cars, with the trailers attached?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I cannot hear the hon. member. Further, and in addition to the position as outlined in these Estimates, the Government is also considering the following schedule which is to give effect to a programme spread over five or six years, to speed up the production of rollingstock. In the year 1945-46 it is expected that ten locomotives will be built, six cars and 150 wagons; in 1946-47 ten locomotives, eight cars, 180 wagons; in 1947-48, 12 locomotives, 10 cars, 210 wagons; 1948-49, 15 locomotives, 12 cars, and 250 wagons, and in 1949-50, 15 locomotives, 12 cars and 250 wagons, a total of 62 locomotives 48 cars and 1,040 wagons. To carry out this programme alterations and additions will have to be made to the Midland Junction

workshops, and the Government may also farm out some of the work necessary to catch up arrears. The State Implement Works may be able to assist in this work, and we may use some of the annexes for which the Commonwealth Government has now no further use. It is estimated that this programme will cost about £1,378,600, of which £197,000 will have to be spent in order to bring the Midland Junction workshop to the state of efficiency essential to carry out the programme.

In the tramways we are not in a much better position and the rollingstock and permanent way have depreciated to the extent that people are justified in complaining. The Government is taking the necessary action to effect improvements to this system. Fifty trolley buses are on order and we hope soon to get delivery and put them into operation to relieve the position. The Estimates of revenue from the tramways are as follows:—Revenue, £510,000, Expenditure, £400,000; leaving a credit balance of £110,000, with interest at £49,000 and a profit of £61,000. Last year the revenue totalled £509,530 and expenditure £392,106, so that revenue is estimated to remain fairly static and expenditure is estimated to increase by £8,000.

The department is under an obligation immediately to improve the permanent way and the standard of the coaches, etc. used on the system. Expenditure must therefore go up, while we will endeavour to maintain the revenue. Due to war conditions in recent years tramway earnings have been on the up grade, but, with the end of the war, it is not expected that the increase will be maintained. There is an indication this year that revenue is declining and the coal strike was instrumental, to a slight degree, in that. When tyres and petrol are again freely available people will use their own vehicles and tram and train passenger traffic will decline to some extent. Everything possible will be done in an endeavour to retain some of the increased traffic secured during that period.

Mr. Cross interjected.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The member for Canning would not care what suburb was stirred down, so long as South Perth was stirred up.

Mr. Cross: There is plenty of room for it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Had the member for Canning any knowledge of the facts he would realise the difficulties with which we are confronted. Though the war has been over for several months, departments have not found increased manpower available to any extent. Returned men have considerable leave due to them and are enjoying their holidays. On the ferries the Estimates are, Revenue, £12,000; expenditure, £11,000, with a balance of £1,000, interest being £350 and the surplus £650. Last year's revenue totalled £12,141 and expenditure £10,348, leaving a surplus, after paying interest, of £1,443. The Estimates for 1945-46 on the electricity supply are Revenue, £600,000; Expenditure, £490,000, balance £110,000, interest £80,000 and profit, £30,000. Here again there is a demand for an extension of the service, and it is desirable that it should be extended. Even the utility vans necessary for the outdoor work are unobtainable and all the necessary materials are still in short supply.

While it is almost essential to make extensions, the material and men are not yet available to do the work. There is a big drain on the power station at present and it is therefore necessary to use the old A unit, which absorbs about twice the amount of coal used by the more modern station. Owing to the demand, however, the cost cannot be considered and extensions are being made and will continue to be made and speeded up as material and labour become available. The Government realises that the catering on our railways is not up to the standard that the public is entitled to expect.

Mr. Mann: It is a positive disgrace.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We realise that our standard of catering has been low for a number of years. The Government has had an expert over to investigate and report, but I cannot say what the report will contain and it is not yet to hand. The Government is inclined to change the system and I do not think the leasing of the refreshment-rooms has been successful. I think the Government will endorse my saying that it is contemplated that it should run its own refreshment-rooms. With set places for refreshments, the time allowed for meals would be made up by not having to

haul rolling stock to provide refreshments. and by the saving of the time taken in shunting those vehicles on and off. Under Government control the refreshment-rooms could give a higher standard of service to the public at no greater charge. No time or effort will be spared to rehabilitate the system and bring it to a proper standard.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly) [9.58]: In the course of his remarks the Minister said—"I am not one of those politicians that gets up and goes for a ride on a political hack." I want to assure the Minister that I am not one of those people, and one of the most unpleasant jobs I have to do during the session is to address myself to the Railway Estimates. When I have had occasion to do business with the Railway Department I have met men whom it is a pleasure to meet, men who are courteous and who meet one's requests when it is possible to do so. It is no pleasure to have to criticise the department in which those men are engaged. If members review the position of the Railway Department, even if only from the Commissioner's report, they must see the deplorable condition into which the department is getting. So if the Minister hopes in any way to preserve to the department the transport business it ought to have, he has to do more than come to Parliament year after year and promise that something is going to be done.

I say frankly that I was disappointed at the speech of the Minister tonight. Had he said he had only recently been appointed to the position and therefore was not able to tell us that everything would be radically changed but that he would do his best, I would have felt inclined to leave it at that. But he did not adopt that attitude. He attempted to justify the present position, and for a member who has been here so long and has not in the past hesitated to avail himself of opportunities to criticise the department—well, if he is going to attempt to justify it, I shall have to say a few words to show that his attempted justification is not warranted.

In the first place, I enter an emphatic protest against the continued failure of the Government to take any action to bring about a change in control despite its promises. Members will recall that in September of last year, when a motion was brought for-

ward in this House for the re-appointment of the Commissioner of Railways, it provoked a long debate in which many members took part. During the debate the then Premier made this admission.

I frankly admit that the Government is not satisfied with the administration of the Railway Department. I am also of the opinion that we have outlived the time when railway administration should be carried out by one man.

He also said—

The criticism raised this evening is not entirely unwelcome because it should, to some extent, stir up the complacency of some of the railway officers who have not had the administrative heads over them to stir them up.

Notwithstanding the Government's expressed dissatisfaction with the position, the Commissioner was re-appointed for five years. During the debate, the then Premier told the House that the whole position would be reviewed during the recess. The recess extended over nearly eight months and nothing appeared to have been done. On the 1st August I asked the Premier what, if any, action had been taken, and the reply I received was that the matter was under consideration. That was in August last. Now we are on the eve of another recess and nothing has been done, except that tonight the Minister tells us there is a committee at work, though the committee has been so busy with other things that it has not had time to go into the matter but is going to consider it.

The Minister for Justice: The committee has gone into it and given it a lot of consideration.

MR. SEWARD: But in view of the deplorable condition of the railways, is there anything of more importance for the committee to attend to? If the Government is going to have any traffic to cater for, it has to do more than consider the matter. It must take some action. The department cannot continue as it is going, losing traffic that it ought to be getting. Years ago we moved from this side of the House for the appointment of a Royal Commission to investigate the railways, and what better time could there be to have a searching investigation than the present when the Minister tells us he is contemplating alterations and large expenditure on replacements?

The Minister, during his speech, admitted some doubt as to the ability of the railways to cater for the traffic in future. Surely, if

we are going to spend a million of money, or whatever the amount might be, if we are on the eve of spending a huge sum of money is not now the time to have a searching investigation before we are actually committed to that expenditure?

Mr. Cross: Do not you think the Government is having a searching examination?

Mr. SEWARD: I will read a paragraph from the latest report of the Commissioner referring to the financial results. He said:—

The loss of £538,509 was £86,275 greater than that experienced in the year 1943-44, and is the highest loss recorded in any year since the inception of the railways. Compared with the immediately preceding year, earnings declined by £110,273, working expenses were £31,639 lower, and the interest bill was £7,641 higher.

The Commissioner went on to say—

In paragraph 11 of my report for the year ended the 30th June, 1944, under the heading of "Retrospect and Prospect" a warning was sounded that earnings could not be expected to remain at their present high level.

When I read that reference, I thought it curious that I should have missed it previously. On my return home, I looked up the reports and found that I had not a copy of the report for 1944. On making further inquiries, I discovered that it was published in last year's volume in addition to the report for the previous year. Both were published in the one volume but that for the year 1944 was laid on the Table a day or two before the House went into recess. Some members might not have read what the Commissioner had to say under the heading of "Retrospect and Prospect", so I shall give a few extracts to show that not only have members of this Chamber endeavoured to bring before the Government the position of the railways, but that the Commissioner also has done so. He said—

The deficit for the year just ended was the highest that has been recorded in the history of the W.A. Government Railways. It exceeded last year's loss by £390,813, was £139,008 above that of 1938-39 and £432,283 higher than in 1937-38. In a year in which earnings were only £31,384 lower than the record figure of 1942-43, such a loss provides much food for reflection and sounds a warning with regard to the future which cannot be disregarded

Goods and livestock earnings actually showed a decline—and this despite the haulage of a much bigger percentage of higher rated traffic in the later year, as evidenced by an average from all goods and livestock traffic of

2.10d. per ton mile in 1943-44 compared with 1.70d. in 1937-38—but coal shortages hindered operations during 1943-44, and even if less remunerative traffic is handled, earnings under this heading should increase when times return to normal.

Later he said—

Just as the costs of 1943-44 overshadowed those of 1937-38 there is no comparison between the latter and those of 1920, and the question naturally arises as to how it has been possible for the department in the face of such additional costs and without increasing charges to keep its deficit to £452,234. The answer is that the actual deficit, if all liabilities were properly taken into account, would have been very much higher than £452,234.

Before passing from that item, I venture to say that that more than anything else is what the member for Nedlands had in mind a few nights ago when he stated that our surpluses for some years past had been fictitious. I believe he thought that had the various departments not been starved of the money necessary to enable them to function, this State could not possibly have shown any surplus in the last few years. I repeat what the Commissioner said—

If all liabilities were properly taken into account, the deficit would have been very much higher than £452,234.

Continuing he said

Railway policy to date has been directed largely towards the provision of transportation for primary products and the requisites for producing them at a cost which enables them to be marketed in world competition, and whilst it was possible to pursue this policy and at the same time keep within measurable distance of striking a balance as between outgoings and earnings, railway deficits have not evoked undue criticism. The time has now arrived, however, when much heavier losses than have hitherto been recorded must be anticipated, and I feel that I would be lacking in my duty if I failed to call attention to the fact that it is quite beyond the capacity of administrative ingenuity to meet present operational and interest costs from present or prospective earnings, and that the only alternatives to still greater railway losses are—(a) raising of charges, (b) the crediting of railway revenue in respect of services rendered at less than cost, (c) an annual grant to cover losses on developmental branch lines, (d) the reduction or elimination of interest or (e) a combination of any or all of these.

Before commenting on one or two of those matters, I should like to mention that a week or two ago I read in Eastern States' newspapers that the Commissioners of Railways in New South Wales and Queensland had warned their respective Governments that

the period of high railway earnings had passed and that they are now on the decline, and that the railways in those States must face very much reduced revenue figures in the next few years. Therefore there was every justification for the warning issued by the Commissioner as to the position into which our railways are falling. One hears on all sides at the present time statements like the following:—"As soon as we can get tyres and petrol, we will not travel on the railways." The railways have had a wonderful opportunity in the last few years to gain traffic and give people a reasonable service. Even despite the difficulties of war time and the fact that desires could not be realised during that period, they could yet have given the service that would have enabled them to retain the traffic after the war.

I have a word or two to say on the alternative raised by the Commissioner in order to enable him to make the railways pay their way. He referred to the raising of charges. This cannot be contemplated.

Mr. Cross: Can't it? Every other country but this has raised charges.

Mr. SEWARD: The hon. member may have his turn later. As the Commissioner stated, he has to haul primary products to the ports at a price that those industries can bear. Apart from that aspect, I venture to say it is not fair to compel the users of the railways to pay charges that are based on a capital expenditure, plus interest and deficit, when the department cannot show the assets that the capital expenditure represents. As the Minister has said, some of the locomotives are 50 years old. There is a line of engines at Midland Junction today, and if another line is not soon provided, the department will have to lengthen the present line to hold them. They are decrepit engines, half engines or quarter engines, perhaps minus even a boiler, old and rusting, and yet they are represented in the £26,000,000 of railway assets. They are so old that they cannot be repaired—locomotives, trucks and coaches that were beyond use years ago—and yet they are included in the capital expenditure, and on this we have to pay interest and charges. The other States have dealt with the matter by writing off such disappearing assets and reducing the capital expenditure.

The Minister for Justice: Their capital is much higher than ours.

Mr. SEWARD: It does not matter whether it is; the point is, have we the assets that the capital represents?

The Minister for Justice: Our railways are on a better basis than those of the Eastern States.

Mr. SEWARD: That does not prove the Government in this case to be right. The capital should not have to bear the brunt of assets that the department has not got.

Mr. Watts: Should we pay on their basis?

Mr. SEWARD: The general taxpayer should be called upon to bear the cost occasioned by any writing down of any assets—not the users of the railways. People who use the railways are being penalised through being asked to pay charges that are higher than they should be, while there are other people who do not use the railways—the State-owned—who get off seat free. The expenditure should be spread over the whole population. The railways themselves are running through all parts of the State. That is why I say the earnings cannot be increased. We have sections of the railway which have been laid down for many years and are far from being remunerative. We have one or two either wholly or partly in my electorate and they will never pay a penny more. The Commissioner should not be expected to bear the whole of the cost involved in seeing that the revenue derived from those sources is infinitesimal. He should certainly be recompensed in that regard in some way so that he may not be judged wrongly because of the result of those lines as part of the service generally.

Reference was made to a reduction or elimination of the interest on capital. The Minister referred to that subject as though it was something that could not possibly be coped with. I hastily took out some figures. In 1933 the interest represented £996,233. In 1945 it went up to £1,050,469, an increase of £54,236 in 12 years. The earnings during that period increased from £2,932,140 to £4,276,250. The earnings, therefore, increased by £1,344,110 whereas the interest went up by £54,236. I want to point out now that when the interest and the earnings were lower we had a deficit of £175,681, but in the year when the earnings had increased to £1,300,000 the deficit had increased to £538,509. It is, therefore, not the interest that is killing the railways.

The Minister for Justice: Our total expenditure from the inception of the railways was £96,000,000, and the interest £34,000,000, which is 33 1/3rd per cent.

Mr. SEWARD: I point out that the railways are showing a bigger deficit than when the figures were lower.

The Minister for Railways: Does it not cost more to get extra revenue?

Mr. SEWARD: I have dealt with that question on previous occasions. That was rather a pet phrase of the ex-Premier, who maintained that if earnings went up the expenditure also had to go up. That is ridiculous! In the case of a new business, if it is launching out and has to increase expenditure in order to produce revenue, that might be so, but it is not so in the case of an old-established business like the railways. There might be some slight increase in expenditure in order to gain more revenue. As will be seen from "Hansard" last year, at the time when I was either reviewing the appointment of the Commissioner of Railways or dealing with the Railway Estimates, I quoted the fact that in Queensland and New South Wales a largely increased revenue was accompanied by a decrease in expenditure. It is not right, therefore, to say that because revenue increases the expenditure must also increase. The Commissioner went on to say—

That this warning was not ill-founded is shown by the results of the past year. Defence traffic, which in recent years has been heavy, showed a big decrease, and while the haulage capacity so released was fully utilised in other traffic such as wheat, water, etc., the freight return was lower and in consequence, while working costs were not eased, there was an over-all drop in earnings.

Bearing in mind the huge volume of deferred maintenance both of track and rolling stock, which is an inescapable liability, but does not yet show in the accounts, it is certain that unless some of the means suggested above are implemented, railway deficits will inevitably run into seven figures annually.

The Commissioner surely cannot be expected to go further than that in bringing the serious state of the railways before Parliament. From September of last year all that we have been able to learn is that the administration is under consideration. Parliament is about to go into recess and we do not know when we shall meet again. I hope that I shall not be told when we do meet again that the matter is still only under consideration. If that is the reply I am given I am sure

the railways will have got into such a state that they will not be able to get out of it.

The Premier: You will have to say, "If not, why not?"

Mr. Watts: "If so, why?"

The Minister for Justice: Your argument is one-sided.

Mr. SEWARD: In the Minister's opinion that may be so. The Minister for Railways blamed interest as being the source of the trouble. I wish to draw his attention to the fact that if the railways had been able to haul all the traffic that was available this year the deficit might not have been so large. I do not know the exact amount but I read recently that about 50,000 tons of wheat were hauled by road from country railway stations to the port of Fremantle for despatch to the Eastern States, and additional wheat had also to be hauled to flour mills by road because the railways could not handle it. I do not know how many thousands of tons of wheat, oil, chaff, etc., have been hauled by road that should have been hauled by rail, but I did read that the State Government had lodged a bill for £20,000 or £30,000 with the Commonwealth Government for road freight. I should like to know how much freightage was lost to the railways this year through its inability to carry goods and stock that were available to it, had it possessed the necessary rollingstock and haulage capacity to carry that freight. I found a very interesting item in the report of the Milk Board which states—

The transport of milk is an integral part of any system designed to ensure consumers milk of good quality. Milk produced under the best conditions can be affected adversely by unsatisfactory and slow transport. In view of the importance of transport in relation to the quality of milk the board considers that it should be given complete control over the transport of milk and should be empowered to lay down the methods and conditions under which milk shall be transported.

Approval has been given by the Transport Board to the use of one tanker for the conveyance of bulk milk by road from the South-West Co-operative Dairy Farmers Depot at Harvey, but the application of another country depot keeper for permission to use a road tanker for the conveyance of his milk has been deferred by the Transport Board although the application was recommended strongly by this board.

This board is desirous of having the delivery of milk from country centres facilitated and

it is hoped that early approval will be given to the use of road tankers to all applications approved by the Milk Board.

When I read those paragraphs, my mind went back to a few years ago when farmers interested in the transport of wheat became aware of the fact that an alteration had to be made in the handling methods employed because the bag system was out of date. They asked the Railway Department what could be done to make provision for the transport of wheat in bulk. The railway people, however, would have nothing to do with it. In the end, the wheat farmers had to do all the work themselves to render the then existing railway facilities capable of transporting wheat in bulk as desired. In return, the railways charged the organisation concerned for the appliances they used, to render usable existing rollingstock. I wondered then and I still wonder whether the milk producers went to the railways, and asked them to speed up deliveries so that milk could arrive in the metropolitan area more quickly than it now does, and if so what reply they received.

I do not travel very much in the areas where milk is produced, but I recently visited the South-West. I was going through by the train that leaves Bunbury at 11.30 p.m. and reaches Perth at about 8 o'clock in the morning. That train carries a lot of milk. As we were getting towards Perth I noticed we were running about 50 minutes late. When we reached Armadale I asked a fellow traveller how long he thought the train would stop there and he replied that it might be there for an hour. We were actually there for three-quarters of an hour. If that is the way the railways carry milk to the metropolitan area, I do not wonder the Milk Board is anxious to adopt a more expeditious system. The matter could well be taken up by the Minister to see whether the railways can meet the changing position from time to time. I draw the attention of the Minister to the fact that in reply to a question I asked him the other night I received a reply that was not true. The question I asked was—

1, In view of the fact that Diesel rail cars on the Great Southern line are being overloaded, thus preventing all passengers from obtaining a seat, will he endeavour to have steam trains run in place of the Diesel,

at all events on those days on which such cars run through to Albany?

2, If not, why not?

The reply of the Minister said—

1, Diesel-electric rail cars meet requirements on the Great Southern line, except during certain holiday and school vacation periods, when steam trains are substituted. A steam train permanently in lieu of Diesel-electric on the Perth-Albany run would be uneconomical and slow up the service.

2, Answered by No. 1.

The Diesel-electric cars do not meet requirements. On the Saturday when I got back from the South-West, I caught the Diesel, which of course was travelling through to Albany, at 8.15. There were nine people standing in my compartment and they had to stand all the way to Beverley, which is 4½ hours from Perth. Despite that, I am told that the Diesels meet requirements.

Mr. Mann: That happens every Monday morning.

Mr. SEWARD: Last Saturday morning I also travelled by Diesel and in that case, too, numbers of people had to stand. That was a school holiday, and yet the reply given to me is that, except during certain holiday and school vacation periods, when steam trains are substituted, the Diesels meet requirements. There was a school holiday last week and many people had to stand until they reached Beverley. It is not fair that passengers who have paid fares for a long trip should have to stand up or sit on a suitcase in the passageway.

Another matter I wish to refer to is the public announcer system at the Perth Railway Station. I wish to relate an incident that happened on two occasions. There was no excuse for the happening, and it is something that should be rectified. Somebody through the loudspeaker on the platform, indicates when trains are going out or when they are coming in. On one occasion I went to meet a friend; in fact it was my wife. The train was due at about 6.5, and I reached the station about five minutes to six. The announcement was made that the train would be in at 7 o'clock and I therefore went away to get some tea. I returned at 10 minutes to seven, and a few minutes later an announcement was made that the

Diesel would be in at 25 minutes past seven. About 20 minutes later the announcement was made that it would arrive at 8 o'clock. I then decided to call at the stationmaster's office to see what time the train was really coming in. I was informed that the Great Southern Diesel had left Midland Junction and would arrive shortly as it was running behind No. 12. Actually, the Diesel left Midland Junction at 10 minutes past seven, and arrived three minutes after my conversation in the stationmaster's office. Meanwhile, a number of people who had been on the station had left again. I came to Perth last Tuesday week with people who were going to give evidence before a Select Committee. One member of the party could not join the train and travelled to Perth by Diesel that night. To enable the party to fix up the case on Tuesday night, it was arranged that those concerned should have a conference. They went to the station to meet the Diesel, but the announcement was made that the train would be 25 minutes late. They left the station and when they returned ten minutes before the train was due found that the Diesel had come in and that all the passengers had left.

There is no excuse for that sort of thing. The station authorities only had to ring Midland Junction to ascertain exactly when the train was likely to come in. People go to the station and have to put up with inconveniences of that kind. It is not fair and I wish to voice my protest against it. Women, with children, arrive in the city late at night and have to go to the suburbs, which is not easy. When the train is specially late and arrives in the city perhaps in the early hours of the morning, no provision is made for taxis to be available for their convenience. For all the Railway Department cares, the women and children can walk to Fremantle or Subiaco. That is not at all fair. If the train is delayed and country people coming to town are inconvenienced as I have indicated, the least the Railway Department could do would be to ensure that taxis were available so that the people could get to wherever they were going. Nothing of that sort is ever done. Another matter the Minister touched on, was the refreshment-room problem, and he said he was going to do something to effect alterations. I certainly hope that he does. I say without any hesitation what-

ever that it is high time the tenders given to Gormans Ltd. were cancelled.

Mr. Cross: Private enterprise has broken down in that direction, too.

Mr. SEWARD: That is all nonsense. If the hon. member were to go to Spencers Brook, he would find he could get admirable treatment. He could get a cup of tea and something to eat that would be most satisfying, but the refreshment-room conditions at Chidlow, on the other hand, are a disgrace, and those at Merredin are very little better. When I was travelling in the South-West recently, I went to a conductor and asked him about the refreshment-room at Picton. He said, "Do not go there. Gorman has that. You had better wait until we get lower down." I am not sure of the places, but I think it was there.

Mr. Withers: Picton is not Gorman's refreshment-room.

Mr. SEWARD: I would not be sure of the place now, but I know that is what happened. It is high time that Gorman's contracts were terminated. If others can provide reasonable service and acceptable tea and foodstuffs, there is no reason why the same treatment should not be obtained at the refreshment-rooms controlled by Gorman.

The Minister for Justice: They were given notice 12 months ago.

Mr. SEWARD: Twelve months ago! Has anything been done to see that the notices have been carried out?

The Minister for Justice: Of course. We know just as much about our business as you do. Don't get excited!

Mr. Mann: What are you excited about yourself?

Mr. SEWARD: I certainly am not excited.

The Minister for Justice: We know our business.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Will the Minister for Justice kindly refrain from interjecting.

Mr. SEWARD: I am not excited, but I am putting the position plainly to the Minister. I pity him.

The Minister for Justice: You need not pity me; I can look after myself.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. SEWARD: If the Minister knows his business, why is not something done?

The Minister for Justice: We know our job, and do not want your pity.

Mr. Watts: You really do.

Mr. SEWARD: I want next to refer to what I regard as a perfect gem, which is included in the report of the Commissioner of Railways. In a paragraph dealing with the housing for the staff, the report says—

A continuous programme of additions and improvements was authorised. A 5-roomed timber dwelling (improved mill type) is in course of construction at Clackline.

Now we come to the gem.

A disused blacksmith's building at Southern Cross was taken down and re-erected at Yellowdine as a two-roomed dwelling.

This is done by a Government that considers that it represents the working man. It pulls down an old blacksmith's shop and re-erects it as a dwelling-house! What a wonderful programme for the railway workers. Then the report says—

Disused buildings at Greenbushes, Eastbrook, Comet Vale, Kojouup, Nugadong and Bulyee were dismantled and disposed of.

That is what the Railway Department can boast of in the way of improved housing accommodation for its staff over the past 12 months. On at least two occasions I have drawn attention to the disgraceful hovel in which the caterer and his family are expected to live at Spencers Brook. When I complained about the matter last year the then Premier asked if I was on railway property, and I said if one leans out of the carriage when passing the station, one almost hits the side of the wretched hovel in which those people are expected to reside. If this is all that the railway people can do in 12 months it is high time that they wakened up to their responsibilities.

Another matter in regard to which the Railway Department is due for severe criticism is its utter disregard of the safety of its staff. The member for Kalgoorlie, when speaking on the Estimates last year—he knows much more about this subject than I will ever know—mentioned that drivers had to break the regulations on the run from Perth to Chidlow by exceeding the speed on the down grades in order to enable them to surmount the next rise. That is not fair. The driver has to take the risk and break the

regulations but has to bear the brunt of anything that may happen. Conductors have told me that trains are usually made up with compartments having side doors at the front and at the end of the train with corridor cars in the middle. If they have to collect tickets or issue tickets along the track, the only way they can do it is by walking along the footplates, which is against the regulations. That is not fair.

I shall not touch on the Garratt engine question particularly as that is the subject of a Royal Commission inquiry at present, but we know that one driver stated that when carrying out shunting operations he would have to lean out of the cabin to see what was doing and thus would break the regulations. Is that fair? Why should the Railway Department issue regulations that their employees are practically forced to break in carrying out their duties, and then place the blame on them should any accident occur? It is high time that that sort of thing was stopped. Now a new timetable has been issued and I do not propose to criticise it to any extent at this stage because it has not been in operation for any appreciable period. I shall content myself by drawing the Minister's attention to a letter I have received—it represents one of many complaints that have been made to me—from a settler at Kulin. He says—

Undoubtedly you know that tomorrow an entirely new railway service will start to operate along this line and on other lines too. But do you know that it is starting without any idea of the timetable having been given to us? I made it my business yesterday afternoon to find out what the timetable was so as to make our new arrangements as regards getting our mail and newspapers. I inquired at the post office. All they could tell me there was the times at which they closed their mail bags, which had been sent to them, but that told me very little.

My correspondent also says—

I examined the notice boards at the station. There was no information there.

That is what people complain of. No attempt is made to let them know what arrangements are being made. That is not fair. Surely the Railway Department could overcome that difficulty! I think we should give the timetable a fair chance to operate, but it is reasonable to say that when there is any prospect of an alteration in the timetable a responsible officer of the Railway

Department could consult members of Parliament who know the conditions locally in order to discuss the matter with them. We certainly know the people's requirements and for my part—other members can speak for themselves but I feel that they would act similarly—I would be only too pleased to go to the Railway Department and place before the officials all the information that they require. As it is, this is the sort of thing that we experience with the new timetable.

A train leaves Perth at 7.25 p.m. for Albany and gets to Narrogin about 2.30. The Diesel leaves Narrogin at 3.5 a.m. and goes via Kulin and Kondinin through to Merredin. People going to their homes have to travel all through the night and arrive at some early hour in the morning. That could be avoided. Then again there is the position on the Narrogin-Merredin-Corrigin line. People have to sit up all night and arrive at their destination about 9.30 a.m. Is it any wonder that people are dissatisfied with railway timetables? I have put it to railway officials that they should send the morning train out at about 6.15 a.m., getting to Narrogin, and then the connecting Diesel could reach Merredin by nightfall, which would be the equivalent of a full day journey. The Minister shakes his head, but I cannot see why it could not be done. As it is, with passengers arriving in the middle of the night, it is most inconvenient. I am afraid the Railway Department will find that it has gone to all the trouble of making alterations in the time-table and yet the people will not be satisfied. What I am afraid of is that as time goes on the railway authorities will see that the changes are not enticing greater patronage and so may take away the quicker service.

Mr. Perkins: You should remember that there are people living to the north.

Mr. SEWARD: Of course there are.

Mr. Perkins: The alterations that you suggest might not be satisfactory to them.

Mr. SEWARD: I do not know about that, but I think that everyone is prepared to be reasonable in such matters.

Mr. Watts: No-one likes sitting up all night.

The Minister for Works: Which means you do not want to sit up all tonight?

Mr. SEWARD: Dealing now with the tramway system, it has to be admitted that it is in much the same position as the railways. It does not follow that because a man is a good electrician he is a good traffic man or administrator, nor yet that a good engineer is a good administrator. Most decidedly if anyone takes much notice of the running of the Perth trams, he will quickly come to the conclusion that a competent transport man is not in charge. The conditions under which the system is run are most deplorable. Frequently one has to wait for 20 minutes before a tram is sighted, then three arrive in a hunch. The first tram is overloaded, with people standing all over the place and the back platform almost dragging on the ground. The middle tram is more than three-quarters full, while the last one may be only a third full. Surely some better system can be devised than that. I think it could be done by means of arranging for certain trams to run through to certain streets.

For instance, one could make its first stop at Thomas-street and the second car could make its first stop at Rokeby-road and so forth. If some such arrangement were made the people would have a much better service. Another matter that should receive attention with a view to prompt action being taken concerns people who park their cars so carelessly on the side of streets. Frequently trams are held up for quite appreciable periods because some man has parked his car carelessly and the tram is not able to pass. That sort of thing should be stopped immediately because so many people park their cars thoughtlessly. The attention of the police should be drawn to the matter and action taken where necessary.

The Minister for Lands: I agree with you there.

Mr. SEWARD: All that is required is a few people to be fined £5, and the trouble would soon be ended. That is all I have to say on these Estimates.

Mr. CROSS (Canning) [10.42]: For the last 10 years we have listened to this annual growl by the member for Pingelly concerning the railways.

Mr. Watts: And it was never more true than it is now!

Mr. CROSS: He made the statement tonight that no increased charges on the producers were warranted. How can anyone expect any improvement in the railway system unless heavier charges are levied?

Mr. Mann: Are you the apologist for the Minister for Railways?

Mr. CROSS: The people in the country districts are getting the same rates on fertilisers as they did many years ago when wages were down to 7s. a day. As against that, the price of wheat is twice what it was 30 years ago.

Mr. Perkins: You are wrong there.

Mr. Mann: What an irresponsible person the member for Canning is!

Mr. CROSS: But the farmers still want their super. carted at the low rate.

Mr. Watts: I think we had better appoint a Select Committee to investigate you!

Mr. CROSS: The charges on the railways have increased 100 per cent.

Mr. Perkins: You are wrong there.

Mr. CROSS: I am not.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Of course you are.

Mr. CROSS: Passenger rates have increased and freight charges have had to be increased too, but the producers have not been called upon to pay anything like correspondingly high rates. In five years the working expenses of the railways, which is what I am most concerned about, have increased by over £1,000,000. The basic wage has increased, which means that the department's wages bill has been increased by nearly £500,000. It is merely commonsense to say that the railways cannot be run successfully unless charges are levied that are commensurate. In all directions costs have gone up. Sleepers have gone up by 100 per cent. and there has been an increase in the price of coal. Now we find that the price of steel which has to be obtained from the Broken Hill Proprietary Limited has also increased in price.

Almost every article which the railways use has increased in price. Yet every section of the community—take whatever section one likes, whether it be the basic wage earner or somebody else—has had an increase in income. But the railways are expected to continue working and to give as good a service notwithstanding that it is costing twice as much to give that service today. I have heard

members opposite say that people will go back to the road. One of these days we shall have an inquiry as to which is the cheaper method of hauling traffic, by road or over steel rails. I venture to say that the result of that inquiry will disclose that the cheaper method of hauling heavy traffic, particularly for long distances, is over steel rails. We had the experience of carting some 50,000 tons of wheat last year to the railways.

When the Commissioner of Main Roads gets the bill for the damage done to the roads by that traffic and makes it public, I have no doubt many people will say, "Why was not the wheat brought down by rail?" It will cost as much to repair the roads between Goomalling and Perth as a result of that wheat traffic as it would to buy the wheat. That is true; it is no use saying one thing and meaning another. If people desire to make use of the roads they must be prepared to pay for their proper maintenance. Inquiries of a similar nature have been made in America and Great Britain and these have definitely proved that it pays to carry heavy traffic over steel rails. There must be a definite improvement in the passenger facilities of our railways. There must be some speeding up and this cannot be done without the expenditure of a tremendous amount of money.

The Minister for Railways: The railways get just as much criticism when they do speed up traffic.

Mr. CROSS: There is something in that statement. When the railways do provide better services, we have the member for Pingelly squawking about the fact that the train leaves Perth at 7.25 in the evening, but that change was asked for by the people living in the southern portion of the State. We cannot provide all the facilities that are desirable. If we had three times the population in the Great Southern district the railways could run two or three trains a day there. One of the great drawbacks in this State is that we have to run an enormous mileage but have only a small population to serve. Trains cannot be run cheaply in thinly populated country. I wish to say a few words about the metropolitan passenger transport service. Notwithstanding all that has been done by the State Transport Co-ordination Board, there must be some drastic changes made in that service. The time is

due when all the passenger transport in the greater metropolitan area should be controlled by a metropolitan transport board.

The CHAIRMAN: I am afraid the hon. member cannot discuss that subject on these Estimates.

Mr. CROSS: But I am dealing with railways and tramways. Our tramways are out of date; they have outlived their usefulness. The time has arrived when we must scrap most of our tramlines. If we have a board such as I have mentioned it would have power to borrow money to carry out the job efficiently, because it is impossible to effect drastic changes in our metropolitan transport without expending a large sum of money. Our railways and tramways are heavily capitalised. The truth is that if we had to lay our railways and tramways down today the cost would be twice that which was incurred when they were originally laid down. The chances are that our railway system, which has cost the State about £27,000,000, would cost today £30,000,000 or £40,000,000.

The solution of our metropolitan transport is to instal trackless trolley-buses under the control of a passenger transport board similar to the London Greater Metropolitan Passenger Transport Board. Such a board would immediately set about scrapping many of our tramlines and trams. I made a speech along these lines before trolley-buses were installed here; and it has been proved definitely that trolley-buses are the cheapest form of transport. They can be run here on electric power generated from coal produced in the State. Neither our railways nor our tramways have been run with the idea of realising a profit. It has not been Government policy to do so. If the matter be studied it will be found that the trams are actually being run at a loss. The bus section is making a considerable profit, but the greatest profit is being made by the trolley-buses. These are more economical to run, and they travel faster than the trams. A trolley-bus can do the trip from Claremont to Perth, on the average, three or four minutes quicker than the journey can be made by train.

Member: You are on your way to Claremont by the sound of your speech!

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. CROSS: The distance is greater on the trolley-bus route than on the train jour-

ney, yet the trolley-bus does the journey three or four minutes quicker and with more frequent stops. Consider the tram line from the Zoo. It takes 27 minutes to get to Perth by tram. A trolley-bus could do the journey in less than 15 minutes, but it would not have to contend with a single line and loops as the tram has. Not one of the single tram lines, with loops, pays. It will be found that people do not use the trams on that line if they can avoid doing so, because it takes twice as long to get into town. The tram is hung up on the loops, at the Causeway and at the car barn. Many things must be done to improve transport in the near metropolitan area: When the committee of inquiry of which I spoke a moment ago makes its report, I have no doubt it will recommend the extension of a trolley-bus service to South Perth. I do not think there will be any terminus in Perth for that service; it will go from South Perth to Claremont.

Another point—and here I may be out of order—is this: The time has arrived when there should be no termini, even for buses, in the city itself. In other large cities, one must go to a station, as in Sydney and in large towns in England and on the Continent. I hope that the new Minister for Railways will soon formulate a programme to scrap our present out-of-date tramway system and instal in its place trolley-bus services. I think that 50 trolley-buses are not sufficient; such a number would only be able to serve the city's requirements on the Stirling Highway run, the Wembley run, and the proposed South Perth run. Our people are entitled to such a service. There is every reason for them to prefer trolley-buses to trams, as the former are so much quicker. Another thing that annoys me is that, notwithstanding that over the past few years we have introduced many trolley-buses and petrol buses, these have to stand out all the year in the weather because of insufficient barn accommodation.

The Minister for Railways: The sum of £30,000 has been set aside to build a new car barn.

Mr. CROSS: It is long overdue. Dealing with electricity supplies, there are a few extensions long overdue in my district. One at Canning Vale has been approved for quite a long time and I hope the Minister will put it in hand. It is not a big exten-

sion. The electricity supply was extended to Riverton. That extension was not expected to pay for some years, but did so in the first year. There should be an extension to Nicboll-road, Canning Vale; it has to come in from Nicholson-road. Some of the people in that district desire to obtain electric current to run pumps. I also draw the Minister's attention to the fact that there are people living on the Canning River less than nine miles from this Chamber. They are the Batemans and have lived there for 50 years. They are still using hurricane lamps as they have no electric light service. It is about time the department considered an extension of the electric light service a couple of miles down the river. Before the war, two or three woodyards were situated in that district. Diesel engines were used for sawing the wood, but the work could have been done much cheaper had electric current been available. I believe that extension of a couple of miles would pay. I hope the Minister will infuse new life into some of these departments. I ask him particularly to give consideration to the taking over by a board of the whole metropolitan passenger transport, so that it may be properly co-ordinated.

Mr. PERKINS (York) [10.58]: The hour is getting very late and I shall not detain the Committee more than a few minutes. There are one or two matters I would like the opportunity to mention. Since I have been a member of Parliament I have stressed the desirability of developing the road transport of passengers to and from the country, and so I was pleased when the Minister announced his intention to open up two new country lines, one of which will run through the York electorate as far as Narembeen. I regret that he is not proposing to develop that system of transport even further still. It would be the means of providing not only better passenger services to country districts, but also of facilitating goods traffic. It is inevitable that bituminised roads will be extended throughout the country districts.

Many miles of such roads were constructed before the war and a great extension is indicated within the next few years; and so we shall have these roads and the railway lines serving most of our country areas. The question then arises as to which is the more suitable medium to provide good passenger facilities in these areas. I understand that

in the United States of America, where there is a much more extensive and efficient system of railway transport than here, the road traffic is holding its own. I have been informed by various members of the Defence Forces, who have done some of their training in America, that people desiring to see the country almost invariably make use of the Greyhound system of buses that serves most of the United States. If, under those conditions, a bus service can hold its own against the railways, then in this State, which has the lightest possible type of railway line and a cheap system generally, it should be much more desirable to develop a road transport system for passengers and light goods traffic in the rural areas. I am pleased that the Minister is making a start to do the job properly.

I wish to mention the general administration of the Railway Department. Government members must be aware of the serious position that exists in connection with many of the best officers of the department. If something is not done to improve the conditions of service in the administration of the department, I fear that, with opportunities arising in other vocations, the services of some of its best men will be lost. Most of the trouble starts from the top. If the Government contemplates a general change in the administration of this department, the position might be considerably improved. It is, however, impossible to expect that the promising young men in the department will be satisfied with a system which refuses them the right to use any initiative or to develop their ability. Countless instances can be quoted of good men in important positions in country areas being hampered by the rote tape system adopted by the department.

I can quote an incident which I am pretty certain is correct. The department recently, in order to save coal, gave instructions that all engines should be loaded to their maximum capacity. Officers in country districts could not vary those instructions in any way without getting into trouble. The instance I have in mind is the case of a light and heavy engine at Koojeda. There was a particular siding a load sufficient for the light engine. The two engines were there and both had to come to Perth for various reasons. The traffic offering consisted of a full load for the smaller engine and if the smaller engine hauled it to Perth the departmental regulations would be observed and no other

would get into trouble, but if the load were divided between the two engines, or even put on to the larger engine, making it easier for the train crews and probably saving some coal as well as wear and tear, many questions would have to be answered. The result is that officers in the country do not exercise their initiative and, in the circumstances I have related, damage is done to the welfare of the department, and the administration earns the contempt of the staff.

This is an important question because I believe that the success of any Government department rests entirely on the quality of the administration. Another point that I mentioned some time ago is the question of affording the means for members of the staff, who have been some time in the service and are anxious to get on, to see something of affairs in other parts of the world. I mentioned the question of facilities being provided for these officers, when on long-service leave, to see how similar departments and activities are conducted in other countries. Very little is done in that regard either in the railways or any other State department. In my opinion it is vital that action along those lines be taken if we want the rising young men of the department to be informed of the latest overseas developments. If such action is taken it will not be necessary, when innovations are required, to send officers away to become acquainted with the particular developments. It will also be the means of increasing the enthusiasm of many of the younger officers of the service. Similar action, I understand, is taken by the Broken Hill Proprietary Co., Ltd., and competent observers say that the success of that concern is largely due to the facilities it affords to its officers to make these inspections in other parts of the world.

I notice that the Minister intends to improve the refreshment service. That is absolutely essential. One hears more comment from the public about the refreshment service of our railways than about any other section. It is something which affects everyone in a personal way. I do not believe that the department is making the best use of the facilities. The lessees of the rooms may be due for some criticism, but the department is doing very little on its own account to improve the rooms. I do not know how many members go into the refreshment-room at the

Perth station, but the general appearance of that place gives one a very bad impression of Western Australia and of the facilities that the Government provides for the patrons of its public utilities. For the want of a coat of paint the place is dingy and that dinginess—although I do not think it is dirty—is inclined to give the impression that it is dirty. The service there is very poor and visitors from the other States, when they compare the refreshment-room at our central station with those at Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney, gain the impression that Western Australia is anything but a go-ahead State. This matter should be rectified at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. WATTS (Katanning) [11.10]: The first matter I wish to refer to is that of increased charges on the railways, mentioned by the member for Pingelly and the member for Canning. I subscribe to the majority of the points of view raised by the member for Pingelly. I assert that there is no justification for increasing charges so long as the service remains inefficient and unsatisfactory. It is by no means fair to ask people to pay more for a service that is not giving efficiency or satisfaction. There might be some justification if means were in hand for ensuring a greater measure of these things. It seems to me that the point raised by the member for Pingelly is of paramount importance, namely, that it is not proper to charge that section of the community—approximately half the population of the State—comprising the users of the railways, who subscribe almost the whole of its revenue, with increased charges that are necessitated because of financial or book-keeping malpractices in the past when no depreciation has been written off and no consideration given to ordinary business and accountancy methods.

In order to justify any increase in the charges at all there must, in the first place, be additional efficiency and greater satisfaction to the users of the railways and, further, a proper revaluation and declaration of the full value of its assets with a proper apportionment of obligations between that section of the public—about one half I would say—that is really the users of the railways, and the other section of the taxpayers that has very little use for them but which is entitled to absorb some of the lia-

bility in view of the accountancy methods that have been adopted since the inauguration of the railways. I could not subscribe to any proposals for increased charges until these two aspects have been given definite attention.

The position of Commissioner of Railways has been made extremely difficult owing to the methods adopted in regard to developmental lines. I have raised this point before. Our Crown lands would, in many instances, have been of very little value if the railways had not been thrust out amongst them. Because of the establishment of such lines these lands have acquired some value and provided a certain amount of revenue that has been credited to the Lands Department accounts, as land rents. But there is ample justification for at least a portion of that revenue being credited to the Commissioner of Railways for the services he has rendered in making the land worth selling. The Commissioner should have these aspects taken into consideration by the Treasury and be afforded some measure of relief, so far as the book-keeping and financial dealings are concerned, because of the valuable work that the railways have done and because he has had imposed upon him the expense of all these railways, very few of which can be payable propositions.

The third matter to which I wish to refer is sleeping accommodation on country trains, particularly those going from Perth to Albany, where it is now a rare occurrence to find an AZ coach, which is a coach with two-berth compartments. Now frequently only four-berth coaches are supplied. They are inconvenient, old, and in some cases dirty, and at the best provide but poor accommodation for those who pay 15s. per head for a sleeper, which is the same rate as that paid for the reasonably high-class berth in an AZ coach. That state of affairs did not exist in the past when, though there was only a limited number of AZ coaches, one was usually obtainable on the Great Southern line, on the Wiluna line and on the Kalgoorlie line, as well as on the Westland express.

I understand that the difficulty in obtaining AZ coaches now on the Albany line is caused by the alteration in the running of the Trans-Australian train, and instead of the train coming in in the morning and going out at night, so that the AZ coaches

that came in were done up during the day and sent back at night, with the result that there were only three AZ coaches in regular use on that service, and one in reserve, they are now obliged to use six coaches on that line, crossing one another between here and Kalgoorlie. No greater service is provided for the public, but six coaches are used instead of four. The result is that on the Great Southern line passengers generally have inferior accommodation, which makes no difference, except the difference between 6s. and 15s., between first and second-class accommodation, with the exception of a clean sheet. By "a clean sheet" I mean the linen, and not the clean sheet that the Minister for Lands may easily have.

Mr. Hill: Sometimes the second-class sleepers are cleaner than the first-class.

Mr. WATTS: That may be so. The second-class accommodation has been slightly improved by the use of the AQ four-berth coaches, some of which are very old and which, on one or two occasions, in my experience, have had undesirable inhabitants other than human beings. I submit that the Railway Department, if it cannot evolve a system by which to get back to the position it had years ago, is indulging in retrogression. Cannot the officials evolve an improvement in this service, particularly as the holiday season is coming on and many tourists will be travelling? The Minister and the member for York have both referred to the desirability of road transport services being used in conjunction with railway services. I agree that advantages may be derived from such a process, but for a number of years we have had a road bus service in this State run by the Railway Department. It has been most profitable to that department, though when it was first suggested the department threw enough cold water on it to submerge it, and had it not been for the pressure brought to bear by people in the areas to be served, I doubt if the service would have been run.

I gave the House last year the figure of over £4,000 profit, made out of a gross revenue of £8,000 from that service. The figures supplied recently in another place as to the net profit on that same service show £3,614 for the year ended the 30th June 1945, but included in the expenditure this year were items that should not be there, one

of which was £879 for repairs and replacements, which is greater than it should have been, because of difficulties with the buses; so much so that well over £1,000 has been provided out of the gross return of that service to the Tramway Department for the hire of a tramways bus at the rate of £20 per week for an ordinary bus and £25 per week for a Diesel bus, plus 6d. per mile if the bus is used for less than a week at a time. That comes to more than £1,000, or almost the complete purchase price of one of the buses. It is clear that in an ordinary year that service made a profit of over £4,000 on a gross revenue in the vicinity of £8,000. It has provided a good service, which would have been better had the buses not had to be changed about owing to breakdowns.

The Minister for Railways: That bus is not suitable for that service.

Mr. WATTS: Admittedly. I do not wish to raise the point of unsuitability, as I know there have been difficulties in obtaining suitable buses, but with all the difficulties and the inefficient buses that have had to be used, and with the alternative bus borrowed from the Tramway Department, there has been a clear profit of almost £4,000. I do not want to anticipate what will be laid on the Table of the House tomorrow, but I ask the Minister to read the evidence, given to the Select Committee that is going to report tomorrow, by the Deputy Chief Traffic Manager. If the attitude he took in that evidence is the attitude of senior officers of the Railway Department towards co-operation and co-ordination with customers, then the department is doomed. Unless it can adopt a better attitude than that gentleman disclosed in his evidence, I fear for the future activities of the department. I have brought this up now as I will not have another chance to mention it, and I think the Minister should read some of the replies given by that gentleman to questions on relatively small matters which, in my view, bear on the attitude of certain sections of the Railway Department to the public good.

The Minister for Railways: To what officer are you referring?

Mr. WATTS: The Deputy Chief Traffic Manager.

Progress reported.

BILL—GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES (PROMOTIONS APPEAL BOARD).

Council's Further Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the Assembly's request for a conference on the amendments insisted on by the Council, and had appointed the Chief Secretary, Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch and Hon. H. L. Roche as managers for the Council, the Chief Secretary's room as the place of meeting and the time 2.30 p.m. on Friday, the 14th of December, 1945.

BILLS (3)—RETURNED.

- 1, Constitution Acts Amendment Act Amendment (No. 4).
- 2, Bush Fires Act Amendment.
- 3, Hospital Benefits Agreement.
Without amendment.

RESOLUTION—GAOL SITE AND MOD- ERN PRISON REQUIREMENTS.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the Assembly's amendment to the Council's resolution and that it had appointed the Chief Secretary, Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch and Hon. C. F. Baxter as members of the Joint Committee.

BILL—COMMONWEALTH POWERS.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council notifying that it insisted on its amendment No. 2 to which the Assembly had disagreed, had disagreed to the further amendment made by the Assembly to the Council's amendment No. 4, and insisted on its original amendment No. 4, now considered.

In Committee.

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

The PREMIER: I move—

That the Assembly continues to disagree to the amendments made by the Council.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

Assembly's Request for Conference.

The PREMIER: I move—

That the Council be requested to grant a conference on the amendments insisted on by the Council and that the managers for the Assembly be Mr. Seward, Mr. Rodoreda and the mover.

Question put and passed and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 11 a.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 11.31 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Friday, 11th December, 1945.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 11 a.m., and read prayers.

**TRANS. RAILWAY,
KALGOORLIE-FREMANTLE SECTION,
SELECT COMMITTEE.**

Report Presented.

Hon. A. THOMSON brought up the report of the Select Committee.

Ordered: That the report be received and read.

As to Minority Report.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [11.27]: Mr. President, the report was printed late yesterday afternoon. I desire to submit a minority report, but have not yet had an opportunity to have it typed. I hope you will accept a minority report from me at a later stage of the sitting.

The PRESIDENT: I am sure the House will have no objection to Mr. Fraser presenting his minority report later.

Leave given.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [11.29]: Before I move that the report, together with the evidence, be printed, I wish to place on record the sincere appreciation of the Select Committee of the services rendered at the committee's request, by Hon. W. J. Mann in finalising and drafting the report that has been submitted. I can assure members that a great deal of work was involved and that it was only with Mr. Mann's valuable assistance that we were able to put on record the views of the majority of the committee. I wish also to say that if time had permitted, we would have inspected portions of the routes that have been suggested, but that was impossible in view of the fact that we had to submit our report to the House. I am more than ever convinced that, in the interests of the State and its finances, a public works committee should be set up. From the evidence the Select Committee received there seems to be an amazing lack of co-ordination between the various State departments. That will be borne out when members come to read the evidence. I now move—

That the report and evidence be printed.

Question put and passed.

BILL—MARKETING OF EGGS.*In Committee.*

Resumed from the previous day. Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 8—Election of elected members (partly considered):

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 9 to 11—agreed to.