provide all the appliances required and recoup itself out of profits. In this way we could replace with electric appliances all those that are now used for gas. We are stunted in our growth. Are we going to say it is not possible to deal with some would-be purchaser of the power station? We have a demand on every hand in the metropolitan area for power and light, and for additional facilities outside the metropolitan area. Those facilities are necessary for the development of our industries. We say we cannot find the money, and yet we have a million and a quarter tied up in a power station which cannot be removed. We could find the capital of a million and a quarter through somebody else, and still retain all our facilities. I know of British companies that are controlling some of the finest electricity systems in the world. If they could not do as well as we are doing, I would be very sorry for the British Isles. It is all a question of whether the terms and conditions can be such that those who are going to use the electricity will get adequate protection, and will not be squeezed for the benefit of a few shareholders. There is a lot to be said in favour of disposing of the power station. There are not too many monuments to me, but this is one of them, and I am certainly not anxious to dispose of it; but I am anxious to do justice to the community which has to carry the burden. Only a small number of people are getting the benefit of the power station as it is, whereas a large number of people are at a disadvantage because of the capital that is locked up in this concern. We must bear that in mind, before we rashly come to a decision on a question which is not before us. People are continually discussing the matter as though we were on the point of signing away this asset, or had come to a final say in the matter. Nothing whatever will be done by the Government except with the definite approval of Parliament. That ought to be the final answer to any discussion on the question. I appreciate the many things that have been said by members in support of the work of the staff of the Railways, Tramways and the Electricity Supply. We have been passing through a very difficult time, but every person connected with those departments has risen nobly to the occasion. Our country station-masters are specially to be commended for the manner in which they have gone out after business on behalf of the system. That is worth a great deal to the community, and all the officers and employees are entitled to our best appreciation for their efforts. This applies to most of our Government departments. The officers have risen to the occasion, greatly to their credit and to the benefit of the State.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.37 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 15th November, 1932.

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

BULK HANDLING BILL, SELECT COMMITTEE.

Extension of Time.

On motion by Hon. V. Hamersley, the time for bringing up the select committee's report was extended for a week.

RETURN—MAIN ROADS AND MOTOR LICENSES.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [4.36]: I move—

That a return be laid on the Table showing:—1, What has been the total expenditure to date on our main roads? 2 What proportion of same has been provided from State funds? 3, What is the estimated contribution

by motor car and truck owners in this State—(a) total amount of customs duty levied on petrol; (b) all lubricating oils and greases? 4, What is the total amount of these duties collected from motorists returned to the State Government by the Commonwealth for the purposes of road construction and maintenance?

The object I have in moving for this return is to ascertain how much money has been expended on the construction of our main roads, for I want all those who are in favour of allowing them to get into a state of disrepair, so that they will be unfit for use, to realise the enormous amount of money that has been expended on road construction and how essential it is that our roads should be maintained. I feel that if we could get an accurate account of the amount contributed by the owners of motor vehicles probably it would be found that really they are contributing the largest proportion of the money required for road construction. At a chamber of commerce conference held in Bunbury recently, a resolution was carried to the effect that, in view of the increasing competition of motor transport with our railways, a transport board should be appointed. I am hopeful that if the information asked for be supplied we shall be in a position to realise how much has been expended on our roads and how much the motorists themselves have contributed.

Question put and passed.

BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY TAX ASSESSMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY TAX.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 2nd November.

HON. SIR EDWARD WITTENOOM (North) [4.41]: I need hardly say that I am not surprised at this measure, in fact I expected it, or something like it. Whilst I am fully in accord with its object in causing almost everyone to contribute something to the taxation, I still think the method I suggested some time ago should have been more acceptable to the Government, for then they would not have been so strongly criticised and opposed. That method was that all exemptions to the income tax be withdrawn, and everyone who has a vote be asked to pay from 10s. up to £100 or more, according to the scale. There are to-day hundreds of people who have a vote but who do not pay anything at all towards taxation. It is generally recognised that representation without taxation is just as unfair as is taxation without representation. The method adopted in the Bill is to see that everybody pays his share. I am still of opinion that although the Government made numerous reductions and cuts in salaries, they did not economise sufficiently. Had they done so, this proposed new tax need not have been so severe, if required at all. Let me remind the House of my suggestions for economies, suggestions which have not evoked any action by the Government. The first was that the University should never have been given a grant of £23,000 or more. The next was that all secondary education should be suspended during the financial crisis, as there are already good private secondary schools in the State. By this means a large sum could have been saved. It may be asked, what would have become of the buildings at Geraldton, Albany and other places? Those buildings could have been leased to the best State school teachers we have, and those teachers could have taken on the pupils at High School rates. The third was that we should do away with the Arbitration Court, thus saving at least £10,000 a year, and enabling many of the unemployed to find work. The other day, the President of the Arbitration Court took exception to some remarks of the Attorney General. I do not think the Attorney General went nearly far enough. I do not know why any man should be in a position to dictate to people possessing money how they should spend it. The next was that the position of Agent General should be abolished, thus saving about £3,000 a year. I am not saying anything against the present Agent General, except that he has nothing to do, and the work of the office could be carried out by the Under Secretary. The idea of free education is practically out of date. I have here an extract from the "Times," of England, which is as good an authority as can be found anywhere. The "Times" says—

A circular has been issued by the Board of Education to Local Education Authorities for Higher Education and to grant-aided Second-

ary Schools, accompanied by revised draft Regulations for Secondary Schools. In revising the regulations the Board state that they have felt bound to take account of two criticisms which have recently been made with increasing force. The first is that the system of admitting pupils free to secondary schools without any regard to the capacity of the parents to pay is needlessly wasteful of public funds. The second is that the fees charged often bear but a small proportion to the cost of the education provided, and are frequently not adequate having regard to what parents can afford to pay. At present a proportion, and sometimes the whole, of the places in a school are filled by competitive examination, the successful candidates at which are admitted free. Under the new regulations fees will be charged in all schools and, while places (in future to be called special places) will continue to be filled by open competition, the parents of pupils successful in the competition will be expected to pay the school fee, except where their circumstances justify its remission either wholly or in part.

It is unfortunate that this Bill had to be brought down, but the Government must get money somewhere. In the circumstances, I am going to vote for the second reading of the measure.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [4.53]: I cannot allow Sir Edward Wittenoom's remarks to go unchallenged. He said he was pleased that no exemptions from this tax were to be allowed. Exemptions are granted in the first place because the persons concerned are not earning enough money to keep body and soul together. In the second place, they are granted because of the fact that the taxpayers in question have a number of dependants, mostly children, to maintain on a very limited income. I am sorry the hon. member should object to these exemptions. I know the Government are hard-pushed for money, but it appears to me that they could get far more revenue by a more equitable system of taxation than they propose to raise under the Bill. Even if the tax be started at 4½d. in the pound, I cannot see why the Government could not impose a graduated tax, starting with 4½d. as a basis. Apart altogether from the number of dependants a person may have in relation to his income, it is altogether wrong to have a flat rate of 4½d. If a graduated tax were brought down, very much more revenue would be derived from it, and a much greater measure of assistance could be given to the unemployed than has been given in the past. The hon. member also advocated the abolition of the Arbitration Court. That is one of the few protections the workers have. I do not think any Government would be willing to abolish the Arbitration Court bench, but the present Government have found ways and means of limiting the activities of that tribunal, particularly through the Financial Emergency Act.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: The Arbitration Court is one of the worst things ever perpetrated in this State.

Hon. G. FRASER: That depends on which side of the fence one may be standing.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: I know on which side of the fence you are standing.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am looking at the matter from the point of view of those who have to give evidence before the court as to their mode of living in order to obtain sufficient to keep body and soul together. The hon. member is looking at it from the point of view of those who hope to amass greater fortunes than they have to-day.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The Arbitration Court has been abolished in New Zealand.

Hon. G. FRASER: New Zealand does not provide a shining example of what should be done in Western Australia. We do not know the conditions appertaining to the workers there.

Hon. G. W. Miles: There is no Arbitration Court in Canada.

Hon. G. FRASER: Australia has led the way in many reforms. The Arbitration Court in this State has not functioned to my satisfaction. It has nevertheless afforded protection to the workers, and has meted out to them a certain amount of justice.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: What about the employers?

Hon. G. FRASER: They have a two-thirds majority on the bench.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: We are all poor men now.

Hon. G. W. Miles: How do you make out the employers have a two-thirds majority on the bench?

The PRESIDENT: Order! I have allowed considerable latitude on this and the previous Bill, because they are both financial measures. This Bill proposes to impose a particular tax, and I ask hon. members to confine their remarks as nearly as possible to giving reasons for or against the proposals contained in the Bill.

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not entirely agree with Sir Edward Wittenoom's remarks on education, although I think a certain amount of money could be saved. I know he has always been opposed to free education, and therein I do not agree with him. It is right that education should be free, even up to the University.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Why are you such a clever man if you have not been to all these wonderful places?

Hon. G. FRASER: I might have been clever had I had the privilege of attending a university. I do not hold extreme views on the matter, as the hon. member does, and I think education should be made accessible to all those who can avail themselves of it. I only rose to protest against the hon. member's views as regards the exemptions that are granted under the Land and Income Tax Act, and against the imposition of this tax on a flat rate.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Imposition of Financial Emergency tax:

The CHIEF SECRETARY: When speaking on the Assessment Bill reference was made to the duration of the tax. I may have used the wrong words, but I did intend my remarks to apply to the tax itself and that it would be imposed to the 30th June next.

Clause put and passed.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 8th November. Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 75—Amendment of schedules:

Hon. A. THOMSON: I move an amendment—

That paragraph (b) be struck out.

I may be unduly suspicious, but it seems to me that it is proposed by this clause to give too much power to the Minister. We have deleted Clause 19 which gave the Minister power to over-ride a local authority and in effect now this clause proposes to give the Minister similar power. The position as it stands under the Act is quite in order and if a man has reason to object to the refusal of a board to approve of plans and specifications, he can appeal to the local court or to the Supreme Court. I hope the Minister will agree to the deletion of the paragraph and allow the position to stand as it is at present.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I oppose the amendment. The clause will prevent a person from forcing a matter to the Supreme Court or Local Court. In either case that procedure involves considerable expense. Why should we not relieve local bodies in the manner proposed instead of making the position more difficult? It is proper that the appeal from a board's refusal to approve of plans should be to the Minister.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I was under the impression that the Minister would define the area to which the Bill would apply. If it is to apply from one end of the State to the other, my impression is the whole clause should be struck out because it is designed to suit the metropolitan area only. If we apply these conditions to outlying parts of the State, we shall be harassing industry and making production more difficult.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am in accord with the proposal to give a local authority power to say that a place erected for a factory may be converted to a building for residential purposes, such as flats. Plans may be submitted to a local authority and approved by them. One might be prepared to spend a considerable sum of money in converting an obsolete building into modern flats and I have a certain suspicion that we then might hand over to the Town Planning Commission the right to have the final say. In a certain town it was proposed to erect two shops, but because some of the existing structures had been built back from the alignment, an appeal was made to the Town Planning Commissioner to prevent the erection of the shops. Invariably a Minister is guided by his responsible officers and it would be difficult for him to override them.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am astonished at Mr. Thomson. His amendment would make the measure more difficult for the local governing bodies. This is a Road Districts Bill and is not connected with town planning. Surely the local authorities should be in the best position to say whether plans are in order. We should trust the local authorities.

Hon. A. Thomson: I am not objecting to that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Time and money will be saved by providing for appeal to the Minister instead of to the court. The officers by whom the Minister would be aided would be those of the local governing branch, and not the town planning authorities.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The paragraph will take the matter out of the hands of the board because it provides for appeal to the Minister. Yet the Chief Secretary says that we should trust the local authority. I have it from an authority on road matters that the Town Planning Commissioner is becoming a nuisance to the road boards. He wants to butt in.

The Chief Secretary: Can you cite an act in the last two years?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: If he has been held in check during the last two years, that is no guarantee of what might happen under another Government. I can read the Town Planning Commissioner's ideas right through the Bill, and I think a lot of the provisions have been inserted on his advice. He has spent many hours in the gallery listening to the discussion on the Bill.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Should not that be to his credit?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: We pay an officer a high salary and then bring him into this Chamber to educate him. I shall vote to retain the existing provision.

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

Ayes	8
Noes	17
Majority against	9

AYES.

Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. H. V. Piesse
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. C. H. Wittenoom
Hon. W. H. Kitson	*(Teller.)*
Hon. G. W. Miles	

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. T. Moore
Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. Sir C. Nathan
Hon. J. Ewing	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. J. T. Franklin	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	Hon. Sir E. Wittenoom
Hon. E. H. Harris	Hon. H. J. Yelland
Hon. J. M. Macfarlane	Hon. G. Fraser
Hon. W. J. Mann	*(Teller.)*

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 76—agreed to.

The CHAIRMAN: The Chief Secretary has handed in a typewritten copy of a proposed new clause. It is word for word with Clause 39 that was deleted, other than that it mentions "Order-in-Council" instead of "proclamation." The best course for him to adopt would be to move on recommittal for the re-insertion of Clause 39 with the alteration I have indicated.

The Chief Secretary: My proposed new clause stipulates "on application by a board."

The CHAIRMAN: In essence it is the same as Clause 39. The Minister had better put his proposal on the Notice Paper and move it on recommittal.

[*Hon. J. Nicholson took the Chair.*]

New clause:

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move—

That the following be inserted to stand as Clause 19:—"Section 132 of the principal Act is amended by deleting subsection two and inserting a new subsection as follows:—'(2) Each member, including the chairman, shall have one vote only, and in the case of an equality of votes on any question, such question shall pass in the negative.'"

Section 132 of the principal Act provides for a chairman exercising a deliberative and a casting vote. I do not know of anything that has caused more intriguing and trouble than the second vote thus accorded the chairman of a board. We have outlived the time when that privilege should be granted a chairman, and I know of no Parliament where the President or Speaker exercises two votes. The reason why the second vote was provided for a chairman was to enable a decision to be arrived at by a majority, and should the voting be equal, the chairman, by the exercise of his casting vote, was to secure a majority on that question. In Parliament if the voting should be equal, the question

passes in the negative. Road boards are *different from* municipal councils in that the chairman of a board is not elected by a separate vote whereas a mayor is elected at a different election altogether. The chairman is merely elected to the board and subsequently is chosen by his fellow members to occupy the chair. Why should such a man be given two votes merely because he is chairman?

New clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [5.40] in moving the second reading said: The Bill comprises five clauses and although they occupy three pages, the Bill, in essence, is exceedingly brief. Although the parent Act applies to enrolments for both the Council and the Assembly, the Bill in no way impinges upon the electoral machinery in its application to the Legislative Assembly. It is highly desirable that that shall be so. Any legislation to alter the electoral machinery applicable to both Houses should rightly be introduced by the Government. I understand such a Bill is under consideration by the Government, but if it were agreed to this session, time has so far elapsed that effect could not be given to it in connection with the Legislative Assembly elections next March. The chief object I have in introducing the amending legislation is to endeavour to avoid, if possible, a recurrence of a regrettable episode in this Chamber during the present session, with regard to enrolments for the West Province in particular. I have all through been of the opinion that Mr. Gray was more sinned against than sinning in regard to that particular matter. The rigidity of our electoral laws with regard to claims and enrolments for the Legislative Council was largely responsible for bringing about a very unhappy set of circumstances and it is to avoid any such possibility in the future that I ask the House to endorse the Bill I am now presenting to them. They will probably find that the measure will not accomplish all they may desire. Personally I am satisfied with the general provisions of the Electoral Act but I know that some of them could be tightened up by reverting to the Commonwealth system, which exactly reverses our methods regarding claims. As legislation along those lines, however, would be applicable to the Legislative Assembly as well as to the Legislative Council, the introduction of such a measure should be by a Minister of the Crown. Our Act provides that a claim for the Council, or a claim for the Assembly, has to go before the registrar, who, if satisfied that it is in order, will grant it after 14 days. If he is not satisfied, he can make reasonable inquiries, and if not then satisfied, he must object to the claim. The claim can then be heard by a magistrate. Under the Commonwealth electoral law, and under the electoral law of most of the other States, the position is reversed. The subdivisional registrar or the divisional returning officer, as the case may be, can reject a claim, but the onus is on the elector himself to get his name on the roll. That is briefly the difference between our system and the Federal system and, I think, the system of almost every other State of the Commonwealth. Under our system, as I have already said, the registrar receives the claim—I am dealing with the Council only—and after 14 days, if he considers it is in order, he places the name on the roll. If he considers it is not in order, he gives notice to the elector, and a date is fixed upon which the claim can be heard before a magistrate, who determines whether or not the claimant can be put on the roll. The period for which a claim is held under our Act, for either the Council or the Assembly, is 14 days. Under this Bill, that period of 14 days is, so far as the Council is concerned, increased to 30 days. There is another phase. An elector can at any time go to the Electoral Registrar's office and see any claim, and our Act provides that he may object to any claim by paying a fee of 2s. 6d. on each objection. It is also provided that the registrar may also object, and that objection is heard in the same way as an objection made by an elector, but there is no fee of 2s. 6d. charged. The objection can be heard before a magistrate. Now we come to the crux of the whole matter. When an objection is made, either by an elector or by the registrar, and a writ is issued for an election, if the objection be not heard and determined

14 days prior to the issue of the writ, then the names objected to must be placed on the roll; but in the case of an objection by the registrar, there is a proviso which states it is his duty to star all such names. Those persons then cannot vote on polling day unless and until they deliver to the presiding officer a declaration stating that they are qualified to vote. The second hurdle that this Bill is designed to overcome is to enlarge that period of 14 days before the issue of the writ to 30 days. A name on the roll may be objected to by an elector on payment of a fee of 2s. 6d., or it may be objected to by the registrar, but the same machinery applies as in the case of an objection to a claim for enrolment. Strange to say, however—and I spoke to Mr. Sayer, who drafted this Bill, on this question—where a writ is issued, the name must go on the roll; if it is objected to by an elector, the registrar is not required to star the name. On the other hand, if it is objected to by the registrar, he must star the name, and the person has then to make a declaration that he is qualified to vote. Why there should be that distinction I am at a loss to understand, because the procedure is exactly the same as that in the case of a man claiming to be enrolled. In the one case, if he is objected to either by the registrar or by an elector, his name is starred. His name is put on the roll, but he cannot get a ballot paper on election day until he makes a declaration that he has the necessary qualifications to vote.

Hon. J. Nicholson: In the other case, the star only appears in case the registrar objects.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Yes. That is ridiculous.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Yes.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Fundamentally, there is no difference at all between a man claiming to be put on the roll and a man claiming that his name ought to stop on the roll. The object of this Bill is to secure uniformity in both those cases. As I have said, I am leaving the Assembly out of the question and am only dealing with the Council. With regard to the Council, this is what happens: Prior to an election, neither side gets busy as soon as it should in connection with enrolments. For argument's sake, both sides may start three weeks prior to the issue of the writ, which is only seven days over the statutory period allowed. I know that in Kalgoorlie at least 700 votes have been put on by one party on the fifteenth day before the issue of the writ. Here in the Metropolitan-Suburban Province—I am not putting up any brief for the metropolitan area, it can fight its own battles; I have fought mine long enough—within a month of the issue of the writ, or 14 days before the period allowed, pretty well 6,000 claims for enrolment have been lodged, and in the West Province about 3,000 odd claims. Can one wonder, when there is only a fortnight within which to clear up such a complicated enrolment, that we had such a regrettable happening as that which occurred here this session, when accusations of dishonesty were made against a man? One wonders what officers would be competent to clean up such enrolments in the short time at their disposal. I do not think any man who is worth his salt, no matter what his political views may be, will claim for a moment that any person not entitled should be placed on the Legislative Council roll. I know of numerous cases, however, where men have gone voluntarily to the registrar and explained that, owing to the injudicious actions of canvassers, they have been incorrectly placed on the roll. They were so placed on the roll through the misrepresentations of people who did not know their business. I want to avoid a repetition of that kind of thing. As far as the Legislative Council is concerned, I want a little more opportunity given to the registrar to make inquiries. I know of two instances, when Mark Saunders was registrar in Kalgoorlie for the South Province, where he refused to register two claims that I put in, and two claims that the other side put in. He said, "I will do this: I will go out and have a look at the places myself, and if I think those names ought to go on the roll, they will go on. If I do not, they will not." He had a look at the four places, and none of the four names was enrolled, so we were fifty-fifty. The fact remains, however, that that man did his job. He was not deluged with claims.

Member: He was judicious.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Yes. He was a competent registrar. What the Bill seeks to achieve is, briefly, this: No claim for enrolment will be in order unless it is in the hands of the registrar one month prior to the issue of the writ. To-day the period is 14 days prior to the issue of the writ. The extension asked for is there-

fore only 16 days. Of the 30 days proposed, 16 days can be utilised by the registrar or by an elector in making objections and settling doubtful claims. It does not necessarily follow that a man who has been objected to will not be put on the roll, because the objection may be heard within the 16 days.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Why should not the same thing apply to the Assembly as to the Council?

Hon. J. CORNELL: I have pointed out that I think it would be highly injudicious for any member of the Legislative Council to endeavour to interfere at all with our Electoral Act so far as it concerns the Legislative Assembly. The Assembly can mind their own business, and we ought to mind ours. If a Bill came along to us from the Legislative Assembly—a private member's Bill, the same as this, asking that a certain amendment be made—it would be the duty of the Council to take it as read, and pass it. I think the Assembly will do the same with this Bill. Even though the 30 days period is extended, the claim must be determined in 30 days now, instead of 14 days, before the issue of the writ. Objections may be heard and determined 16 days after the issue of the writ, but if they are not heard and determined any person who has made a claim to go on the roll shall go on, but his name shall be starred, as it is now. In the case of objection to a man being on the roll, there are 16 days in which to hear and determine the objection, but if it be not determined within 16 days after the issue of the writ, he too goes on the roll; with this difference, that in both cases, whether the objection is by another elector or by the registrar, the name is starred and the voter shall make a declaration before he can get a ballot paper. That is all that is in the Bill, and I can assure members it is not loaded. It is self-explanatory, and all that it will mean in application is that members of this House going up for re-election, or candidates going up against them, will need to start 16 days earlier than heretofore. That is the whole essence of the Bill. I have heard it said that rolls are not issued, that it is the waiting for the rolls that makes this congestion before the issue of the writ. There is no need for an amendment to get over that, because the law as it stands is adequate if only it were administered. Section 26 of the Electoral Act provides that a supplementary roll shall be issued by the Chief Electoral Officer within one month after the 30th June and the 31st December in each year. If the electoral registrar were given sufficient money to carry out the law, the congestion would disappear. At any last election it was only 14 days before polling day that a roll was issued. For 12 months previously there had not been a supplementary roll or a main roll, and there was no main roll issued for the South Province until 14 days before election day. Members can imagine the position in which I would have been had I not been an old campaigner and kept my own roll right through. That roll was 98 per cent. correct. The Bill is overdue, it is necessary, it is not asking for much while it is calculated to bring about a better set of conditions. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Harris, debate adjourned.

BILL—LOCAL COURTS ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 1st November. Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 3—Section 130 repealed (partly considered):

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported on Clause 3 as previously amended.

Hon. H. SEDDON: It had been my intention to move an amendment as follows: "Subclause (5), strike out 'person entitled to enforce the judgment or order may' and substitute 'registrar or clerk of the court shall, if requested by the person entitled to enforce the judgment or order.'" However, when I consulted the Crown Law officials they pointed out that the amendment would introduce an entirely new principle. At the wish of certain members I have had the amendment framed and placed on the Notice Paper, but I do not intend to proceed with it.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I move an amendment—

That the following be added at the end of Subclause (5):—"The person entitled to enforce any judgment or order as aforesaid shall be entitled to all costs incurred by such person

in connection with any such summons, and same shall be added to the amount of the judgment debt or order, and be recoverable accordingly.''

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This amendment would give permission to the court to add the costs where the judgment creditor was successful in obtaining an order.

Hon. J. Nicholson: To give him the right to get his costs.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: But the creditor is not entitled and never was entitled to his costs of the judgment. An amendment I have on the Notice Paper would be more in keeping than this one. I certainly cannot accept Mr. Nicholson's amendment, for it would alter the Act.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I do not know that the Minister's amendment will go as far as mine.

The Chief Secretary: Yours goes too far. That is the trouble.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That objection would be met by adding to the amendment the words, "The person entitled to enforce any judgment or order of the court shall be entitled."

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I would be prepared to accept the amendment of the Chief Secretary, which is on the Notice Paper, if he could embody the text of my amendment in his.

Hon. J. M. DREW: Mr. Nicholson's amendment is not acceptable to me. It would be very unfair to the debtor because the creditor could take him to court, with the object of having him put in prison, and if, then, the debtor was unable to pay, the costs of the action would be added to the amount that he owed. The amendment of the Chief Secretary leaves the whole thing to the discretion of the magistrate.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know what prompted Mr. Nicholson to move his amendment. It would enable a creditor to approach the court on the most trivial point and the cost of the action would fall upon the shoulders of the debtor. What we ought to do is to relieve the position without imposing any hardship on the creditor, who certainly could not benefit if the debtor were put into gaol.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Mr. Nicholson's amendment would pave the way to serious abuses. Actually, I am not in favour of the Bill at all. The tendency is to make it more difficult for the creditor to get payment of what is owed to him. He has to bring a debtor twice before the court, and the latter may be one of those people who endeavours to get out of his obligations. We should not encourage persons of that description.

Amendment put and negatived.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That the following be inserted to stand as Subclause (6):—''Where the magistrate makes any order under Subsection (2) or (5) of this section against any person making default as aforesaid, he may order payment of the cost of the application by such person to the person entitled to enforce the judgment or order as aforesaid, and in such case the same shall be added to the judgment debt or order and be recoverable accordingly.''

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. G. W. MILES: I hope the clause will be struck out. Its object appears to be solely to assist the debtor, and the only good it will do will be to kill credit in the country. As a matter of fact the whole of the Bill is unnecessary.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I am of the same opinion, and I should like to see the clause go out. It leaves the way open for the unscrupulous, and will not do genuine people any good.

Clause, as amended, put, and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes	9
Noes	10
Majority against	1

Ayes	
Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. H. J. Yelland
Hon. E. H. Harris	*(Teller.)*

Noes	
Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. R. G. Moore
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. H. V. Piesse
Hon. J. M. Macfarlane	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. W. J. Mann	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. G. W. Miles	Hon. E. Rose
	(Teller.)

Clause, as amended, thus negatived.

Progress reported.

BILL—DEBTORS ACT AMENDMENT.

Recommittal.

On motion by Hon. G. W. Miles, Bill recommitted for the purpose of further considering Clause 3.

In Committee.

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

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 3 of 34 Victoria 21:

Hon. G. W. MILES: I am going to ask the Committee to delete this clause for the reason that like the clause in the Local Courts Bill which we have just rejected, it is entirely unnecessary and will harass the creditor.

The CHAIRMAN: I suggest that before the vote is taken on the clause it should be amended to bring it into line with the clause that has just been deleted from the Local Courts Bill. Then later the Committee, if it thinks necessary, can vote out the clause as amended.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: What is the object of doing that unless it be to waste time? We would amend it to-day and recommit the Bill to-morrow for the purpose of striking out the clause. If we are going to strike out the clause what object can there be in adopting your suggestion, Mr. Chairman?

The CHAIRMAN: Only this, that there are 19 members present, and to-morrow there may be 30.

Hon. J. M. DREW: The clause, in my opinion, is capable of being satisfactorily amended. I do not like the words in it accruing or recurring. Accruing means that a man may owe someone else money, and that would be a good defence. He may have an obligation accruing; he may have issued a promissory note and hence he would have an obligation recurring. Those two words should be struck out.

Clause, as amended, put and a division called for.

The CHAIRMAN: Before tellers are appointed. I give my vote for the ayes.

Division resulted as follows:—

Ayes	11
Noes	11
A tie	0

AYES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. E. H. Harris
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. H. J. Yelland
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	*(Teller.)*

NOES.

Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. H. V. Piesse
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. J. M. Macfarlane	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. W. J. Mann	Hon. C. H. Wittenoom
Hon. G. W. Miles	Hon. Sir C. Nathan
Hon. R. G. Moore	*(Teller.)*

The CHAIRMAN: The voting being equal, the question passes in the negative.

Clause thus negatived.

Bill again reported with a further amendment.

BILL—JUSTICES ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

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

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 155:

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I move an amendment—

That after "thereto" in paragraph (a) the words "and in connection with any steps or proceedings under this Act" be inserted.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have no objection to the amendment except that the word "Act" should read "section."

Hon. J. Nicholson: I will accept that alteration.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment will be altered accordingly.

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

Clauses 3 to 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—New Schedule:

Hon. J. M. DREW: I move an amendment—

That in the new schedule all the words relating to Masters and Servants Act be struck out.

My object is to allow the Masters and Servants Act to continue. This legislation was first introduced by Mr. Septimus Burt when Attorney General in the Forrest Ministry in 1892. It was based on the English law, and has worked well. It has been the means of securing for many an

unfortunate workman the full amount of wages due to him. Wages owing to a workman can scarcely be considered to be on the same plane as a gas account or an ordinary account. A workman depends for his existence on his wages, and a physical injury may be inflicted on him, and, if he is married, on his wife and family, if he is deprived of the price of his daily toil. Other legislation adopted in Australia and in the Mother country shows that wages are always regarded as something sacred. Under the Companies Act wages owing are a first charge on assets when a company is wound up. It was the same with the State Bankruptcy Act, and it is the same with the Federal Bankruptcy Act, except that rates are made a first charge and wages come next. In other directions wages have been protected. The Bill proposes to make wages an ordinary debt. Action would have to be taken in the police court and the decision of the police court registered in the local court. Subsequently the debtor would come up for examination, and later he would appear on a judgment summons and on process. Meanwhile the unfortunate workman would be waiting for his wages, and it might be many months before finality was reached. If the Debtors' Act Amendment Bill be passed, wages will no longer be a first charge on the assets of the employer.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That is not so.

Hon. J. M. DREW: The workman will not be able to take action under the Masters and Servants Act. The Federal Bankruptcy Act and the Companies Act are not affected in any way, but the workman will not be able to proceed promptly in the police court to recover money due as wages. I read in the "Daily News" of Tuesday last, some time after I had placed my amendment on the notice paper, a letter written by Joe Thomas, organiser of the Timber Workers' Union. I do not know Mr. Thomas, and he has not been in communication with me, but he wrote as follows—

> Some months ago I had considerable trouble over an order for sleepers for the Commonwealth railways. I am still having complaints for, although the cutters around Busselton supplied portion of the order for 38s. a load and were not covered by insurance, they are still unpaid by those holding the contract although the sleepers have been shipped from our shores many weeks. Mr. Nairn is to be commended for having taken up the matter in the Federal House. . . . . The position is that cutters, under present conditions, are not protected as ordinary workers, and I have been instrumental in securing the introduction of a Bill into the Assembly, called the Timber Workers Bill, which will bring all sleeper cutters legally under the Masters and Servants Act, 1892, and as "workers" under the Industrial Arbitration Act, 1912. The desperate condition of the sleeper cutter emphasises the urgency of this legislation.

Contractors do not come under the Masters and Servants Act, although piece-workers do. Evidently the sleeper cutters are anxious to come under the Act. We should hesitate before depriving the working class of a privilege they have enjoyed for a century or more.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I appreciate the views of Mr. Drew, but the Bill will not deprive the workers of exacting their full and reasonable remedy against the defaulting employer. The Bill will simply transfer certain action relating to proceedings under the Masters and Servants Act, or the Justices Act at present, to their proper realm. It will have the effect of removing such proceedings from the category of quasi criminal proceedings to that of ordinary civil proceedings. Mr. Drew appears to think that the workers will lose their remedy against defaulting employers, but they will retain those powers; the proceedings after they originate in the police court will be transferred to the local court to be further dealt with there. The sleeper cutters he referred to are in a different position from other employees. They cannot recover under the provisions of the Masters and Servants Act because those sleeper cutters are really contractors. They stand in the position of principals in regard to the contract.

Hon. J. M. DREW: My object is to get at a certain class of employer that Mr. Nicholson cannot have in mind. I refer to birds of passage and crooks who go to a district, take a contract, employ labour and disappear without paying the men. If the workers could take action against such men under the Masters and Servants Act, then those individuals, if within the State, would be tried in the police court and if they failed to pay what was due to the men or to provide securities for payment, they would be sent to prison.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is, if they were able to pay.

Hon. J. M. DREW: Yes. It is not a one-sided arrangement. If an employee deserts his employer and fails to carry out his engagement, he can be brought before the police court and be dealt with similarly. During the last 35 years I have not known one instance in which it has been found necessary to prosecute an employee but there have been scores of instances in which employers of the type I have referred to have been prosecuted. In not one of the latter instances that I am aware of has the money not been found when the worker has had recourse to police court action. If that is not still available to the worker, it will mean that the bird of passage employer will clear out and nothing more will be heard of him.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 7, 8—agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—PUBLIC SERVICE APPEAL BOARD ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 2nd November.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [8.29]: The Bill was introduced by Mr. Seddon in a very brief speech. So far as I can understand it, the proposal is to give all railway and tramway employees and others operating under the Commissioner for Railways the right to go before an appeal board on the question whether they are entitled to come under the superannuation fund or not. At the time of the unfortunate strike of civil servants some years ago, provision was made that those officers who had joined the service prior to 1904 should have the right to go before a board to ascertain whether they were entitled to superannuation allowance. That put the country to a great deal of expense. There was no obligation on the part of the Government to carry out the decision of the board, nor is there any obligation for them to do so under this Bill, if passed. What I am afraid of is that considerable expense will be incurred by the appointment of an additional board, as I presume 95 per cent. of the employees will consider they are entitled to a superannuation allowance.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It would only apply to those who joined the service prior to 1904.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Perhaps all those officers will consider they are entitled to superannuation allowance. Whether they are or not, their cases will be heard by this board. I do not think this is the time to establish a board of this kind, the members of which, I presume, will have to be paid. The Government should not appoint such a board. The officers of the Crown Law Department are available to look into each individual case. If they decide that a man is entitled to superannuation allowance, then the Government can take action. It seems to me that this is only a smoke screen; anybody and everybody is to be asked to put his application before the board.

Hon. R. G. Moore: Does it apply to the world?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: You will see that it applies to the railway and tramway service.

Hon. R. G. Moore: Does it apply to the tramway service?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: No, I do not think so. I was slightly confused there. If the proposed board could give effect to its findings, it would be a different matter; but after the board makes its finding or recommendation, the Government may or may not agree to it. Surely that is putting the country to much expense and unnecessary trouble. I do not think the present time is opportune to introduce a Bill of this character. If we have men available in the department who could form a board of this description, with unlimited time to deal with applications, there might be something to be said in favour of the Bill. I repeat, that I think if these public servants are entitled to a superannuation allowance, it should be the duty of the Crown Law officers to advise the Government accordingly. I oppose the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by Hon. J. M. Drew, debate adjourned.

BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [8.35] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is very simple and consists of only one clause, namely, that the definition of

"State instrumentality" shall not include the University of Western Australia. A peculiar position has arisen here, and I think in justice to the gentlemen controlling the institution, Parliament should go to their assistance and put them in such a position that they cannot be assailed at a later day. Briefly, the Bill amends Part VI. of the principal Act. The claim of the University is that it is a State instrumentality. I think I am right in saying that neither the Government nor Parliament ever intended that it should be a State instrumentality. The University certainly has reduced the salaries of the professors and teachers in accordance with the Financial Emergency Act; but when it comes to the money which has been lent to road boards and other people, it is claimed that the University is a State instrumentality, and is not obliged to make any reduction in interest. That was the position the University took up. It went before a Judge in Chambers, who gave a ruling that, under the Act the institution was not a State instrumentality, but when road boards and other borrowers from the University made application for a reduction in interest, the University set up the plea, "We are very sorry indeed, but, as trustees, we are bound to comply with the express wish of Parliament." At a later stage, the University announced in the newspaper that it had been decided to make a reduction in interest as from a specific date. I do not think that men of such high standing should be allowed to depart from their trust. It certainly is a very bad example to set to the students who come under them when those responsible say that although they are bound to carry out the express wish of Parliament as contained in the Act, they have decided to make a reduction in the rate of interest as from a given date. In their own interests I claim that this matter should be cleared up. It should be definitely enacted that the University is not a State instrumentality. I go further. I think I am quite justified in saying that it was never intended the University should be a State instrumentality. In confirmation of what I have said, I would point out that the University seems to have reduced the interest payable by some of its borrowers and not others. The road boards that have borrowed money from the University have been making applications for reduction. That is since the announcement was made in the newspaper by the University that a reduction in interest had been made. I have a letter here from one of the road boards addressed to the secretary of the Road Boards Association, Perth. That letter states that several Ministers of the Crown have said that the University is not a State instrumentality and is not under the control of the Minister. In a letter of a later date from the University it is set out that a reduction cannot be made because the institution has to be true to its trust, and so the issue is side-tracked. Later on another borrower is written to and told "We will make a reduction in the interest as from the 24th July last." The University takes all the advantages afforded by the Act; but when it comes to the question of making a reduction in interest payable the answer is, "We have to stand by our trust, much as we would like to grant your request."

Hon. J. Cornell: Does the Act apply to a trustee company?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Yes. I know of an instance in this State where men carrying on a very large business in one of the principal streets of Perth became involved through no fault of their own. They had two properties, each adjoining the other. On one property they borrowed money from the University, to whom they have been paying the full rate of 7 per cent. ever since the Financial Emergency Act was passed. They borrowed money on the adjoining building from a private individual or a company, I do not know which, but in that case they secured the reduction immediately the Financial Emergency Act was passed. They have been paying the full rate to the University until now, when they have been notified that a reduction in the interest will be made as from the 24th July, this year. The University has not made any reduction in the interest payable by road boards. I do not want any misunderstanding about the matter at all. Boiled down, this Bill declares that the University is not a State instrumentality.

Hon. J. Nicholson: It is understood the Act does not apply.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I do not know what position is taken up in regard to that; the University has shifted its position so often. But it has been stated and not disputed that several Ministers have been

through the country saying it was never intended to apply it. I do not believe it was intended. The University is not a State concern controlled by a Minister. The Bill, if agreed to, will set out clearly that the University is not a State instrumentality and so, as Parliament intended, it will not be a State instrumentality as from the date of the passing of the original Act.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: Where does the University get the money from?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: It has lots of money. It has taken all the advantages offering, but accepted none of the disadvantages. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. J. M. DREW (Central) [8.47]: Is this not a money Bill? At all events, I move—

That the debate be adjourned until Thursday next.

Motion put and passed.

MOTION—RAILWAYS' CAPITAL ACCOUNT.

To inquire by Committee.

Debate resumed from the 11th October on the following motion by Hon. A. Thomson—

That in the opinion of this House a Committee should be appointed with the powers of an honorary Royal Commission—

(1) To inquire into and report upon the Western Australian Railways' Capital Account with a view to reducing the amount upon which the Commissioner of Railways is expected to find interest and running costs.

(2) To make such recommendations to Parliament as the Committee or Commission may deem desirable to enable the Railways to meet the competition of motor transport.

HON. G. W. MILES (North) [8.48]: I intend to support the motion, and I hope the House will agree to the appointment of the proposed committee. No doubt the object of the hon. member is to see if we cannot get our railways run on business lines and so give relief to the primary producers. A lot of railways have been built and under the present capitalisation the Commissioner has no hope of making them pay. The system adopted of building railways to open up lands may have been justified in most cases, but in some instances they have been built ahead of settlement, and the policy of successive Governments has been to sell the people's birthright; that is to say, the land has been sold on conditional purchase and the money taken into revenue. It is a wrong principle, for at least a portion of the money received for the lands should have gone to liquidate some of our liabilities. If this had been done the railway capital account would have been automatically written down. Up in the North we had but one railway. That line was built to develop the country. It appreciated the value of the land up there, and when the re-appraisement of the pastoral leases was made in 1917, owing to the railway the Lands Department received increased revenue in land rents. Portion of the money thus received should have been credited to the railway capital account. Had that been done the capital cost of the line would have been reduced, and the Commissioner would have been able to charge the same rates on that line as are charged in other parts of the State. Therefore I hope the House will agree to the appointment of the proposed committee. The Minister has said the interest on the capital cost must be paid however much the capital account be reduced. But the taxpayer will pay the difference instead of the primary producers being saddled with it as they are now. If the committee be appointed no doubt it will make recommendations to the Government to write down portion of the capital, and probably some system will be evolved for setting aside portion of the receipts from land sold and so enable the capital cost of the railways to be written down. I will support the motion.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [8.52]: I understand the idea the hon. member had in moving this motion was that an amount of, say, £20,000,000 be written off the capital account of the railways and handed to the taxpayers as a whole to carry. If our railways were in the hands of a private company that might be possible, but the difference between a privately-owned railway and a State-owned railway is that the private company can at any time write down the capital on which to pay interest and depreciation, and so far as concerns the shareholders that is the end of so much of

the capital as is written off. Seven years ago I travelled over 500 miles of the finest railway system in the United States. But that railway was in the hands of the official receiver. It was over-capitalised and had to be reconstructed and the stock written down. The shareholders lost something like half their capital. But in a State-owned railway you can write off say half the burden on the users of the railway, but only by adding it to the burden of the general taxpayers. Mr. Thomson's proposal is that instead of the users of the railways paying interest on a capital of, say, 80 millions, they will pay on a capital of, say, 60 millions, while the balance of 20 millions will be a charge against the general taxpayers. So the people as a whole will not be any better off. If we could rid ourselves entirely of that 20 millions of capital, I would be with the hon. member in this. However, under our system it cannot be done, else our troubles would very soon be over. So I cannot see what is to be gained by the motion.

Hon. A. Thomson: What about the writing off of soldier settlement and group settlement?

Hon. J. CORNELL: What was written off is still with us.

Hon. A. Thomson: If it is a sound principle in the one instance, is it not equally sound in the other?

Hon. J. CORNELL: It is not sound in either case. If on finding that we cannot pay interest on the full capital we write off 20 millions of capital from the users of the railways and put it on to the general community—if that be sound from the point of view of the primary producers, whom the hon. member represents, why not write off the lot and put it all on the general community? As the motion stands, I am afraid that even if the House should agree to it nothing could be done, for who is going to appoint the proposed committee? The House cannot. We can only appoint a select committee, and if the hon. member desires action the only thing for him to do is to amend his motion to one for a select committee. The motion as drafted will get him nowhere.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East) [8.58]: I am inclined to agree that Mr. Thomson will achieve better results by amending his motion to one for a select committee. If he will do that I will give him my hearty support. There is no doubt the time is overdue for an inquiry into certain aspects of the railway finances and also of railway construction and railway policy. Also there is certain information we might look for as to railway freights. I myself have not been able to get it out, although I have made a complete investigation into certain railway figures and have made certain inquiries of the department. Yet I have not been able to arrive at the ratio between the earnings of certain lines of traffic and the actual cost of that traffic. Here is information which should be obtained in order that this House may know what is being done, and what is being imposed upon the Railway Department. One can only describe the railway system as one which has simply grown into existence. Any idea of laying it out as a scientific and co-ordinated system of transport has always been put in the background. There are certain portions of the State to which traffic should naturally gravitate. In attempting to arrange a scheme for this natural gravitation, one comes across obstacles associated with the construction of our railways which show that traffic is really being diverted in the wrong direction. As an illustration of this, I would quote the railway from Corrigin to Brookton. The ruling grade of this railway is one in 40. Corrigin is a centre of a big wheat-growing district. In the ordinary course of events the wheat traffic should gravitate from the Corrigin-Brookton railway, but owing to the fact that the grade is so heavy, the cost of transport over that section is high. A large amount of the traffic therefore goes down to Narrogin or up to Merredin, and then flows down to the port, in the one case to Bunbury and in the other to Fremantle. In both instances the traffic has to be lifted in the air to cross the Darling Ranges, and then it gravitates to the ports. The natural way for the traffic to go is to gravitate to the ports along such route as can be obtained to give the best grade and the lowest cost of transportation. Our railway system through the wheat belt has not been laid down in accordance with the natural lie of the country. Had that been so, a very much greater quantity of wheat would have gravitated to Albany, which now goes to Bunbury or Fremantle. Certain railways have been foisted upon the country by political string-pulling. Such railways have never paid. At least

one of these, namely, the Narrogin-Dwarda line, was constructed directly against the advice of the Commissioner of Railways.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It was never intended that some of it should be built, and it would not have been built but for the general elections.

Hon. H. SEDDON: This railway was the subject of an inquiry by a select committee of this House. In the course of that inquiry we found there was no justification for the construction of the line. The committee reported to the House accordingly, but, in the face of the report, the House authorised the construction of that line. I am safe in saying that the railway has never paid axle grease. It was supposed to give certain relief to settlers but, as was pointed out at the time, a properly constructed motor thoroughfare would have carried all the traffic that was likely to arise from that district without the necessity for opening it up with a new railway. If members will analyse the segregations of tonnage, which until recently were attached to the railway reports, they will find another railway which has been an incubus to the system, namely the Wagin-Bowelling railway. That line has never paid.

Hon. Sir Charles Nathan: Were not these railways approved by this House and Parliament as a whole?

Hon. H. SEDDON: Yes. This House must take its share of the responsibility. All these things have been pointed out, and yet we have gone on constructing railways. Actually, about 500 miles of railways have been authorised, but not yet constructed. I suppose if the construction proceeds we shall be adding to the debts the country is incurring.

Hon. E. H. Harris: The money for some of them has been borrowed.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Yes, but transferred to other accounts. The greatest farce is that whilst advancing arguments for the construction of railways, we admit that they are not likely to pay for many years, but we contend they have been constructed for the purpose of opening up the country. Having achieved our object, we then say to the Commissioner of Railways, "You have got these lines which we had constructed on the understanding that they would not pay; now you have to make the system as a whole pay." The commissioner has drawn attention to these matters on many occasions. It is no wonder we find ourselves in the present deplorable condition with regard to our railway finances.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: The railways carry a lot of bulk freight at low rates.

Hon. H. SEDDON: A great deal of bulk freight is carried on our railways, with the result that there is very grave doubt in my mind as to whether we are doing so at payable rates. The more that class of traffic increases, the greater is the load we are placing on the railway system. Because of the financial position of the railways we find that the freights which are classed at a higher rate are being forced up again and again in a desperate endeavour on the part of the commissioner to make things pay. The result is that this better paying traffic is being lost to the railways, because it is being snapped up by motor transport which is running to the country. The railways are left with the bulk traffic and other forms of traffic which do not pay. That state of affairs should be inquired into by a select committee, which could go methodically and thoroughly into the question, and make a clear report to the House and Parliament generally showing exactly what the position really is. I should now like to refer to the question of fuel. This has been stressed before by members. The Herman Royal Commission is now also dealing with it, in an endeavour to show what the cost of fuel is to the country. When we consider the question of transport costs on the railways, that of fuel and its thermal efficiency becomes a very important one. Engineers have repeatedly pointed out that the most efficient engine from the thermal point of view is the Diesel engine. The least efficient is the steam engine, and of these engines the least efficient is the locomotive. That matter might well be the subject of an investigation by a select committee. An inquiry would have a material effect on the discussion that will ultimately arise between the commissioner and the coal people as to the value of the power that is being generated in relation to fuel. I am glad Mr. Thomson has raised the point of what the country pays by way of freights. If a man lives in Kalgoorlie or in the country he is at a serious disadvantage compared with the city man. Every article the country man wants must be brought to him over the railways, and his costs are materially increased. His conditions of life are seriously affected owing to the fact that his cost of living is increased. His conditions of living are also affected by

reason of the fact that many of the amenities of life are placed beyond his reach because of their cost. With regard to the adjustment of the capital account, I do not agree with the remarks of Mr. Cornell. It does not necessarily follow that the result of the inquiry will be to transfer the cost to the general taxpayer. It may be found that certain sections are not carrying a fair share of the capital cost, and recommendations might be made in the direction of forcing those people to bear a proportion of the cost.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: No matter what you do, the Treasury will have to find the interest.

Hon. H. SEDDON: They may be helped to find the interest by removing the burden from the railways and putting it upon some other section of the community. It may be possible to find that some section of the people for whom the railways were constructed should play a fair part in finding the traffic for them. In 1930 the interest charge per mile worked was £231, and the deficit was £98 per mile worked. In 1931, the interest charge per mile worked was £225 per mile, and the deficit was £92. In 1932, while the interest charge per mile was £225, the deficit, because of the retrenchments which had been effected, worked out at only £45 per mile. I wish to refer to the area of land in agricultural use, especially the areas of such land within 12 miles of a railway. The proportion of that land which has been alienated is very high compared with the area being worked. If the area within 12 miles of a railway were anything like fully worked, there is no doubt there would be a great deal more traffic for the railways, which would be able to meet expenses more easily. All these matters require investigation. They could be made the subject of an inquiry by a committee along the lines suggested by Mr. Thomson. I move an amendment—

That the words "a committee should be appointed with the powers of a Royal Commission" be struck out, and "a select committee be appointed" be inserted in lieu.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [9.13]: I was glad to hear Mr. Seddon's remarks regarding the diversion of railway traffic from its natural port. We in Geraldton have had considerable difficulty in getting our fair share of the wheat grown in what we claim to be the Geraldton port zone, not only with regard to the wheat from the Wongan line, but with regard to the wheat along the Midland line. At the time of the agitation, the member for Geraldton happened to be the Minister for Railways. We had not much trouble in getting our rights from the Government system, but the difficulty was a little greater when we came to deal with the Midland company. The general manager of that company visited Geraldton, and after some discussion we were able to get what we considered we were entitled to. We still have cause for complaint with regard to general goods traffic. I am very much in accord with the latter portion of Mr. Thomson's motion, which deals with recommendations to Parliament concerning what the select committee or Royal Commission may consider desirable to enable the railways to meet the competition of motor transport. When speaking on the address-in-reply I referred to a matter which has given many of us in the Central Province cause for considerable dissatisfaction, and that is that every bale of wool grown on the Murchison passed what we contend was its natural route over the Government line to Fremantle. The wool was brought to Geraldton and because of the business-like action of the Midland Railway Company in carrying wool at a cheap rate, it was re-consigned and carried over the company's line in Government trucks and under Government sheets. Members have no idea of the loss sustained by the Government railways because of their insane policy and inaction.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Do not the Midland Company pay for the use of the Government trucks?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: The hon. member knows well that the company pay for those trucks, but the point is, as is known to every railway man, the Government railways do most of the work for which they are not fully compensated. It is claimed by the railway men in Geraldton that the amount paid is nothing like commensurate with the trouble involved in getting the loading to Fremantle. Whilst we have had some redress as far as wheat is concerned, at long last the Commissioner or the Government—and I think it is the Government that have given the instructions— has seen fit to reduce the rates on wool. The result is that

we now see wool coming down over the Government line. Ever since the Midland Company brought in what is known throughout the State as the port to port rate, that company has started to show a profit. That speaks for itself. I do not blame the Commissioner of Railways; the blame should fall on the proper shoulders. The Minister can correct me if I am not right, but I am informed that the Commissioner has not the power to fix rates and fares, that he has to go to the Government for authority. When we pay a man £2,000 a year to manage a huge undertaking like the railway system, he should have the authority to do these things without being obliged to approach the Government.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: If the Commissioner does not do as the Minister tells him, he is not re-appointed.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Our complaint is that Geraldton pays 7s. 3d. for a freight of 112 lbs. to Meekatharra, a distance of 334 miles, whilst Fremantle and Perth pay 8s. 3d. only for 612 and 600 miles respectively. This gives the latter cities the monopoly of the business which by right belongs to Geraldton, because of its geographical position. Either the rate from Geraldton is too high or the rate from Perth and Fremantle is too low. There is no fair comparison between 334 or even 400 miles for 7s. 3d. and 600 or 612 miles or any other long distance for 8s. 3d. What is happening now, notwithstanding the reduced rates on wool that apply over the Wongan Hills line, is that many motor trucks are still bringing a considerable quantity of wool down to Fremantle. The trucks bring down that wool and get back loading. The railage from Geraldton to Meekatharra is £7 10s. 9d. per ton: the sea freight from Fremantle to Geraldton is 17s. 6d. per ton; the wharfage at Geraldton is 9s. 6d. per ton; the wharfage and handling charges at Fremantle are 4s. 6d., and forwarding at Geraldton or merchants' cost of handling in and out of store is another 5s., making a total of £9 7s. 3d. The motor truck freight from Perth or Fremantle to Meekatharra is £8; thus there is a saving by motor truck of £1 7s. 3d. On Class 3 goods the railage from Geraldton to Meekatharra is £9 5s. 11d., plus the charges that I have already mentioned, £1 16s. 6d., making a total of £11 2s. 5d. The motor truck freight being £8, the saving by motor truck is thus £3 2s. 5d. On spirits, tobacco, etc., the railage to Meekatharra is £9 5s. 11d., plus 10 per cent., which adds 18s. 7d. Then there are shipping charges, £1 16s. 6d. or the Midland railway flat rate of 50s. per ton. That adds another £2 10s. and gives a total of £12 14s. 6d., against the motor truck freight of £8, showing a saving by motor truck of £4 14s. 6d. Is it not time that someone took action? People complain about the roads being destroyed by the heavy six-wheeled trucks that are continually travelling over them from Meekatharra to the city. The figures I have quoted are sufficient to show that something should be done, and I hope the committee, if it is appointed, will get to the bottom of this vexed question and find out who is responsible. Even with an old member on my right and a new member on my left, we are not too certain whether the fault lies with the Commissioner or with the Government. I have nothing against the officers of the department, but I would like to see the responsibility acknowledged and we certainly should know who is responsible for the fixing of these freights, both passenger and goods. I will support the motion.

On motion by Hon. L. L. Bolton, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.25 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 15th November, 1932.

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