

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 30th October, 1957.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

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

- 1, Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act Continuance.
- 2, Bee Industry Compensation Act Amendment.
- 3, Newspaper Libel and Registration Act Amendment.
- 4, University of Western Australia Act Amendment.
- 5, Cemeteries Act Amendment.
- 6, Pig Industry Compensation Act Amendment.
- 7, Associations Incorporation Act Amendment.
- 8, Marketing of Potatoes Act Amendment.

QUESTIONS.

TRADE WITH EASTERN STATES.

Tonnage of Goods Carried by Rail.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON asked the Minister Railways:

The Wentworth report of the Rail Standardisation Committee shows on page 24 the following extract from the Commonwealth Railways Commissioner's 1955-56 report:—

Year.	To W.A.	From W.A.	Total.
	Tons	Tons	Tons
1954-55	36,716	6,379	43,095
1955-56	49,641	8,450	58,091

These figures differ from those given by the Minister in reply to a similar question asked by me, without notice, on the 24th October, 1957. Can the differences be explained?

The MINISTER replied:

The figures quoted cannot be reconciled, particularly the tonnages of goods forwarded to the Eastern States for 1955-56, the Western Australian records of which give the following details:—

	Tons.
Timber (mostly sleepers)	8,760
Tomatoes	3,459
Potatoes	1,191
Other goods	5,108
	<hr/> 18,518

Presumably the timber has been treated by the Commonwealth Railways as departmental traffic and excluded from the total.

GUILDFORD AIRPORT.

Sewerage and Local Waste Disposal.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Is the Government aware that the Belmont Road Board has received information from the Public Health Department to the effect that certain undesirable conditions exist at the Guildford Airport in connection with sewerage and local waste disposal?

(2) Has the Government perused the report of Inspector W. H. Moyle of the Public Health Department, which states that septic tank installations at the Guildford Airport are causing trouble to such an extent that septic tank installations at the overseas terminal building annexe have been cleaned out twice in the last three months?

(3) Will the Government immediately have further inspections of the airport made in this regard to ensure that there is no risk of any infectious disease of the intestinal or bowel group—such as cholera, typhoid fever, etc.—occurring as a result of any defect in the sanitary requirements?

(4) Will the Government make recommendations to the appropriate Commonwealth Government department to negotiate for connection of the airport to the main sewer on the north of the Swan River?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) A close watch is being kept on the position by both the State and Commonwealth Health Departments.

(4) Discussions have taken place between State and Commonwealth departments concerning the connection of the airport to the main sewerage system.

ESPERANCE PROJECT.

Concern at Lack of Progress.

Hon. G. BENNETTS asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is the Minister aware that much concern is being expressed at Esperance because of the lack of progress expected after the expiration of contract time and money spent on the Esperance Plains by the Chase Syndicate?

(2) Would the reason for this lack of progress be that the principals of the syndicate are not using the knowledge of the experts from the research station?

(3) Is the Government satisfied with the progress being made by the Chase Syndicate at Esperance?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No. A recent inspection indicated that no time has been lost in the normal establishment of pasture by the methods adopted by Esperance Plains Development Pty. Ltd. since the signing of the agreement. The area ploughed and late-seeded serves the purpose of fallow, which normally would be seeded during 1958.

(2) and (3) The Government is satisfied with the present progress, and the syndicate plans to follow accepted methods of pasture development.

SCHOOL CHILDREN AND CROSS-WALK HAZARDS.

Inquiry by Parliamentary Committee.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH asked the Chief Secretary:

Is the Government still prepared to appoint a parliamentary committee to investigate the possibility of invoking the aid of suitable age pensioners in connection with the manning of cross-walks used by children journeying to and from school?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

No. The hon. member has rejected the Government's offer to appoint a parliamentary committee. A special committee comprising Thomas Meagher, K.B.

(chairman), J. M. O'Brien (Acting Commissioner of Police); T. L. Robertson, M.A. Ph. D., (Director of Education in W.A.); H. W. Dettman, M.A., (chairman of the School Safety Activity Committee of the National Safety Council); N. Sampson, B.A. B.Sc., (president of the Teachers' Union); H. K. Kahan, (secretary of the W.A. Federation of Parents and Citizens' Association); T. S. Edmondson, (executive member of the National Safety Council of W.A.); and R. G. Clark, (executive director of the National Safety Council of W.A.), was appointed and came to the unanimous conclusion that—

(1) The most satisfactory form of supervision of children's cross-walks is by police control.

(2) The most satisfactory alternative to police supervision of children's cross-walks is a system of pedestrian-operated traffic lights.

The committee was in agreement that other alternatives to pedestrian-operated traffic lights such as paid adult patrol and elderly citizen volunteers were undesirable.

BILL—PHYSIOTHERAPISTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by Hon. N. E. Baxter and read a first time.

BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Midland) [4.42]: The Bill which has been submitted to us has the one main purpose of providing for a single commissioner of railways to take the place of three who had been administering the Railway Department since 1948. The Bill covers a certain number of other machinery matters, incidental to that purpose, and it was very well explained by the Minister yesterday. I can assure the House that there will be no exception to the Bill—at least on my part—as I think the principle it contains is quite sound.

It may be asked at once why the change was made in 1948 if the principle is accepted now as being sound when applied to our present-day conditions. It is necessary to go back into past history, because I think it will show that what was decided in 1948 was, in the light of circumstances, a right decision to make, just as I firmly believe the time has arrived for the single commissioner system to be reverted to.

The Government Railways Act from 1904 to 1948, provided, as far as possible, for administration of the Railway Department to be divorced from political control. There

was certainly a Minister for Railways; but so far as the administration was concerned, all matters affecting the railways, with the possible exception of the fixing of freights and fares, and matters of policy, were decided by the commissioner; and the commissioner, while he was appointed by the Governor from time to time, could not be removed from office without a joint vote of both Houses of Parliament.

In 1947, when the McLarty-Watts Government took over the reins of office, it appointed a Royal Commission into the affairs of the railways, and it made a very adverse report on the condition of the system at the time. It reported that not only the track, but the rollingstock and everything to do with the railways was on the verge of collapse.

There is no intention here to attach any blame for that state of affairs to anyone in particular; it was just one of those things which, owing to the war, the general shortage and, I think, the lack of appreciation as to the deterioration of the railways, just came about. However, it was very necessary, when the report revealed what the condition of affairs actually was, that serious consideration be given to the best ways and means of rehabilitating the railways as efficiently and as speedily as possible.

It may be recalled that in 1947 a Bill was sent forward by the Government of the day suggesting that a commission of three be appointed. That Bill was defeated mainly on the grounds that the Royal Commission was still in the process of conducting its inquiry, and it was thought best to wait until its recommendations were available before taking any further action.

The suggestion of that Royal Commission was that a commission of three should be appointed; and, having regard to the run-down condition of the system, I think it was a sound recommendation. It was at a time when high-grade railwaymen were being released from the Indian railways, in particular; and it was thought—I think quite logically—that it would be a good idea to get these men to pool their brains in an effort to try to devise the best possible system for administering the department.

Hon. G. Bennetts: We did not make a good choice by the look of it.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: That, of course, is just one of those things that happen. Over the years there have been single commissioners for some Australian systems and there have been boards administering the others; and, by and large, little difference can be observed between the results secured under a single commissioner and the results obtained under a commission

of three. It is a matter of co-operation on the part of those charged with that responsibility.

Theoretically, there is quite a bit to be said for either one or the other. With the three-man commissioner system we were—I mean the Government of the day—of the opinion that we would have the opportunity of getting perhaps a diversity of views in regard to railway operation, which could be welded into the Western Australian system; and, on paper at least, it looked to be the answer to our particular problem.

It may be mentioned that at that time Mr. J. A. Ellis was Commissioner of Railways. He had been Commissioner for three terms—by far and away the longest period of service of any commissioner—and I think there is general agreement that he was very efficient. It was a big load to carry during the years when finance was very difficult and the railways were suffering from malnutrition; and it was his bad luck to find, after he had retired from service, that loan money immediately became plentiful and that he had no chance of spending that money, and thus applying the knowledge which he had gained. I believe I am right in saying that he was the only commissioner who retired without some mark of civic recognition. Still, that is something about which we cannot do anything.

At that time the commission was appointed for the reasons I have given. We must not run away with the idea that the members of the commission did not contribute quite a lot towards the rehabilitation of the railways. Each had had experience in his own special field, and the task of rehabilitation was a difficult one. At the time road vehicles had to be used to cart wheat and super, in particular, and many other items which the railways could not carry.

Under the direction of the commissioners a tremendous amount of work was done. Additions to the motive power section were made and a build-up of vehicles necessary to transport goods was effected as well as a complete overhaul of the Midland Junction workshops. The service then not only was able to cater for traffic which in earlier years it had had to sacrifice, but it improved so that today it is handling considerably more tonnage than it did in 1947.

If I may mention one name—that of Mr. Clarke—I would point out that whatever he may have done subsequent to his appointment, he definitely was an outstanding man in his own particular field. The “W” class engine which he designed was much better adapted to the burning of Collie coal and getting results than was any other engine that we had ordered from overseas. The same thing applies, but in a lesser degree, to the work of the other commissioners.

We did have the disability of a strike in 1952. That was a great drawback and it set back the railway programme for at least a year or more. But the work that had been done, once the lag was picked up, enabled the railways to function more efficiently than they had earlier on.

We come now to the present time when it is quite obvious—not only from the inquiries that have been made, but from the general knowledge of outsiders as well as those inside the railways—that clashes have been occurring between the key men of the commission. This condition had filtered right down through all levels, and there was a general lack of confidence in the railway leadership. In these circumstances I think the appointment of a single commissioner is not only advisable but desirable, because confidence must be restored.

In the ordinary course of events there is not much difference between the operation of a commission of three and that of a commission of one because a commissioner who has sole control has his departmental heads—the Chief Traffic Manager, the Chief Mechanical Engineer, and the Chief Civil Engineer—who are called into consultation at least once a week on all matters concerning railway operation. Each is responsible for the work of his department; and the difficulties, if there are any, can be thrashed out with the knowledge that there is one man to make a decision and exercise final responsibility. This all makes for a satisfactory state of affairs concerning the departmental chiefs and the men who work under them.

As I said before, while theoretically there is, perhaps, something to be said for a commission of three and also for a single commissioner, I think that today we are making the right decision by restoring the one-commissioner system; but we were emphatically right in 1948 when we appointed a commission of three; that is, having regard to the special circumstances with which we were then faced.

There is just one more point, and that is the question of the independent powers of the commissioner. Under the 1904 Act, the commissioner had a considerable amount of independence in the administration of the department; but when the financial position became so acute and the commissioner had to trim his sails accordingly, of necessity there developed a much closer liaison between the department and the Minister, or the Government, for the time being; and the department had to depend more and more on the Government for assistance.

So, as that position has developed, and as the Minister or the Government has had to come into the picture on the score of providing the necessary finance and determining policy, it came about that there was in fact a commissioner under

the control of the Minister, despite the wording of the Act. So I think the appointment of a single commissioner is the desirable and right step to take at the present time, and I am pleased to support the Bill.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [4.57]: The question of the control of the railways has always been of considerable interest to all members of Parliament, and I just wonder whether we are doing the right thing now. Since I have been a member of Parliament I think there has been too much political control over the railways and the commissioners. I wonder whether we should diminish the amount of that control. I am not accusing the present Government, but talking generally of the political control by every party.

When the railways were first constructed there was a need to regard them as a Government instrument designed purely for the expansion of the country and the spreading of the population into the out-back areas. But I think the day has long since past when the railways could be regarded as being exclusively so. They have now come down to being a concern that must interest every person in the State because they cost every one of us quite a considerable sum annually.

I cannot imagine a privately-owned railway being run by one commissioner and one outside adviser. I am certain that every privately-owned railway has a board of directors the same as every other business. From a reading of the report of the Royal Commission as published in the newspapers I have come to the conclusion that not only was there a difficulty between the three commissioners but a difficulty between some of the previous Ministers and the commissioners; and that certain Ministers could have been just as much to blame—I exclude Mr. Strickland—for some of the troubles that arose between the three commissioners. Reading between the lines, it is possible that the means of approach through one commissioner to the Minister was easier than through the other commissioners. So a difficulty started which could only heap itself upon itself until the climax was reached.

Other organisations in the State are conducted by means of a board of directors, even though they are public instrumentalities; and I refer to our hospitals, which have been admirably run by superintendents, who have a big staff under them, and with a board of directors. But those hospitals have to rely mainly upon the Government for funds.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Their costs have gone up terrifically too.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: All costs have gone up.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The same applies to the railways.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Yes, the same applies everywhere. The cost of running the Royal Perth Hospital today is approaching £1,500,000 per annum; and well over 50 per cent. of that sum comes from Government funds. But the Minister in the story is in the background, rather than in the foreground, and we have a cross-section of reputable people prepared to give their time and advice to those administering these institutions.

Something of that sort could be done with our railways. It would stop entirely the possibility of approach to the Minister being too easy in some cases and too difficult in others, because the approach would have to be made through a board of directors. I feel that a good deal of thought could be given to this type of administration for the railways.

I would like to go further and make a definite statement, without equivocation, that before I entered this House, and when I was a physician doing a good deal of workers' compensation work, if a man could not be found a job, or if his rehabilitation was difficult, the answer generally given to us—and to the State Government Insurance Office in the early days—was to send him to the railways for employment. I know that for a fact; it happened on a number of occasions.

Hon. L. C. Diver: An employment stabiliser!

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Yes. Therefore, I do not think that the commissioners, single or treble, can be blamed for some of the things which have grown up in the past and which have become accepted as the means of conducting the affairs of the railways. I think the whole of the public would feel very much better about it if they as a people had some say in the control of the railways. A board of directors such as I have suggested would be able to give the commissioner some advice on general matters; because on that board there could be men with business instincts, men with technological knowledge, and so on. If that were done I believe we could conduct the railways in a very much more efficient manner than has been the case in the past.

While I have no hesitation whatever in voting for the Bill, I still suggest to the Government that it might well consider, even if the measure is passed, looking into the question of whether an advisory committee could be appointed to act between the Minister and the commission. I feel there would be a good deal of public support for this move because the people would feel that there was some protection, and in that way we could restore the confidence of the people in our railways. They have confidence in all these other organisations which

have boards acting as advisory committees; and I think the same could apply to our State industries.

Recently I saw private railway lines running in competition with Government lines, and running most efficiently. But I admit that in that case there was a huge population involved, sufficient to warrant the running of these lines. The private railways were very well run, as were the Government railways, and the competition between them was keen. But I do not imagine for one moment that the privately-run railways were run as we run our railways—without a board of directors.

While one might regard Cabinet as a board of directors, it does not fit in with what I have in mind. I suggest a cross-section of the public should keep an eye on the administration and expenses of the railways; and if I were the Minister I would charge those people with bringing the railways up to the stage of making a profit, if possible. I feel some thought should be given to these suggestions because in my opinion they merit the Minister's attention.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [5.51]: I am very pleased that the Government has seen fit to introduce this Bill. For the past five years, during the Address-in-reply debate, I have mentioned the matter of the top-heavy administration of our State railways. When we brought blow-ins into this State to run our railways we caused a lot of dissension among the staff and that is one of the worst things that could happen. Many of the men in the railways have been employed there from the time they were lads, and some of them have reached high positions and have become capable of handling the bigger jobs. But we bring in other people from different parts of the country, and even from overseas.

When we decided to appoint three commissioners the Government brought two of them from overseas, and appointed one of our own men to be the third. On his death, what did we do? We gave the job to a Victorian who had been with us for five years. He had previously been the head of the accounts branch, and there was no end of trouble throughout the accounts branch because of him.

The Minister for Railways: That is not fair.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: When that man came here the first thing he did was to alter the ticket system throughout the State. I suppose thousands of pounds worth of tickets in booking offices throughout the State were destroyed; and he instituted a system of his own which has cost this State a large sum of money. There is also the question of the introduction of these calculating machines.

Only the other day I was at one of the stations, and I saw an instance of where there is a terrific waste of money. I saw

a sheet of paper, about the size of our notice papers. On the top was the name of the person involved, and the sheet went on to notify him that his holidays were from such-and-such a date to such-and-such a date.

That notification was in triplicate; and it is only one instance of how paper is being wasted because of the introduction of these machines. The Minister may be able to tell me how much it costs the State to hire them. I believe, from answers to questions that I have asked in this House, that they cost about £30,000 per annum to hire.

Years ago I saw the railway built from Southern Cross to Kalgoorlie. In those days every man who worked in the railways had an interest in his job. He had a respect for the department, and he took a pride in his work. But since the last world war, because we have imported people to run the railways, the men have become uninterested. Surely our own men were entitled to these high positions, because they are capable of carrying out the work.

Mr. Ellis, when Commissioner of Railways, was also in charge of our electricity supply and the Tramways and Ferries Department. But he was without a stiver in his pocket, so far as running the railways were concerned. They were run almost to standstill, and yet he was able to carry on. I think the wonderful job he did in keeping our railways running is recognised throughout Australia.

But we took it into our heads to appoint three commissioners; and, of course, as soon as they were appointed, they started working points, and nothing was done between them. They handed out money like a man with no arms. They threw it everywhere. That is quite true. Members can go around the State today and see where money has been spent without any purpose in it.

They bought diesel locomotives; but, instead of buying them from a firm that had been making them for years, they purchased them from a firm that had never made diesel locomotives before. Crossleys make a good stationary diesel engine; but they had not made diesel locomotives. There is another railway, working almost at our doorstep, which has been using a certain class of diesel locomotive for years. Those diesels have been doing a very good job and have been the means of turning that system into a payable proposition. But that was not good enough for our commissioners; they must go and buy these other locomotives.

They did not buy one or two for a trial; they hopped in and brought the lot. And what has happened since then? We have had no end of trouble with them; and only the other day one of these diesel locomotives was out on the road with two of its bogeys cracked. That was dangerous for the travelling public and also the crew who were driving it.

I would like the Minister, if he can, to tell me if these engines have been handed over to the department or whether they are still under contract. I ask him that because, in my opinion, they are not up to standard, although I will say that the service between here and Kalgoorlie is very good. We Goldfields members are regular travellers.

The Minister for Railways: It is pretty cheap too.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I do not think any member could say that we have any trouble with that system.

Hon. H. K. Watson: How is the morning cup of tea getting on?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: It is very good. But these engines have cost the State a lot of money; and it is no use any of the commissioners telling me that the expenses involved are the responsibility of the builder of the engines. When there is a delay the cost involved has to be met by the taxpayers of the State. Since we have had three commissioners, who has done the main work in the railways? The Chief Traffic Manager, a man by the name of Brodie.

Hon. W. R. Hall: How many chief traffic managers are there?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: He joined the railways as a boy and he knows all there is to know about the system. He is the man who should have been in charge. Not only does he know his own job, but he has every member of the staff behind him also. There is nothing they would not do for him, and there is no better organised section of the railways than the traffic branch. Bill Brodie has done a wonderful job for the railway service. There are other officers in the department, such as the traffic superintendents, who have a good knowledge of the department.

Hon. L. C. Diver: How many are there?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: There would be about half-a-dozen. These men have been in the service for years. They understand their job; but they did not know where they were under the commissioners. These commissioners did not give them credit and were on their backs all the time. In my opinion, the commissioners were not worth giving assistance to; and if I were in the railways I would do just the same as the men are doing today. I would drag my heels and let them have the lot. I have experienced the same sort of thing myself.

While I was working in the railways, it was necessary in certain periods to obtain the services of telegraph operators from the post office. They were put in charge of practical railwaymen, like station masters, but they were not able even to couple up a train. They were similar to the three commissioners we had in the Railway Department.

I asked a question in this House in regard to the appointment of the new commissioner. When the Minister is considering that appointment he ought to take into account the men who are at present working in the department. I contend that the best type of officer to be appointed as the new commissioner is one from the traffic branch, because officers of the traffic branch carry out 80 per cent. to 90 per cent. of the actual railway work. Yet we find that nearly always an engineering officer gets the appointment.

The officer who earns the money for the railways is the one in the traffic branch, and that type of officer should be appointed as the commissioner so that he will be able to find the revenue to run the railways. It is always possible to obtain engineering personnel to give advice to the commissioner. Their views in regard to railway construction, on the workshops, and on similar engineering matters can be obtained. The commissioner should be selected from the administrative branch of the railways.

At all railway conferences there is inevitably the question of finding the revenue to pay for the running of the railways; and if the commissioner is selected from the traffic branch he will be able to put up arguments at such conferences from personal knowledge; whereas if an engineering employee were appointed commissioner he would have to seek that information from other sources.

It might be contended that the commissioner should be selected from the top traffic officers. In remote areas there are station masters who possess very high qualifications; but owing to jealousy on the part of their seniors, they do not seem to get the chance of rising to the top. In the selection of the commissioner, the position should be looked at broadly so that the best person will be chosen.

I heard Dr. Hislop make a suggestion which I had in mind a long time ago. That was the establishment of a board with representatives from road transport, from the railways, from the users of the railways, and perhaps a representative from the workers. Such a board could control the railway system. What is uneconomical to cart by rail could be carted by road. Arrangements could be worked out so that buses converge to feed the railway system, instead of running parallel to the lines. More trains of the smaller diesel type should be put on service to move the population to and out of the city. The railways should be brightened up, and the people should be given better service and more attention. If that were done more patronage would fall to the railways.

One outstanding point that struck me the other day was the deplorable condition of the railway refreshment room and the bar at the Perth railway station. That is a disgraceful set-up. The facilities at the bar and refreshment room

should be better than the facilities available at the best hotel in Perth, owing to the large patronage. It should give a service on Sundays.

The Minister for Railways: They never do.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I was in the bar having a squash and lemon on one occasion when I heard a person asking for a bottle of cocktail which he wanted to present to a passenger going on the Westland. There was no liquor of that sort in the bar; yet in any hotel bar in Perth one is able to procure bottles of liquor like apricot brandy or cherry brandy. Here is a case of a passenger going away on a long trip and his friend not being able to purchase a bottle of liquor as a going-away present. At the bar one cannot even get a piece of lemon to place in a drink. Half the time the cooling system to chill the beer is out of order.

There is a large staff running the refreshment room and the catering side. The figure given by the Minister was 16. They are all highly paid employees, yet not one of them has any knowledge of catering. The three commissioners appointed to control the railways should not have permitted that state of affairs to continue. On the dining-cars, half the food used is canned. Even carrots and similar vegetables are taken from cans. It is possible to obtain fresh vegetables, but no attempt is made to do that. Years ago it might have been necessary to use canned vegetables; but today, when so many fresh vegetables are offering at a cheaper rate than canned vegetables, the opportunity should be taken to supply the passengers with them.

A few years ago a large number of bunk-houses were built by the Railway Department, each costing about £2,000. They were erected all over the State. The construction was of rough timber. At the outside, £500 would have been sufficient for each. They had no fly-wire doors or windows, and green timber was used. That timber shrank and cracks appeared in the floor. They were not lined. They contained no bath; only a shower recess was provided. They all had to be renovated.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: How many rooms had they?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Three or four rooms. They were the roughest-looking houses that one could see. The timber used in them could be classed as off-cuts. No dressed timber was used in them. I would like to see what happens to children who slide over the floor; they would no doubt be injected with many splinters.

While the Royal Commissioner is inquiring into railway matters he should inquire into the refreshment rooms. According to the reply to my question, he will investigate that matter, and I am sure he will find a hornet's nest.

Hon. L. A. Logan: He ought to inspect the Welshpool refreshment rooms.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: That is intended. The Welshpool refreshment room staff sends out all the requirements to the out-back refreshment rooms. The pies are cooked and sent out in hampers. The only refreshment room that is at all good is the one at Beverley, where the food supplied is equal to the best obtainable anywhere else. The wives of the persons running the refreshment rooms receive no pay for their work although they take part in the conduct of the service. If these wives were permitted to prepare the pies and pasties, the passengers would be able to get fresher supplies of these things. That would result in some saving to the Railway Department; and furthermore, it would be an inducement for the managers to remain at isolated refreshment rooms.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Are you in favour of the refreshment rooms being let?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I am. When they were run under contract, many aspersions were cast on the late Mr. Tommy Gorman. While he was running them he carried out the task with the assistance of a manager and one clerk. They controlled the whole of the refreshment services. At that time it was always possible to get something to eat on the dining-cars. To-day there are between 20 and 30 people running the refreshment services. They are doing a good job.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: You have inside knowledge.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I have the lot. Changes can be made in the railway booking office in Perth. A little while ago when a passenger went to the office to make a booking, the booking clerk had on the counter behind him a diagram showing the berths. This was available to the five booking clerks. If a passenger wanted a sleeper to Melbourne it could be fixed up straightaway. That system was altered and each clerk was supplied with a telephone at his desk. The central office and the diagram was set in another part of the building. Those clerks now have to write down the requirement, read it over the telephone, wait until a reply is received and transmit the information to the passenger. There is a delay of at least 20 minutes; whereas previously a booking was attended to immediately.

The best booking system seems to be in Adelaide. If the officers of the department in this State were to inspect the Adelaide booking office they would be able to find means to overcome the difficulties encountered here. I must point out that the clerks in the booking office in Perth are very obliging; and their service is equal to, if not better than, the service found anywhere else. The difficulty is the delay in getting a booking.

The Minister for Railways: What do you think of the one commissioner proposal?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: That is a very good idea, and I am all for it. One commissioner at the present time should be able to do the work of the previous three commissioners because there are 800 miles less of line to control. The expenditure involved in the appointment of three commissioners has been some contribution towards the discontinuance of railway lines. We were compelled to close certain railway lines because money was spent unwisely in other directions.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Do you think the new commissioner will increase freights?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I do not know. Some months ago the Commonwealth sent representatives to our accounts branch to see whether some system could be introduced that would put traffic between the Eastern States and Western Australia on a better footing. These people went to the commercial officer and submitted their case to him but did no good. A little later, over came the Commonwealth Railways Commissioner, Mr. Hannaberry. I met him in Hay-st, and he told me that he was dissatisfied because our railway officers had not given any consideration to the committee which came here. He called on one of the heads in the Railway Department but that officer would not talk to him about the project he wanted to discuss—namely, the establishment of a better freight system. This Officer said, "We do not want any more freight. The more we get the more money we lose."

I came to a certain member and told him I had met the Commonwealth Railways Commissioner who was leaving that night on the Westland, and I asked whether it would be possible to have a talk with him and have the matter looked into.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Was that member a Minister?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I will not say who it was.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Oh!

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The time was too short to enable a discussion to take place, and that man returned to Melbourne firmly of the opinion that it was no use trying to do anything to improve matters between the Commonwealth and the State.

The Minister for Railways: What man are you talking about?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The result is seen in the Kalgoorlie pick-a-back system on the Trans-railway in connection with the huge trailers. The other day when I was travelling from Southern Cross to Kalgoorlie I met nine of these huge semi-trailers loaded with first-class railway goods.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I saw one tip over at the Causeway going out.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: There were nine of them using our roads and taking good first-class freight from our railways just because of the pig-headedness of railway officers who would not co-operate.

The Minister for Railways: That is incorrect.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: It is not.

The Minister for Railways: It is.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: No. The Commonwealth commissioner reduced his charge to these large concerns to get the traffic between the Eastern States and Kalgoorlie. Our railways are a business concern; and whether we appoint one commissioner or a board, we need to do what some of these firms are doing. I know that at one time certain traffic superintendents used to go afield looking for business for our railways. But what happened? They were not given a chance; they were not encouraged.

It is possible that business could be obtained if representations were made at some of the Farmers' Union meetings or big Chamber of Commerce functions where the railway position could be placed before those present with a view to seeing whether we could not regain some of the traffic that has been lost to our railway system. If the railway service is not satisfactory to these people, we should say that we will do something that will meet their requirements.

In Melbourne the Railway Department has touts out looking for business. My own son, the station master in Canberra, was sent to Sydney to look into a new system of freight charges with a view of regaining traffic for the railway system between Sydney and Canberra. When he took over, hardly a package was carted on the railway from Queanbeyan to Canberra. It was all removed from the train at Queanbeyan and taken by road into the capital.

My son canvassed the business people in Canberra and ascertained what was coming in and what was going out. He submitted a report to the commissioner and that was sent to the Minister for Railways; and now the department has recovered 90 per cent. of the traffic. It altered its system of booking. Previously it had been difficult to obtain staff on account of the Commonwealth basic rate being lower than that of the Federal territory. People went to work for the railways; and then, a week or two later joined the Department of the Interior at a higher rate.

Under the new system the Commonwealth Railway Department threw the rate book away and now has a different system altogether. Our booking system is very costly especially from the point of view of the amount of paper required. For the despatch of one package of goods from here to Brisbane 14 waybills are required. They are very long and 6in. wide. They have to be provided apart from the abstracts required for each of the different

States, which must be supplied in duplicate. Then there are accounts current at the end of the month and weekly returns to be submitted, and all are charged on a different system. There is no through rate. One must look at the systems obtaining in South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and the Commonwealth in order to work out the cost. The Commonwealth has done away with that system and works on truck loads, which is cheaper and more satisfactory.

We have Magistrate Smith inquiring into our railway system. He is a very capable man and will no doubt be able to straighten the whole matter out. Perhaps he could have a look at this particular problem and find economic ways of managing a freight system between one State and another.

The Minister for Railways: There is only one freight rate between the capital cities.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: How long has it been altered?

The Minister for Railways: Since 1919.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: From one State to the other? That is something new to me.

The Minister for Railways: You have been a long time finding out.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I was in it in 1946.

The Minister for Railways: You missed that one.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: There is also some concern in the Railway Department regarding accumulated holidays. Some are allowed to accumulate for two or three years.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I ask the hon. member to connect his remarks with the Bill.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I am speaking about the railway system, and I want the railway commissioner to have a look at this holiday scheme and to observe that the accumulation of holidays is causing considerable expense to the department.

Hon. G. E. Jeffery: Two of the commissioners are on holiday at present.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: One of them could be on holiday all the time and I think no one would notice that he had gone.

Hon. J. Murray: Only one?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Or two. I think I have covered practically all I wanted to say. For the past five years I have been striving to get the administrative staff down to one man; and I hope that if we do decide to appoint one commissioner, he will be chosen from the present railway staff and that consideration will be given to services in the remote areas.

I hope that the present employees of the department will be examined with a view to selecting one able to control our railways. I am sure that we will be able to

find a man in our service who would not have to depend on those under him to do the job. While we have had three commissioners in control they have had to get men like Mr. Brodie and others to do the work for them. I am glad that the Bill has been introduced, and I hope it will be passed.

HON. G. C. MacKINNON (South-West) [5.43]: Mr. Bennetts has been very interesting, and I only wish I had his detailed knowledge of the railway system. Despite that, I would like to join issue with him on one or two points. I wish to refer particularly to one matter which he stressed.

There seems to be a tendency, whenever we want anybody to run a big organisation, to rush around and look for an expert in some facet of that organisation's activities. I noticed the other day that Mr. Bennetts believes in this method, as was evidenced by the questions he asked and which indicated that he felt that a member of the railway staff should be given any job that might be available at the top of the organisation.

This is a tendency that has been noticeable throughout the length and breadth of Australia. It is one to be deplored and has done more to hamstring our large organisations than perhaps any other single factor. The mere fact that a brilliant scientist in Russia has developed Sputnik does not mean that he would make an ideal director of interplanetary travel. Likewise, the mere fact that a man in the Railway Department is a brilliant engineer and knows all about diesel locomotives does not in the least fit him, necessarily, to run an organisation with about 13,000 employees. Mr. Bennetts said—I know it is a general tendency of thought—that when we have a man who has worked up through an organisation, he should make an ideal head of it. That is not so and the modern trend and experience do not bear that out.

The greatest worry of many business directors today is the man who joined the firm at 14 or 15 years of age, possessing better than average ability and who has worked up to perhaps a minor executive post. For every extra year he serves, it becomes increasingly apparent that without academic qualifications it is almost impossible in commerce for such a man to hold a topline executive position.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: What do you mean by "academic qualifications?"

Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: Take a large firm marketing a national product, for instance. It is almost essential that the man at the top should have qualifications in commerce. In big business posts in America the trend is towards a university course which incorporates some law with some economics, commerce and so on, so

that the graduate is able to read, assimilate and understand a market survey, for instance, together with all the reports which come in from field officers. He must be able to peruse statistics and read their story, and it is difficult for anybody who starts in an organisation at an early age—unless he is extremely gifted and energetic and in fact does a lot of study—to gain the necessary academic qualifications.

It is not long since an American who was visiting here said he was doubtful if there were more than a couple of hundred men in Australia capable of handling a staff of more than 200 people, and that is a very serious position for any country to be in. This American, whose name I cannot recall at the moment, produced a lot of evidence to support his view, and one of the questions which has exercised the minds of many people is the lack in this country, at all events up to recent times, of facilities for advanced study in business relations, management and so on.

When we get to the top of an organisation like the railways we find that the person in charge is concerned, in the main, with managing people. The fact that coal has to be put in one end of a steam locomotive or diesel oil into the other end of a diesel locomotive, and that either will pull carriages along, is of no immediate concern to the commissioner of railways in this State.

The immediate concern of a commissioner of railways is organisation and administration, and so, rather than decide that we want a man from the traffic branch or any other particular branch, I think we should pay very strict attention to the qualifications of a prospective new commissioner, with special emphasis on organisational and administrative ability, and, above all, ability to handle people and get work out of them.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: All things being equal, would you not choose him from the traffic side?

Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: If there is a man there with the necessary ability, I think the traffic side would be the ideal and I was pleased to hear Mr. Bennetts say that there was someone in that department who was very able. The ability to handle people is of vital importance in this position, but I think it has been forgotten in many major instances throughout Australia, in large businesses; and the Railways Department in this State is a very large business. I think it was Carnegie, in America, who was asked what he would do if he lost his fortune and he replied that, if he could get a half dozen men with all the qualities he desired, he could build his fortune again. Some people have the ability to work out ideas for themselves, while others have the ability to handle men; and the quickest way to fortune is by correctly handling men. In other words, to have a small team working in harmony.

The Commissioner of Railways has his team ready made in the managers of the traffic and various other branches, and perhaps Dr. Hislop's suggestion could be incorporated; perhaps there could be a board on which could be technical advisers as well as representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, other Government departments and business interests. Such a board could be devised, from which there could be fed to the commissioner technical information and ideas. That body could perhaps work on the same basis as a board of directors. It has been said that such a body would lead to a lot of rubbish being put forward, but the principle of getting ideas which contain some nonsense is widely used to advantage today. Many large bodies have a meeting and discuss all the problems sanely and quietly, following which there is a session in which all sorts of stupid ideas are put forward, often with good results. An example which can be quoted is the problem of supplying a food and deciding what is the ideal container for it. What seems a fairly silly idea is to make the container edible. On the face of it that sounds ridiculous, but in practical application, with a commodity such as icecream, it works out very well.

I repeat that, quite often, apparently silly ideas have a firm basis of application; and so the idea of a board should not be just thrown aside on the basis that it would lead to many silly ideas. I desire to impress on the Minister the fact that serious thought should be given to the matter before agreement is reached that the person in charge of our railways organisation should be selected mainly for technical reasons. We all know that an organisation employing over 10,000 people is big business; and with the widespread ramifications of our railway system terrific organisational ability is required of the man at the top. Extensive administrative experience is also necessary, together with a personality which lends itself to the trouble-free handling of men.

When it comes to a question of technical knowledge, there are technicians to be consulted. We cannot hope to get for the position a man with all the necessary qualifications in accounting, engineering, traffic and so on. There are many departments in which a commissioner of railways has to rely on the advice of his experts, but with the three qualifications that I have stressed he could achieve success. I support the Bill.

HON. J. D. TEAHAN (North-East)
[5.55]: I suppose the Government railway system will always be a target for criticism, because it is such a huge undertaking and so hard to control in detail that losses are easily incurred. No matter what Government may be in power it is

difficult to arrive at freight rates satisfactory to all concerned, and in that regard I do not think Western Australia has kept pace with other parts of the world.

When the three commissioners were appointed, as far back as 1948, I commented that it is difficult for any partnership—even in private business—to function as smoothly as an organisation under one capable administrator. As an illustration, I heard a locomotive engine driver asking how they could possibly keep to their timetable with so many controlled speeds. Such things may be necessary, but when we read the evidence recently given before the Railways Royal Commission it is patent that if three members of the commission are not working in harmony all sorts of difficulties can occur.

One of the three commissioners is probably responsible for the safety of the track and so on, while another is responsible for the running of trains on time. Unless they work in harmony the man in charge of safety places certain limits on speeds, irrespective of the result, and then the trains cannot run to the times set by the other commissioner. I believe that in the appointment of a person to control the railways, or any other large undertaking, a string of letters after a person's name is often taken as an indication that he is the man for the job. Even the most brilliant university graduate may be lacking in administrative ability, while a person without such academic qualifications might have a very real knowledge of how to get things done.

I know of men in the State Civil Service who have good administrative ability; and I am certain that there are people in the State railways who also have this ability. We all know that in the Railway Department there are engineers, accountants and other experts such as those controlling signalling and traffic on whom the commissioner can call at any time when a particular problem arises. It is a man with administrative ability, with ability to control staff and get the best out of them, who is required. I have also thought that perhaps too much time has been taken up in the past by the commissioners remaining in their own offices.

Very seldom do we see them moving around in the outer areas of the State. They do not often tour such places as Geraldton, Albany, Bunbury, and Kalgoorlie. If the commissioner at least conveyed the impression that he was interested in the economy of the railways—although I doubt whether any one of them has been—it would help those serving under him to exhibit a similar interest in the welfare of the Railway Department. If the senior officer is showing some concern about the financial set-up of this department, it is natural that the superintendents, station masters, and even the humble

porters who are serving under him, will also be interested in the economic running of the railways.

If, on the other hand, the commissioner and his most senior officers display a don't-care attitude, it is only natural that this attitude will permeate the whole system. I am very pleased that the Government is aiming at one-man control. It will be a very good thing indeed if we are able to secure a man with administrative skill, and one who has the ability to handle men and get the best out of them. If we can find such a man, who can convey his feeling of concern for his department to his subordinates, the position of the railways will be considerably improved, even though the losses are not recouped overnight.

HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [6.3]: I wish to support the Bill. There is nothing wrong with it at all. As the Minister has already explained, its provisions are very necessary. During his speech, however, he was inclined to twit members on both sides of the House, and to point out that on some occasions they supported a multiplicity of commissioners, while on others they favoured control by one commissioner.

For my part, I believe that each case should be viewed on its merits. In any concern that is managed by a number of people—by commissioners in this instance—we should view the situation in perspective; vote in the manner we think best; and decide as to whether one or more commissioners is the answer to our problem.

From experience it does appear that three commissioners are not the answer; they have been tried in the Government railways and have proved a failure. We must all make up our minds in this matter, and it is quite possible that many of us will arrive at different decisions as to why these three commissioners have been a failure. I must say at once, however, that there was nothing wrong with the administration of the railways under a one-man control; and I think members know that the man to whom I refer is Mr. Ellis.

I met Mr. Ellis on one or two occasions when deputations were introduced to him during his tour through the country areas, while he was making his annual inspection of the railways. I felt then that he was a most competent man; and I feel now that had he been given the monetary assistance that has been poured into the railways in the last seven or eight years, the system would not have suffered the losses it has; nor would they have been nearly as great as they are today.

In my opinion the three commissioners have done a very poor job indeed. Mr. Bennetts, and several other speakers, have pointed out several features that should be looked into. The incoming commissioner will have a terrific job; and I agree with other members that if there is the least

possibility of finding a good man locally, he should be appointed to the job. This will be far preferable to appointing an outsider and making him responsible for a system about which he knows nothing. It is my fervent hope that the commissioner to be appointed will recommend the re-opening of some of the lines that have been closed because in view of the service given we are losing considerable freight on miles of lines that have been closed.

Quite apart from the capacity of the commissioner to administer the department, it is necessary in my opinion for all those who have anything to do with railways—and now I refer to the unions—and who have control of various sections of the workers on the railways, to come into line and pull their weight, and see that the railway workers are giving of their best; they should instil the idea into them that they should provide a service proportionate to the salary they receive.

Hon. G. Bennetts: If a good man were appointed you would get that 100 per cent.

Hon. A. R. JONES: That is possible. Since the 800-odd miles of railway line have been closed I have not been able to find any indication of there having been a curtailment in expenses. Indeed, from the answers given by the Minister to questions that have been asked, it would seem that the losses have increased rather than decreased. At present we have the spectacle of a dozen or more station masters having nothing to do. There is no station for them to control. Yet we have been trying to get a station master for years for a particular locality, and there is still not one forthcoming.

To my mind there is a lot of wasteful work being undertaken in the railway yards. For instance, we find that in some places light rails are being pulled up and being replaced with heavy rails for no apparent reason. It does not seem to add up. All these matters must be taken into account and they must all be gone into thoroughly.

Each one of us should back to his utmost any commissioner who is appointed—and when I say each one of us, I also include the union officials who may be associated with the running of the railways generally. I support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. J. MURRAY (South-West) [6.10]: I wish to say a few words on this Bill. I think it is a most desirable measure. It is most important because we are endeavouring to get back to one-man control of the railways. Had the Government that introduced the three-commissioner system realised that it was a complete fallacy to attempt to give three people equal status, and at the same time expect results we might have an improved position. It would have been far better

had one man been called general manager; and the other two, assistants. Had that been done some of the difficulties that ensued would not have occurred.

My feeling on this matter which it is sought to correct by legislation, is that at the time the Government of the day decided to appoint three commissioners to administer the railway system in a State so widespread as ours, there must have been many men in the railway set-up who knew what was wrong with the railways. They not only knew what was wrong with the railways, but I am sure they also had the ability to put things right had they been given the authority to do so.

It is all very well to seek top men from outside the State and from overseas when private business concerns are affected, and where business here and business overseas is very similar so far as administration is concerned. We all know that when business concerns are short of capital to carry on, they introduce capital from overseas to strengthen their activities. So it is all right so far as it relates to business concerns.

But the business of running the railways and of managing that department in such a widespread system as ours is a most difficult one. The railway system in the first place was opened to make available the best land in the State for the benefit of the primary producers and the State generally. That was a problem facing the State; and surely nobody was more conversant with that problem than the men who were then operating the railway system of Western Australia. I am convinced that there are men in that system today who are well aware of that problem; and if they were given the opportunity, free from political interference, they would willingly and conscientiously do the right thing by the State.

I would like to say at once that there is no section in the railway administration that knows the problems of the entire system better than does the traffic branch itself, because this branch is vitally concerned with the running of trains to schedules, and when those schedules are upset those people know exactly why they were upset. They know the weaknesses that exist among the men and in the system itself. So if a man is to be appointed from among those who are locally available, we should be certain that he is taken from the right section of the railways; he will then see that other people do their jobs well and thoroughly, because he, himself, has been doing a similar job all his life.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. MURRAY: Before tea, I was drawing attention to the fact that it seemed to me to be a great fallacy to go outside the State in an endeavour, not

only to get people to manage our railways, but also to get Royal Commissioners to examine the position and make recommendations in regard to our particular railway system. Our system is a peculiar one on account of the large areas which it has to traverse and the large area of unproductive land at the present time—and I stress at the present time—between one productive area and another.

Therefore, there must be many railway lines laid over non-producing country so as to get products and goods to the revenue-producing areas. These are difficult problems and cannot be understood by people who just come here and overnight, after examination of various people, figures and the like, try to make recommendations to the Government on how to overcome them.

Therefore, I stress that the only people who are really qualified to face up to our problems are those people who came into the railway service and grew up with it. They may be wanting a little in administrative ability, but would have knowledge of other things. The main thing for a commissioner of railways in Western Australia to understand is why the railway lines were established and whether they can be brought into an economic proposition; because the ills of the service grew up with the service—internal ills, as well as those which are the result of having to stretch the railways far afield over unpayable land, in some cases, to reach payable areas.

These are ills that have grown up in the service; and it is only the people who likewise grew up with the service that fully understand them. We could get a Treasury official who would know what it cost the Government of the day, but he would lack the knowledge of either running the railways or where the faults lie.

I cannot stress too strongly that there must be a man in charge of the railways who understands these things and who can go a long way towards rectifying them. I would go further and say that there are men in the service—men who have grown up with our railway system, and, to use a very good expression, men who love our railways—who would shudder to think of the things that have happened to them over the last few years. These men, over the last few years, have been smacked down by the introduction of people into the job who do not know where they are going; or, if they do, do not want to put into operation practices which are fundamental to the good management of a railway system.

In conclusion I would say that had there been a man in charge of our system over the last few years who had grown up with it; and had he been given the opportunity to do the things he had the ability to do, I doubt very much whether

the Government would have found itself in the position of having to close 800 miles of railway line. I would say he would have had an answer. Even though we had three commissioners, no answer has been given to the people as to why the closure of 800 miles of line was necessary.

I conclude by saying I support the Bill but I hope the Government will not make the mistake of the previous Government and go outside the State for a man qualified to run the Western Australian railway system.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [7.38]: This Bill seeks to reintroduce the system of a one-man commission into the railway system of Western Australia. It also seeks to alter the term of appointment from an indeterminate period, to one of seven years. Arguments about the merits or demerits of a three-man commission or a single commissioner are not, to me, very important. Both systems have been tried in the past, and apparently both have failed.

Maybe this has been due to different reasons; but the fact that a single commissioner was replaced by a three-man commission, and now it is proposed to revert to a single commissioner leads me to say this: Irrespective of what system we have, and irrespective of the number of men we have as commissioners—and suggestions have been made in this Chamber this afternoon in regard to the necessary qualifications of a commissioner and where he should come from—unless we have a change of attitude on the part of Governments—I use the word plurally; a change of attitude on the part of the men themselves; and a change of attitude on the part of the unions, the Almighty himself could not take on the job of commissioner and do any good.

We have to remember that recently the Government closed 800 miles of railway line and immediately said there would be no sackings. What commissioner, in endeavouring to control the railways in Western Australia, could possibly do so if the Government turned around in the face of what the commissioner wanted to do and told him that he could not sack men? What hope would any commissioner have of making a success of his job? I say that he would not have a hope from the start.

Today, 84 per cent. of the cost of our railways is made up by wages, salaries and allowances. The Government said "no sackings," so that leaves the commissioner 16 per cent. of the cost of the railways in which to endeavour to effect economies. I do not care how much he effects in that 16 per cent., it will not affect the overall figure very much, because he would not be able to reduce that 16 per cent. by more than 6 per cent.

Hon. A. R. Jones: It would not amount to much if he saved the lot.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: It would not be a great amount. Therefore, until the commissioner is given the right to do what he thinks fit in regard to employment, he has not a chance.

The Minister for Railways: What about the fixing of fares and freights? Would you give him that right?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: If he did increase rail freights, it would not alter the ratio between wages and working expenses very greatly. The only way is to increase the traffic. Until that can be brought about—and believe me, the Government has not gone the right way about it by closing 800 miles of line, because once a man loads his goods on a truck he will keep to road transport—the Government will lose many goods which should have been made available to the railways. Therefore, what hope has any commissioner under these circumstances of doing a proper job?

There is also the attitude of the men, which has been mainly brought about because of the commissioners on top and by some of the bosses over them. Until a change of heart can be effected in that respect, there is no possible hope of achieving any great improvement. In regard to the unions, until they can discipline the no-hopers—we all know they are there—we will never get anywhere, because it is not possible to sack a permanent employee of the railways. Departmental heads who have endeavoured to do that can tell members the same thing. While this set of circumstances prevails, it would not matter if we had a 10-man commission—we would not get results.

It has taken a good many years for this State to build up the present quantity of two-row barley to satisfy the Western Australian market. Only two days ago a grower told me that because of the closure of his line he is forced to bag every bit of two-row barley that he wants to sell, and it will cost him an extra £100 to get it to the market. He said, "I will not grow any more barley." Therefore we start to lose the production of the country.

One other aspect—Mr. Teahan will probably take notice of this—is that the extra cost of carting a drum of petrol from Meekatharra to Wiluna is 15s. The fellow who is carting it is doing so at a bare minimum because he happens to be the agent, and fortunately in this case the extra charge has not been put on to the consumer because the oil company concerned is bearing the loss. Probably someone in the city is having to pay a little extra for it.

The Minister for Railways: That'll be the day—when the oil companies lose!

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: At the moment the company is absorbing the extra charge, but it could easily say, "We will not absorb it any longer," and up the price will

go. From the other side, I will say that there probably has to be a change of attitude on the part of those people who can and should use the railways. But until such time as they are given service it is impossible for any commissioner to contemplate that the railways will be used to any great extent. I only hope that when this man is appointed—and we can all give him our blessing—

Hon. L. C. Diver: He will need it.

The Minister for Railways: He will need more than that; he will need your assistance.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The other day the Minister tried to throw on me the job of the Minister for Railways. Now he is going to throw on someone the job of Commissioner of Railways. I think the commissioner will need all the assistance he can get, not only from the department but from outside as well. I am prepared to do all I can to make sure his job is a success, because on his success depends, to a large extent, the development of Western Australia.

No Government can afford to lose £7,000,000 a year on the railways, because when we get to that stage something has to go short; and the development that is going short at the moment is mainly in the country areas. So it is my fervent hope that the man appointed will be strong enough and will be given all the assistance possible to ensure that the one-man commission will on this occasion be successful. I support the attempt, by appointing one man, to bring the railways back to a better state. The railways need not necessarily pay their way because I do not think it is possible for them to do so, but let us put them on some basis of sanity so that the losses will not be comparable with what they are today.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [7.48]: It is hoped that when the Bill is passed the least result obtained will be a saving in overhead administration costs. At the same time I am not keen to say that the Bill is the answer to the control of the railways, because from the time the three-man commission was appointed the fortunes of our railways did not go in the best direction—although with a certain amount of luck in having the right men as commissioners, the position could have been different; and so could be the effect on the financial results over the past nine years.

If one reads the Act, one finds that provision is made for the three commissioners to handle different sections of the railways in co-operation. The commissioners should have been men keen on seeing the railways put into a good position, and with the money made available for locomotives and rollingstock generally, they should have been able to produce a better result than they did in the last nine years. But we all know, more or less, what

has transpired during that period. The railway finances have got into a very bad state.

Reference was made by Mr. Logan to the fact that the commissioners were not given the power to dispense with the services of employees. Section 73 of the original Act gives power to the commissioner to appoint, suspend, dismiss, fine, etc., any officer or servant of the department, but there is a rider to the effect that they shall not interfere with anybody without the consent of the Minister, if he is a prescribed officer under the Act.

The Minister for Railways: That is wrong.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I will read the section—

The Commission may appoint, suspend, dismiss, fine or reduce to a lower class or grade, any officer or servant of the Department, and in the exercise of any of those powers, shall not be subject to the Minister except in the cases of such offices and services as shall be prescribed.

The Minister for Railways: You have the wrong one.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The Minister may have a list of offices and services.

The Minister for Railways: What section are you reading?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Section 73. If the Government decides that the commissioner is not to carry out any dismissals because of reasons of unemployment, or any other reasons, the commissioner could be placed in an invidious position. I ask the Minister to reply to this question: If a single commissioner is appointed under this Act and he wishes to retrench a large number of employees in order to place the finances of the railways on a reasonably sound basis, what will be the attitude of the Government? Is it going to give the commissioner power to do what he thinks is right in the matter of dispensing with the services of, perhaps, a large number of employees who are not pulling their weight in the railways; or is it going to say, "We will not allow you to dispense with their services"?

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: What do you mean by "not pulling their weight"?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I think the hon. member knows that as well as I do.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Do you mean the officers or the rank and file?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: It is general throughout the railways and that is a well-known fact. I have friends in the railways so I do not discuss this matter as the result of a flight of imagination. Any member knows as well as I do what has been going on for years in the railway system.

The Minister for Railways: Tell us; I do not.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: If the Government is not going to give power in this direction it is a waste of time appointing a one-man commission, a three-man commission or a 10-man commission.

The Minister for Railways: Should the commissioner have power in regard to freights and fares?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: If the Government feels after the commissioner has been appointed and given an opportunity to do his best, and every assistance has been rendered to him including the right to dismiss employees who are not pulling their weight—

The Minister for Railways: What is your opinion?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I am coming to it. If, then, the railway finances did not improve and it meant the freights and fares had to go up, I would agree to the freights and fares going up provided the same thing applied to the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Railways: Yes, generally.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: But I am not going to allow the Minister to put one over me and suggest that freights and fares will be increased in the country while there is still a pandering to the people in the metropolitan area by keeping the fares down.

The Minister for Railways: Don't hedge, but tell us what you really think.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I am not hedging. I have given the Minister my answer which is pretty plain. He can take it, or not; but that is his business. I have not made up my mind on the Bill; whether I am yet prepared to agree to one commissioner in place of three unless the Minister is prepared to answer the question I have asked. I still believe that with the right men the three-commissioner system is the better; and that with proper co-ordination and co-operation, not only between the Minister and the commissioners but between the Government, the Minister and the Transport Board, we might get somewhere with the railways.

Unless the assistance I have mentioned is given to either a single commissioner or a number of commissioners, we will get nowhere with the railways in spite of the fact that fares and freights might be increased; and other actions but the right one taken. With these few words I leave the matter in abeyance.

HON. G. E. JEFFERY (Suburban) [7.56]: I support the Bill. This is one of the sad occasions when I feel like a pall bearer—at the burial of the bones of the three-commissioner system. Some 10 years ago when that system was introduced members no doubt extolled the benefits that would accrue just as those present this evening are extolling the benefits that will accrue from the one-commissioner system. I thought 10 years

ago that the three-commissioner system would mean an improvement in the running of our railways, and for this I make no excuse; but unfortunately things have not turned out as was hoped.

In the first place the introduction of commissioners from India and other places was a bad mistake. We suffer in this State from an over-developed inferiority complex, and qualifications attached to individuals from other places are looked up to more than they should be. I think that the Western Australian Government railway system had within its ranks men who, given the opportunity, would have proved themselves in the top executive positions.

In the first place it was said that the men appointed had the necessary qualifications. I suggest that in view of some of the equipment they purchased for the system, that is doubtful. Secondly, and most important, it was their rickshaw-minded outlook which from the day they took office in the State divorced them from any chance of loyalty from the staff that had to work under them. Not only did the three commissioners come from India and other places, but more important and harder to get rid of are the camp-followers who accompanied them.

The Minister will be faced with a terrific problem in the future in this regard, and we are more concerned with the future because the past is history. Unfortunately the scars of the economic burdens will be seen on the financial face of the railway system for many years to come; and the Minister is going to be faced with a big job when he starts on the restoration of the railways; because with the advent of the three commissioners, terrific staffs were built up, and it is going to be difficult to put these officers—many are conscientious servants who have achieved their high positions through ability and service—in jobs that will be appropriate to their ability and seniority.

Mention has been made of the loafers in the railway system. Well, this Parliament should be on its bended knees and thankful for the wonderful service that we have had from some of the employees of the system, both officers and wages staff, when we consider the conditions they have worked under and that they have had no gratitude expressed for their service, and there is no chance of promotion for them within the service because every time a vacancy occurs at the top someone from overseas is imported to fill it.

I do not know whether we have the right man in Western Australia, but I do know that there is the right man somewhere in Australia; and I hope that with the return to the single commissioner system, when the time comes to appoint the commissioner, he will be appointed from those who are within the State.

When we look at the record of the employees of the Western Australian Railways, despite the abuse they have received from all types of people, from members of Parliament downwards, we can see that a good deal of that abuse has been unwarranted. It has not been beneath the dignity of commissioners of railways in other States, and in other places, to accept some of our higher-ranking officers and employ them in their services. One high-ranking Commonwealth officer made a remark that he was not satisfied with the officers that we had in our railway service. I think there was probably some justification for his remark because he had gone over our system with a fine toothcomb and picked a lot of our good officers for his own system.

If we read the records of American commanders who were in this State during the war years, we will see that the men at the Midland Junction workshops, and other members of the railway staff, did a wonderful job of improvising and helping with repairs to American equipment. A terrific burden has been placed on our railway employees by governments of all colours. I am not saying this government or that government, but all governments. During the war years the railways were run into the ground, and I do not blame the previous Minister for Railways for it, any more than I blame the present Minister for Railways, or Ministers in past years. I think it was one of those debts we had to pay to win a war.

Hon. E. M. Davies: And the Commonwealth Government would not recognise it.

Hon. G. E. JEFFERY: No. I do not intend to kick the heads of respective Ministers because of what has happened in our railways. It has been said that a prophet is without honour in his own country. I think that applies particularly to our railway employees, whether they be commissioners or callboys.

It is time Parliament took over the responsibility, irrespective of the Government's politics; and if we bring one commissioner back to control the railways we should do everything possible to assist him with his burdens. I have heard it said, not only on railway Bills but also on Supply Bills, and many other Bills, that Parliament will accept the responsibility.

Whatever one's politics may be, it is up to every person to endeavour to do something to improve our railway system and make it easier for those in charge of it. It is up to every farmer as well as every suburban traveller to do his best. If the commissioner could approach his job with the knowledge that he had the sympathy and assistance of every person behind him he would be able to do a better job. Do not let us have a board of directors consisting of three people, or 20 people; but

let us have a board of directors consisting of 50 members of another place and 30 members of this.

I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill, and I only hope that members will show tolerance towards the Minister who has to face such a terrific task in reintroducing the one-commissioner system, whoever that commissioner might be. It will be a terrific job, and there will have to be a big reorganisation of staff. The person in charge will need the wisdom of Solomon; but I only hope that members, as well as the public, will show tolerance, and that they will do all they can rather than come to this Chamber and indulge in carping criticism. I support the Bill.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (Central) [8.3]: I do not intend to say very much on this measure, but I certainly support it. We have been getting into a tangle with our railways; and, of course, there will no doubt be many different ideas as to how we can rectify things. But we have to be extremely tolerant in our views because it is not an easy task for a Minister to make sudden changes and get quick results.

I was rather interested in Dr. Hislop's statement when he tried to draw a comparison between the railways and the Royal Perth Hospital. They are two totally different organisations, and no analogy can be drawn between them. The Royal Perth Hospital has been built from money procured from the State Lotteries Commission, and there is no interest charge. In addition, a good deal of the service at the Royal Perth Hospital is given free by honorary medical officers. Also, a lot of other matters have to be taken into consideration. But when one considers the costs of hospitalisation these days, as compared with the old times, one can see how terrifically costs have increased. If one wanted first-class accommodation in a hospital today one would have to pay no less than £27 a week.

If we could put up our railway freights, in a similar manner to the hospital charges, there is no doubt that the railways would be financially well off. I know that there has been some reduction in staff recently but, after all, there is a fairly big staff in the railways. During the three years from 1952 to 1955, 57,773 men have been added to the staff; and if each person received an average of £800 a year that is almost £500,000 a year extra. It does not seem to me that that increased staff is necessary.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Did you say that there were 57,000 more men?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Yes.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: You mean that they were replacements as well as additional men?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I am quoting from the latest report. It says that the average staff employed in 1952 was 119,422. The hon. member can check those figures.

The Minister for Railways: They are not correct.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: In 1955 the total was 177,195.

The Minister for Railways: Is that the wages Bill?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: No, that is the average staff employed.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: No more than 13,000 are employed at any one time in the railways.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: The hon. member is saying that the railways have half the working force of the State.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: They are the figure taken from the report. I must admit that it seemed a terrific number to me.

The Minister for Railways: What is the date of the report?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: It is a comparative statement for the last five years and it shows the average staff employed. I will have another look. I am sorry. It was only 1,000 additional men employed. I have been quoting the wrong figures. Probably there was some reason for the increase of 1,000.

Personally, I think it would be better if we returned to the old system such as we had when I first came into politics. In those days there was a commissioner, a chief traffic manager, a chief civil engineer, a mechanical engineer, a man in charge of finance and a staff manager. That system seemed to work very satisfactorily.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: With a pretty close contact with the Treasury, too, in those days.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Yes, there had to be. I can remember that in 1922 we had a Royal Commissioner who inquired into the Western Australian railways. It was a most extraordinary situation. The Chief Traffic Manager of the W.A.G.R. became the manager of the Midland Railway Company, and the Premier of the day appointed him to inquire into our railway system. But he was an officer junior to the commissioner when he left the railways, and he was brought back to inquire into the system. There was a great improvement afterwards.

I realise, of course, that a commissioner frequently makes application for additional finance, and that his application is rejected by the Treasurer. But when an inquiry is made into the railways, such as in the form of a Royal Commission, and the report is submitted, money is immediately made available and improvements are made to the service.

One of Mr. Stead's findings was that too many men were being conveyed by slow transport along the permanent way. So the railways introduced petrol-driven lorries which made the position much better. Today, of course, our railways have reached the stage where they have to enter into competition with road transport. That will be so irrespective of what we do or say. When that happens the railways are competing against men working not 40 hours a week but 48 or more hours a week.

At the time there was a breakdown in the railways, and they could not cart the wheat, road transport was working day and night. If that could be controlled in some way, and our railways could be given a reasonable opportunity, I think they might be improved.

Apparently the railways have not been conducted satisfactorily since the three-man commission was appointed; and, as the Minister pointed out, the trouble was to get co-operation between them all. I think the commissioner should have over-all control; but he must depend on the senior officers under him. Personally I think it was a waste to bring a man here from India, because the Indian railways are able to get cheap labour, and plenty of it.

The Minister for Railways: And unlimited money.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Yes, those working there received very little pay. They will work for a few shillings a day; and so, when these people came here from India, they put on additional staff. Then they found there was not enough money to do the job properly, and I think they expected too much. Although they certainly got a better service from our men than they did from the people working on the railways in India, they had to be content with fewer of them.

Whatever help we can give to the men who will take charge of the railways should be given. The Government, in its wisdom—and I thought it was a very poor move—has decided to close certain of our railway services which are feeder lines to the main system. But the service to be used in their place will be more costly to the people in the areas affected, and they will certainly have to discontinue the production of grain.

They will have to go in for stock. They will grow pastures, and will be able to take the stock to market in a good condition—I am referring to beef and mutton—and they will also go in for wool. They will be able to handle that sort of produce much cheaper than grain because of the discontinuance of the railways. I hope we can get together in a spirit of co-operation, and do something for our railway system. We have a good railway which was built very cheaply—far more cheaply than any railway in any other part of the world.

Hon. E. M. Davies: That is the trouble with a lot of our track now. It was put down too cheaply in the first place.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: No; the railways are not in such bad order as some people would have us believe. The average cost of our track would be about £5,000 a mile, which is very cheap considering all the cuttings and banks that had to be put down when the line was taken through the hills to the coast. However, some of the lines in the wheatbelt were laid for about £1,500 a mile.

I will agree that the sleepers were rough cut, and the rails were 45lb. But they have been gradually changed to 60lb. rails in most places; and the main-line rails have also been improved so that they are much better than they were previously. But the stories that a lot of our lines are dangerous for traffic are not correct. More accidents occurred on the 60lb. rails than on the 45lb. rails. There are not too many of the 45lb. rails left.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: The 45lb. rail permitted of a much lower speed.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: In respect of the transport of heavy goods, the railways are faster than road transport.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: They are not.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The waiting time at the sidings make it slower in the long run. I support this measure and hope that when the new commissioner is appointed all the help that is available will be given to him so as to encourage him to do the best possible work in the department. The main consideration is to re-establish the confidence of the staff of the Railway Department. I consider that they have lost interest in their work on account of the constant friction between the commissioners.

HON. F. R. H. LAVERY (West) [8.17]: I support this measure; and in so doing I wish to raise two points. I believe in the maxim that one should not go into a butcher's shop to buy a yard of silk. It behoves me to attempt to teach the Commissioner or the Minister his job. As Dr. Hislop has said, much can be learnt from travelling in other countries, and he has given us the benefit of the knowledge he gained from his recent tour. Likewise I have also learned something about the railways which should interest the Minister and the new commissioner.

In March last I travelled over from the Eastern States in company with Mr. MacKay, the assistant railway commissioner of New South Wales. He was a past president of the Australian Engineering Society. One subject we discussed related to the replacement of steam locomotives with diesel locomotives. Diesel has many advantages, but it suffers a disability in regard to finance. Because the Government of New South Wales has laid down

a policy to dieselise the railways as much as possible by eliminating steam locomotives, that Government now finds that with the increase in the cost of diesel fuel which is used on the diesel electric trains, it is facing higher costs of operation.

The assistant commissioner told me that he would be happy to revert to a large extent to the use of coal. A huge expenditure was incurred in withdrawing the steam trains and introducing the diesels, and it is beyond the financial resources of the New South Wales Government to reverse the practice. I am not criticising the oil companies when I say that the cost of fuel has risen to such a great extent that unless some action is taken by all the railway commissioners in Australia, some of the railway systems will be in financial difficulties through using diesel trains. I am purely a layman on these matters, but the opinion which I have outlined, and which was expressed by Mr. MacKay, is worth repeating, especially in a State like ours where there is a tendency to increase the use of diesel locomotives.

The other point I wish to refer to concerns the punctual arrivals and departures of express trains in the other States. I am not referring to the subsidiary lines. I found that when an express train was due to leave or arrive at a station in the Eastern States at a certain time, one could set his watch by it. They invariably arrive and depart on time. As soon as the East-West train reaches Kalgoorlie and the passengers transfer to our smaller gauge train, they find that within a few hours of travelling in this State they are often running late, by as much as 45 to 150 minutes.

I was anxious to eulogise the railway system of this State operating on the smaller gauge; and I found that one of the reasons why the trains here run so much behind time is because of the insufficiency of interlocking gear on the lines, especially with the introduction of faster diesel trains. That lack of interlocking gear prevents the passing of goods trains in many places. Therefore passenger trains are delayed. That was one reason why the Kalgoorlie express had to reduce its speed. It is possible for that train to reach Perth one hour to 1½ hours earlier than it does. Such delay adds to the cost of operations.

I mention those two points because of my interest in that aspect of railway operation. It is probable that they have been considered by the Railway Department in the past; if not, I offer them for what they are worth. I congratulate Mr. Jeffery on his forthright statement regarding the running staff employed in this State. It has been suggested by Sir Charles Latham that we should throw all our weight behind the new commissioner, and I agree.

There is much pinpricking going on in the railway service, particularly applying to drivers of locomotives. For the slightest failure, such as running ahead or behind time to a section, the drivers received "Please explain" notices. I have seen a number of them. While to the ordinary person they may appear to be trivial, to the locomotive drivers they are a great cause of dissatisfaction. The drivers have no opportunity of bringing that matter before the commission except through a member like myself. I am not making excuses on their behalf because I realise that the traction staff should keep the trains running on time, but they should be given every assistance in so doing. I support the second reading.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS

(Hon. H. C. Strickland—North—in reply) [8.25]: I am pleased with the reception of the Bill in this House, but I was sorry to find one critic who has yet to make up his mind. I shall risk losing his support by not giving the assurance that he seeks from me. Some very interesting details were given by Mr. Simpson who has had more experience in administering this department than I. I was very pleased indeed that one of my predecessors in office could see eye to eye with the Bill. Undoubtedly that was because he has had the same experience as I and my immediate predecessor had in regard to the three-man commission.

In 1953 Mr. Simpson recognised the futility of the three-man commission, as it was constituted during his regime. He met with the same difficulties as experienced by his successor, Mr. Styants. Mr. Styants mentioned in another place, during his term as Minister for Railways, that if it was possible he would abolish the three-man commission. He stated that when introducing amendments to the Act in 1953 which altered the term of office of the chief commissioner from a life term to seven years; and in the case of the assistant commissioners to five years.

I experienced the same difficulties with regard to the three-man commission, as were experienced by the two previous Ministers. To sum up the objections to a three-man commission, as I see it the commission fiddled while Rome burnt, so to speak. The railway system fell very definitely into a deplorable state. Apart from the physical deterioration of the railways, the attitude of its officers and employees was very seriously affected during the long period when there was no control from the top.

A very bad impression was created among the employees as a result of the continued squabbling between the three commissioners. As a result they were frustrated and disappointed. At no time has it been suggested that every employee of the railways threw in the sponge and

gave up hope that the position would improve. I do not agree that all employees of the railways sat down and looked on.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: They were terribly disheartened.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The morale of the employees was low, but I honestly believe that they were earnest in trying to do their best for the department. I am certain that even with the changes that have taken place in the last few months, there is a different feeling throughout the railway system as regards the employees; and I am certain too, that there will again be evidence in the staff and the wages men of that attitude which prevailed in the early days, summed up in the phrase of Mr. Murray that, "They loved their railways."

There will again be the attitude which will induce them to take a greater interest in striving to put the railways back on to an efficient and respectable footing—respectable in the eyes of those from whom they have to run the gauntlet year after year; critics like Mr. Bennetts, whom I have never yet heard praise anybody in the Railway Department.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I have done so. I have praised the staff and the workers.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I thought the hon. member opened his remarks by saying that the staff were all dissatisfied.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Yes, with regard to the appointment of the commissioners.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am not going to argue; I may have misheard the hon. member. But tonight we heard him praising a gentleman concerning whom he had something else to say in 1946. For the benefit of his memory, I shall remind him of what he said.

In 1946 there was an attempt to transfer the railways from the commissioner's control to ministerial control, and there was quite a lot of debate on the subject. In "The West Australian" of the 13th December of that year, Mr. Bennetts is reported to have said—

The State railways were in a worse condition than ever before in the history of the State under the present administration.

I would like him to note that one. He said—

The employees were given no incentive and had become very dissatisfied.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: He was a very young member, then.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Well, it does not matter. The employees and the administration have always had to run that incessant gauntlet of criticism by the public, by the patrons of the railways, and by 80 members of Parliament.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: By 79.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That attitude should be changed. The Act should be changed so that instead of the department having 80 bosses up here in Parliament those in charge might have a little bit of a mind of their own and be free to make decisions of their own; though I maintain, of course, that the direction of policy must remain with the Government to some extent, because the Government has to find the money.

Dealing with the points raised by Mr. Logan and Mr. Baxter in connection with the wages staff, it appears that we must blame the wages men, blame the employees, for everything. There are too many of them and that is why the railways are losing. They are not doing anything, and that is why the railways are losing. Heavens above!

They consider the railways can never do any good unless the commissioner has full control over all his employees and has power to hire and fire at will. Nobody grows about that; but when those members are questioned as to their opinion about the charges on which he is expected to run the business, there is no comment.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Yes there is!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There is a lot of hedging. There are tags attached to Mr. Baxter's comments. If the Government will guarantee this and that—that is the condition. What is wrong with giving a fair, straight-out statesmanlike answer and saying, "Let those who use the railways pay for them"? What is wrong with saying to the commissioner, "You have full control to hire and fire and to fix your charges so that your business can be run on a businesslike basis"?

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Fair enough! That is all I ask for.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: What is wrong with that? Nobody will argue against it. The whole trouble as regards the financial aspect of the railways is that the commissioner has not been allowed to increase fares and freights since 1947.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: He has not been allowed to hire and fire, either.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In 1947 a parliamentary committee was set up and it told the incoming commissioner what must be done.

Hon. L. A. Logan: He increased freights 30 per cent.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Freights were decreased. Telescopic freights were introduced.

Hon. L. A. Logan: Freights were increased 30 per cent.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; but how often have they been increased since?

Hon. L. A. Logan: Twice.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Members asked for men to be sacked. It is all right to employ them while they are carting wheat and super, but for the rest of the year they must find jobs somewhere else. That is the idea. These people say, "You must still cart my products at a losing rate, no matter what price they bring in the market; no matter what we can afford."

Hon. L. A. Logan: It is not a losing rate.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That remains to be seen.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Your own words—

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am sorry if I do not say things that everybody will agree with. But I never expect 100 per cent. agreement. What I am trying to point out is that we all have our ideas; we all become parochial in relation to something that affects our business or our electorates. But as Sir Charles said, the day has arrived when we should all co-operate and attempt to pull the railways out of this sad mess and put them back on a sound financial footing. I agree with him entirely.

I believe that if industry can afford to carry a freight rate, they should pay it; but if they get into a position where they cannot afford to pay, then they should be subsidised to a reasonable extent. I agree that the railways exist for that purpose—to open the country and serve industry. But heavens above, they do not want to be simply a milking cow for everybody in the country!

Hon. A. R. Jones: We don't want—

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We know what you don't want. You want to be parochial all the time. It is a case of, "You must do what I want you to do all the time." Why not look at the matter on a State basis, with statesmanship and co-operation? It is all very well to hear members say, "We will assist the commissioner. We will give him all the assistance that we can when he comes along." We know what sort of assistance is given. We have only to look at what has happened to some of the measures designed to assist the commissioner now! It is all very well to voice these sentiments.

Hon. A. R. Jones: That is what you are doing.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am doing my best and am not afraid to take some action and stand up to my responsibilities. I am not afraid of losing a few votes, even if the hon. member is.

Hon. A. R. Jones: I'm not.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I don't know! The hon. member is making a terrific song.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: There are not many up you way, you know.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I know. But I increased State shipping freights only recently and am not ashamed of it. However, there are those who would attempt to make political capital out of that. I believe that if industry can afford to pay a reasonable freight rate; if it is prosperous enough to do so, then it should pay. If not, then it should be given a benefit.

Hon. A. R. Jones: What about the poor old dairy farmer?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In this Chamber I have heard a lot about the poor old dairy farmer. Two or three years ago a dairy farmer in this House said that he wished some members would have a look at what it cost anyone to buy a dairy farm! That was his comment, and he was a practical man and a very successful dairy farmer. It is all very well to give lip service to the employees of the commission from the top to the bottom. It is all very well to say they are not pulling their weight and to condemn them. But we cannot have it both ways. Never mind about the incoming commissioner! Let us give the one who is in office now the power to hire and fire and to impose rates that will enable him to make the business pay.

Hon. L. A. Logan: How can you when you told them during the railway discontinuance that there would be no sackings?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is all very well to talk about sackings. Those who read the hon. member's remarks when 10 or 12 railwaymen were transferred from Geraldton as a result of the closure of the line will know that he put up a terrific show. Previously he contended that 4,000 should be sacked, but when 12 in his own town are removed, he considers that that should never have happened. There is a good deal of lip service with regard to sackings and all the rest of it, and about the lines not being pulled up. But I would like to know the general opinion in the hon. member's province in which the Yuna and Ajana lines have been discontinued. I would like to know the farmers' opinions.

Hon. L. A. Logan: I know. They told me on Saturday night.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I would like to know what the majority think. One of the most remote farmers said what a blessing it was that the railway had gone. And he is a man who would have to cart his oats the best part of 100 miles to the nearest railway: whereas prior to the closure he had to take it only some 12 miles. Those are the facts. There has not been any demonstration from individual farmers in that area about the closure of lines.

Hon. L. A. Logan: The Northampton Road Board asked for a reinstatement. Is that not a representative body?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There is the parochial attitude again. We should run a stock train 30 miles to transport stock to a sale. I wonder how the hon. member thinks pastoralists living in the North-West or on the Murchison get their stock to market; how cattle are brought from Hall's Creek to the market; how they are brought down the stock route over the years. Some of them travel over 1,000 miles, yet there is a great outcry here when some farmers have to move stuff 20 or 30 miles further than they had to before. It is laughable and does little credit to the members who voice such complaints and yet expect the Railways Commission to improve the finances of the department.

This question has become the subject of political twaddle and it is time common-sense was exercised in relation to the railways. As Sir Charles Latham said, we should get together and co-operate in an endeavour to get the railways out of the present financial mess. It is interesting to note from the file how views change, depending on the Government in power at the time.

I think it was Dr. Hislop who said there is too much political control and suggested a board to control the railways. I think there is a lot of merit in the suggestion. Since the depression years the financial position of the railways has fluctuated with the times and terrific political pressure has been applied by various Governments in some instances. I agree with Mr. Logan, that no matter who the commissioner was, he could not make a success of his job under those conditions.

Seeing that board control is successful with the State Electricity Commission and the Fremantle Harbour Trust, I feel that a board with a manager and sub-managers might be the answer to our railway problems, as they would be expected to show results. Provided they were given the right to hire and fire and fix charges and were not appointed for life, such a system might well be successful.

The suggestion for the establishment of such a board must be considered during the next few months; and, if it were thought advisable, Parliament could be asked to agree to some such system. The Royal Commissioner inquiring into railway matters is giving serious consideration to most aspects, after studying the history of the railways over the past 50 years.

In 1946, when Hon. F. J. S. Wise was Premier, his Government attempted to place some control of the railways in the hands of the Minister but that Bill was defeated in this House by 16 votes to 9. Further on in the file I see that a year later there was a change of Government, and in 1948 a new Act was brought down

and passed, doing precisely the same thing as the Wise administration had attempted to do.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: They had the report of a railway Royal Commission in the meantime.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I agree with Mr. Murray, who said he did not believe Royal Commissioners should be brought in from outside the State and I think he holds that view about railway commissioners and other departmental heads.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: I think you should get the best man, no matter where he comes from.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member's leader in another place thinks differently from Mr. Murray because when Mr. A. G. Smith was appointed Royal Commissioner he was caustic and critical of the appointment and told the Press he was not satisfied.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: He gave a logical reason for what he said.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: He gave no reason, but simply said he was not satisfied and my reaction was that we should judge by results. The local man, in whom so little faith was expressed, is doing a remarkably good job.

Hon. G. Bennetts: They could not get a better man.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The job he is doing is satisfactory, even from the point of view of the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: It was not the man who was criticised.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It was. I would advise those who feel inclined to be critical at present to wait until they are apprised of the contents of further reports from the Royal Commissioner. An inquiry into the railway administration from top to bottom was an agreed condition of the discontinuance of certain rail services.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: But before the discontinuance.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We have stood up to our obligation, to a stage where we cannot be criticised, and what is being done is not at the expense of £100,000 for some imported Royal Commission or a team of expert accountants from overseas. New South Wales is having such an inquiry at a cost exceeding £100,000. The Government is living up to the responsibility Parliament placed on it to explore every avenue, in order that economies might be effected in the railways.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I understand New South Wales is going to supply this State with some of the information they receive from that inquiry.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Premier of New South Wales told the Premier of this State that when he received the report from the E.B.A.S.C.O. people, and it had been tabled in his State, he would forward a copy of it to the Government here; but it has not yet been received. I understand that inquiry is working much along the lines of our Royal Commission. Interim reports are presented and action is taken on them as they are received and, incidentally, one of the very early reports recommended the closure of a number of lines.

Various views have been expressed in relation to our railways and many complaints have been voiced, although most of them have been of a minor nature. However, Mr. Baxter referred to Section 73 and said that the commissioner is not allowed to hire and fire because the Government stands in his way. Section 73 says—

The Commission may appoint, suspend, dismiss, fine, or reduce to a lower class or grade, any officer or servant of the department, and in the exercise of any of those powers, shall not be subject to the Minister except in the cases of such offices and services as shall be prescribed.

Cabinet, under Section 73, prescribes the appointments in which the commission shall be subject to the Minister as all positions which have not a right of appeal under the Promotions Appeal Board Act, and that is governed by the salary received. That was signed by R. McLarty, Premier, on the 10th June, 1952. It referred to any appointment with a salary range over £725 and in 1957 that had risen to £1,240 in accordance with the basic wage rises. That provision was placed in the Act so that the Government would have control over the appointment of officers on high salary ranges. Under that provision the commission could not set up some new department of highly paid officers without reference to the Minister.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: It could not dismiss them either.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is the meaning of Section 73 and I do not recall the commission ever being prevented from sacking men. I gave an undertaking there would be no retrenchments owing to rail closures; and that promise has been honoured and I quoted the number of men, 600 altogether, 300 of whom were permanent way men. I said the position would automatically take care of itself owing to deaths, resignations and the expiry of the working life of men at 65. Since November last year there are 825 less men employed in our railways.

Hon. L. A. Logan: You have employed some more since then.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The number employed at the end of September was 825 lower than at November last year.

No one can satisfy everybody and I cannot achieve 100 per cent. success. That is exactly what took place. But even after one meets the wishes of the hon. member to a large degree, he is still critical and not satisfied. No matter what commissioner or Minister was controlling the department—even if it were the hon. member himself—I will tell him at once that he would never run the railways with the 4,000 men less, as he seems to think is possible. I can assure him of that fact.

It is proposed however, to reduce the overall employment strength considerably. There will be some more reductions, and more reorganisation taking place, but it will not affect a large number of men; it may affect the men who are in the higher categories of employment.

Hon. G. Bennetts: The three commissioners set up many new branches.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Despite the criticisms hurled at the railways and at the administration during the past 12 months, they have been going through trying times, and I think there is some achievement for which it should be complimented rather than criticised. I must tell Mr. Bennetts that he has been misled or misinformed on this question of the pick-a-back system.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I do not think so.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I would assure the hon. member that he has been misinformed in regard to his comments on the pick-a-back system, and the cost to the Trans.-line. The hon. member was most unfair when he said that the Commonwealth introduced this system at a low freight rate cost because of the pig-headedness of some W.A.G.R. officer.

Hon. G. Bennetts: That is quite correct.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not believe it; and before I did, I would have to be shown some evidence to prove it. I know that when I was first appointed Minister for Railways I inquired why goods were being carried from Kalgoorlie to Adelaide at a lesser rate for the journey than applies to goods carried from Perth to Kalgoorlie. The difference in price was about £1 to 25s. per ton less. I wanted to know why the railways should do that, and I soon found the answer.

I had the file submitted to me and I found that back in 1917, as a result of an agreement between all State railway systems in the Commonwealth, there was an inter-capital freight rate fixed and fare charges were made. Let us say, for example, that the freight rate from here to Adelaide is £10 a ton. That is distributed between the Commonwealth, the South

Australian railways, and the Western Australian railways, according to the length of line over which it passes. That agreement has been in existence since 1917—since the day the Trans-Australian railway began operations, and we have not been able to vary that very much in favour of Western Australia.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Was the agreement interminable?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It could be terminated by our pulling out. I spoke to the commissioner and said, "We want more of the freight." He replied, "Very well." And went off to attend a commissioners' conference. There is apparently in existence between the systems a code whereby if one system is not satisfied with the freight or fare charge it must notify all the others and the matter is debated at an annual conference. This was debated at the last Commonwealth conference and the Commonwealth stuck out solidly and refused to participate in any increased freight. But it did sacrifice a little of its own share in the freight and gave it to Western Australia. It was, however, a very minute portion.

My answer to that was, "We will pull out of it altogether." To this the Commonwealth Railways replied, "We will introduce a pick-a-back system," which it did. We have not been able to pull out, because if we did we would get nothing. That is how it came about, and it is like holding a gun at the head of Western Australia.

It is possible for the Commonwealth Railways to do that. They run their system with a minimum of employees and crew; apart from which we must not forget that they do not have to pay interest on any loan funds. They are able to show profits and are able to buy rolling-stock and to improve and dieselise their system, and relay their track from moneys out of the Commonwealth revenue funds. Loan money is not used and they have no interest bills to meet. The State railway system has an interest bill of £2,250,000 a year to meet, and that is a tremendous hurdle to overcome before we are able to even start meeting our operating costs.

I would advise the hon. member that he was misinformed by whoever told him that some pig-headed person was responsible for the Commonwealth Railways introducing a cut rate; and instead of competing with road hauliers they are combining against Western Australia. Unfortunately we are on the receiving end and we cannot do anything about it or we would lose the lot.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Because of the Commonwealth's pig-headedness.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is just the opposite to the version given to Mr. Bennetts. I am pleased at the reception the Bill has received. I do not say

it is a complete answer to our problem, or that it is a cure-all, but it is a step in that direction.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Coal Mine Workers (Pensions) Act Amendment.

2, Bills of Sale Act Amendment and Revision.

Received from the Assembly.

BILL—ACTS AMENDMENT (SUPER-ANNUATION AND PENSIONS).

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [9.15] in moving the second reading said: This Bill seeks to increase or adjust the pensions payable under the three Acts which deal with superannuation for retired Government employees. These Acts are, the Superannuation Act, 1871, the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act, 1938-55 and the Government Employees' Pensions Act of 1948.

The 1871 Act provided a non-contributory pension scheme for those officers who had commenced permanent employment prior to 1904.

The 1938 Act provides a contributory scheme for all Government salaried and wages employees, and the 1948 Act was introduced to provide limited pensions for certain persons, principally railway employees, who were not covered by the 1871 Act.

In 1953 Parliament agreed to the Pensions Supplementation Act, which provided increases in benefits under the three Superannuation Acts, in order to meet increases in the cost of living. This Act was due to expire at the end of last year, but, as the Government was not then in a position to carry out a general scheme of amendments in regard to superannuation, Parliament agreed to continue the Act until the end of this year.

In the Bill now before us, which will come into operation on the first day of next year, the main proposals in connection with the 1938 Act are, firstly to introduce a second scale in regard to the maximum number of units of pensions for which a contributor may or can subscribe. The scale already provided for in the present Act will continue to operate and, in future, will be known as Scale A. The new scale will be called Scale B. Those pensioners who will come under Scale A, will receive a pension unit valued at 15s. as against the present unit of 12s. 6d.

In addition, they will receive the benefit of the existing supplementation of £1 per week.

The proposed new Scale B will apply to those persons who first commenced to make contributions to the fund after the 31st December this year, while Scale A will apply to those who have made, or will make, contributions prior to that date. Those who first make a contribution to the fund after the 31st December this year will receive a pension unit valuation, when they are eligible to draw pensions, at the rate of 17s. 6d. per unit; that is, their pension unit value will be 2s. 6d. per unit above those who will be covered by Scale A. However those who come under Scale B will not receive any supplementation payment, and consequently the net result will be that those coming under each scale will finally receive approximately the same pension.

Another result of introducing the second scale of maximum units which shall be contributed for, will be to extend the groups in respect of each number of units of pensions. Scale B will have some restrictive effect in regard to the maximum number of units available to each salary group. For instance, the minimum will be extended from £52 to £65 per annum for each unit in excess of 20. I might point out that this new scale B is the one which operates uniformly throughout Australia in respect of the Commonwealth Government superannuation scheme.

The supplementation which is at present paid to those under the 1948 and 1871 Acts will continue. This means that although the supplementation legislation will cease to operate the supplementation payments will continue to those who are now receiving them, either by direct absorption under the provisions of this Bill or by a new formula as set out in the Bill which it is proposed shall apply to those who come under the 1871 Act.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Does that mean there will be any reduction of pensions?

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: As I mentioned earlier, it will be on the same basis; and I do not know of any reductions. I have heard it suggested and I intend to make inquiries in regard to the position before this Bill goes through.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: The 1871 man would not like a reduction in the pension he is receiving.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: I have a recollection of the discussion in Cabinet when this Bill was being formulated, and I would be the most surprised man in Parliament if Cabinet has agreed to any reduction in pensions.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: I hope you are not surprised.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: In connection with the 1948 Act, it is proposed in the Bill that the existing supplementation

benefit of £1 per week will continue. Most of the 1948 Act pensioners, if not all of them, receive social service benefits and that is the reason why the maximum of four units of pension was fixed. Had the Government at that time fixed a higher number of units, the result in the great majority of cases would have been a reduction of Commonwealth pension.

In regard to any reduction. I meant to convey that there would be no reduction in the combined Commonwealth social service payment and the pension under this scheme. No one will receive an overall reduction under this Bill.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: In actual fact the 1871 pensioner will get less pension.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: From a combined point of view there will be no reduction.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: The 1871 pensioner does not get Commonwealth benefits.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I think these points would be better ironed out during the Committee stage. The point I was trying to make is that no person, to my knowledge, will receive a reduction in his present rates of pension. The total amount, whether received from the State or the Commonwealth, will be the same. That is the point I wanted to convey. In view of the recent alterations in Commonwealth social services payments and regulations, these people will continue to receive from the State their four units of pension, plus the supplementation, and also the full Commonwealth social service benefits, unless there are particular circumstances which will debar their receiving the full payments under the provisions of the means test.

In connection with the 1871 Act, the Government has included in this Bill what is known as the Nicholas formula. Members will recollect the appointment of Mr. Nicholas, who had been Auditor General for some years, as a Royal Commissioner to investigate thoroughly the whole position, particularly in regard to the 1871 pensions. Mr. Nicholas recommended that a formula based substantially on cost of living increases should be applied to those pensioners.

At that time the Government was not able to give Mr. Nicholas's recommendations the necessary careful consideration and so it was decided not to take any legislative action during the last session of Parliament. This formula which at first glance appears most involved has been worked out mathematically. It is calculated to relate the 1871 pensions not fully, but partially, to the cost of living.

The organisations concerned with the 1871 pensioners submitted the first request that these pensions be related absolutely to the cost of living movements and that

adjustment along those lines should be continued. However the formula in the Bill will not give to individual members of the associations everything they have sought in that respect.

The formula would, in operation, adjust the pensions payable to the cost of living as it existed not very long ago. Consequently this formula in operation would benefit those who retired before the inflationary period commenced. It would also benefit those who retired before the inflationary period was well under way, but would not benefit every pensioner under the 1871 Act.

The reason for that is that the supplementation which is at present available will no longer be paid. The other reason, which is the more important of the two, is that some of the 1871 pensioners who retired fairly recently, were at the time of retirement receiving a high salary to which cost-of-living adjustments had been applied. So when those persons retired under the 1871 pension Act, their salary was such as to entitle them to a very high rate of pension.

Consequently, there would be no justification for giving them any special or additional consideration. Their pensions will be adjusted in accordance with the principles of this formula. They will receive a rate of pension which will be fair and reasonable under the circumstances. Some who have been receiving both that high rate of pension and the £1 a week supplementation, could receive less under the proposals in the Bill than they receive today. This is because they have been receiving more than they were really entitled to. However, such persons would be in the great minority. I suppose they are the pensioners to whom the hon. member has been referring. I will examine the position.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: I understand there are 300 receiving the 1871 pension.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is the figure which I gave to the hon. member. The larger number by far will receive increases upon the application of this formula. In a few cases no reduction will result as their present pension rate coincides with the principles of this formula.

The Bill also deals with the position of the widows and children of pensioners. The rates of pensions which are now payable to the children will continue to apply as, although the supplementation Act will cease in the event of this Bill passing, the payments which are now being paid under the supplementation Act will be continued by the new legislation.

The widow of a contributor who dies before his retirement from Government service will receive half the pension to which he has contributed, plus £1 per week for each child under 16 years of age. The widow of a pensioner, where the pensioner was drawing the pension prior to the 31st

December, 1957, will receive half the pension at 15s. per unit, plus 10s. of the £1 per week supplementation. In other words, she will receive half of the pension which was being paid to her husband during his period as a pensioner, but the half of the pension will be calculated at the new rate of 15s. per unit, as against the present rate of 12s. 6d.

In addition, she will receive half the amount of supplementation which was being paid to her husband pensioner prior to his demise. Where the pension comes into operation after the 31st December this year, the widow will then receive one half of the pension at the new unit rate of 17s. 6d., but no supplementation payment will be made in addition. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. F. Griffith, debate adjourned.

BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 23rd October.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [9.30]: The measure is designed to make amendments to legislation which passed through this Chamber in the dying hours of last session—if I remember aright about two a.m. on a Saturday. That legislation which was intended to amend Section 100 of the Act has not yet been proclaimed.

In dealing with the Bill before us it is necessary, to some extent, to cover a portion of the ground which was necessary for the introduction of the amendments last year. I realise that the measure creates quite a lot of concern for the Minister, for motorists, and even for members of Parliament. They are concerned about the stifling of free enterprise as a result of these controls. To some extent they may be correct, but I think it is necessary to look a little further than the service that is rendered, and get behind the scenes. If we do this we will appreciate why the amendment was sought in the first place.

If members will read the report of the Honorary Royal Commission on petrol they will find that the commission recommended these trading hours. I believe that the normal trading hours are not really the cause of the trouble. The reason for most of the trouble seems to arise in finding a solution of the problem in connection with the serving of emergency supplies. The amendment endeavours to do something in that regard by permitting petrol to be provided for the ambulance services and the R.A.C.

The commission spent many hours studying this problem in an endeavour to find a remedy, but it was unable to reach

a satisfactory conclusion. When we talk about free enterprise we should examine the position to see what free enterprise means in this regard. In 1951, every service station in the metropolitan area was owned and operated by a private individual. Today almost 50 per cent. are owned by petrol companies and I should say that free enterprise is going the other way when it goes from the individual to a monopoly control by a cartel of oil companies.

Members should take this into consideration. The normal trading hours suggested in the Bill represent 69 hours per week from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. during the week; from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday and from 9 a.m. to 12 noon on Sunday. In my opinion those hours will cover the needs of 95 per cent. of the people using motorcars; possibly more.

Hon. G. E. Jeffery: 99 per cent.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Well, that may be. I was trying to be helpful the other way. Surely we are not going to ask the operators of these service stations to remain open any longer when every hour they remain open is an uneconomical one. It was proved beyond doubt that except in one or two instances, every hour past 7 at night was uneconomical.

It might be said that these service station operators are not forced to open. By law they are not, but by the wholesaler influence they definitely are. It is all very well to say that they are free men and went into this business with their eyes open, but the proposition put to these fellows might have looked rosy. Whilst we are not here to relieve a fool from his folly, I think on this occasion, when we know what we are dealing with, some protection should be afforded these people.

Since the commission put in its report at least 51 new stations have been built in the metropolitan area, and maybe one or two more. This should make members realise the difficulty under which service stations operators are making a living particularly when it is found that only 12, I think, in the metropolitan area, increased their profit margin over the period dealt with in our report.

These figures might impress upon some members what is going on in the metropolitan area. Some 38 freehold stations have changed hands since the report was made and 75 company-owned stations have changed hands in the same time. To my knowledge there are five or six stations around the metropolitan area without an attendant at the moment. It is alarming to think that people are trying to run these stations in the metropolitan area. We should realise that the position, unless a station is in a favoured area, is not as good as it is made out to be.

We have to appreciate that the companies have only one aim and that is gallonage—output or throughput. This policy is dictated from the highest point of management in the world of the oil companies. It is not the dictation of the local managers, but comes right from the top. The companies are not fussy what the cost is provided they get an outlet for their gallonage. They are not fussy whose corns they tread on in getting the throughput. That is why we have this mad rush for service station positions. No one can tell me that the cost of some of them is economical. Possibly from a long-range point of view the ultimate value of the land will not be a loss, but it will not be reimbursed by the sales of petrol.

I have mentioned the wholesaler influence on the service-station operators, and possibly the figures I am about to quote will further convince members of that influence. The average hours of Shell service stations owned and operated by a freeholder, were 72.1 per week. Those operators in company-owned service stations were doing 89.5 hours per week. The freeholder operating Vacuum was operating for 62.2 hours per week, and with the wholesaler service station, 94.6 hours per week.

The C.O.R. happened, if anything, to be a little the other way. The hours were 86.6 for the freehold-operated station and 85.2 for the company-owned station. In regard to Caltex the hours were 64.3 for a freehold-operated station and 110.6 for a company-owned one. There were no freehold Ampol stations. The hours per week for the company-owned Ampol stations were 97.

It can be seen that the wholesaler influence is very real. When we decide on the public interest, the wholesaler interest or the service-station-operator interest, I am inclined to the view that the service-station operator needs some control to save him from the influences I have mentioned. I know the cry will go up: What about service to the public?

When I spoke on the banking Bill I said I believed in service to the public, but I believe there is a limit to the service that can be given to the public. After all, who are the majority of the people who use the service stations after the normal trading hours? By far the largest percentage would be those who knock off at 5 o'clock at night or earlier and do not work on Saturdays or Sundays unless forced to and given overtime rates. Yet they are the people who ask that we should give them consideration, in the public interest, with the result that someone can be forced to work during hours that they are not prepared to work themselves.

That is another point to which we must give consideration. I know that difficulties will arise—no one more than I because of the miles I travel in the country

—at times because of the distances we have to travel. But there is no intention in the measure to bring in the country areas until such time as trouble is encountered in some of the bigger towns, and then they can be brought under the prescribed legislation.

Take the town of Geraldton. If the Ampol company put up a service station there it would say to the operator, as it has in other places, "We have to get our output. You work all night—24 hours a day; or at least until midnight." Some fellow has taken on such a station and because it looks as though Ampol might pinch a bit of the gallonage of the other companies, they will force their operators to remain open for the same hours. That is what we are up against all the time.

We had the instance in Bunbury only recently of an operator being given 24 hours' notice of the termination of his lease if he did not remain open until 9 o'clock in spite of the fact that there was an approach to the manager. He, however, remained adamant and said that if the operator did not stay open until 9 o'clock the company would walk in the next day and take over control. It can be said, "Why do we not do something in regard to the leases?" It might be said that the Royal Commission made these recommendations, but unfortunately the Government did not do anything about them.

There is one other matter we have to consider, and that is that the amending Bill of last year has never been proclaimed. So we could return to the position as it was under the old Act. It could be said that that does not hold in law; but the advice I have received is that it could be made to hold in law.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: That is correct, too.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Until such time as the last year's legislation is proclaimed, we do not know what the position is. We may be placed in a position where the garages will have to close at 6 o'clock at night, 12 o'clock on Saturdays, and there will be no trading on Sundays.

Nobody dislikes controls more than I do. I think members will realise that in the past I have done my best to oppose controls. But I said earlier that I think control in this instance is essential: and if members go behind the scenes and find out what is going on, they, too, will realise that it is necessary in this instance.

Whether the emergency provision, introduced by way of a zoning system, will be a success, I am not in a position to say at the moment. The idea is to have eight zones, seven in the suburban areas, and one in the city area. By this method at least one service station will be operating in each of the seven suburban zones until midnight, and in the city block one station

will be open until 1 a.m. As far as possible one garage will be open on each of the highways.

If that is the way the legislation is to work out, I do not think there is much need to worry about it. With eight service stations open in the metropolitan area, there will be a greater distribution of motoring requisites for the motoring public, than there will be of any other commodity for the general public.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: It works very well, too.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: It has been claimed that the industry has reached the stage where it can look after itself. It can never do that, as the reason I gave proves. These companies must have a gallonage output. The fellow at the top demands that his company has a certain output. The service-station operators themselves might come to some agreement in a town like Geraldton. They might get together and say that they will come to an agreement; but then one company says, "We are not getting our percentage. Our garages will have to keep open longer hours." The moment that is done the whole agreement breaks down.

My approach to this problem is to try in my small way to curb the activities of the oil companies' cartel. I believe that the passing of this Bill is the only way we can do it. No other section of industry remains open to give a service to the public, such as this one does. If the Bill is agreed to at least one station will be open in each zone, and the ambulances will be able to get petrol whenever they possibly can.

Hon. A. R. Jones: If they can find a garage open.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: They will be able to find a garage open because they will be advised of which garage is open each night. Surely no ambulance service would be without petrol at 7 o'clock at night.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: All tanks are filled after every trip.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The tanks must be full at all times. So I do not think there should be much worry about them in that case.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: What about the person who goes on a trip of about 100 miles and arrives after hours and cannot get any petrol to go back again?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: On his journey he would pass a lot of service stations where he could get petrol.

Hon. A. R. Jones: They would probably be closed.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: They would be free to open if they wished.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: Will they give a service? That is what I want to know.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: That depends on the operator himself. He is free to do what he likes. We are not controlling him. The garage at the top of the Armadale hill—

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: "Yule-do."

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I do not know whether he comes within the zone or is just outside it.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: I do not think he does.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: There would be no control over the garage which is situated 44 miles out on the Midland-rd. There is even one garage about 30 miles out, and the same would apply to him. There are such garages on every highway throughout the State. I cannot see any reason why this legislation should not be given a trial to see whether it will work out for the benefit of the industry. I hate to see something like 400 people, who own their own businesses being deprived of them. Today there are only half of them in the business. There is no free enterprise about that.

Hon. A. R. Jones: They sold out to the oil companies.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Some did and some did not. But that does not make it any better for the community. When those fellows went out of business the companies bought them out.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: They are not in the industry now.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: There are 75 who went out of the company-owned stations, and they did not get any rake-off because in some cases they took out a licence and in some cases a lease. Some companies operate on a three-year lease, others on a 12 months' licence and some on a monthly lease. There is no security in those circumstances. I am quite willing, if this legislation is given a trial and is found to be unsuccessful, to support any attempt to amend the Act to make it operative for the benefit of all concerned. I hope the legislation is given a fair trial and that it will work out in the long run.

On the motion of Hon. J. G. Hislop, debate adjourned.

BILL—SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [9.54]: I am surprised at this Bill being introduced at this time, because the indications are that the best times in the sheep and wool industry have passed; and wool prices are definitely on the decline. Yet it appears that all those who are likely to be concerned with it have agreed that the Bill is quite a good one, and they have no argument against it.

But I wonder if some of these people have studied it properly; because in my opinion, some of the claims are a little beyond what the industry may be able to pay, particularly if prices continue to fall. Since the beginning of the season the price of wool has dropped by about 1s. a lb., and the trend is far from firm. I am wondering, if the industry does accept this Bill, whether it will be able to comply with all its conditions.

The first amendment provides that where five shearers are employed accommodation shall be found for them up to a certain standard. At present the Act states that the number shall be eight. I have no quarrel with people in the industry having to provide the best possible accommodation for their workers. But there is a limit to what can be done. I think it is a rather big drop from eight shearers to five; the expense in providing that accommodation will be the same as it would be for eight shearers, because of the change in conditions.

The Bill also provides that separate accommodation shall be found for the cook or cooks, who might be attached to the shearing team. As the Minister pointed out last night, it is no good if the cook is trying to sleep and he is kept awake by some of the boys having a party, or playing cards until late at night. Also it would not be good for the shearers if the cook woke them up at 5 o'clock in the morning when he got up to do the cooking. So it is quite logical that separate sleeping quarters should be provided for the cook and shearers.

But I do not think it is right to expect an owner of property to build quarters and have the buildings separated. I propose to draft an amendment which will allow the buildings to be built in one block, so that the shearers' quarters can be at one end, with the cook-house and the mess hut in the middle, and the cook's quarters at the other end. That should provide for an economy in building costs; it should eliminate the necessity for an excessive number of walls; and it should cut down considerably the cost of plumbing which is such a big item these days.

There are also recommendations for the improvements of beds and bedding. The old size was 6ft. 6in. x 2ft. 6in. wide, as a minimum. Under this Bill it is provided that the beds shall not be smaller than 6ft. 3in. long and 2ft. 6in. wide. There is no argument in that respect. Regarding the type of mattresses to be provided, that is all to the good. I agree that every comfort should be given if the cost is not prohibitive.

One other amendment contained in the Bill proposes to increase the cubic air space of a room from 360 to 480 cubic ft., which in my opinion is a big increase. Consideration should be given to where the shearing quarters are built; there is a

difference between the conditions in tropical or sub-tropical districts, and those found in the South-West of this State.

Formerly the sky was the limit as far as the height of the roof was concerned, but it is proposed in the Bill to limit the height to 11ft. in calculating the cubic air space. With a height of 11ft., a compartment need only be 9ft. by 9ft. to give the required cubic space. That is not a very big room in which to house two beds each being 6ft. 6in. by 2ft. 6in. I wonder if that area is not unreasonable.

In the case of a room built under the modern trend with a 9ft. ceiling, the area would be 10ft. by 11ft. to give the required cubic air space. That would be a much more comfortable room than the smaller room with an 11ft. ceiling. However, the shearers seem to be satisfied with the limitation set out in the Bill. Personally I consider that an improvement could be effected by reducing the height of the ceiling and increasing the area of the room.

I do not propose to oppose the whole Bill, but I wish to move one or two amendments. In the existing provision, ablution facilities were provided only if water was available. Now there is to be no restriction at all and water has to be found for ablution purposes; I agree with that. This provision, however, does not take into account that water might be hard to find on a property or hard to supply.

The clause stipulates that one shower cubicle shall be provided for every six shearers; one wash-basin shall be provided for every four shearers; and one laundry wash-tub shall be provided for every three shearers, and any number in excess of three or a multiple of three but not being a complete multiple of three, to be regarded as three. If there are four shearers in a gang it will be necessary to provide two laundry wash-tubs. That over-emphasises the normal requirements of a shearing gang.

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: What is the number in a gang on the basis of each shearer?

Hon. A. R. JONES: I do not know, but possibly one man for every shearer.

The Minister for Railways: Usually a shed hand to each shearer.

Hon. A. R. JONES: A slight alteration could be made to this requirement without causing any inconvenience to the shearers. I suggest that one hand-basin for every four shearers would suffice. Getting down to the provision of coppers, which are essential because the shearers cannot wash greasy clothes without hot water, the ratio is one copper, not less than 20 gallons in capacity, for every 10 shearers. That is a very big-sized copper. I do not know if one of that size can be purchased. I have made inquiries from two hardware firms, and the biggest

copper on sale has a 16-gallon capacity. This Bill will enforce the provision of a utensil which cannot be purchased.

The Minister for Railways: In many cases a galvanised oil drum is used.

Hon. A. R. JONES: It would be reasonable to reduce the capacity from 20 gallons to 15 gallons. That capacity should be sufficient for up to 10 shearers. If there are 20 shearers then two coppers of 15 gallons each should suffice. Where 10 shearers are engaged, a 15-gallon copper should prove adequate. If two shearers decided to wash their clothes at the same time they would not each require 15 gallons of hot water. Seven to eight gallons would be enough for each. A 20-gallon copper is too large, and the capacity should be reduced considerably. I do not wish to say anything further at this stage, but I hope at a future sitting to place on the notice paper the amendments which I have outlined. In view of the drastic changes proposed in the Bill, and in view of the fact that the industry is not on top of the world, as it was some three years ago, I hope the amendments will be accepted. I support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham, debate adjourned.

BILL—FREMANTLE HARBOUR TRUST ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 26th September.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [10.10]: To refresh the minds of members, I would point out that the Bill was introduced by Mr. Diver and has as its object a provision to enable police constables in charge of police stations to issue drivers' licences. The information supplied to me is that in some respects the mover has been wrongly informed. Under the new system, when a person applies to a country police station for a driver's licence, he is issued with an interim receipt, and he has to return at some future date to pick up the licence. That is correct in a case where the address of the licensee is not known. All licences are forwarded by post to the addresses of the licensee where the addresses are known; only in cases where an address is unknown does the central office send the licence back to the police station where the application was made.

For the information of members I shall read some of the comments which have been supplied to me in respect of this matter. Mr. Diver's amendments enable

a driver's licence to be issued at every police station. In actual practice that is the effect of the present arrangement, the only difference being that the driver's licence is forwarded to the recipient by post later, while at the time of his application he obtains only an interim receipt.

When an application for a driver's licence is made at a police station and the necessary fee is paid, the applicant is issued with an interim receipt. In the case of renewals, showing the number of the licence, and the time and date of issue, the renewal is then forwarded to Perth for processing through the cash register and returned by post to the recipient—not as the hon. member stated to the police station where the licensee would be required to go on a second occasion to pick up his licence. I have explained the exception to that case.

Naturally licences would be posted to the addresses shown on the interim receipt, so that any person applying for the renewal of a licence at any police station, unless the postal address is left there, would not get the licence by post. The licence would be posted from Perth to the police station where the application was made.

I am informed that many members of the public have expressed their appreciation of the present system of renewals as being more convenient to them and saving them a great deal of inconvenience and time.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I have heard the opposite.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is the information supplied to me.

Hon. G. Bennetts: That is to suit themselves.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In country centres such as Kalgoorlie, Merredin, Albany, Katanning, Narrogin, etc., arrangements have been made for members of the public to take their licences direct to the clerks of courts, pay their money and have the licences processed forthwith.

It was stated by Mr. Diver that the postal facilities could run into a considerable amount of money. My notes state that is correct. They continue—

But a considerable amount of money is saved in the aggregate in police time, in that members of the Police Force are able to give more time to ordinary police duties instead of to the renewal of drivers' licences.

The hon. member states that this new system is the golden example of how those in charge of the administration of the Traffic Act are doing their best to centralise all the work they can.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Police stations will have to give a little receipt; they might as well give the paper out straightaway.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Continuing—

This is not so. All drivers' licences have been recorded at the central office since the initiation of the Traffic Act—that is for the past 37 years. The only alteration in the present issue of drivers' licences is that it has been made more convenient for members of the public:

- (1) In notifying them of the date of renewal.
- (2) In providing facilities whereby the licence can be renewed by post, in lieu of having to go to the nearest police station and perhaps find the constable is absent and have to return a second time to renew a licence.

It is also stated that a person can renew his licence by post, regardless of what infirmity or defection he may be suffering. This was quite possible prior to the institution of the present scheme, because the privilege of renewing by post has been in force for the past 37 years. Therefore there is no difference in the renewal of licences today than in previous years.

There should be no muddle and confusion by country dwellers in the matter of renewal. It is plainly stated on the licence that it can be renewed by post or at the nearest police station.

For many years the Royal Automobile Club and others have asked for notification to be sent to all drivers for the renewal of their drivers' licences, to enable them to be reminded that their drivers' licences are due to expire, which avoids many complications with regard to insurance and prosecutions for not having renewed their drivers' licences.

For the issue of an original licence at any police station other than the four main traffic offices, the applicant is tested; and if he is found suitable to drive, an interim receipt is issued, which enables him to drive as from that time pending the issue of the Licence. Therefore no inconvenience is caused to any member of the public in this regard, the interim receipt acting as a licence until such time as the original is issued and posted to the recipient.

The reason for the alteration was, as stated previously, because of the insurance. It is so pointed out that numbers of otherwise law-abiding citizens, through carelessness or neglect, unwittingly contravened traffic laws by failure to renew their drivers'

licence on the due date. Such inadvertence, neglect, or carelessness caused most serious complications in respect to injury to other persons or damage because of the insurance cover becoming invalid; and many persons who are very law-abiding in other respects have been placed in a very unenviable position because of this.

For the period June and July of this year, over 64,000 drivers' licence renewals were posted from the Traffic Office to notify drivers that their licences were about to expire.

The number of driver's licence renewals by post at the central office were:—

June (estimated)	18,770
July	10,352
August	29,165

showing that over 58,000 people availed themselves of the privilege of renewal by post.

The only other information I have in regard to the Bill is that it is considered that the effect would be to force an officer in charge of a police station to issue drivers' licences; and it is considered by the traffic authorities that that is not desirable from the department's point of view. It is more convenient and efficient for the controlling authority to have a complete record of the licences issued and the applications kept in the one office.

Hon. L. C. Diver: You said it had been done for 37 years.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They have been doing it.

Hon. L. C. Diver: There is nothing to stop them.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They are doing it now, working on a machine which issues a receipt the same as a machine issues a motorcar licence.

Hon. H. K. Watson: The whole arrangement is mechanised.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; it is speeded up terrifically. Then there is the point regarding the understanding of licences. Under the former system the licences were written out by constables in all parts of the country. When a new number had to be registered there was some delay, and often many checkings of the name of the licensee, on account of the difficult handwriting of the officer issuing the licence. Under the new system there is no doubt. The names are typed and the authorities claim there is much more proficiency under this system than prevailed under the old one.

I have no other information in connection with the matter but the department hopes the Bill will not be passed. It feels that the existing system, judging by the brief experience it has had, is much better than the old; will improve the methods of

bookkeeping; and will enable the department to keep much more legible records and facilitate the office work.

Hon. H. K. Watson: What about the frailty of the licence?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is a point on which we are all agreed; but the Bill does not propose to do anything about it. I think we all agree that the original licence—not the blue one that we had recently, but an earlier one which had some cloth binding—was one which many drivers treasured because they had it for a long period and it showed on one side that there had been no endorsements, which was something of which they were proud. But they were all recalled when the blue-coloured licences were substituted, and the latter were not of as durable a quality.

Now we have a paper record. If it is carried in a person's pocket, just folded and without any protection, it must deteriorate. Most motorists, however, look after their important documents and do not carry them around in their pockets except in some protective cover. I oppose the Bill.

HON. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM (South-East) [10.25]: I cannot help feeling it is to be regretted the Government has in latter years had a tendency to replace old and permanent records with a new system of flimsy pieces of paper, on the score of economy.

One can remember the days when one acquired a book and obtained a deed of a decent size and durable material, which could be treasured for years as something permanent. Today one receives a document similar to the present licence; and that seems to be the general trend.

It is to be regretted that in the past two or three years there have been several changes. The original driver's licence was solid and permanent, and yet it was a very handy little booklet which could be fitted in the pocket or a wallet, and which showed endorsements which could be written out in the matter of a few moments at any police station one was able to go to.

Hon. H. K. Watson: A family heirloom.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Yes; I do not know how long I have had mine. One could keep it as long as one wanted to. That was replaced by a frailer-looking piece of governmental nightmare which had room for endorsements and changes of address. However, we had hardly got used to that document before another one was substituted similar in shape and size and texture to other utility paper, except for the red mark through it. It seems to be so completely futile for such a fragile record to be the ultimate replacement for something which had been so permanent and useful.

I agree that a great advantage of the new system is the notification to licence-holders of the due date. That is a good innovation and very acceptable. It is a pity that a combination of two good methods could not have been evolved.

In a place like Kalgoorlie, licences are not issued at police stations but at the office of the clerk of courts; and that is no disadvantage, because there is very little difference between going there and to a police station. In smaller towns or sidings where there is no clerk of courts, there is nearly always a policeman; and it was convenient to go to the nearest police officer in the district and obtain one's licence. It may be said that the answer to that is that one can obtain a licence through the post.

However, I think the hon. member has done a good service to the State by bringing forward his Bill because it enables members to debate what has become a contentious issue. I have heard a lot of bitter complaint about this flimsy piece of paper in place of the very important document most drivers carried around with them all the time.

Hon. W. R. Hall: You are supposed to do so.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: It is not an offence not to, but it is wise to do so.

Hon. W. R. Hall: You have three days to produce it.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: As I said, I feel the hon. member did a good service in bringing down his Bill so that we might give consideration to what has become a very contentious issue since this new flimsy piece of paper has become the recognised form. Whether the Bill is agreed to or not, those members who have been approached to do something about it will have an opportunity of expressing their views.

HON. F. D. WILLMOTT (South-West) [10.31]: I listened carefully to what the Minister read out in this regard. He said this method had been introduced to simplify licensing in country districts, but in practice it has not worked out in that way. Both my licence and that of my wife fell due for renewal on the same day, but we were both due to come to Perth on that date; and five days before then I should have received notification that my licence was due. As it had not arrived I went to the police station and they said they could not issue me with a licence until I had received the notification.

I told them I did not want to drive without a licence and asked what my position would be if I were involved in an accident. They said I would have to wait until the day before I was due to leave for Perth and then see them again. That meant another trip to the police station on the day before I was to come to Perth, as I still had not received the notification. They then accepted my money and issued

the interim receipt mentioned by the Minister; and it constituted my licence for the time being.

In due course, as they had accepted my money and forwarded it to Perth, I received a receipted licence, together with that of my wife. Three weeks later I received notification that our licences were due for renewal—the notification I had been waiting for nearly a month earlier. Many other country people have told me that they had the same experience. When the present system works as it is intended to, it may simplify things, but the experience of country dwellers up to date is that it has been most inconvenient.

Mr. Diver has done a service in bringing this question forward for debate, so that the Government may know what is occurring. I hope the Government will endeavour to correct the anomalies that exist at present.

HON. G. C. MacKINNON (South-West) [10.35]: The troubles mentioned by Mr. Willmott are such as must occur on the commencement of a new system. I believe all members will agree that, in the main, the innovation is working very well indeed and it prevents forgetful people from failing to renew their licences. The prime function of a policeman is to preserve law and order and, with our habit these days of licensing so many things, the police are becoming snowed up with all the various licences that have to be issued.

In many country centres today there is a man at the desk in the police station, attending full time to licences of one form or another. I have written down almost a full page of the various licences that I can call to mind—licences for orchards, dogs, guns and so on. I believe there are now about 40 different licences required to be issued in this State. Of course, they are not all issued by the police, but many of them are. A man must be proved competent to handle a car before he is issued a driver's licence; and therefore I do not see why it should have to be an annual licence. I can see no reason why that system should operate and, if it is only a matter of income for the State, why should we not allow a man to pay a £10 licence fee to cover a period of years?

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Why do you think the licence fee was increased to 10s?

Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: It would probably be said to have been done to cover costs. It would be impossible to work out, but nevertheless interesting to know what the cost is. I take it that the licences are filled out by girls who operate machines, as against the old licence which was issued by a policeman. I feel we could well cut out the annual licence, particularly as an increasing amount of the time of policemen is taken up with this kind of work instead of the maintenance of law and order.

HON. L. C. DIVER (Central—in reply) [10.40]: I thank members for the reception accorded the Bill, and with the exception of the Minister all those who have spoken to the debate have been in favour of the measure. The Minister read out the department's reply to the points I raised; and apparently I made an error in saying that the applicant for a renewal of a licence had to go to the police station. I take it that the inspector in charge would be right in that respect, although I do not agree with some of the replies given by the Minister to what I said when introducing the Bill.

The department claimed that the central licensing system entailed less work, yet it is obvious that the country police officer, in issuing an interim receipt, must do as much writing as was involved in the issuing of the old type of licence. Having issued that receipt, he forwards the old document to the central office where a new licence is issued by means of a modern machine. Formerly that was done by hand at the police station. One copy of the document goes to the licence holder and the other is retained as a permanent record in the central office. Some years ago I had occasion to report to the traffic office, but had not my driver's licence with me. In spite of that, within a minute or less the officer concerned could give me all the details of my licence.

In that respect the new system adds no benefit, except possibly that the typing may be more legible on the new licence than was the writing of some policeman on the old licence. But there again we know how many documents there are which one has to fill in for various authorities where block letters are required, and that would overcome the difficulties concerning the name and address which the police may require.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: I have never seen a driver's licence that is hard to read.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: That is so; I am only putting this point forward to parry the weak suggestion that has been put to us. The cost angle has also been mentioned, but I do not think it will be one farthing cheaper now than it was under the old system. I know for certain that in the country areas it was never necessary to employ extra staff because those duties were always carried out by the policeman.

The matter of postage was also referred to; and it was said that already the department has been put to considerable expense by the fact that it notified motorists that their driver's licences are about to expire. I do not for one moment doubt that that was a useful service, but I cannot understand why it was brought up as an argument to justify the central collection of driver's licences.

Another argument was that the posting of the licences involved a further expense to the department. If that is so, it supports my contention that these should be sent back in bulk to the nearest police station. When thousands of licences are being renewed there is bound to be this extra expense.

Hon. G. Bennetts: It is 8d. on each.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: We will probably have another Bill setting out a fee of 11s. to cover extra expense. There has been no valid reason advanced by the department for opposition to the Bill other than its own convenience in the use of its machine. That is the only benefit so far as I can see. No consideration is given to the people who want their licences renewed. At one stage the Minister read out that thousands of licences come in by post. Is it not obvious that they must all come in by post? Whether they come in from the would-be renewer of his licence direct, or from the police station, they must still come by post. That is merely another bogey that has been put forward to dissuade us. I hope that the statements I have made to answer the points put forward by the Minister will ensure support for my 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.

RESOLUTION—STATE FORESTS.

To Revoke Dedication.

Message from the Assembly requesting the Council's concurrence in the following resolution now considered:—

That the proposal for the partial revocation of State Forests Nos. 4, 7, 14, 22, 33, 37, 38, 49 and 51, laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly by command of His Excellency the Governor on the twenty-third day of October, 1957, be carried out.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS

(Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [10.50] I move—

That the resolution be agreed to.

This is the usual resolution which is submitted to both Houses of Parliament, in order to comply with Section 21 of the Forests Act which provides that such action must be taken to revoke in whole or part the dedication of Crown Lands as a State forest.

Ten areas are concerned in this dedication. They are as follows:—

- (1) Adjoining Collie townsite. Approximately one-half acre required by the Commonwealth for a P.M.G. line depot.

- (2) About 1½ miles north-east of Pickering Brook. Approximately 2½ acres of former tramway formation, to be opened as a new road.
- (3) About five miles west of Nanga Brook. Approximately 42 acres of non-timbered country which is to be exchanged for an area of approximately 77 acres of good jarrah forest.
- (4) About two miles north-east of Pickering Brook. Approximately six acres of non-timbered country applied for by adjoining land holder.
- (5) Adjoining Karragullen townsite. Approximately five acres which has been applied for by the Armadale-Kelmscott Road Board for recreation reserve and hall site.
- (6) About eight miles south-east of Busselton. Approximately 350 acres of poorly timbered country applied for by an adjoining land holder.
- (7) About 12 miles east of Pemberton. Approximately 14 acres of cleared land which is to be exchanged for an area of approximately 40 acres carrying good quality karri and marri which can be effectively regenerated to karri.
- (8) About three miles north of Mulalyup. Approximately 3½ acres of non-timbered country which is to be exchanged for an equal area of good jarrah forest.
- (9) About 2½ miles north of Congelin. Approximately 42 acres of non-timbered country applied for by an adjoining land holder.
- (10) About three miles south-east of Heartlea. Four areas totalling approximately 265 acres which has been applied for by an adjoining land holder in order to considerably reduce his external fencing. He is prepared to surrender approximately 90 acres of his property which will shorten the boundary of the State forest.

On motion by Hon. J. Murray, debate adjourned.

BILL—CHIROPODISTS.

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to the amendments made by the Council.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) I move—

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

House adjourned at 10.58 p.m.