

have power to take these children into orphanages and institutions but will not have power to send them there without the consent of their parents.

Mr. BRADY: I have no objection to the amendment; however, I would point out that it is not new and has been in the Act until now. If the hon. member for South Perth is desirous of having this amendment passed, there is no objection on my part.

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

Clauses 41 to 63—put and passed.

Bill reported with amendments.

House adjourned at 11.2 p.m.

Legislative Council

Wednesday, the 24th September, 1958.

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE.

BLIND AND AWNING HEIGHTS.

Variations in Regulations.

1. The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Would the Minister please explain why the minimum measurement from ground level to the bottom of any blind or awning is—

(a) eight feet in the regulations under the Traffic Act;

(b) seven feet six inches in the uniform building regulations; and

(c) seven feet under the Police Act?

(2) Does the Minister agree that so many measurements to establish a minimum are confusing?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) To achieve uniformity with Section 312 (2) of the Municipal Corporations Act. Both these provisions refer, however, to awnings, not to blinds. An awning, like a verandah, is more or less horizontal to the footway, while a blind is vertical to the footway.

(b) This refers to blinds only.

(c) This refers to awnings only and the appropriate provision in the Police Act is contained in Part VII., Section 95 of the Act, and provides that the provisions of this part shall not apply wherever any by-law or regulation is made by a local authority to effect the same or a similar object.

(2) Consideration will be given to making the provision in the Police Act consistent with that in the traffic regulations and the Municipal Corporations Act.

GERALDTON REGIONAL HOSPITAL.

Inclusion in Hospital Plan.

2. The Hon. L. A. LOGAN asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is the Geraldton regional hospital included in the plan whereby the Government intends to expend £6,000,000 on hospitals within the next few years as indicated in "The West Australian" on Saturday the 20th September, 1958?

(2) If not, why not?

(3) If the reply to No. (1) is "No," why has Geraldton's priority been overlooked?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) and (3) It has not been overlooked. Because of insufficient Loan Funds it has not been possible to proceed with a new regional hospital other than at Albany, but substantial sums have been spent on existing hospital facilities at Geraldton.

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

DENTAL CLINICS.

Costs and Staff, Albany, Bunbury, Boulder.

3. The Hon. J. M. THOMSON asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) What is the estimated cost of the dental clinics proposed, or under construction at—

- (a) Albany;
- (b) Bunbury;
- (c) Boulder?

(2) When open to the public, what will be the number of persons employed—

- (a) on the professional staff;
- (b) in other categories,

and in what capacities will they all be engaged?

The MINISTER replied:

- (1) (a) £8,444.
- (b) £10,819.
- (c) £15,146.

	(2)	Albany	Bunbury	Boulder
Dentists	1	2	2	2
Staff nurses	2	2	2	2
Dental mechanics	2	2	2	2
Clerks	—	1	1	1
Part-time cleaners	1	1	1	1

SULPHUR IMPORTS.

Preference to Local Pyrites for Manufacture of Superphosphate.

4. The Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Will the Minister inform the House whether the importation of sulphur from communist China to Western Australia has taken place? If so—

- (a) Is this sulphur to be used in the manufacture of superphosphate?
- (b) Is the "Buy W.A. made goods" campaign still a prominent issue with the Government?
- (c) Is he aware of the huge pyrites deposits in Norseman still waiting to be fully utilised in the manufacture of superphosphate?

(2) In view of the difficulties being experienced by the Norseman project in attaining its most economical production level, will the Government, in accordance with its promise to foster industry in Western Australia, assist this mine to reach its maximum production?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Sulphur is being imported from China to Western Australia by the Australian Sulphur Pool. It has been purchased for sterling to conserve dollars.

- (a) Yes.
- (b) Yes.
- (c) Yes.

(2) The State Government over a period of years has assisted in a very large measure to develop and utilise the pyrites deposits at Norseman as a source of sulphur, and assistance is being continued. However, the State Government is unable to dictate the quantity of pyrites used by the superphosphate companies. Sulphur could only be imported into Australia from communist China or any other country with the approval of the Commonwealth Government.

WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT.

Dairy Farms Allocated, Settlers Evicted, etc.

5. The Hon. L. A. LOGAN asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) How many dairy farmers have been allotted farms under the war service land settlement scheme?

(2) How many are still in occupation in each of the recognised war service land settlement dairying districts?

(3) How many settlers have—

- (a) been transferred from each district;
- (b) vacated properties in each district;
- (c) been evicted by the Land Settlement Board in each district?

(4) With reference to No. (3) (c) above, what were the reasons for the evictions?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 299.

(2) Dairy Farms.

W.S.L.S. District	No. of Farms.
Pinjarra	16
Kudardup	85
Narrikup	8
Albany	5
Manjimup	46
Northcliffe	8
Denmark	29
	197

(3) and (4)—

(a) From:

Denmark	3
Donnybrook	2
Greenbushes	1
Nannup	1
East Narrikup	1
North Dandalup	1

(b) From:

Denmark	18
Pemberton	23
Kudardup	19
Manjimup	6
Bridgetown	7
Coolup	2
Pinjarra	3
Burekup	1
Northcliffe	11
Albany	2

W.S.L.S. District	No. of Farms.
Mt. Barker	1
Nannup	2
Vasse	1

(c) From:

Karridale (One for incompetence, two for misconduct)	3
Pemberton (One for misconduct, two for incompetence)	3
Mundijong (Misconduct) ..	1
Denmark (Misconduct) ..	1
Marybrook (Misconduct) ..	2
Cowaramup (Misconduct) ..	1
Albany (Misconduct) ..	1
Narrikup (Foreclosure by Rural and Industries Bank)	1

(b) increase the maximum carrying capacity of 900 sheep at which stage full commitments are payable?

(2) If the replies to No. 1 (a) and (b) are in the affirmative, what increases are anticipated?

(3) If the replies to No. (1) (a) and (b) are in the negative, what policy has been determined by the board to overcome the resultant drop in income?

The MINISTER replied:

(1), (2) and (3) These matters are at present being reviewed by the Land Settlement Board, and the deputy chairman of the board is at present in Canberra conferring with the Commonwealth director.

Dairy Farms Vacated, and Details of Stock.

6. The Hon. L. A. LOGAN asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) What was the reason for the considerable number of dairy farmers under the war service land settlement scheme vacating their properties?

(2) What was the number of cows in profit on each property at the time of vacating?

(3) What was the number of other stock carried on each property vacated?

(4) What was the average butterfat content of the herd on each property vacated?

(5) How many of these properties had been developed to an economic unit stage according to the standard laid down by the Commonwealth?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) In the main—voluntary relinquishment.

(2) and (3) Information not available. Statistics of this nature are not maintained by the department.

(4) Butterfat content of herds is not known to the department.

(5) All properties were established or in course of establishment to an economic unit as laid down by the Commonwealth. Where a property had not reached establishment, an assessment policy operated providing for concessional payments.

Commitments of Settlers.

7. The Hon. L. A. LOGAN asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) With reference to the war service land settlement scheme, and in view of the fall in wool prices, is it the intention of the Land Settlement Board to—

(a) increase the minimum carrying capacity of 600 sheep at which stage commitments commence on grazing properties;

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE.**UNIFORM GENERAL BUILDING BY-LAWS.***Result of Crown Law Investigations.*

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH asked the Minister for Railways:

Last week the Minister was good enough to inform the House that the uniform general building by-laws had been referred to the Crown Law Department for investigation as a result of the comments that had been made by Mr. Gifford. In view of the fact that these by-laws will come into operation, I think, on the 29th September—

(1) Would the Minister be good enough to supply to the House, by tomorrow afternoon, any information on the progress that has been made by the Crown Law Department in its investigations?

(2) Would he appreciate that I have to ask this question because there will be no sitting of the Legislative Council next week and time will pass without anything being done and without any satisfactory reply being received?

The MINISTER replied:

I will make every endeavour to secure the information for the hon. member tomorrow.

CATTLE TRESPASS, FENCING, AND IMPOUNDING ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by the Hon. A. L. Loton and read a first time.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1. Vermin Act Amendment.

2. College Street Closure.

Passed.

PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Report of Committee adopted.

GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

THE HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Midland) [4.44]: The Bill before us is only small, but it deals with a big and important matter. In effect, the measure is designed to set out the conditions under which the appointment of a single railway commissioner shall be made in contrast to the previous system of having the activities of the Railway Department controlled by three commissioners. The clause in the Bill referring to the term of appointment provides—very sensibly, I think—that the appointment shall not exceed seven years. However, paragraph (b) of the same clause sets out that the resignation of the commissioner must be subject to the approval of the Governor.

To me, that seems to be rather an unusual proviso, and I would like the Minister in replying to the debate to explain what the Government had in mind when it inserted it in the Bill. I can only imagine that the Government feared that the appointment might be in the nature of a contract, and that if a good man was secured, he might be offered a better appointment at a later stage, and because he had no ties, he might regard himself as being at liberty to terminate his contract as commissioner before giving the usual notice. Of course, if that happened, the Government would lose the services of a good man.

That may be the reason. It is the only one that has crossed my mind, but the proviso is rather unusual because appointments are usually subject to a month's notice in respect of termination, and there are usually conditions surrounding a notice of dismissal in certain circumstances. Therefore, I can only think that this paragraph has been inserted because the Government may have had some good reason for doing so.

The Bill also deals with the question of misdemeanours. I do not know that there is any objection to these provisions. Possibly, they are set out a little more explicitly than those provided in the old Act and for that reason they will probably cover any contingencies that might arise in the future or even, possibly, some that may have occurred in the past.

Dealing firstly with the appointment of a single commissioner as against the appointment of a commission of three, there is no doubt that the Royal Commissioner has made out a reasonably good case to show why a single commissioner should

be appointed. However, he has stated that this is by no means universal and he has not suggested that a commission of three men does not or could not operate as satisfactorily as a single commissioner in certain circumstances.

I would like to refer back to 1947 when an Act was passed in this House to provide for the appointment of a commission of three commissioners. From 1904 to 1947 the Act had not only provided for the control of the railways by a single commissioner, but also had given the Commissioner powers independent—to a certain extent—of the Minister to whom he was responsible. Also, I think the Act provided that the commissioner could only be dismissed by Parliament, to which he presented his annual report.

At the time of the passing of the 1904 Act there had been considerable trouble in the railway system and it was considered most necessary to divorce the control of the railways, as far as possible, from governmental authority. That is the reason why the Act was framed in that way.

At that time, when the railways held practically the whole transport field without competition, the earnings not only covered working expenses, interest and depreciation, but also returned a fair sum to the Treasury. This fact is sometimes forgotten when complaints are made about the accumulated deficits of the system; those people do not seem to take into account the amount of revenue which had been paid into Consolidated Revenue during the time when the railway system had no competition.

The Royal Commissioner's report of 1947 not only advised the appointment of three commissioners, but suggested, and I think quite rightly, that the commissioners should be brought under the direction of the Minister so that there would be a direct link. If hon. members were to cast their minds back they would realise that the Royal Commission in 1947 reported that the railways of this State were in a very parlous condition. I am not blaming anyone or any Government for that state of affairs. Probably it was brought about through neglect and through under-manning during the war years. The fact remains the Royal Commission reported that the railways of this State were about one of the worst in the world.

The railways here have always suffered difficulties through lack of density of population; they serve the smallest number of persons per mile of line in the world. The Government in 1947 faced that position. It decided to appoint a commission of three persons in order to bring in new blood by the selection of expert railwaymen wherever they were offering. It was thought that the three commissioners would instil new ideas into the management of the system. The Act provided that the chief commissioner should be

skilled in railway operation; the commissioner commercial should have experience in traffic and accounts; and the commissioner engineering should be able to control the civil and mechanical engineering side of the system. There is every reason to believe that that was the right decision to take at the time.

Despite the strictures which have been passed against the commissioners who have since retired, I can say that they introduced many innovations into the railways which were certainly very beneficial. It is only fair to acknowledge the good work done by them, as well as the criticisms which have led to the rearrangement of the railway system and the introduction of the Bill before us for the appointment of a single commissioner.

In England, when the railway companies were merged under Government ownership, control of the system was vested in a railway board which is subject to the transport commissioner, who in turn is subject to the Minister for transport. In New Zealand there is a board of five directors as well as a general manager controlling the railways. The Australian National Airways have five commissioners who control the general manager and the assistant general manager. In the State Electricity Commission there is a board of commissioners, which is assisted by a general manager who controls the undertaking subject to the supervision of the commissioners.

In regard to governmental control which has often been stigmatised I am of the opinion that where a commission enters the picture to a great degree in respect of a railway system which is using a great deal of money, inevitably there must be a direct link between the commission and the Government, otherwise the Government would exercise very little control over the commission. In that respect I quote from page 3 of one of the reports of the Royal Commissioner. He said—

The whole position was admirably summed up by the Royal Commission, appointed in 1952, to inquire into the New Zealand Railways. The Commission was comprised of three eminent New Zealanders. An extract from page 70 of its report is as follows:—

We do not see how the railways can be completely divorced from political control, no matter how desirable that may be. The Government is responsible to the people for the money it has expended, and will expend in the future. Although the final control must be in the hands of Governments, it is desirable that those composing the management be given as free a hand as possible and that, after policy has

been decided upon by the Government, full responsibility for carrying out that policy be left with them.

I think that is an admirable summing up of the relationship between the commission and the Government. In considering the appointment of a very important officer in the public service, who is to be paid the highest salary in the service, and who will control an instrumentality which has a vital bearing on the economics of the State, it is necessary to refer to the report of the Royal Commission. This should be done from time to time in order that the position which has arisen in the railways may be understood.

Before referring to that report I want to give some figures relating to the changes that have occurred between 1947 and 1957. In those ten years the basic wage rose from about £5 to £13 odd. The railways have had to pay the penalty rates for overtime which were awarded by the Arbitration Court, and which did not apply in 1947. Long service leave was introduced, and an increase of wages was granted by the court. There was a tremendous increase in the cost of stores, which was in line with the increase in the cost of other commodities.

Coal, for instance, cost 23s. 6.55d. per ton at pit head in Collie in 1947, but in 1957 it had risen to 65s. 9.63d. per ton. A difference of 1s. per ton in the cost of coal was estimated during my term as Minister for Railways to cost an extra £30,000 per year to the railways. So it will be seen that coal alone would account for about £1,250,000 of the added costs.

It was contended by the hon. Mr. Willmott that the commissioner should be able to delegate authority. I entirely agree, but I do not agree with him when he says that the commissioner need not necessarily be a railwayman. In my experience of the railways, I have found that where it was desired to obtain the wholehearted support of the men it was necessary for the head of the department to know his job. Without making disparaging remarks about Mr. Lee, one of the commissioners who was retired recently, a good deal of the friction which has arisen was brought about by this fact: While Mr. Lee was an expert at figures he had little or no knowledge of the intricacies of traffic, or of matters concerning derailments on which, as a commissioner, he had to supply comments from time to time. Therefore, from my experience of the railways, I say quite definitely that the man appointed to this position must have a considerable amount of railway experience.

Over the years the commissioners have been selected from various branches of the railways. The late Mr. Short and the late Col. Pope were both office men. Mr. Evans was promoted from the position of

Chief Mechanical Engineer to that of Commissioner of Railways and Mr. Ellis—who held the position for about 15 years, during which time he gave wonderful service—was an all-round engineer, specialising particularly in civil engineering.

In 1947, three commissioners were appointed—two from overseas, the Chief Commissioner (Mr. Hall), and Mr. Clarke—and a local man (Mr. Raynor). Unfortunately Mr. Raynor died, and I want to pay a tribute to him at this stage. He was one of the most conscientious railway officers I knew. He had particular experience on the commercial and traffic sides, and I suppose was more knowledgeable with regard to the intricacies of Colliie coal contracts than any other man in the service. The difficulties he encountered with his two fellow-commissioners, who simply could not agree, probably hastened his death.

During his life Mr. Charlie Raynor was the moderating influence operating between the two, and it was because of his acknowledged competence in his own particular line that he was able to keep things on a more or less even keel. It has to be remembered that at that time the task confronting the railways was not only a very big one but it included the question of obtaining supplies which were scarce and which became dearer and dearer. There was also the task of securing efficient men to cope with the various problems relating to the services rendered by the railways.

Reference was made by the hon. Mr. Willmott to American practice. He said that transport restrictions in America were along the same principles as here. That is quite true. I can recall one railway which had to apply to the transport authorities because it was being undercut by two road services, and there was the danger of its closing down. Members will realise, I think, that the railways in America are privately owned so that matters had to be managed in such a way that the railways, which were regarded as necessary for economic reasons, should be retained. This has not only been the experience in America but in other countries as well. The hon. Mr. Willmott also referred to the fact that railway rates were controlled by an interstate commission.

This practice is much the same as in India where the railways are owned partly by the Government and partly by private companies. A committee is appointed representing various branches of interested people, including competent accountants and people who are big patrons of the railway service. This committee arrives at a scale of differential rates having regard to the goods that have to be carried. It tries to strike a balance between under-par and over-par rates, realising, as the people here try to realise, that the higher

charges on the higher priced goods are necessary to subsidise—as it were—those under-par items, such as, in our country, wheat and super, the carting of which, as cheaply as possible, is regarded as important from the producers' point of view.

In France the system is rather different. Pierre Armand has had control of the French railways for about ten years and he has revolutionised transport by rail. Hydro-electric power is used to a great extent and practically the whole of the system is electrified. This enables the trains to travel at high speeds and to operate very efficiently, and as a result the railways have been able to compete very successfully with road transport. The situation has been altered from the time when road transport was a real threat to the railways. Because of the lack of restrictions, a big proportion of the custom which the French railways had lost, is being recovered.

It may be interesting to refer briefly to the question of road transport versus rail. During World War II, 95 per cent. of the army equipment and personnel in America was conveyed by rail, resulting in a great saving in cost and manpower.

The rates charged by the privately-owned companies were not raised, although the ruling prices throughout the United States advanced in those years by about 50 per cent. Because the railways found that increased traffic volume and the handling of a greater amount of tonnage, with roughly the same personnel, enabled them to maintain their dividends to their shareholders, the necessity for raising their rates was obviated. In other words if they had raised their rates in sympathy with the ruling prices those shareholders instead of getting normal dividends, would have had a 50 per cent. dividend return on the capital, as compared with what they actually received.

Referring again to the royal commissioner's report, which on the whole is a very good one, I think the situation could have been improved if Mr. Smith had had an expert railway man to assist him. We read these reports through and gain the impression that only one side of the case is presented. There is nothing said in defence of Mr. Clarke or Mr. Lee—the report regarding Mr. Hall is not here. I understand that the opportunity was not given to the persons concerned to have their evidence placed on record so that those perusing the report could feel that they had heard both sides. It seems to me that is rather a serious omission. We must not forget that a Royal Commissioner or commission—receives authority direct from the Governor (the Queen's representative), and I think it is vitally necessary that if reports of a Royal Commissioner—or commission—are to be taken as being above suspicion, both sides of the case should be presented.

In the Royal Commission report of 1947, when Mr. Gibson and Mr. duPlessis acted as Royal Commissioners, the sittings were held in public; members of the public were admitted, and each of the officers concerned was invited to give evidence; and a good deal of it was published in the paper. The report was duly presented and a comparison of that report, with the reports presented by Mr. Smith, will show the force of what I am saying.

I am not reflecting on Mr. Smith in any way; but I think that possibly he could have received a good deal of assistance had another commissioner been appointed with him. That would have allowed the opportunity for some other side of the case to be presented instead of a report by one man being prepared and presented to us as a sort of fait accompli.

I will admit that the submissions in Mr. Smith's reports are very valuable, and none is more valuable than the report on the operations of the diesels. On the whole the report on the operations of the diesels is very scathing; and I think it is rather important to give some consideration to the pros and cons of the alleged failure of these engines. It has been proved conclusively that in the main the use of diesels is economical—even our diesels which, by comparison with diesels in other States, are certainly not giving as much service as they should give—and they compare more than favourably with steam engines.

In the report the Acting Motive Power Engineer (Mr. Griffith) states that the cost per running mile for steam engines is 180.65d., whereas the cost per mile of the "X" class engines, which are in use in Western Australia, is 82.86d. So that with all the delays and failures of the diesels, they still show a running cost well below that of a comparable steam engine. That is something worthy of note. In addition, we who have watched with interest what has happened to the diesels, know in our own minds that when they were introduced into this State in 1954 they immediately cut the running time on the various lines by quite an appreciable amount. The time to Kalgoorlie was cut by four hours, and the time on some of the other lines was cut even more.

There is one important feature about the diesels. Once they were introduced they adhered very closely to the scheduled timetable so that people on the Murchison, for instance, if they wanted to catch Wednesday's train to Perth, had a reasonable certainty of having to wait only one or two hours for the train whereas previously it was nothing for them to have to wait 10 to 12 hours. Farmers, too realised that when the diesels were running there was a marked absence of fires such as had previously been caused by some of our steam locomotives. So, with all their faults—which I hope can

be rectified—there is no question that the diesels have, by comparison with steam locomotives, proved their worth.

The running cost per mile for the "X" class diesel, as I have already said is 82.86d. per mile, but in Victoria, where the "GM" class is in operation—I understand the "GM" stands for General Motors—the cost is only 47.32d. per mile. In the Commonwealth railways, the three-yearly average cost was 45.08d. In Queensland there are three types in operation on a 3ft. 6in. gauge, the same as our own; but there are no statistics available for that State. However, in Queensland, while the diesels account for only 5.23 per cent. of the total locomotive strength, their actual running mileage is 20.15 per cent. of the total. It indicates that by comparison with steam engines the diesels appear to be four times as efficient.

Even in Western Australia the diesels, which are 16 per cent. of the total engine strength, travel 30 per cent. of the total mileage, which means that they are running 1.8 times more than would be the case if all the locomotives in the service were available for running. Admittedly, by comparison with the diesels in operation in Queensland and the other States, our diesels are not doing as well as they should; but at the same time, when we compare them with the steam locomotives, they are doing relatively well.

We have a total locomotive strength in the State of 424 engines of all types; 66 of these are diesels—48 mainline diesels and 18 shunters—and there are 358 steam engines, some of which have been purchased or built during the last 12 years or so. For the information of hon. members the numbers of the principal engines, and the types in the service, are as follows:—

"FS" class	....	....	50
"G" class	....	....	16
"P" class	....	....	17
"PM" class	....	....	18
"PMR" class	....	....	17
"PR" class	....	....	17
"S" class	....	....	10
"U" class	....	....	14
"V" class	....	....	20
"W" class	....	....	60

The "W" class was designed by Mr. Clarke, and is especially suitable for burning Collie coal. It has proved to be a very good engine, and at speed it really gives a better drawbar pull than some of the other engines which have a higher rating. These latter engines being built to English specifications, the drivers are not able to make the full use of their power because they were built to use English coal and not Collie coal, which is the only fuel supplied. The "S" class engine, a steam locomotive, gave a tremendous amount of trouble for some years but now that its defects have been solved it is proving to be one of the best engines in the service.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: That is built at Midland Junction.

The Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Is it?

The Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Yes.

The Hon. G. Bennetts: What about the "PR"?

The Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: It is a very good locomotive; but I am talking about the one that gave trouble in the initial stages. One engine—it was one of ten purchased in Queensland—the Australian Garrett engine, designed principally by the late Mr. Mills, who was Chief Mechanical Engineer, had rather a hectic life. There was trouble with the locomotive drivers and the engines were finally withdrawn from service. The locomotive drivers in this part of the State complained about them; but those operating on the Kalgoorlie-Esperance line were very happy with them.

The Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: That is correct.

The Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Those men were very sorry when the Garretts were withdrawn. I have already given the figures for the costs of running the steam and diesel engines, and at present the saving in running diesels as compared with steam engines is 8s. per mile and the diesels in use in this State are supposed to have only 66½ per cent. availability. If they had been able to give 90 per cent. service, which, I believe, is common in the Eastern States, the savings would have been 10s. 6d. per mile; and, according to the figures given by the hon. Mr. Griffith, the savings per year would have been in the nature of something over £1,000,000. If we take away from that amount the charges for depreciation, and so on, I believe the net saving he estimates would be £750,000.

I would recommend members to read this report because those figures have a definite bearing on the problem confronting the railways. They must be of intense interest to any of the applicants for the job to which this Bill refers. I should say that any applicant for the job would make it his business to read through those reports. If he did he would gain a lot of knowledge concerning the conditions and the service here, and the necessity for some appreciation of the problem concerning diesel locomotives.

It might be worth while reading this particular portion of the Interim Report No. 4 of the Royal Commission. It is headed, "Diesel Availability—Comparative Figures showing the Disability of the W.A.G.R. in its Present Diesel Power" and reads as follows:—

From whatever angle the diesel problem is approached, it is patently obvious that the present position can no longer be tolerated and that positive and decisive action must be taken immediately to remedy it.

It is confidently estimated by both the Comptroller of Accounts and Audit and the Acting Motive Power Engineer that the X and XA class should average 100,000 miles a year. This is not a guess but is based on the availability of freight and passenger traffic and the estimate is considered to be reasonable.

The Queensland Annual Report for 1957 (page 14) shows that diesel electric locomotives, whilst representing 5.23 per cent. of the total effective locomotive strength, ran 20.51 per cent. of the total train miles. "Effective strength" is referred to because new locomotives were placed in traffic at different times during the year. The average miles per diesel locomotive were 92,834.

The PRESIDENT: I must draw the attention of the hon. member to the fact that this Bill deals only with the appointment of a railway commissioner and not with the entire ramifications of the railway system.

The Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I have tried to point out that an issue such as this is one that not only must concern hon. members of this House, but also the individual who is to be appointed to this high position. I hope I may be allowed to read this report.

The PRESIDENT: I think I have permitted the hon. member a fair amount of latitude already.

The Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Very well, Mr. President, I bow to your ruling. I would, however, refer the House to this report, because I think it is directly connected with the matter we are discussing, and the task that will face the commissioner to be appointed. There is a tremendous amount of the report to which I could have referred, and which I have not attempted to cover. It is all most pertinent to the Bill under consideration.

In conclusion I express the opinion that an expert railwayman should be a first consideration in the task of selecting a person for this very important post. Even if there is a little delay in calling for applications, time should be allowed to finalise the appointment, because it is one that could have far-reaching effects so far as the railways are concerned.

I do not wish to touch on the matter which has already been referred to by the hon. Mr. Logan. There has been some comment, however, concerning the demotion, might I say, of Mr. Brodie, after the completion of his six months as acting commissioner. I am aware that the Minister feels he can give a satisfactory reply to this matter. If there was one side of the railway services that needed some consideration it was the relationship between the Traffic Branch—which might be called the contact men—and the public. From

actual experience I do not think a better man than Mr. Brodie could have been selected to approach that particular task.

He had an expert knowledge of the relationship between the customer and the department, and appreciated the need for every consideration being given. He was only too happy to study the problems that arose from time to time, and to help as far as he possibly could to reach a happy solution of the difficulties with which they were jointly confronted. That attitude communicated itself to the employees of the department, and I think, myself, that the public would have been very happy to have seen Mr. Brodie continue in that position until the time came for him to retire. With those few remarks I am happy to support the second reading of the Bill.

THE HON. L. C. DIVER (Central) [5:28]: I rise to support this measure. In doing so I would like to say I feel the Minister has been big enough to have a second look at this problem, because I have before me the speech he made when dealing with the closure of the railways. On that occasion I suggested, by way of interjection, that the Government was tackling the problem of the railways from the wrong end, and I pointed out that under one commissioner we had had far better results.

The Minister replied that if we disposed of the services of the three commissioners we would save only £12,000 a year. The House will see, therefore, that in the interim, the Minister—from experience and through the appointment of a Royal Commissioner—has substantiated the point I was trying to make in 1956. In consequence, he has convinced himself that the time has now arrived when we should have one commissioner. I commend him for his action.

It was rather interesting to hear the hon. Mr. Willmott speaking yesterday when he made reference to the foggy thinking of many advocates of road transport in competition with the railways. I also wish to say to that hon. member that while some few years ago he did not agree with me when I claimed it was impossible for road transport to compete satisfactorily with the railways, yesterday he came back not only to the opinion that the railways were a better proposition, but he also pointed out the weaknesses of road transport. I say that as the years go by, that will be proved beyond doubt.

I have been browsing through a Hansard of 1915 vintage regarding another Bill which is before the House, and I read some notions dealing with the scope of agriculture in this State. It was lamented that certain surveyors had gone out into the country because, as hon. members will recall, 1915 was just after the great 1914 drought, as we knew it, and everyone was

bemoaning the fact that agriculture in Western Australia had expanded too rapidly to the east.

I would like to let hon. members know that the area where my farm is today was considered to be too far out. It just shows that in our whole approach to the railway system, whether it is economic or otherwise, we are far from reaching the true limits of agriculture in Western Australia. From the inception we have always had marginal farmers but not marginal areas. As time marches on these areas will be developed and the new commissioner to be appointed by this enabling Bill will have to open up all lines again. I can envisage that he will see localities, which have been mistermied marginal areas, flourishing; and there will be increased land values through his capacity to put the railways on a sound footing.

I was informed the other day that a property east of Merredin—a wheat and sheep property—had changed hands at £14 per acre. Did the hon. members of 1915 ever envisage that land east of Merredin would bring £14 per acre? No.

The Hon. J. D. Teahan: £14 for the lot.

The Hon. L. C. DIVER: The block of land of 837 acres, next to the homestead on which I was brought up, changed hands in those days for £147. That price included 200 acres of cleared land and such huts as existed.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: Some blocks were actually given away.

The Hon. L. C. DIVER: They were, but that was a lack of faith in our heritage. Too many people are prone to show they have no faith in the remarkable heritage we have, and I trust that with the passage of this legislation we will obtain a man with the capacity to do to our railway system in Western Australia that which the agricultural community highly deserves. I trust also that those who are sent to Parliament to represent country people—urban members as well—will look with vision to the future so that we do not have dry rot setting in in a country which has plenty to offer.

THE HON. J. D. TEAHAN (North-East) [5:36]: I am pleased that this Bill has been brought forward and that the three-man commission will be replaced by a one-man commission. When a three-man control of the railways was first suggested, I considered it would be a tragedy, and it has turned out so mainly because the appointees were practically equals. One represented the engineering side, one the accounts side and the other administration; they were masters of their own particular sections.

Those who observed the position could see a "don't care" attitude at that time. The differences or enmity that prevailed in the various branches seemed to create a

"don't care" attitude. If I could see anything wrong with the railways administration at that time, it was the fact that no one—at least among the senior officers—seemed to leave his office to observe railway management, or to seek ideas or get the feeling of what was going on in the various sections.

It is a generally accepted fact that the Commonwealth railways are successful, and seem to be more so as the years go on. One of the reasons for this is no doubt the dieselisation of the traction system, but I think another is that the commissioner and those immediately subordinate to him exhibit a personal and practical interest. I am told that it is quite common for the commissioner to travel frequently on the railways; to be seen talking to members of his staff as he travels; and to those in charge of different sections of the work. Naturally, those seniors and juniors obtain the impression that the commissioner is interested.

The Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: He is known personally to every ganger on the line.

The Hon. J. D. TEAHAN: The opposite prevails if it is thought that the person, who is termed the boss, is not very interested, and not economical in his actions. The staff feel that they might as well enjoy the honeymoon, or whatever it might be termed. Judging by what has happened over the past 12 months, I would say that interest is again gathering weight in the State railways. At the present moment, the men are genuinely interested in their jobs. One receives courtesy when travelling and the employees seem to be doing their best to invite custom to the railways.

Whilst Mr. Brodie was acting commissioner—it may still be so—I believe employees were requested to offer suggestions for improvement. I understand those suggestions were not pigeon-holed, but were studied and acted upon. For a number of years, the railways completely lost the carriage of furniture. However, it appeared to the employees that perhaps the traffic could be attracted back again. I believe that quite a junior member of the service suggested that furniture be permitted to travel long distances in special vans on passenger trains. Although the suggestion was put forward by a junior member, it was acted upon, and produced results. While the seniors and juniors employed in the railways are interested in their work, the Minister for Railways will be happy with the results.

In the report of Royal Commissioner Smith, regarding three-man control, it is stated that when the change from steam to diesels was made, an entirely new type was patterned for the Western Australian railways. As it was a new type, I should have thought—as with a road board, municipality or small association—the department would have said, "We will try

these. We want 50, but we will try five and see what the results are. We will then order another five." But not the railways! They ordered 48 of these diesels at one time!

The Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: They had to alter all the platforms to make them fit.

The Hon. J. D. TEAHAN: I understand that each diesel cost £80,000. When faults were discovered, look at the chaos that resulted. A junior clerk would not order 48, let alone men with the capacity the commissioners were supposed to have!

When an appointment is made, I hope it will not be a question of how many letters the successful applicant can boast after his name. We should ask, "What administrative capacity have you?" "Can you control men?" "Have you the confidence of men?" "Have you proved yourself in the position you propose to leave?" There are plenty of technical men in the railways including men who are able to build bridges and buildings; and they can give advice to the commissioner. I hope, that as a result of past experience, a man with good administrative capacity will be appointed. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

THE HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East): [5.38:] I am pleased to support the Bill, as I believe it is the only way in which the railways can be controlled in a proper manner. I agree with what the hon. Mr. Willmott said last night; that we want a man with business ability. However, I do not agree with him that the commissioner should be a man without railway experience. The man who is to hold this position should be trained on the traffic side because such a man knows 90 per cent. of the railway work. The engineers know the engineering side, whereas the traffic man has to start off with portering, shunting, guard's work, booking of parcels, goods traffic, and that sort of thing; and the main part of the revenue comes from the rate book.

The book is a complicated one, and a lot of study is required to be able to work out the freights. A man who has done this job has a knowledge of 90 per cent. of the work of the railways, whereas a locomotive power engineer has knowledge only of the mechanical side, and a civil engineer has knowledge of the road. An engineer, if he were appointed as commissioner, would need to have another man to tell him what he could quote to get freight traffic.

The main thing for the railways to have is revenue. Hon. members have to bring matters forward in the House, and they have to do a secondhand job. An engineer who was appointed to the position of commissioner would be in much the same position, but a traffic man would have a knowledge of ways and means of bringing in revenue. I say that a traffic

man would be the best selection. Mr. Brodie was a man who went right through the job. When he was made acting commissioner, he selected a man from the commercial agent's office and sent him out to look for business.

One night I was at a conference in Merredin—and I attended another at southern Cross—at which this officer spoke. It was wonderful to see the way in which that man put the railway's case to the farmers and the business people of the town. He brought back a lot of traffic to the railways. The Railway Department is the biggest business in the State, but it has to go out and get new business. The position is not like it used to be when there was no road transport.

I have heard the hon. Mr. Teahan speak about the Commonwealth Railways. They are different altogether from our State organisation. The Commonwealth Railways have no debt and consequently have to pay no interest. Our interest bill is terrific. Do we expect the man who takes on the job of Commissioner of Railways, to make the railways pay? He will never do it. As long as we have increases in the basic wage and in the cost of building materials, etc., the railways will go further behind each year.

The Commonwealth Railways have 1,100 odd miles of straight running and no suburban traffic. Their trains consist of 11 passenger coaches and 12 goods vans which are drawn by two diesel locomotives with one crew. They have a long straight run, and the line is lightly staffed with traffic employees because they have sections of up to 150 miles with automatic staff stations.

The Hon. J. G. Hislop: Have you those on the Kalgoorlie run?

The Hon. G. BENNETTS: No. The Commonwealth Railways have longer sections than we have.

The Hon. J. G. Hislop: There are still delays.

The Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes, there is starting and stopping.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: On which section do they have automatic staffs?

The Hon. G. BENNETTS: I have not looked into that question. The Commonwealth railways have gone out for business; they have set up a commercial agency in Adelaide. My son happens to be the person who will be in charge of the agency; and he is going to contact people throughout Australia in an effort to find freight for the Commonwealth department. What the hon. Mr. Willmott said, is true, namely, that the freight charges are fixed at conferences at which the different railways are represented. This applies to through-freights, but the Commonwealth can send its commercial agent to a businessman at Port Pirie and say, "You have 100 tons of material to go to Kalgoorlie. We will quote you

a price to cover the freight." If the person says, "No. The figure you quote does not suit me," the Commonwealth Railways officer will discuss the matter with him, and try to meet him.

The Commonwealth Railways are paid for, but we have to meet huge interest commitments. Recently I was talking to a senior official in the State Railways and he told me that the department at present is very good and that our commissioner is highly respected and is doing a good job. I understand that he has about nine to 12 months to go before he retires. A man in the service, with a few years ahead of him, should now be selected and put into a position where he could be trained to take over the commissionership. Our railways were never at a lower ebb than at the time when the three commissioners were dispensed with. The employees did not care whether they did anything or not; there was no incentive.

Years ago when I first joined the service, its employees were 100 per cent. railwaymen. A railway worker would go to work clean and tidy; and if he did not have a tie on he was told to go home and put one on. The employees were not allowed to smoke on the job. The work was carried out in an efficient manner. During the war period, however, the position declined and when we got the three commissioners—imported men—the railway employees said, "What is the good of us looking for promotion when men are imported into the country to be our bosses; but we have to show them the work?" When those men get a little bit of authority, they hound the others from pillar to post. By appointing a local man we would be doing a good thing for the service.

We can never make the railways pay. To do so we would have to cut out all concessions. The railways have been established for the benefit of the remote areas. They have assisted in the opening up of the back country and they serve to bring commodities from the outback into the city in order to supply the needs of the metropolitan area, and to be exported overseas. Many concessions are granted. We give concessions to children and to aged people.

The Hon. A. R. Jones: And to railway workers.

The Hon. G. BENNETTS: That is right.

The Hon. J. D. Teahan: And to members of Parliament.

The Hon. G. BENNETTS: That is right. The railways are a benevolent society, and they have to be that way. The farmers receive large concessions in regard to wheat and superphosphate freights. These concessions are granted to assist in the development of the remote areas. We have to help the person in the outback, otherwise he will not remain there. The farmers

admit they have been well treated by the railways. Today, apart from the Commonwealth Railways, there are no railways that pay. Motorcars and road transport have taken the cream from the railways. If a person has a motorcar, and he is going to Kalgoorlie, there is always someone waiting to go with him.

The Hon. A. R. Jones: That is against the law.

The Hon. G. BENNETTS: That is so, but everyone is doing it. If we want the railways to pay we must do, as we did before, separate them from Government control. We must give the commissioner the right to do as he likes. Then what would the freights be? There would be no concessions. The freights would be doubled, and I doubt whether even then we would make up for losses; and we would not have anyone living in the back country.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: What governs freights today? The hon. member does not answer.

The Hon. G. BENNETTS: Today the Commonwealth Railways are carrying traffic pick-a-back fashion; and they have high-freight traffic. They do not bring in weeties or other goods which are assessed by weight instead of by measurement. I have trans-shipped goods from a 17-ton truck that has come from Port Pirie to Kalgoorlie, and there would possibly be not more than three tons of freight on it.

The PRESIDENT: Order! We are not dealing with the Commonwealth Railways.

The Hon. G. BENNETTS: I am comparing the freights. How is the commissioner to get money to keep the railways going? He has to see that we get good freights instead of the rubbish that we now have. Today the State Railways are carting motor bodies from Kalgoorlie to Perth. Empty trucks have to be sent to Kalgoorlie to pick them up. They are brought to Perth at a freight cost of £10. Some of our railway wagons carry only one motor body but generally two. Lately, however, the system has been altered so that three instead of two of these motor bodies are brought to Perth on one railway truck. This will mean an amount of £30 instead of £20 a truck. But in many instances, empty trucks have to be taken to Kalgoorlie in order to bring these motor bodies to Perth.

I hope the new commissioner will be appointed from the traffic section. He could be appointed immediately, as has been suggested by many railwaymen with whom I have spoken. While Mr. Brodie is still in the department, the new appointee could be worked into the position, and when the present commissioner retired, he could take over. If this were done, we would not look back, and there would be harmony in the railways; and the Government and Parliament would be pleased with the position. I support the Bill.

THE HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [6.0]: I support the Bill, as I think it is necessary, in order to obviate the mistakes that have been made in the past and to make it possible for us to have a one-man commission instead of a three-man commission in charge of our railways. When introducing the measure the Minister's remarks were quite brief, and he said he did not want to restrict members from criticising or discussing the railways; so I will therefore make only one or two observations of which I trust the Minister will take note.

When introducing the Bill the Minister emphasised the need for the amendments contained in the measure now before us; and for the appointment of a single railway commissioner within the very near future. I, like many other members, believe it is necessary to make the appointment as soon as possible, in view of what has taken place. In my opinion we lost a man who had done a marvellous job for the railways—a man of whom I have spoken highly on many occasions—when the present commissioner was appointed. Since the appointment of the present commissioner we have heard nothing about him, yet the man whom he replaced had his name before the public, in the Press, almost daily, for the services he was rendering.

I am wondering—as many other hon. members are—what the Minister can tell us as to the reason why that man's appointment was terminated and someone else brought out of the blue to fill his place. As has been pointed out, the present commissioner is only three months younger than his immediate predecessor—

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Out of the blue? Was he not brought out of the Midland Junction Workshops?

The Hon. A. R. JONES: I would pose this question to the Minister: In view of what we have heard, what we know and what we have seen of the better service being given by the railways at the instigation of Mr. Brodie, was the appointment of the present commissioner one to which the Government gave considerable thought in the interests of the railways, or was it inspired by the unions or by Trades Hall? I pose that question, because I would like the Minister to give us some information on the matter. Many people, apart from members of Parliament, are concerned at the appointment that has been made. Mr. Brodie had his men go through the country seeking business, and the country people were pleased with what was taking place in the railways. The farmers said that the service was looking up and that they would give the railways all the support they could; but they are now wondering whether Mr. Brodie was receiving too much co-operation, with the result that some people were not satisfied—

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: Didn't they read the newspapers?

The Hon. A. R. JONES: I hope the Minister can give the House a satisfactory reason why a man who was doing such a splendid job was replaced. I echo the enthusiasm of the hon. Mr. Diver in regard to the potentialities of Western Australia and, like him, I hope that the new commissioner will be able to convince members of the Government that most of the lines that have been closed should be reopened. Like many other members, I feel that the closing of those lines was a retrograde step, and even the Minister for Justice, when speaking at Bunbury the other day, said that the closures were a retrograde step and one which should never have been taken. The Premier, when asked whether the view expressed by the Minister for Justice was also the view of the Government, side-stepped the issue as he is so adept at doing.

Many members now realise that the closures of the lines in question should never have taken place, because the potentiality of our country areas is increasing daily. Only today I met a party interested in having a grain bin placed some distance north of Milng; and it seems to me that there is good reason why the railway should be extended to that area, although I suppose it is a vain hope to try to interest the Minister in extending any railway at the present time. The produce of the area in question has increased by 500 per cent. in the last five years and now, by the extension of the railway for another 20 miles, the area concerned could be brought into much greater production and would consequently yield far greater revenue to the railways than it does at present.

A similar position applies north of Kalannie, where the farmers are opening up new country 20 or 30 miles out and are bringing it into a state of great productivity. Would it not have been a tragedy if the Kalannie line had been closed?

The Hon. G. Bennetts: And when they get water supplies the position will be even better.

The Hon. A. R. JONES: Although I was not present when the Minister introduced the measure, I read his speech, in the course of which he said he thought most of the farmers would not want the metropolitan rail services closed because trains had to come through the metropolitan area to go to the port. That was a silly thing for him to say, because it would be quite an easy matter to do something about the metropolitan rail passenger services and still allow the railways to operate freight through to the port. No-one has suggested that the railway from Fremantle to Midland Junction should be closed, but it has been suggested that something should be done about metropolitan rail passenger transport.

I believe that great changes have been made and that, with the advent of the small diesel cars and possibly the use of less personnel, it is possible that the railways can give the necessary passenger service in the metropolitan area, without running at too great a loss. I do not advocate that the metropolitan rail passenger services should be closed, but I think the Minister made a silly remark when he said that if we were to close the railways, because of the passenger transport of city people not paying, we would not be able to bring produce from the country to the port.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: I did not say that. I said "the metropolitan railways."

The Hon. A. R. JONES: Or words to that effect, at all events. While there have been great achievements in the last 12 months and a much better service has been given by the railways over that period, there is still room for improvement. In this regard I would point out that next week, Show Week, the Midland Junction sales will not operate on the Wednesday. In this regard I can speak with personal knowledge regarding the Milng-Toodyay line, on which there is no service whatever to bring stock to Midland Junction market next week, and that seems wrong. If the railways are chasing custom they should provide the service to bring stock to the market on Tuesday. For the past few years the Wednesday has been declared off as a sale day, in Show Week, and we have had to chase around and find road transport to bring stock to Midland.

It is wrong for members of the Government to say that the farmers will not support the railways, when they are not given the chance to do so.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: Have you requested a service?

The Hon. A. R. JONES: Why should it be necessary, when the service is given on the Tuesday, for the Wednesday market, in the normal course of events? If there is no Wednesday market, is it not right that the railways should give the customers the service when it is desired? If I asked the Minister for one truck to be hauled, would he put on a special train? Of course not! There is still plenty of room for improvement—

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: We will run a special for you.

The Hon. A. R. JONES: The Minister belittles himself when he makes remarks of that sort. It is foolish for him to make silly statements such as that. I admire the job the Minister is doing, but when he says things like that he is simply being silly. The Railway Department should have enough business acumen to provide the service when it is required. What is the use of not providing a train when the stock must be transported to the Midland Junction market very week? There may be 12 or 15 trucks per week and if the

stock cannot be brought to the sale this week by rail, we simply have to pay more to have it transported by road.

I believe that when the new commissioner is appointed, an effort should be made to bring the railways into line with other industries, where work is carried on over 24 hours a day and seven days a week. It is impossible for the railways to give service and also to be made to pay when the employees are paid at the overtime rates that obtain at present. There are a number of country centres where, because of the high rates for Saturday and Sunday work, no service is available until the Tuesday; because the trains cannot give service if they do not leave Perth for country places perhaps 200 miles away until the Monday.

This means that in many districts, if spare parts are wanted for machinery and the necessity for them is known by the Friday, nothing can be done about getting them until the following Tuesday or Wednesday. The railways should give more service to country areas, no matter on what day of the week it may be required. When a person elects to work in an industry where he knows he may be called on for duty any day of the week, there should be an award to give him a rate of pay that will compensate him for, perhaps, having to work some week-ends on the roster system, but it should do away with the heavy overtime rates such as double time and two-and-a-half times for Sundays. I believe that is where a great deal of money, which should never be paid out, is going.

The dairy farmer receives nothing extra for the milk he takes from the cow on Sunday or Saturday afternoon, but because a person elects to work in the railways he is paid two-and-a-half times the ordinary rate when he works on Sunday. The sooner we get down to a condition of sanity in such matters, the sooner we will have a better and more efficient railway system operating in this State. I hope that the Minister, when replying to the debate, will give the answers to the questions that have been raised. I support the Bill.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

THE HON. J. MURRAY (South-West) [7.30]: I will not take up much of the time of the House to discuss the Bill. At the period when arrangements were being made for a commissioner of railways to be appointed temporarily, I expressed the hope—without mentioning any names—that the Government in making an appointment—whether temporary or otherwise—would choose a man from the right branch of the Railway Department. I was extremely pleased when the first temporary appointment was made, because the man selected had a complete understanding of our railway problem. He also realised that a firm line had to be taken

within the service and that a better understanding had to be built up between the railways and the people who used them, in order that both could understand each other's problems and so meet any difficulties half way.

When this man's name was mentioned the other evening, the Minister, by way of interjection, said that the hon. member who had mentioned his name was doing him a disservice. I believe that that statement is true because here is an instance of a man who was trying to do a job in the best interests of the State but who trod on the corns of those much higher up. So a change has now been made in the temporary appointment and the man who now fills the position of commissioner has been drawn from a branch of the service which has no conception of the overall role the railways are designed to fill in the interests of the people who use them.

By and large, one has only to realise that the huge organisation that has been set up for the construction of locomotives and other rollingstock is completely out of proportion for the needs of the service. As a result the expenditure of the branch in which this man once served is so high that it cannot be met from the services that are rendered by the railways. Also, it will be interesting to take stock of the stores branch which I think would have come under his personal supervisions in the past—

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: Not under the supervision of this man.

The Hon. J. MURRAY: Well, perhaps not, but probably it once came under his control. It would not matter whether a man was selected from within the Railway Department to fill the position of commissioner if he were a person of high administrative ability and fully qualified to administer a large undertaking such as the railways. That is fundamental. Of course, if we are fortunate enough in obtaining the services of a man with such qualifications we will probably still keep him hamstrung by denying him the right to hire and fire. Unless a man has this right he has little chance of successfully managing a large business undertaking such as the railways.

In passing to another matter which, in the viewpoint of some people may be difficult to tie up with the Bill, I am going to read Clause 3 of this measure and I will lay particular emphasis on proposed new Sub-section (3a) which reads—

The Governor may appoint a fit and proper person to be Commissioner, and may, without prejudice to the exercise of any power conferred by sub-section (10) of this section, on the happening of any vacancy in the office, appoint a fit and proper person to the vacant office.

I will select the words "fit and proper person" to enable me to enlarge on the happenings that have occurred within the branch of the Railway Department from which the present commissioner was drawn, and if they are continued it will illustrate—in my view anyhow—that this man may not be a fit and proper person to hold this important position. Of course, Mr. President, I realise that you will probably not agree with me that I will be able to tie this up with the Bill, but I will endeavour to do so. Some time ago there was some agitation throughout the South-West—it continued for years—to speed up the railway services to the South-West, and a certain degree of efficiency was introduced to bring this about. The Railway Department brought in the Australind passenger train, together with its feeder services.

Nevertheless, the agitation among the people in the South-West continued and within the Railway Department itself there were two lines of thought. One was that the only way to speed up the service was to duplicate the line between Perth and Bunbury. The other line of thought was that central traffic control, or automatic signalling devices, should be installed. I understand that the correct expression is "central traffic control." Those who followed this line of thought contended that the train could still run on a single track between Perth and Bunbury, with short loops added to the line provided central traffic control was put into operation. Eventually, this was done. In my opinion the installation of this signalling device is going to prove quite satisfactory.

However, this is an instance, within the railways administration, of peculiar thinking because one of the advantages of central traffic control is that a continuous power service must be obtained all along the line. I refer to it as peculiar thinking because the time arrived when the electricity power lines radiated out from the metropolitan area as far as Serpentine. From there they will continue on to the Serpentine dam which is extremely desirable. Further south of that point, there are many people between Perth and Bunbury and, for the sake of argument, and to cite an instance, I will refer to those at North Dandalup.

The residents at that centre are farmers in the main and are working large properties and are, if the S.E.C. were prepared to connect them to the main, all within the scope of the distribution of the power lines. When the Railway Department was installing this central traffic control on the line between Perth and Bunbury instead of that department co-operating with the people who resided in those parts and who would be consumers of electricity provided by the State Electricity Commission, and instead of saying to the State Electricity Commission, "We want

power at North Dandalup for our own purposes", it failed to do so. The Railway Department failed in its duty in co-operating with the S.E.C., and it showed it had no regard for the people who are farming the properties in the South-West. Without any regard for those people whatsoever the department said, "No. We will make a deal. We advise you to follow the policy of the S.E.C. and have the power lines extended to your area at Serpentine and from that point we will continue the power lines along the railway line as far as North Dandalup for our own requirements."

THE PRESIDENT: I hope the hon. member is going to connect these remarks with the appointment of a commissioner of railways.

The Hon. J. MURRAY: The Bill states that the Government may appoint a fit and proper person as commissioner. I am suggesting that if his mentality is similar to the mentality of the person to whom I was referring, then he would not be a fit and proper person to run the railways. I said that 15 miles of electric light poles were erected to extend the service from Serpentine. All this was done for a small amount of current to be used by the department. Had the Railway Department insisted on extending the supply of electricity from that line to the residents of North Dandalup, the S.E.C. could have derived much more revenue from the supply of electricity along the line in question.

I regret that you, Mr. President, have asked me to connect my remarks with the subject matter of the Bill, because I thought I did that. I shall not weary the House with much more detail. A serious situation will arise when pressure is brought to bear on the Railway Department—no doubt it will come about—to extend the supply of electricity from that line to the people of North Dandalup. I do not know whether some other step will be taken outside of the Act to return possession of that line to the S.E.C. so that electricity can be supplied to the residents of that district. I support the measure.

THE HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (Suburban) [7.47]: I desire to make a few brief observations on this Bill. I am sure that you, Mr. President, have exercised a great deal of tolerance in allowing speakers to run their trucks off the line in speaking to this measure. I shall be very careful not to infringe in that respect.

The Minister must be very pleased with the reception which this Bill has received here. It is fitting to say that he, in turn, when introducing the measure was quite generous in his remarks on the situation in which the railways have been placed for a period of years, and concerning the control which was in operation under the three-commissioner scheme. He did not

blame anybody in particular. He recognised that system as a mistake. I repeat that he was generous enough to accept the situation in that form.

My mind goes back to the time when Mr. du Plessis was brought to this State from South Africa to inquire into the railways, and the head-lines of the daily Press, after the royal commission had been completed, stated—

Western Australia has the worst railways in the world.

It was the purpose of the Government at that time to put a stop to the state of affairs which existed in the department. The railways were then under the control of a single commissioner who was not subject to ministerial control. I venture to suggest that if the Government of the day had been in a position to provide the commissioner with as much money as was provided to the railways in later years, we would have had a much better railway service in this State.

The appointment of the three commissioners resulted from the recommendations of the du Plessis royal commission. I say with respect it was done with all good intention with a hope that the situation would improve as a result. Now we find before us a Bill which is not very large and which Parliament is asked to pass. Its purpose is to give effect to the appointment of a single commissioner of railways.

However, on this occasion the commissioner is to be subject to ministerial control, and he is to be subject to Government control. We have known how much effect political and Cabinet interference can have on the control of the railways and on the diversion of opinion that can take place. I hope that when an appointment is made the person selected will be less subject to political interference, at least from the Cabinet, than has been the case up to date.

Mention has been made of the right of the commissioner to hire and fire. Of course, I cannot see that state of affairs coming about in Western Australia because of the industrial awards and the appeal court covering railway workers. They will have a say before the commissioner is given the right to fire.

The Hon. E. M. Davies: The appeal court only operates after an employee is fired.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: That is right, but as the hon. member knows, under existing conditions the court sits if an appeal is made against an appointment to a senior position, because an officer may be picked for promotion as a result of his superior ability. At present appeals can be made against such a promotion and frequently they are heard by the court, and dealt with in the manner which the court thinks fit.

I say the Minister for Railways has a great and grave responsibility resting on his shoulders. I expect it will be upon his advice chiefly that the appointment will be made. Reference has been made to the fact that the commissioner should be selected from Western Australian applicants. I regard that as an important statement from one point, and one only: That is, if the best man is a Western Australian. Should that be the case, naturally he will get the job. If the position is advertised overseas and suitable applications are received, and if all qualifications are not equal, it is hoped the Government will make the appointment from outside the State. If all qualifications are equal then a Western Australian applicant should receive the appointment.

It is insufficient that the commissioner shall have railway experience if he has not got sound business experience. He must have a background of business experience. Of course he must also be a man of the highest integrity, and that goes without saying. I regard it of the greatest importance that he should have the respect of the unions; if not, his task will become a little difficult. When I use the word, "respect," I use it advisedly because I am sure it will be agreed that we can find an applicant who is personable with the unions, but who is not necessarily the right person for the job.

What we want is a person who will earn the respect of the unions and the employees of the department through drive, ability and a willingness to undertake his task. He will have to impart to those men his existing enthusiasm so that the service can be improved beyond the point at which it stands at present.

I suggest the commissioner must also have the support of the public. It will be very difficult to find any man with that group of qualifications. On examining the Bill it is noted that it will come into force by proclamation. I would suggest to the Government that it does not proclaim the Act until it has found a suitable person for the position.

When such a person is found he should be paid according to his qualifications. I understand that the salary of the commissioner is to be £4,750 per annum. If the Government is able to find such a capable man, and it has to pay a greater salary, I hope it will employ him and pay him accordingly. I wish the Government good fortune in seeking out such a man for this very important position in the Railway Department.

The department has been under a great deal of criticism over a long time, some of it just and perhaps some unjust. But all in all I hope the appointment will be a success. I give the second reading of the Bill my personal support. I repeat, in conclusion that the Minister has a great responsibility firstly to find a suitable

applicant, and then to work hand in glove with him. The hon. Minister will, I am sure, to the best of his ability, protect him from political interference. I support the second reading.

THE HON. G. E. JEFFERY (Suburban) [7.56]: I likewise rise to support the Bill. I only hope that, when the Government does advertise for a commissioner of railways, the prospective applicant does not read the Hansard reports of the Western Australian Parliament first. I think the man who possesses the qualities that seem to be required of the commissioner, has yet to be born.

Some hon. members have stated they would like the appointment of a Western Australian to the position. That is naturally the wish of us all. I would extend the field and hope he will come from somewhere within Australia, at least.

Some remark has been made that he should come from within one particular branch of the service. I do not think that should apply to any great extent. Looking back on the history of the railway commissioners in this State, and on some of the commissioners whom I personally knew, one of the best was an engineer. Some hon. members have said that a commissioner should come from the Traffic Branch. In my view the most important thing is that the commissioner shall be an Australian and a person who understands Australian workman.

I express the high hope that, on this occasion, the carriage of this measure will enable the railways to start on the long road back towards achieving the objectives which Parliament thought would be achieved some 10 or 11 years ago when it introduced the three-commissioner system. I say that the three-commissioner system creaked a few months after the commissioners were appointed. Some people seem to have an inferiority complex in thinking that anything coming from this State or from Australia is inferior to the foreign product. In this regard some of the worst mistakes were made by past Governments. In the past there has been an unnatural desire to appoint applicants from overseas to high positions.

In the case of the commissioners who came from the Indian and Pakistan Railways, I do not think the Government ever made a worse attempt to fit square pegs into round holes. From the day they took office, because of their attitude towards the railway employees, the three-commissioner system was doomed. In their desire to bring in so-called executives from overseas we saw the appointment of one officer with qualifications about as valuable as the label on a condensed milk tin.

On this occasion I hope that the appointee will be a railwayman with long experience and, most important of all, will be able to handle men. Reference was

made by two speakers, in particular, to the railways, and in so doing they gave away their complete lack of knowledge of the Western Australian Government Railways. I have not been a railway employee, but I have had a close association with the railway system for over 20 years. In my industrial experience I have had to deal with scores of railway employees, from the executive level down to the call boy.

When hon. members talked about Trades Hall pressure bringing about a change in the composition of the railway commission, they showed complete ignorance of the railway system. The gentleman who until recently had the onerous task of running the railways in this State, has performed his job well. Whatever comments have been made against him were an injustice. I say that Mr. Brodie is one of the easiest men to approach and to get on with. Anyone who has a doubt on that matter would be well advised to discuss the matter with the railway employees or with the union officials who handle the affairs of the men.

They also show their complete ignorance of railway workings when they say "Who has the job now?" I would say Mr. Marsland has probably made a greater contribution towards keeping the railways in some sort of order than any other employee. The hon. Mr. Simpson mentioned the figures concerning the cost of operating local diesels. I think the true comparison there lies in the fact that Mr. Marsland was the Chief Mechanical Engineer at that time and got some wonderful work out of the men at the workshops. To obtain a true comparison it will be necessary to quote the number of modifications which have been made to Eastern States railway diesels compared with what has been done to the local "X" class diesels. I think the number of modifications necessary will convey their own story; and this State owes a debt to those who performed the work to enable the diesels to remain on the track for as long as they have.

The Hon. L. C. Diver: Don't you think they are as bad as they say?

The Hon. G. E. JEFFERY: No, I do not mean to say that at all. They are probably much worse than the public realises, but because of the excellent work done by the technical staff at the workshops their deficiencies have been covered up.

The Hon. A. R. Jones: Don't you think Mr. Marsland should have been kept where he was if he was doing such a good job?

The Hon. G. E. JEFFERY: It is fitting he should be in the position he now occupies. Earlier in the evening we heard talk of the Commonwealth railways. Any commissioner of railways from another State would be pleased to be the Commonwealth Commissioner of Railways, because

the Commonwealth railways have one-line management going from one point to another and returning. Trains going in both directions carry 100 per cent. payloads. With the local railway system, this is impossible because the trains either go to the country empty to pick up a load or take a load to the country and return empty. Therefore I think hon. members should realise what are the common essentials for a successful railway system.

With regard to the criticism of railway finance, it has to be accepted that whatever Government is in power, the railways become a general cow for everyone to milk. Much has been said about removing the railways from political control. I have still to see any Government—of today or tomorrow—that would even entertain that thought because every section of the community enjoys something for nothing from the railways. When it is all boiled down, the railways of today are being run on a depression finance basis. A lot of the things introduced in depression years have, in essence, remained in the financial aspect of the Government railways, and that being so, we must be prepared to accept the financial return that we get.

The Hon. A. R. Jones: In what regard?

The Hon. G. E. JEFFERY: There are telescopic rates, school children's concession fares and gold passes for members of Parliament. Incidentally, the most critical people are those who never pay.

The Hon. L. C. Diver: They are reimbursed.

The Hon. G. E. JEFFERY: Because people do not pay they do not appreciate the benefits they receive. People from other States appreciate our railway system and are amazed that it is much better than we lead people to believe.

Much has been said about the Midland Junction workshops. If anything has been a whipping post it has been the Midland Junction workshops. I am not going to say there are no loafers there. Out of 2,500 workers there are bound to be loafers. In any company of 20 or 30 men, it will be realised that at least one will not pull his weight, in the opinion of his workmates. I think we owe a lot to the men of the workshops and the system generally for the way they have carried on in most adverse circumstances. Certainly very little encouragement has been shown them from sources from which they should receive it—particularly from Parliament. I believe that too much is being expected of the new commissioner. Some say he should be an engineer; others say he should have commercial experience; others again say he should have business experience. He would have to be 100 years old to be as experienced as hon. members feel it is necessary for him to be in order to run the system efficiently.

The main essential in a new commissioner is that he should be an Australian and understand the temperament of the men he has to handle. It may be possible in the Commonwealth railways—I do not know how many employees are engaged on that system—for men to be called by their Christian names as it has been suggested should be done on our system. But with our 12,000 employees I venture to suggest it would be rather a big task to know everyone by his Christian name, or even his surname; even the manager of the workshops would find it difficult to know everyone by his surname, but I do not think these things have any bearing on the matter.

I hope that the new commissioner will be given a fair chance to prove himself. The Bill gives that opportunity by providing for a seven-year period of appointment. This period will be sufficient to enable a man's ability to be gauged and his capabilities to be determined. He should be given a fair chance, and too high hopes should not be held concerning him in the first instance. Frankly I would think twice about applying for this job after what I have heard here, because too many people expect too much from this commissioner; and I think it is time we set an example.

Reference has been made as to what has happened in the last 12 months. Much has happened, but I pay tribute to the men who have carried on the service and have carried the commissioners and a lot of other people they appointed who were inept and inefficient. It seems to me that one of the things that every Australian will do is to carry on a job even if the people in the top jobs are the wrong type and not worthy of their appointment. Most hon. members will agree that it is an Australian characteristic, which applies not only to railway workers but to others, to carry on in adversity and do the job.

When we see what has happened in the railways, and what has been brought about by childishness, I think we should raise our hats to some of the executive officers who have carried on affairs under difficult circumstances, and I only hope that when the Bill is carried the commissioner will be able to do some of the things hon. members have asked for. He will not have to be a very bright individual to do better than the three former commissioners who plagued our railways for five or six years. I support the measure and have high hopes for the future.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (Minister for Railways—North—in reply) [8.8]: This Bill has certainly brought forth quite a lot of debate, including much valuable constructive comment; but it has also brought forth quite a lot of useless comment, not at all relevant to the subject matter of the measure.

There is one query only that I recollect, in connection with the amendments, and that was asked by the hon. Mr. Simpson. He wanted an explanation of Clause 8 which relates to the provisions under which a commissioner may be retired or resign, and wanted to know why the Government is including a provision stating that a resignation will need to be accepted by the Governor. The object of that amendment is to give the Governor the final decision. In any case, the Governor appoints the commissioner and it is considered that he should have the right to terminate the appointment. There is also another reason, and that is to safeguard a man from getting out from under, as could occur.

The Hon. H. K. Watson: Safeguard or prevent him?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: He cannot, in other words, resign and get out gracefully. Also, as the hon. Mr. Simpson said, he may be a good man and it might be easy to get out, simply by a month's notice. I am not too sure of that period. It would depend upon the agreement which was entered into when the appointment was made, but there is a common law ruling in respect to it. I know, however, it would have the effect of a commissioner knowing that first his resignation must be accepted before he can take on another position and get away to a better job.

I think all members will agree that the provision is a very necessary one. Generally speaking, I cannot answer all the queries that have been raised in relation to other matters concerning railways. Some of them are simply thrown in with the object of having one eye on politics and another on the railways. However, be that as it may, I think that the subject of the closure of lines has been kicked around with considerable force hither and thither, but in the general consensus of opinion, in the country anyway where I travel around, there is not the great dread in connection with the loss of services that we are led to believe exists in some areas. However, I believe that at that point, because it has nothing to do with the commissioner—

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member is not bound to get away from the Bill.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I desire to stick strictly to it, Sir, but unfortunately I am asked, bully-ragged, and cajoled; and replies are demanded of me in this place.

The Hon. H. K. Watson: And coaxed.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I did not know that this Chamber had turned into a star chamber where one should be interrogated.

The Hon. H. K. Watson: Cut it out, cut it out!

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: But that does occur. Nevertheless I intend, with your permission, Sir, to clear up one or two points that do have something to do with commissioners of railways. I was thinking a little bit like the hon. Mr. Murray when I interjected that I was disappointed with the hon. Mr. Logan's views in connection with Mr. Brodie; and I hate to talk of someone not in the Chamber and take advantage, perhaps, of his not being here to interject. I really feel that when an hon. member, without any justification or evidence whatsoever, bandies a commissioner's name around and suggests that simply because he would not bow to the wishes of the trade union movement—

An hon. member: And others.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Yes, the Farmers Union, too, probably. When he says that because he would not bow to the wishes of unions and unionists the Government had—to use his words—to depose him, I think it is not fair. Hon. members will agree that it is totally unfair and unreasonable for a man to use these kinds of tactics for some type of game—it could only be a political game—and be the only one to bandy names of commissioners around here; and, in addition, accuse others of doing so. Particularly is it unfair in the case of the gentleman whom he quoted, Mr. Brodie. The hon. member certainly did Mr. Brodie a disservice and, with your kind permission, Mr. President, I will attempt to put on the statute book something which will correct the erroneous idea.

The Hon. H. K. Watson: On the statute book?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I mean into Hansard. The Hon. Mr. Logan said—

I think it is a fair proposition to suggest that Mr. Brodie was shaking up some of the union officials, some of the administrative staff and heads of the department in an effort to improve the position of the railways.

There is absolutely not an atom of truth in his suggestion—there is absolutely no evidence to support that contention. Mr. Brodie is a very popular man with the unions.

The Hon. L. A. Logan: I know he is.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: He is a very popular man everywhere, and I have never heard any person say one word that was detrimental to him in any way. I have known Mr. Brodie since 1930, and I have associated with him for considerable periods during those years. I think it is most unfair for the hon. member to drag an officer's name through the papers, and through this House, with the insinuation that he may have been playing up to the unions and the Government would not approve of it.

The Hon. A. R. Jones: You are reading something into the speech that is not there.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I am not reading anything into it which is not there. If the hon. member reads Hansard he will see—unless it has been rubbed out—that what I have quoted is what the hon. Mr. Logan said when he spoke to this Bill. The hon. gentleman went on—

It is my belief that because he was doing too much shaking up he was discarded, and some other officer was appointed to the post—someone more amenable to the unions.

That was another disservice to Mr. Brodie's successor. It is a well known fact—and any of the 3,000 men who have worked under him in the workshops for years will confirm this—that Mr. Marsland is a hard taskmaster, but he is a man. All the men admire him and they would prefer to deal with that type of man—the man they know—rather than a man they do not know.

The Hon. A. R. Jones: He did not get particularly good results in the workshops.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: We can never satisfy the hon. gentleman who comes from Milngavie. However, one of these days—when we send him a truck in which he can put his sheep—perhaps he will be happy.

The Hon. A. R. Jones: Now you are getting facetious.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I feel that I should place in Hansard Mr. Brodie's record so that anybody who follows this debate through from the previous stage will be able to read and discover that Mr. Brodie is not the type of man that the hon. member perhaps thinks he is. Mr. Brodie is an old and faithful servant. He started at the very bottom in his railway employment and worked to the top. He is due to retire in November, 1959, and he commenced his employment, as a permanent employee with the W.A.G.R., in 1914. Prior to that year he was employed for a short period and then went to the Eastern States. He returned to Bunbury where he commenced in permanent employment with the W.A.G.R. and has worked his way up from junior porter, clerical cadet, through the Traffic Department until finally achieving the position of Chief Traffic Manager and Acting Commissioner of Railways for six months—the maximum period which the Act at present allows.

The reason why Mr. Brodie was not re-appointed is because of the legislation which is in existence and which we are by this Bill trying to amend. When Mr. Hall resigned and Mr. Brodie was appointed for a six monthly period—the maximum which the Act at present allows

—the Royal Commissioner had not completed his inquiries into the three-man commission and, obviously, had not presented the Government with the report on that phase of the department. We could not appoint a deputy because there was no commissioner for whom he could deputise—the three commissioners had gone. As I stated in the Press on the 20th December last, when Mr. Brodie's appointment was announced, it was a six months appointment and we were waiting on the final report of the Royal Commissioner. When that report had been received, and its findings analysed, we could go ahead and advertise for a permanent commissioner.

The 20th December is very close to Christmas, and not long after, in the new year, the Royal Commissioner presented his report regarding the three-man commission. He recommended in that report the amendments which are contained in this Bill. The reason why Mr. Brodie was not re-appointed in June, as the permanent commissioner, is because he is due to leave the service on the 27th October, this year, when he commences his final leave prior to retirement. I stated that in the Press last June when Mr. Marsland was appointed. The whole position was discussed with Mr. Brodie and Mr. Marsland, and had Mr. Brodie been re-appointed the position would have been this: He is due to leave the service on the 27th October and then we would have had to appoint another permanent commissioner or, as the Act stood, we would have been able to appoint one for a six monthly period. He would have been merely filling in time and keeping the railway administration going. At the end of that six monthly period we would have had to advertise for another commissioner, the same as we will do when this legislation is passed, and there would have been, as there will be in this case, some months between the date of the advertisement and the date of the appointment.

Had Mr. Brodie been re-appointed he would have retired on the 27th October on the commissioner's salary, and his successor would also have retired on the commissioner's salary at the end of his acting period of six months. So we would have had two commissioners retired on a commissioner's salary. Mr. Brodie becomes 65 years of age in November next year, and the other gentleman is 65 in June of the following year. So hon. members can see that the Minister and the Government would certainly have come in for some criticism had they adopted that course. As I said, the position was discussed with Mr. Brodie and Mr. Marsland and, on the 19th June, when Mr. Marsland was appointed, the following Press statement appeared:—

The Minister said that Marsland had acted as Deputy Commissioner previously but because of ill health

he was not available for selection when Brodie was appointed Acting Commissioner in December.

That is a fact; Mr. Marsland was having a gallstone removed. However, he was not consulted in regard to the matter on that occasion. Obviously, either Mr. Marsland or Mr. Brodie would have been appointed, had Mr. Marsland been available at the time, because Mr. Marsland acted in that position on a previous occasion and he must have been given the opportunity to act as commissioner for six months.

I do not know what hon. members are complaining about because the position has been mentioned in the Press, and has been liberally advertised. There is not the slightest foundation for the inference that the Government deposed Mr. Brodie because he was not friendly with the unions. That is absolutely wrong. This Government, and the commissioners who have acted during its regime, have not had the same trouble which the previous Government experienced with the unions. Possibly that is because this Government is a little more amenable to trade unions than was the previous Government.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Now who is playing politics?

The Hon. A. R. Jones: It has done more of what the unions want it to do.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: But the facts are there. It is all right for the hon. member to complain. I can remember a time when not a train ran along the line through his district for many months. At that time he was not singing out to the Government to resume the services on those lines. I am talking about 1952 when the trains did not travel along some lines for a period of six or 12 months. What was the advice to the then Minister? "Don't give in! Don't let them run any more!" I will bet that that was what was said, and that would have been the advice given.

I have given hon. members the facts. The hon. Mr. Griffith has said that I am playing politics. In my opinion, if the game is to be played it should be played by both sides or not at all. The hon. Mr. Willmott said that an incoming commissioner will experience some problems. He certainly will. He will have a very big job, whoever he is. I have not the slightest idea who the new commissioner will be—I do not think anybody can say because we do not know who is going to apply for the job. However, when the selection is made I hope that this Government will not be as unfortunate as was the previous Government with its three-man selection.

Whoever the new commissioner is he will have problems on his hands—and not only domestic problems. The tide has been turned, so far as the railways are concerned and they are slowly coming back

into their own. Of necessity the progress will be slow and the new commissioner will have to face the changed economic circumstances which are not peculiar to this State, or Australia, but which are world-wide.

Mention has been made of the Commonwealth making a profit, and it has been said that if we haul between one point and another we will have no money worries. On looking at the balance-sheet of the Midland Railway Company for 1956-57 I find a most interesting position. This is one railway service which, according to some hon. members, including the late Mr. Ackland, could never be equalled for economy. Yet we find in this balance-sheet for the year 1956-57 that it has a deficit of £83,791. So the problems facing the railways are indeed very difficult.

It cannot be said that the Midland Railway Company is extravagant or wasteful—that cannot be given as the reason for this loss. But that is the view expressed in connection with the W.A.G.R. I do not for one moment deny that there has been, or that there is, extravagance and waste; and certainly some irresponsibility towards the cost of supplying and running the railways. The hon. Mr. Logan wanted to know something about contracts for metal. Hon. members know, from a previous report tabled last year, that a layman like myself was able to effect a saving running into many thousands of pounds on metal.

You would perhaps be interested to know, Mr. President, that for the first time in 20 years, tenders were called this year for sleepers; and there was a reduction in the price of sleepers. A saving is being effected in that direction. Every angle of railway expenditure which the previous commission apparently ignored, or failed to check, is being systematically examined, and where economies can be effected, they are being effected. That is in keeping with the amendments moved by the Opposition in another place, when the motion to discontinue certain railway services was agreed to by it. We are living up to the undertaking we gave Parliament in that respect. The row has not been easy to hoe. There have been some great changes in railway administration during the past two years, but they have been for an improved railway system—that is agreed by all speakers. Some hon. members claim, and rightly so, that there is more to be achieved. I do not deny that for a moment. I say that much can be achieved and much will be achieved in the future.

When I was introducing the measure an interjection was made concerning the attitude of the trade unions vis-a-vis the Government. The relationship between the trade unions and the Government is very cordial indeed; as I have already said. We are getting on all right. The trade

unions, in regard to the railways, are getting on very well with us. There are those who would like to disturb this relationship. But I am very pleased to say that not much notice is being taken of those elements. I am able to say that the average trade unionist has as much commonsense, perhaps more, than some of those who are attempting to disrupt him. Through hard and trying experiences they know just what it means to be subjected to long periods of unemployment. They also know that they will not be subjected to those conditions as long as they adopt a reasonable attitude, and the Government co-operates with them.

That has always been the case so far as this Government is concerned. Accordingly, I would say to the interjector, the hon. Mr. MacKinnon, that I am able to answer him more clearly now, after having given his interjection some thought; and I can advise him that he need have no fear about our relationship with the trade union movement, in so far as it relates to the railways. I think there are perhaps one or two items here which I might be able to tie up with the appointment of the commissioner.

The hon. Mr. Griffith mentioned the du Plessis report, and said that had the one-man commissioner of that day been provided with the finance with which the three-man commission was provided, the railways would not have got into the mess in which the du Plessis Royal Commission reported them to be. That is a fact, and I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. member. But it is common knowledge that the money was not available in those days. A war was in progress, and, prior to that, there was a depression. No matter how good the heart may have been, the money was just not available. Consequently the railways got into a dreadful mess physically, and with the fifty million or sixty million pounds used in the succeeding eight years unfortunately very little improvement was made.

Those in charge commenced by building the railways the wrong way up. The engines were purchased before the rails were bought to carry them. And now the rails are being laid, we know what has happened. There have been speed and road restrictions, and derailments. At one time there was at least one derailment per week. This all happened because they were built upside down. That defect is now being ironed out. But a lot of money was poured down the drain. Too many steam engines—the “W” class engines, mentioned by the hon. Mr. Simpson—were bought and not sufficient rails. It is very interesting when we consider the other point raised by the hon. Mr. Griffith, namely, that the railways should be free of political interference. I take it the hon. member means governmental interference from Cabinet Ministers. If we look at the records to

1947 it is interesting to see that the revenue of the railways exceeded the operating expenses; and from 1947 they have never since balanced that budget.

The reason for that might be attributed to political policy rather than interference. Now we have arrived at the position where the railways are operating at 1958 costs on 1953 freights. That has been the position right through. I do not think industry could have ever stood the equivalent rise in freight rates that should have occurred in relation to operating costs, such as basic wage rises and so on. I am sure it could not have done so. But some of the lag could have been taken up; there is no doubt about that. We are operating on 1958 costs and earning at 1953 rates which are, and were then in 1953, below the average freight rate in all other States. On many items it was much below.

The Hon. A. R. Jones: Average freight rates of other States?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Yes, and our freight rates are below theirs. But the other States are also in bother. They are losing as many millions of pounds as is the W.A.G.R.—in fact, more. They are not the only ones concerned. This trend is worldwide. As a matter of fact, I would like to read from an article that appeared in “The Australian Financial Review” of the 17th July, 1958. It is headed, “U.S. Railways Fighting a Losing Battle.” It mentions in that article the problems confronting the administrators of the railways in the United States. And there, as we know, the railways are privately owned. It cannot be said that they are overstaffed by 400 or 500 or that there is terrific waste.

The Hon. H. K. Watson: Over there the unions do a bit of feather-bedding.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: In my second reading speech I said that 30,000 miles of line had been closed, and 100,000 employees discharged from the various private railways. But there is another interesting fact which I would like to read. It is as follows:—

Twenty eastern railway systems lost 42,500,000 dollars in the first two months of this year.

That is in 1958—

Several are on the verge of bankruptcy, and once again vague talk of nationalisation is going the rounds.

I would suggest that the nationalisation may be similar to the Metropolitan Transport Trust that was formed here in respect of road services in this metropolitan area. The article goes on—

Last week a one-day halt in rail service for 10,000 Boston commuters—

Commuters are suburban passengers—

—emphasised the growing problem in transportation—the steady cutting back of railway passenger service.

One of the New Haven Railroad's lines failed to run a single train in Boston's South Station. Service was resumed the next day after rail officials were hastily assured that a 900,000 dollar subsidy for the company would pass both Houses of the Massachusetts Legislature.

So, hon. members can see that they are in exactly the same position as are all the railways in Australia, excepting the Commonwealth Railways. Therefore, the commissioner who takes over here is going to be in the same position as those commissioners or administrators who operate the railways in America. The very same thing is happening in Great Britain. This year, 180 miles of lines are being closed and the saving is estimated to be £500,000.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Did you say 180 miles?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Yes. That length of line in England is quite a fair step. To give an idea of what is happening in Great Britain; in the March period, originating tonnage of almost 21,000,000 tons was 2,026,000 tons, or 8.8 per cent. below 1957. The problems are caused by a new form of transport; and the commissioner who takes over in Western Australia is certainly going to have some problems. However, I have no doubt that with the further savings and economies which, in my view, are substantial—some yet to be achieved, but possible and more than probable—the new commissioner will be able to carry on the good work that has been established by Mr. Brodie during his term of six months as acting commissioner and kept in continuation by the same Mr. Brodie as Chief Traffic Manager and Mr. Marsland, the present commissioner. They work very well together. They work as a team and it is something which the commissioner's department in the W.A.G.R. has not known for many years. Its executive is now a happy family and is co-operating instead of dodging each other.

The hon. Mr. Simpson could tell us—I think he did mention something when quoting one of the original three commissioners—that his worries with the other two commissioners who were appointed may have affected his health.

The Hon. C. H. Simpson: I did say that.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I do not doubt it for a minute. It was well known that that commissioner was acting as a peacemaker. A difference came with his decease as his successor was not a peacemaker but a belligerent type. I think that might have been fortunate because it hurried up the end of the three-man commission and we have now reached the point of a sane, sensible working basis. I am pleased with the co-operation of members in connection with this Bill.

Personal Explanation.

The Hon. A. R. Jones: I wish to make a personal explanation. The Minister in his remarks, I understand, wanted it recorded in Hansard that I, and another hon. member, did Mr. Brodie a disservice. I want it plainly stated that he misunderstood me, because I did not do Mr. Brodie a disservice. I never have; I have always given him the best name possible. I want the Minister to accept what I have said because I did not want to decry Mr. Brodie.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

LICENSED SURVEYORS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Returned from the Assembly without amendment.

MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS (POSTPONEMENT OF 1958 ELECTIONS) BILL.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

THE HON. R. C. MATTISKE (Metropolitan) [8.53]: Section 218A of the Commonwealth Electoral Act precludes the holding of municipal elections on the same day as that fixed for the holding of a Federal election. As the 22nd November has been fixed for the holding of the Federal general election it is imperative that the Municipal Corporations Act, which provides that the municipal elections be held on the fourth Saturday in November, be amended.

From inquiries I have made, it appears that there is no objection to the election being postponed for one week, although in certain quarters the view has been expressed that possibly the municipal elections may have been held off for a fortnight instead of one week. The reason for this suggestion is that many voluntary workers who normally become engaged in Federal elections are also interested in municipal elections and may find it somewhat arduous to be engaged on two consecutive Saturdays.

I therefore submit that thought to the Minister for consideration, and hope that he will give it some attention before this Bill reaches the Committee stage. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

THE HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (Suburban) [8.55]: In order to assist the Minister in this small matter, I support the contention put forward by the hon. Mr. Mattiske. The suggestion he made was that consideration be given to altering the Bill to provide that municipal elections be held a fortnight after the 22nd November and not a week after.

I see Mr. President that you are frowning. I do not know whether you are in a mind to disagree with this idea. It is the contention of local authorities—and I agree with it—that their elections are of great importance. Of course, so are elections for the Federal Parliament. The people who are engaged in helping with parliamentary elections are also engaged in elections for local authorities and perhaps it is a hard task for them to be employed on two Saturdays—one following the other.

We also have to bear in mind the question of assistants in polling booths and that sort of thing. I would like to hear the Minister's view on this point: Does he not think it worth while to give a week's break between two elections? It is a pity that the Federal election falls on the same day, but that cannot be helped. I think the suggestion put forward is worthy of some consideration.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (Minister for Railways—North—in reply) [8.56]: The only information on the file is that of a ruling given by the Chief Parliamentary Draftsman, in which he draws attention to the postponement. It reads as follows:—

In case it is intended to postpone the municipal elections beyond the 29th November, 1958, either by Cabinet decision or amendment in Parliament, attention is invited to the probable necessity of considering extension of the terms of office prescribed by Sections 44 and 45 of the Municipal Corporations Act.

I am not able to enlarge on that statement by the Parliamentary Draftsman, but apparently it has something to do with the officers of the various local authorities. I will postpone the Committee stage until another sitting.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

THE HON. L. C. DIVER (Central) [8.58]: When this Bill was presented to this Chamber it covered only a few half

sheets of notes; a vastly different preparation from the original introduction to Parliament of the Industries Assistance Act in 1915.

Perhaps if we hark back to what Sir James Mitchell had to say in his second reading speech in another place—of course he was then known as James Mitchell—it will give us an opportunity to see the circumstances and reason for the original introduction of this measure. I might say that there is no doubt whatsoever that this Act has been of far greater importance through the years than was ever envisaged at the time of its introduction. At page 627 of Hansard for 1915 the hon. J. Mitchell, as he was then, is reported as having said—

This is one of those unfortunate urgency measures we are called upon to deal with from time to time, particularly unfortunate, for, owing to the bad season of last year, the agricultural industry is in trouble, and we have to consider the best means to help those engaged in it. The agricultural activity in the State will depend upon this measure as we pass it, and I hope what we pass will not be the measure which is now before us.

As is obvious from a study of the same Hansard, one of the first industries, other than the rural industries, to receive relief was the mining industry through the Kalgoorlie Firewood Co. This company was almost immediately assisted under the terms of the Act.

At that time I was quite a lad. I had, in 1910, gone into the country with my father, and he was able to take shelter under the terms of the Industries Assistance Act. Over the years I had an opportunity of seeing how, not only he, but scores of other farmers, were able to continue farming pursuits because of the provisions of this legislation. With the passage of time, we have seen areas in the eastern wheatbelt and along the Great Southern line, that were looked upon as being doubtful farming propositions, flourish into sound, farming country. Today these districts are regarded as some of the soundest parts of the State and they are producing, in the form of taxation payments to the Federal Treasurer, enormous sums of money—far more than the originators of the legislation ever thought possible.

This is an interesting piece of legislation and one that is worthy of the study of all representatives in Parliament today, and those people who, in the future, may become members of Parliament. If hon. members look into the Act which was thought to be—I might say—only a spec. crop, they will learn how, with the passage of time, it has turned out to

be something that is highly desirable for the welfare of our great State. I would go so far as to say that perhaps no other one piece of legislation did more for the financial benefit of the early farmers, and later the secondary industries, than this one.

I assume that today all hon. members are aware that the Government does assist certain secondary industries. This is done through the Rural and Industries Bank and also through this measure. Its importance has grown to a degree never contemplated when it was introduced. I have been looking at some figures in regard to land settlement in recent years, and I find that from June, 1952, until June, 1957, some 5,000,000 odd acres of country have been thrown open for selection and taken up by new settlers.

At the moment there is a substantial number of comparatively new settlers who need financial assistance; and it is highly desirable that this legislation be made permanent so that not only these settlers, but others in the future, may receive assistance. I point out to hon. members the purchasing power of money which was originally made available in 1915, under the drought provisions of the Act, and the purchasing power of money today. The present Government might well give consideration to making available an amount of money with the same purchasing power as the amount that was advanced in those times to settlers who were thought to be on marginal farms.

The land that the Government has thrown open today is said to represent an absolute certainty, so that the settler can make a success of his farming venture. This is so, because all the areas concerned are located within a substantial rainfall area, and are reasonably close to the coast. Therefore the odds against today's settlers losing money are not nearly as great as were those against the producers of 40 odd years ago.

Surely the members of the Government would not like us to consider them as being not of the same calibre, as regards statesmanship, as their predecessors. Therefore I strongly urge them to look at this aspect and to assist the many scores of farmers who have taken up light land but who now need assistance. I would also mention the matter of those settlers who are endeavouring to have water located on their properties; especially where they have to go to a considerable depth for water. I suggest to the Government that it look at the Industries Assistance Act to see whether the necessary finance may be made available—I think it can—to enable the Mines Department boring plant to tap good water supplies for the farmers.

In addition, frequently a farmer finds that he has not the capital to equip a water supply, when it is located. Well, here is a golden opportunity for the Government to

do something for such a man. If it assists him, it will also be assisting the State because, as I have said on numerous occasions, once a water supply is established, it is there for posterity, and it becomes a revenue-producer and a tax-earner, not only for the farmer, but for the whole of the State. All the people of the Commonwealth benefit immediately in some way from the establishment of water supplies. I hope the Government will have a look at this aspect of the matter. I trust that the statute, instead of having to be reviewed every five years, as it does at present, will be placed permanently on the statute book in order to assist not only our primary industries but our secondary industries when the necessity arises.

Before I conclude, I wish to say that in my research into the original Bill, I noticed a name that was associated very closely with agriculture in the early days. There may be others, but I have my doubts whether there are any in the same category as the one I have in mind; and this name is that of G. L. Sutton who, at the time, was a member of the original board constituted for the bringing forward of the Industries Assistance Act. This gentleman is still associated—perhaps only in a small way—with agriculture in Western Australia. He has something to do with the Dairy Products Marketing Board and also with the Wheat Prices Board. He has rendered yeoman service to agriculture over the years, and I do not think it would be right for us to deal with this measure without mentioning his name.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Hear, hear!

The Hon. L. C. DIVER: I can recall a visit back in 1912 by Mr. Sutton (later Dr. Sutton), the late Sir Hal Colebatch, and the late Sir James Mitchell, to the property that my father took up in 1910; and I think they were the first Government men that I saw in the country. Mr. Sutton, who had come from New South Wales, knew the conditions that the settlers were placed in. Only recently he said to me that the marvel of his life was to think how these areas came into their own. For several years he did not think the people would make a go of their properties but they showed what could be done under adverse circumstances.

The many sceptics in the State, especially some of the people who write up the eastern districts for "The West Australian," should spend more time in talking to Dr. Sutton about the potential of these areas than they appear to have spent in the past, because I am certain that if they did, he would disillusion them in regard to their approach to farming in those areas. Dr. Sutton is getting fairly old now, but he is still bright of intellect, and he could pass on much valuable information to many of the young men of today.

I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill which seeks to perpetuate the Industries Assistance Act; and in doing so I wish to say that I feel that the original enactment enabled me to follow farming pursuits; and I have never regretted that. Perhaps thousands of others benefited from the Act. It had a profound effect on our lives; not that we were the key personnel of that day, but in many instances our fathers or grandfathers benefited greatly by that legislation and I trust that, in years to come, its value will not be overlooked. I support the Bill.

THE HON. J. D. TEAHAN (North-East—In reply) [9.16]: It has been good to hear the comments of one hon. member, in particular, who benefited greatly under the parent Act. I thank hon. members for the favourable reception they have afforded the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (Minister for Railways—North): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.15 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.20 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, the 24th September, 1958.

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

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE.

No. 1. *This question was postponed.*

FISHING VESSELS.

"Halimah" and "Lancelin"—Cost and Maintenance.

2. Mr. **CROMMELIN** asked the Minister for Fisheries:

(1) What age is the new fishing vessel "Halimah"?