

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 4th December, 1918.

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

[For "Questions on Notice" and "Papers Presented" see "Votes and Proceedings."]

PAPERS PRESENTED—TURTLE INDUSTRY.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): I desire to lay on the Table of the House the papers in connection with the proposed indenture between the Government of Western Australia and H. Barron Rodway for an exclusive license to take turtles. With the permission of the House I would like to make a short explanation on the subject. At the beginning of 1912, Mr. Rodway obtained a similar license for seven years, with the right of renewal for another seven years. Unfortunately, however, he had bad luck shortly after he secured the license, the misfortune including the loss of papers in the "Titanic." Then a little later war broke out and he has not had a chance of going on with the operations he intended to carry out. We propose now to put him in the position he was in at the beginning of 1912, that is to say, his license will have 14 years to run from the 1st January, 1919. Mr. Rodway claims that he can make a success of this industry. The conditions of the license are that he will work the ground, erect a factory and other works to enter into the treatment of the turtles and the preparation of products within the State. The only difference is that he previously held two licenses. Now one license will be given him. He will have permission to operate along 75 miles of the foreshore from North-West Cape to Cape Lambert in the vicinity of Onslow. There are over 1,000 miles of this coast line which are practically as good for turtles as this particular portion.

QUESTION—MINISTERIAL ROOM, INSTALLATION OF FAN.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN (without notice) asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is the fan installed in the Ministerial room attached to Parliament House for the purpose of allowing the hot air to escape? 2, Seeing that the Opposition will be housed in another room for probably two years, will the Minister provide similar comforts there, as this will be to his benefit also when he takes up his residence there?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: The fan placed in the Ministerial room is for the purpose of taking out the fumes of tobacco which arise sometimes from good cigars and sometimes from bad ones.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Did you do this independent of the House Committee?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think I did, but I shall be pleased to put a fan in the other rooms if Mr. Speaker will notify me.

BILL—DISCHARGED SOLDIERS' SETTLEMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—AGRICULTURAL LANDS PURCHASE ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIES (Hon. R. T. Robinson—Canning) [4.50] in moving the second reading said: This is a measure to give the Government control over the wheat for the coming harvest of the 1918-19 season, and for the ensuing harvest of the 1919-20 season. It is hoped that by such control the wheat will be effectively marketed as heretofore under the general Australian Scheme that has been in existence since 1915, for the profitable disposal under war conditions of our Australian wheat harvests. At present there is a Minister charged with the administration of the Wheat Marketing Act, 1916, in this State, and also of the Wheat Marketing Act, 1918. Under these Acts he has the exclusive rights of the purchase and sale of the wheat of the 1916-17 harvest, and of the 1917-18 crops now on hand here. Section 10 under the original Act, relating to the prohibition of sales, has already been extended by proclamation until the 31st December, 1918. It is desired, with regard to the wheat of the next two ensuing harvests, that similar rights to those provided under the Acts mentioned will be conserved to the Government under the authority proposed to be constituted in the Bill now before the House. If this Bill becomes law the extension of Section 10 already provided for will automatically prohibit sales of any new wheat to the date referred to—that is, the end of the current year. This section will be further extended from time to time as may be necessary. The most important alteration to the existing legislation as appearing in this Bill is that proposed in connection with the incidence of administration. Hitherto, this has been effected by the Minister controlling the Scheme, acting on the advice of what is known as an advisory committee. It is proposed that for the future the Wheat Marketing Acts shall be administered by a board having executive functions, and it will be only in connection with financial matters in relation to harvests subject to a Government guarantee that the Government, through the Minister in charge, will have any direct control. Clause 11 of the Bill provides that the operation of the Wheat Marketing Acts may be extended by proclamation to the wheat to be harvested during the season 1919-20.

Mr. Munsie: Without reference to Parliament?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes, that has been customary previously.

Hon. J. Mitchell: It was cut out of the last.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: For a reason I will give directly. In addition to giving the board the necessary control of the coming harvests, hon. members will be asked to ratify and confirm the agency agreements that have been entered into in connection with the acquisition and gisting of wheat. It is really not necessary that agreements of this nature should be confirmed each year, as there is adequate provision in the original Act for such arrangements to be made.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It was cut out last year.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Hon. members will notice that under Section 6 of the Wheat Marketing Act, 1916, the Minister may, for the purpose of the satisfactory marketing of the wheat, appoint such agents as he deems necessary. In view, however, of the public interest affected, of a certain amount of dissatisfaction expressed by members last session, and of the recent activities of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the operations of the Scheme, the Government consider it only proper to take Parliament fully into their confidence and explain the reasons actuating them in making these agreements.

Hon. P. Collier: But the agreement is made and Parliament cannot alter it.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Of course, it must be understood that naturally, if it had been practicable, the Government would have submitted to this House their propositions with regard to both wheat acquiring and wheat gisting before the respective agreements had been arranged. Hon. members will, however, I am sure, realise that in the delicate negotiations that have been made to obtain the terms from millers and from the acquiring agent, as are disclosed in the agreements now before them for ratification, it would have been impossible for the Wheat Scheme to publicly show its hand. One amendment of the principal Act is designed to meet the situation arising from the action of the Government this year in helping farmers in the purchase of cornsacks, in which to bag the new season's wheat. With the exception of a few minor amendments it is not proposed to make any other alterations to the Wheat Scheme operations that are not already adequately provided for by existing legislation. In conformity with the recommendations of the Royal Commission, the Government consider it advisable to provide, what may be called, specific legislative power for the erection of suitable wheat sheds or other accommodation for the protection and safe custody of the wheat whilst it is on hand pending shipment overseas—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We are going to watch that other accommodation.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Gristing at mills, or selling for local consumption. Another amendment is the imposition of penalties on farmers who tender old wheat with new. It has been found that such action on the part of careless growers endangers by con-

tamination large parcels of good clean grain that is delivered by the mill. These are the features of the Bill now before members, and I will refer directly to each one in detail. Before doing that there are one of two remarks that I desire to make by way of explanation. Hon. members know that since last session the Royal Commission appointed at the request of Parliament has been sitting continuously in pursuance of its investigations into the operations of the Wheat Scheme in this State since its inception. The Commission has presented an interim report which is in the hands of members, and has passed many comments on the Scheme work besides making several recommendations in connection with the future management of the Scheme. Several of these recommendations had already been decided upon by the Advisory Committee, others have been embodied in the present measure, and, I might say, the Government have very carefully considered their attitude and reviewed exhaustively the various recommendations for the improvement of the Scheme that have been made from time to time. I have no doubt that any such matters that may be of peculiar interest to individual members, which may have been omitted from the Bill, will be referred to during the course of this debate. In that event, I shall be most happy, in my reply, to explain the reasons actuating those concerned in the administration of the Scheme in the policy that has been determined, and why certain recommendations of the Royal Commission have not been followed.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You know the Advisory Board approved of all except one.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I would like, however, to make clear that the adoption of the main recommendation of the Royal Commission, that is with regard to investing the board with executive functions, renders it unnecessary to consider many of the subjects that would have had to receive consideration if the functions of the board were to remain merely advisory, as they are at present. Many of such matters can now well be left for the decision of the Executive board. Unfortunately, there were certain matters that could not wait—particularly in regard to wheat acquisition and wheat gisting. We must not overlook the real reason for the appointment of the Royal Commission. It was appointed primarily to inquire into the operations of this Scheme since its inception, and discuss any acts of maladministration and incompetence that have been freely alleged. If such discoveries were made, as were anticipated, then naturally it followed that the secondary duty of the Commission should be performed, namely, the submission to the Government of recommendations for the future control of the Scheme's operations. The Commission, as will be gathered by a review of its personnel, is more a judiciary tribunal than an advisory body of experts. It is representative of both Houses and a reflection of the various parties, and, I submit, not wanting in those inquiring characteristics so essential in a commission of review.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There is no party on the Commission.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No, all parties are represented. A perusal of the interim report of the commission discloses on the whole, considering the magnitude and extensive period of those operations, a very satisfactory state of affairs. When we compare the result of the inquiries of our Royal Commission here with the results of the inquiries of similar commissions in the other States, we have reason to be proud of the honesty and success of the Scheme's operations. In the absence, therefore, of any allegation of wrong-doing and bad administrative work, the Government, especially when supported by the Advisory Board and expert advisers, feel that they would have been justified in carrying on in precisely the same way during the coming year as during the past year. We must, however, face facts as we find them, and realise that Parliament, having recommended the appointment of this Royal Commission, will naturally feel bound to favourably consider its recommendations, particularly on major points. Although the Government cannot see eye to eye with the Commission on some of those that are characterised as important matters, we must leave it to Parliament to give to the Government as great a measure as possible of that power and control which the Government consider is so essential to the successful working of the wheat marketing scheme in the interests of the whole community. I have in mind more particularly the main recommendation that the Royal Commission made, namely, with respect to giving executive powers to a board instead of to the Minister. We feel that the attitude the Scheme has always adopted in connection with an executive board is a perfectly justifiable one, and the work of the Scheme on the whole, particularly under the present Minister and the existing Advisory Board, has been well carried out. We cannot lose sight of the fact, however, that there may be changes of Government as there have been in the past, and therefore that measure of stability and continuity which is so desirable in a scheme of this kind might be interfered with by a change of Minister. It is because of this belief, supported by the expressed views of so many members in this Chamber and in another place from time to time, that the Government have decided to submit for the approval of members the proposal for an executive board as embodied in Clause 4 of the Bill. In the clauses as printed, an endeavour has been made to embody the intentions of the Royal Commission in its recommendation in connection with executive powers. It is suggested that the Government should retain complete control of any advances to be made in respect to the wheat pooled. To admit Government control to advances only would not give effect to the obvious intention of the Commission. There is a fundamental difference between advances to farmers and a guaranteed price to farmers. Advances to farmers are amounts that are paid at the time of

delivery of the wheat and later when there is further money available and it is safe to pay. A guarantee, on the other hand, is made before the crop is harvested, and in some cases before it is sown. Such a guarantee is made in anticipation of the profitable disposal of the wheat and with the risk of an unprofitable one. Hon. members will see, therefore, that if any existing Government guarantee is to be conserved, the Government, through the Minister in charge, must have complete financial control of the Scheme. Notwithstanding the provision under Clause 4 that the Minister shall have exclusive control of all expenditure of administration in connection with those guaranteed harvests, it is not the intention of the Government that the board should be in any way ignored in this connection. The Minister will, as before, receive and be guided by the advice of the board, even on the question of finance, but it is he, as representing the Government, who must have the final decision. There is one very regrettable circumstance in connection with the alteration of the functions of the board from advisory to executive, and that is the probability of losing the services of some of the present members. Anyone who has had a close insight into the administrative work of the Scheme must appreciate the enormous amount of work that members must have performed in order to be able to render the very valuable service to the Government that they have individually done since accepting membership on the board. The Government is especially grateful to those gentlemen having businesses of their own who have, in a purely honorary capacity, devoted their time and ability to the services of the Scheme and the growers participating in the Pool. I think the very least I can do is to mention to the House in this connection Messrs. T. E. Field, H. H. Paynter, and E. W. Cotton.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Messrs. Paynter and Cotton were appointed only during the past few weeks.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: As will be seen from a perusal of the agreement set out in the first schedule, the Government has decided to appoint the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., as their sole acquiring agent for the coming season. The services are substantially similar to those carried out by this company last season. The rates for the various services are relatively the same, but the terms and conditions are more advantageous to the Scheme and have been decided upon as a result of our experience last season. It will be remembered that last year (1917) the shipper agents as well as the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., and their co-operative subsidiary societies, had an opportunity of tendering for the handling of the 1917-18 wheat in competition. On this basis of competitive handling the Farmers' Co-operative Society was appointed agent on terms lower than were quoted by the other agents. If it could be shown that from the Scheme's point of view the previous season's work had been reasonably well done, that the rates were fair and reasonable and

would be the same next year, and that the services for the coming season would be similar, the Government felt that no good cause would be gained by changing agents, nor would it be just to the company that had obtained the work the previous year by competitive tender that that company should be turned down. The Royal Commission on the Wheat Scheme has made extensive inquiries into the past season's operations of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd. It has made no suggestion that the work of acquisition by that company has not been well and faithfully done. They say that they cannot find that such work has been performed either better or worse by the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., than by any of the old shipper agents who operated for the Scheme in former years. I take that to mean that it was done equally as well. Furthermore, the Commission has not recommended that the company should not be further employed. Moreover, the officers of the Scheme reported that the work of the company, considering the magnitude of the operations and that it was the first time a single company had had to do the whole of the acquisition work, and under close expert supervision, was well done. So much for the company's ability to do good work. The rates at which the work was done last year and that are contemplated for the coming year were not considered by the expert advisers of the Scheme to be unfair and unreasonable nor to give any undue profit to the agent operating. Moreover, the Royal Commission after its inquiries, does not say that the rates were unreasonable. So much for the remuneration to be paid. No further services such as storing at depots and handling from depot to mill or ship could, for various reasons which I will explain later if necessary, be dealt with other than by the Scheme's officers. If the Government had intended to substantially extend the services to be performed by means of an agency for the 1918-19 crop, it would naturally have had to favourably regard the recommendation of the Advisory Board. This was that competitive tenders should be invited from all the reputable wheat agents in the State and they would have in all probability been asked to quote rates at which they would be prepared to perform all services, including the additional ones, either in competition or as sole agent. I think I have now shown that the work to be done is the same as last year, it can be done at similar rates and it will be done equally well if not better, next season. In view of these circumstances we could not decide that the company was not fit to be re-employed. Another reason for consideration of members is this: If the Commission had considered that it was essential to the well-being of the Scheme that the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., should not again be appointed as agent, and that the Scheme itself should do the work of acquiring, by dealing direct with the co-operative societies at the various sidings, it would, I should have thought, have definitely said so. I now come to the final reason actuating the Government in the re-employment of the farmers' company. It is not the policy of the present Government to

perform departmentally any services that can be effectively performed by competent contractors. In the absence of a direct recommendation from the Commission and the submission of cogent reasons for any such recommendation, the Government could not appoint the Scheme officials to do the wheat acquisition work and thus add to their present onerous duties. It is the policy of the Government to legitimately assist the farmers' co-operative movement in this State, and where we find, operating successfully and reasonably as Government acquiring agent, a farmers' company that acts in conjunction with the co-operative societies throughout the State and works in unison with those societies, not as a middleman, but as a parent company developing the progress and fostering the interests of a daughter society, the Government would, I think be quite justified if it were necessary, in giving that company special consideration in the continuance of its agency.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Why do not you tell the House the exact facts, instead of wavering?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I am not wavering. As it happened, such special consideration has not been necessary, as the company is being re-employed purely on its merits from a business point of view.

Hon. P. Collier: On its merits, with a good deal of pleasure.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Not at all. Coming to the agreement itself, I would point out that the principal alterations this year as compared with the agreement approved by this House last year, are as follows: the period of operation extends approximately two months longer than last year, that is to say, from 1st December, 1918, to 31st May, 1919. Remuneration for handling wheat by trucking direct from farmers' wagons is five-eighths of a penny as compared with one halfpenny for stacks over 3,000 bags and five-eighths under.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is reasonable.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Thanks. Roofing of nominated stacks one farthing per bushel as against one halfpenny last year. The bond is being reduced from £20,000 to £10,000. Special alternative penalties are provided for various minor breaches of the agreement. Checking by running bulk sample has been eliminated, as recommended by the Royal Commission. Sub-agents must obey the instructions of the Scheme's wheat inspectors. All agreements between the agent and the sub-agents must be approved by the Minister. No penalty can be imposed except at the instance of the Advisory Committee, or, as it will now be, the Executive Committee. The agent must loyally respect the confidential nature of his obligations to his principal. A number of these alterations were suggested by the Royal Commission. In all other respects, the agreement is practically the same as that which was confirmed and ratified by Parliament last session. A perusal of the evidence taken by the Royal Commission will show that there have been some very strenuous differences of opinion between the Scheme's officers and the servants of the company as to the methods

that should be adopted in connection with the handling and protection of the wheat. This was in a measure to be expected from a company that considered it had the interests of the farmer more at heart than did the management of the Scheme. I think, however, it is now generally realised that the Scheme administration desired only to do the right and proper thing by the farmers who entrusted their wheat to the control of the Scheme, and to the taxpayers of the State who are responsible for the financial guarantee made by the Government for payment to the growers participating in the Pools of the 1917-18 and 1918-19 harvests. There is no doubt that the Government supervisory control must be paramount, and that the agent must carry out the wishes of its principal. With the recognition of this principle, what has been alleged as dual control will disappear and the irksomeness of divided responsibility will be negligible. This relationship is very carefully safeguarded in the various additions in the agreement now before hon. members for ratification, and if both the Scheme and the agent are not subjected to undue outside interference and criticism there should be smooth working in the coming season. If members so desire I shall when replying refer in detail to the reason why it is necessary that the protection, storing and shipping of the wheat should be performed by the Scheme's officers instead of by any outside agent. The proposed agreement with millers is set out in the second schedule. The terms of this agreement have been entered into, only after most careful consideration and strenuous negotiation with first of all the millers as an association, and then with each one individually.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Have the millers signed it?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. Last year's agreement expires on 3rd November and the new arrangement will operate from that date. Instead, however, of it being for 12 months' duration, it will be for a period of three months and thereafter determinable on one month's notice by either party. The main object of entering into a gristing agreement last year, whereby the millers, instead of purchasing the wheat from the Scheme and selling the produce on their own account, gristed full time on behalf of the Scheme and disposed of the produce of the Scheme either locally or for the Imperial flour order, was to cope comprehensively with the weevil trouble. By working all the mills three shifts per day for the whole period of the agreement, a quantity of wheat equal to more than half an average season's crop (over six million bushels) was treated in this way. An alternative arrangement could have been made whereby the miller would purchase the wheat and receive an allowance for inferiority, including weevil damage. Under this arrangement, however, the miller, unless guaranteed definite Imperial orders, would not have gristed full time and therefore would not have dealt with as much weevily wheat as was done under the gristing arrangement. Moreover, the determining of a fair allowance for inferiority to be made to

the miller was impossible from the Scheme's point of view. The miller would gain every time or else refuse to grist the wheat. No board that could have been appointed to decide the allowance could have been satisfactory. The allowance system has been in operation in the Eastern States and has proved a very costly business to the Pool, millers receiving as much as 1s. per bushel for weevil affection of the wheat. The gristing arrangement in this State was undoubtedly very much cheaper and certainly more satisfactory and desirable than the payment of allowances. By our arrangement last year of gristing full time at all the mills we were able to get the weevil menace well in hand, and when we approached the millers for a renewal of the arrangement we were not in the same position as we were last year when the weevil menace practically compelled us to accept the terms the millers demanded. This year it is we who are in the position of demanding that only a fair and reasonable charge shall be made by the millers for gristing on our account, and we have not hesitated to avail ourselves of this opportunity. A comparison of the two agreements will readily reveal this to members. It is estimated that if the arrangement that has been agreed upon continues for a period of 12 months the Scheme will have saved approximately £38,000 over and above last year's terms.

Hon. P. Collier: The millers must have done well last year.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: They must have.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You have not yet got out of the litigation over it.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Some people would go to law over anything. A factor that assisted in the undermining of the influence of the close combine of millers in this State was our decision that the mills should be divided into three grades, according to the flour producing capacity of the mill. Under this arrangement—Grade 1, of three tons per hour capacity and over, comprising Cottesloe, East Guildford, and Northam mills receive a gristing allowance of 29s. per flour ton produced from the Scheme's wheat. Grade 2, from two to two and a-half tons per hour capacity, comprising Katanning, Perth and York mills, get 31s. per flour ton. Grade 3, of under one ton per hour capacity, comprising Geraldton, Narrogin, Wagin, Kellerberrin, East Perth obtain 33s. per flour ton. Each mill, except Katanning, gets a commission on local flour sales of 1½ per cent. Katanning, on the other hand, receives a more than compensatory benefit in an extra allowance of 1s. per ton on the gristing rate. This was the first mill to make a satisfactory agreement with the Scheme. For sales of offal all mills receive a selling commission of 2s. per offal ton, or approximately 1s. per flour ton. A system of grading of this nature is no doubt the most equitable arrangement, especially from the Scheme's point of view, that could have been made. Unquestionably the payment of the same rate to all the mills is wrong, because it always means that that rate is based on a price which would enable

the smaller mills to pay their way, thus permitting the larger mills to make what we consider an excessive profit. The suggestion that preferential rates should be paid last year was considered by the late general manager, Mr. Sibbald, who had had large milling experience at the Northam mill, but he pointed out that under the conditions then existing it was impracticable. If such arrangement had been possible there is no doubt the Scheme would have been better off last year than it was. It is proposed that the gisting agreement will be continued as long as it is of practical importance to the Scheme. There is not much doubt that although the allowances to millers are considerably less than they received last year, it will pay them to continue in the present reduced rates as long as they are permitted to work full time. If the arrangement does not work out satisfactorily from the Scheme's point of view at certain of the mills, their agreement will be terminated and they will then have to purchase the wheat, grist it on their own account and dispose of the products privately at their own risk. In order that hon. members will appreciate the difference in the rate this year as compared with last, I will quote a concrete instance. At the Cottesloe mill the rate this year on the Imperial order, including commission on offal sales is 30s. Last year it worked out at 36s. 6d., a saving of 6s. 6d. per flour ton.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Mr. Ockerby told us 40s.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: On local flour it is 32s. 9d. this year, including commission on flour sales and offal as compared with 42s. last year, or 9s. 3d. per flour ton less. The main alterations to last year's agreement may be set out as follows:—1, Period of agreement: Three months determinable at one month's notice, as compared with 12 months last year. 2, Storage capacity: Until full storage provided, the miller must be prepared to receive and handle a quantity of wheat equal to double the daily milling capacity, as compared with single day's capacity last year. 3, Percentage of extraction: An average of 42lbs. of flour must be extracted from each bushel of f.a.q. wheat. All screenings having no deleterious effect must be worked back into the bran and pollard. 4, Checking stocks: All produce must be stacked separately from the produce obtained under the old agreement. 5, Account sales: If sales of produce are not accounted for within seven days, interest at 5 per cent. must be paid by the miller; after 14 days, 10 per cent. is the rate. 6, Remuneration: Gisting allowance per flour ton—Grade (a) 29s., grade (b) 31s., grade (c) 33s., as compared with 7d. per wheat bushel last year, plus 7s. 6d. per dozen bag allowance. Commission on local sales of flour $1\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. as against $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. last year. Selling commission, bran and pollard 2s. per ton as compared with $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. last year. 7, Millers' books: The Minister now has power to write up books in arrears at millers' expense. 8, Fiduciary obligations: A special clause has been inserted to compel the agent to respect the obligations of his confidential and fiduciary re-

lations with his principal. This is a similar clause as has been inserted in the acquiring agency agreement, the object being that the agent shall not use the confidential information he receives in the business of his agency with the Minister for private benefit or political purposes. Clause 11 of the Bill provides that the operation of the Wheat Marketing Acts, including this measure, if passed, shall apply to the 1919-20 harvest on the issue by the Governor of a proclamation to that effect. In view of the generally favourable nature of the report of the Royal Commission it is considered that if the House now deems this measure a suitable one for the coming harvest, it should be also quite good enough for the ensuing harvest of 1919-20. Hon. members will realise that the bringing forward of a measure every year considerably dislocates the operations of the Scheme and interferes with the continuity of the policy. When once the policy is satisfactory to the majority of those concerned, it should not be interfered with unless the Government considers that exceptional circumstances warrant it. With this provision for extension the tenure of membership of the Wheat Marketing Board is more or less assured and not subject to frequent revision. It will be rather late this season for some of the board members to have their influence felt owing to their delayed appointment. If the provision sought regarding extension by proclamation is passed by Parliament the Government will also know where they are with respect to entering into financial obligations in connection with guaranteeing payment to farmers for wheat of the 1919-20 harvest. Unless the Government are assured of retaining financial control over the Pool's operations, as provided in Clause 4 it cannot be expected to blindly commit itself financially in this direction. If necessary the Government could give an assurance to the House that if agency agreements contemplated by the board for the 1919-20 harvest provided for additional services or for extra remuneration—that is to say if the Scheme finds itself in the position that it cannot make as satisfactory arrangements in the acquiring or the gisting of the wheat for the 1919-20 season, as it has been able to make for 1918-19 season, as evidenced in the agreement set out in the first and second schedules of the Bill—the Government will not exercise their option of extending the Acts by proclamation, but will seek Parliamentary authority for and approval of such agreements. The Government are anxious that in the operation of the Scheme, we shall, in the future, have smooth working. The provision of an executive board should go a long way to induce confidence in the Scheme work, with those good friends who, as a rule, can see no good in anything controlled by Governments. The Scheme will not be in the future, nor has it been in the past, an ordinary Government Department, where the expenses are charged to the State funds, excepting in the case, of course, of the State's liability under the guarantee for any deficiency when the wheat is sold, but it is an institution where every penny comes out of the pocket of the grower putting his wheat into the Pool. Every penny saved in the

expenses is, therefore, a penny for distribution amongst those particular farmers. I urge hon. members, therefore, in the interests of the growers—if not for the sake of the Government—to agree that this Bill may be applied by proclamation to the 1919-20 harvest if necessary. In Clause 9 provision is made for a recoup from the farmers' wheat certificates of the amounts advanced by the Scheme to growers for payment of the cornsacks needed for the bagging of the coming harvest before delivery to Pool. The very satisfactory arrangement that has been made by the Minister in charge, firstly, with the Commonwealth authorities and, secondly, with the jute importers in this State has enabled the grower this year to receive his cornsacks at 5½d. per dozen less than he would have otherwise had to pay if those arrangements had not been made. They may be detailed shortly as follows:—It will be known to most hon. members that all jute goods, including cornsacks, consigned to Western Australia, were subject to an extra freight of 7s. 6d. per ton as compared with similar goods consigned to ports in the Eastern States. On special representations being made to the Commonwealth Government, and through them to the Imperial Government, this impost has been removed. This means a saving of 1d. per dozen on cornsacks. The next saving was that of 4½d. per dozen effected per medium of negotiations with the jute imports committee in this State. Certain suggestions have been made from time to time by individual members of the jute importers' committee—in 1917 and again this year—but neither of these suggestions showed in the opinion of the Scheme sufficient advantage to the farmer as would warrant the Scheme in agreeing to the proposals suggested. These were that the Scheme should guarantee payment for cornsacks to the merchants and make a recoup thereon by the farmer a first charge against his wheat certificates. It is considered that if the only point was that merchants should be guaranteed their accounts, they were sufficiently protected by the existing legislation. Hon. members are aware that provision was made in the original Act for the assignment of certain interests in wheat certificates with the approval of the Minister. This approval, I might say, has never been arbitrarily withheld. Under that arrangement the merchant, by obtaining an assignment of interests in the certificate to the value of the account due to him by the farmer, is amply protected. However, this year the Scheme represented to the merchants that by railing cornsacks direct to the farmer from the ship, money could be saved, inasmuch as there was no necessity for handling in and out of stores, with consequent cartage charges pending sale to the farmer. Moreover, it was pointed out that if the Scheme guaranteed payment within 30 days, merchants would be taking no del credere risk. Ultimately it was arranged with the jute importers interested that, instead of charging the farmers the proclaimed price of 10s. 9d. per dozen, payment within 30 days, they should accept 10s.

4½d. per dozen cash within that period guaranteed by the Scheme. A further benefit that the Scheme has arranged, subject to the approval of Parliament, is that the interest to be charged to the farmer on his cornsacks will be only at the rate of one half-penny per doz. per month, instead of 1d. per dozen, until the amount of his cornsacks account guaranteed by the Scheme is recouped under the wheat certificates. Perusal of the clause will show that provision is made that all moneys expended on behalf of the farmer for cornsacks under the form of authority prescribed by the Act, and signed by the farmer, will be a first charge against his certificates and will be automatically paid by the bank to the credit of the Scheme's account so soon as the wheat certificates are presented for payment. This arrangement was made with the full approval of the Australian Wheat Board and Commonwealth Government. Under all the circumstances I submit that the Scheme was justified in making the arrangement in anticipation of the unqualified approval of this House.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It will assist farmers outside the Industries Assistance Board.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It will assist every way. In regard to the imposition of penalties for mixing wheat, this provision is made at the suggestion of the Royal Commission. Its recommendation on the point is—“That legislation be passed providing penalties to be imposed on persons who deliver to the Scheme old season's wheat as new.” The Commission found, during the course of its investigations that there were a few bags of wheat badly attacked by weevil that had, in the opinion of the Commission, been mixed up with new wheat and put into stack. I do not know that farmers have been any worse in this respect during the last season than they have been in past years. In normal times the matter is not a very serious one because the wheat could be shipped very readily and the damage by contamination with old wheat is not very great inasmuch as not much time is lost between the delivery to the agent at the siding and the outturn of shipment. Where, however, the wheat is liable to be stored for some considerable time, pending shipment or gristing, it is necessary that every care should be exercised. I am rather inclined to think that the threat of penalties would almost be sufficient to deter a farmer from transgressing in the manner indicated. We must, however, legislate for any flagrant cases that may be brought to the notice of the Scheme, so that the honest farmers shall be amply protected. Clause 7, therefore, provides for a penalty not exceeding £100 for each instance that may be proved. In order that during the coming season there may be less risk of farmers tendering weevilled or old season's wheat, arrangements were made whereby the time of delivery to the Pool of the old season's wheat should be extended to the end of last month. It is hoped, therefore, that there is very little of the 1917-18 wheat now left in the hands of the farmers and that no penalties will need to be enforced. Under

Clause 8 power is given to the Minister or the board to erect storage sheds as may be necessary for the proper protection of the wheat, pending shipment or other disposal. The Royal Commission is rather of the opinion that there is not sufficient power under the existing legislation for the Minister to have done what he has done, namely erect substantial sheds for the storage of wheat at the various wheat depots at country centres. In order, therefore, to be on the safe side and to give hon. members an opportunity of saying how far they think the board should be empowered in the provision of storage, and the Minister's past action in this connection be confirmed, this addition to the original Act is submitted for consideration by members. In regard to the question of gristing wheat without the Minister's permission, Clause 10 is practically a re-enactment of Section 6 of the Wheat Marketing Act passed last session. The only alteration is in the year 1919 instead of 1918. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. P. Collier debate adjourned.

BILL—CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT.

Message received from the Council notifying that it no longer insisted on its amendment No. 2.

BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading—Amendment, six months.

Debate resumed from the 22nd October.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [5.40]: I want to take this, the earliest opportunity of reiterating the complaint I made when speaking on the Address-in-reply regarding the manner in which this important subject has been handled. The term of the present Commissioner of Railways expired in June last, and some time prior to that date the Government decided that they would not renew his appointment. At the time that decision was arrived at the House was in session; therefore it was the bounden duty of the Government, in my opinion, to take the earliest opportunity to introduce legislation to give effect to their altered policy. It must be remembered that the House sat until well into May, but even allowing for that, it was not an easy matter to introduce legislation of this character and pass it through in the closing days of the session. There was no excuse or explanation offered so far as I am aware, as to why this Bill was not the first one to be introduced and dealt with during the present session. Because of the fact that the Government did not pass the necessary enabling legislation last session, they were compelled to ask the present Commissioner to continue on for another six months; that is, until the end of the present year. The House met late in August, and it is not until nearly the closing days of the session that this Bill is presented to the House. In the meantime we were engaged upon the consideration of the Criminal Code Amendment Bill, the Prisons Bill, and others, which, by no

stretch of the imagination, could be characterised as being urgent. Yet they took precedence over this Bill, which was in fact absolutely urgent. Now we find that the first time the House had had an opportunity to consider it, six weeks have elapsed since the second reading was moved. The consequence will be now that we are nearing the end of December, the term for which the Commissioner of Railways was engaged is drawing to a close, and the Government will have no alternative but to request him to continue on for another six months, because whatever may be done with the Bill by the House, certainly the Government will not be able to make an appointment until at least three or four months have elapsed. No explanation has been offered to the House, and in my opinion there is no justification for this delay. Without casting any reflection on the Commissioner for Railways, I do not think it is a desirable thing to have an officer, occupying the high and responsible position of Commissioner for Railways with dismissal hanging over his head, and I think hon. members will agree with me on this point. Having decided not to re-appoint the Commissioner it was the duty of the Government to take the necessary steps to give effect to that decision at the earliest possible moment. According to yesterday's paper the Minister for Railways does not know what is to happen at the end of the year. He says the Commissioner has only just returned from the Eastern States, and that he has had no opportunity of consulting him. He does not know now whether it is intended to ask the present Commissioner to stay on for a further term, or whether some subordinate officer will be appointed to carry on the duties.

Mr. Troy: They are making use of the Commissioner for the time being.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We have £18,000,000 of the public funds of the State invested in our railways. This is just half the public debt which is some £36,000,000. This is incomparably the biggest earning or business trading concern of the Government. Its revenue last year, I think, was £1,816,000, and its expenditure £1,450,000, whilst it also had a deficit over working expenses and interest of £290,000. During the course of the Treasurer's Budget Speech, that hon. gentleman made the point that the whole of the Government's financial difficulties were due to the operations of the Railway Department. He quoted the profit or loss on the railways in the years when the Labour Government were in office, as compared with the loss last year and the year before, and contended that the difference between the financial position of the State three years ago, and its position in the present year was due entirely to the falling off in revenue of the Railway Department. Notwithstanding the serious effect that the railway revenue and expenditure have upon the finances of the State we have this careless, indolent, and happy-go-lucky kind of attitude with regard to this important matter. During the past six months the railways have been controlled by a man who has been dismissed, and there will be no alternative for the Government but to continue to have them operated for the next six months on the same terms. I do

not wish to indulge in any captious criticism, but I must say that the attitude adopted by the Government towards this important matter is typical of many of their administrative performances, and I am of opinion that the drift and chaos which has set in with regard to the financial affairs of the State is largely due to this attitude. What can be expected when the Government were not alive to their responsibilities in this connection, and are calling upon members to discuss the appointment of a Railway Commissioner five months after he has practically been dismissed? I would like to know what the explanation of the Government is, and why the House was not afforded an opportunity of dealing with the matter during the first few weeks of the session, so that we might be in a position to go ahead and appoint either one new Commissioner or three, whichever Parliament may decide. If the Government find at the end of the financial year, that their finances are no better than they were at the end of the previous financial year, and if, in addition, they find that this position is due largely to the unsatisfactory nature of the railway finances, they will have no one else to blame but themselves. There is only one principle involved in this Bill, and that is as to whether there shall be one Commissioner or more commissioners. On this matter, I am speaking only for myself. It is not a party subject, and every member of the House will exercise his own judgment with regard to it. Possibly members may disagree with my views on the subject, but I am not in a position to say whether they will or not. My three years' experience in connection with the Railway Department has convinced me that it is necessary to have more than one Railway Commissioner. The operations of the railways in the Eastern States have been sufficient to satisfy the powers that be, in most of those States, of the wisdom of having more than one Railway Commissioner. We cannot overlook the fact that in this State our railways stretch far out into the country. In one direction they extend for 600 or 700 miles, and extend to the same extent in another direction, whilst in a third direction they extend for a matter of 400 miles. We have 3,500 miles of railway in this State. In Victoria, however, the greatest railway journey that can be taken within that State in any one direction covers a distance of 240 miles. Having regard to the wide stretch of country over which our railways are operating, I am forced to the conclusion that it is utterly impossible for one Commissioner to do justice either to himself or the State. In a department employing some 7,000 persons it will be understood that the head of that department is compelled to devote the major portion of his time to matters connected with the conditions of employment, the grievances of the employees, and other matters which crop up in connection with a large body of men. I am not wedded to the principle of three Commissioners, but I would give my support to the appointment of two. For months at a time the Commissioner of Railways, when I was

Minister in charge, devoted two-thirds of the year to dealing entirely with staff matters. Files are built up with regard to the grievances of employees, although the amount involved may only be 6d. a day, and so it goes on throughout the service. The Commissioner of Railways has to decide practically all these matters in dispute. If we had two Commissioners, one of these could attend entirely to staff matters, and to matters connected with the employees in general. The State would thus get better results, and I am certain the employees themselves would get better results from their work. As things are at present, employees have failed to get redress because of the impossibility of one man, with all the work that he is called upon to perform, going thoroughly into all the details of each grievance or complaint, as he would be able to do, and as could be done, if he had assistance. Of course we have a Chief Traffic Manager, and district superintendents located in different parts of the State, as well as other highly paid officers who assist in the general management and control of the railways. It is argued that these officers actually do the work that additional Commissioners would do, and that consequently there is no need to appoint any further Commissioners. The fact is overlooked, however, that although the Chief Traffic Manager has certain powers of decision with regard to the staff under his control, without being obliged to refer to the Commissioner, every one of the employees has the right of appeal from the decision of the Chief Traffic Manager, should the decision not be satisfactory to the employees concerned. In this way the Commissioner's time is taken up during a large proportion of the year. The district superintendents, however, have no final say so far as the employees are concerned. That being so, they cannot render to the Commissioner that amount of effective work which they would otherwise be able to do. If we had one of the two Commissioners suggested devoting the whole of his time to the management of the staff and the employees, with his head office in Perth, but also travelling around the country in order to keep himself acquainted with the doings of the staff, the other Commissioner, who would be the chairman in my opinion, would then be able to devote the whole of his time to the service of the railways themselves. I know that the present Commissioner for years past has not been able to visit the whole of the railway service of this State even once a year.

Mr. Davies: When was he in the workshops last?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know. When the Commissioner does make a tour it is only a flying visit, and he does not hope to do that more than once a year. I know that, as a matter of fact, he has not been able to accomplish the journey even once a year on an average. Let us take the case of a big centre like Kalgoorlie, where the district superintendent controls the service extending from Leonora to Southern Cross, without having even once a year a visit from the Com-

missioner for Railways. Is that a good thing for the Service?

Mr. Teesdale: The superintendents get a good salary and ought to be competent.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is not a matter of competency on their part, but a matter of the inability of the Commissioner to inspect, during the year, 3,500 miles of railway, and thoroughly look after a service which employs 7,000 persons, makes 16,000,000 passenger journeys, runs 4,000,000 train miles, and carries on numerous other operations. No comparison can be made between this department and any other department of State. Unless there is some supreme authority who can decide in cases that may be referred to him from time to time, how can the volume of the work be coped with and justice done to the State? So far as the question of salaries is concerned, I venture to say that there are managers of some of the big businesses in the State—

Mr. Teesdale: I meant the salaries of the superintendents, who would distribute the work of the Commissioner to some extent.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They do, but they are not Commissioners. These men have worked up through the different grades. The man who is district superintendent to-day would probably have been promoted from the position of station-master yesterday. He would perhaps have joined the service as a porter and worked up to the post of station-master, the next step being that of district superintendent.

Mr. Foley: Every one of them has done that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But, after all, is it a fair thing that these men should have practically sole control and jurisdiction over those sections of the railway system in which they are located, without being able to obtain the advice and assistance, and the supervision, too, of the Commissioner at least periodically? That is what happens to-day. I have no doubt it will be found that many of the causes of complaint we hear from various parts of the State at different times are due to shortcomings on the part of subordinate officers, where the Commissioner himself has not had the opportunity of dealing with the matters in question. Next, the subject of salary comes up. It is urged, of course, that we are already paying £2,000 per annum for a Commissioner's salary. That salary is not high in comparison with the salaries received by persons managing large businesses. I venture to say there are several men in this State receiving more than £2,000 per annum for the management of just one particular business. If it pays a private employer to give £2,000, or more, annually for the management of a business where there are comparatively only a few thousand pounds of capital invested, and where there is a comparatively small turnover, surely it ought to pay the State to allot a salary of £2,000 a year for the management of a business in which the country has invested 18 millions sterling. My experience of public life has led me to the conclusion that the matter of salary is not worth a moment's

consideration; what is worth consideration is the capacity of the man. One might get a man willing to take the management of any concern on earth at £500 a year, but probably he would be dear at 5d. a year. It might be cheaper for a particular business to pay a man £5,000 a year rather than accept the applicant at £500. Any hon. member, I think, will agree with that. Of recent years the tendency has been increasingly to pay high salaries to men of high capacity. It has been found that that, in the end, is good business. After all, I do not suppose that if we appointed one additional Commissioner his salary would be more than, say, £1,500. The amount is not stated in the Bill.

The Minister for Railways: In moving the second reading I stated the salary would be about that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Even two more Commissioners at salaries of £1,500 each would represent only £3,000 a year. What is £3,000 a year in a business with a revenue of £1,800,000 and an expenditure of about 1½ millions?

The Minister for Railways: We could easily save that over and over again.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If we get closer and keener supervision, the £3,000 could be saved in a day. There is no concern in this country which lends itself more to extravagance in management than does our railway system. Waste may be going on in all directions—in the traffic branch, in the locomotive branch, in the workshops. Waste may be going on from day to day involving total losses of possibly £1,000 per day. Such an amount is easily lost in such a huge department. If by the appointment of additional Commissioners, we get keener and closer control and supervision of the department, to check losses and waste now occurring, the extra salaries may be saved a hundred times over in the course of a year. Anyhow, I offer that view in all sincerity as the view of one who has had three years' experience of the Railway Department. My experience there has led me to the conclusion that it would be wise to make the number of Commissioners two, if not three. It is utterly impossible for one man, despite the highly placed officers under him, to do justice to the railway service. The position of the Commissioner of Railways is largely analogous to that of a Minister. Ministers know that half their time is taken up with trivial detail work, which ought not to come under their notice at all. As a fact, Ministers are often compelled to lay aside matters of great importance in order to deal with small individual grievances and complaints pouring in upon them from all quarters. And so it is with the Commissioner. Precisely the same. Two-thirds of his time is occupied with matters of that kind, and not with matters of policy, of the thorough overhauling of the service from one end to the other with a view to cutting out unnecessary expenditure, or, on the other hand, increasing his revenue.

The Minister for Railways: Or the granting of facilities to the public.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. The whole public suffers. The Commissioner cannot do the work from his office in Perth. The greatest genius in railway management that ever lived could not give decisions day after day affecting the traffic or the service in Kalgoorlie or Fremantle or Bunbury or Albany from the head office if he has not opportunities of periodically visiting those districts and making himself acquainted on the spot with local life and trade and conditions. No man can do it. And that is the position as regards the railway service to-day. I am going to support the second reading of the Bill, whilst not committing myself to the three Commissioners. I shall, however, certainly vote for the two, if not for the three.

Mr. FOLEY (Leonora) [6.8]: One hears a good deal of criticism of this Bill outside, from people engaged in trade and commerce, the customers of the Railway Department, and from men working in the Railway Department. Very little of that criticism, however, is backed by sufficient knowledge to enable a member of this Chamber to decide whether three Commissioners are required, or whether the system of one Commissioner should continue. My own view is that members of Parliament should consider the question whether the capital invested in the railway system of Western Australia warrants three Commissioners at the head of the Railway Department instead of only one. But we as members of Parliament are not in a position to say how, if three Commissioners are decided upon, the various duties would be allocated amongst them.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But one Commissioner is to be supreme, under this Bill. His views are to be given effect to every time.

Mr. FOLEY: I contend that with three Commissioners it will be possible to abolish various high positions in the railway service, the duties of those positions being then carried out by the Commissioners. I suggest that the management of the railways might be split up into, say, the locomotive branch, the traffic branch, and general business management. The leader of the Opposition said that much of the work of district superintendents could be done by one of the Commissioners. My contention is that our railways should be run, not entirely under the same conditions as those obtaining in Victoria, but similarly as regards Commissioners. One Commissioner, even if he is a railway genius, cannot possibly carry out all the superintendence and other necessary work entailed by our railway system. We are in a different position, as regards railways, from any other State of the Commonwealth. We have a lesser number of people to the mile of railway than has any other Australian State and we need still more railways. Many features of our railway management could, I believe, be attended to with greater satisfaction to the customers of the railways if we had more than one man at the head of the railway management. Take, for instance, the carriage of live stock. At present the conditions under which men have to truck stock are by no means all that could be desired. A single Commissioner no matter what his capacity could not visit the various districts of this State and acquire

the local knowledge needed to cope with local difficulties. We would still want district superintendents. Under the three Commissioners system, we could clothe the district head offices with greater powers than they possess at present, and place them in a position of dealing with local requirements. We could give the man in charge of a district the job of really superintending the district, saying to him, "We give you full power to superintend this district, and, having given you that power, we want you to do the job; and if you cannot do it we must get somebody else."

Mr. Davies: That is not a bad suggestion.

Mr. FOLEY: Our Railway Department comprises great engineering works and large manufacturing works. Could we possibly get one man as Commissioner of Railways to go through those various branches and tell the man in charge of a branch possibly a man with wide engineering knowledge, whether he is pursuing a right policy or not. But if we appoint three Commissioners, we could have one man with an intimate knowledge of locomotive work, and another man with an intimate knowledge of traffic, and a third man with a thorough business training in railway administration. We could place those three men in charge of our railways in those three capacities, and then we would have the opportunity and the likelihood of deriving much benefit from their services. For that reason I favour the appointment of more than one Commissioner of Railways.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [7.30]: I am not altogether in agreement with the proposals outlined in the Bill. It appears to me the Government are just about stuck on the railway policy, and to have some means of getting out they desire to appoint three Commissioners to take certain responsibilities which they themselves should take.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Under the Act they cannot take them.

Mr. WILLCOCK: According to the Act, the Commissioner is in charge of the Railways, but according to a practice, when it comes to a decision of any matter of policy it is always referred to the Minister. Even in connection with any question of wages it is referred to the Minister.

The Minister for Works: Is not that the result of political interference?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Perhaps it may be.

The Minister for Works: You know it is.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Although the Commissioner is supposed to be in charge, any matter of policy has to be decided by the Minister or by the Government.

The Minister for Works: That is the fault of members of Parliament.

Mr. WILLCOCK: But the pressure does not always come from members of Parliament. When an industrial organisation wants something which they cannot get out of the Commissioner, they go to the Minister and the Government make certain changes as the result of pressure.

The Minister for Works: Why do you not alter the Act?

Mr. WILLCOCK: I am not concerned in altering the Act. The appointment of three Commissioners will make no difference to the present system. Even a question of freight or a question of industrial conditions has to be decided by the Government, and it does not matter whether there are three Commissioners or one Commissioner, the system will go on. Even during last week there was industrial trouble in connection with the trams. The men could get no satisfaction out of the Commissioner, so they went to the Minister, and he, thinking that they had right on their side, ruled in their favour, and eventually the trouble was settled over the head of the Commissioner. The same thing obtains in regard to freights, which are invariably revised by the Minister or the Government. It seems to be part of the policy of the department. If the Commissioner finds that under a certain schedule of rates he cannot make the railways pay, he has not the right to alter those freights, but has to go to the Government; and if no political pressure is brought to bear, the Government alter the rates at their own sweet will. It is not the fault of the single Commissioner that the present position obtains. It has been brought about by war conditions. The whole trade of the country has been disturbed, and it is not to be wondered at if the railway revenue has suffered. The timber industry has been practically at a standstill. Prior to the war this industry constituted one of the most profitable sources of railway revenue, and kept in employment at the loco. depot, Donnybrook, no fewer than 27 men, whereas when the war had been going for three months there was not a man left in that depot. The same thing applies right through the South-West, where about one-third of the staff was engaged on timber business before the war, whereas six months after the outbreak of war the whole of that business was thoroughly disorganised. So, too, in respect of wheat and other large freight. The railways are run, not for profit, but for the purpose of opening up the country and encouraging production. One of the greatest faults in connection with the railways is that we have too much mileage. We have one mile of railway to every 90 persons in the State or, if we take into account the Midland Company's and other private railways, we have one mile to every 75 persons. Until we get profitable production, until the land contiguous to the railways is fully developed, we cannot expect a profitable service. The policy of the Government during the past five or six years has been to extend the railways. Any member who wanted a railway had but to rise in the House and say there was good land in a certain district, and the Government were prepared to build a new railway. The policy of the Government should be rather to develop the land contiguous to the railways.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think the hon. member should pursue that line. The Bill does not provide for the settlement of land.

Mr. WILLCOCK: No, but I am showing why there should be a change in the present system. Had the railways been profitable there would be no necessity to change from one Commissioner to three Commissioners. The whole of the policy of the department must be discussed if we are to discuss the proposed change. The three-commissioner policy is peculiarly Australian. We do not find it in any other part of the world.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): In other countries they have a board of directors.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Still, there is a manager in control of the system.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): There will be a manager in this case also.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Only three Commissioners are provided for in the Bill. In America, in England, and on the Continent they have one manager in sole charge of each railway proposition. In America we had Harriman in charge of the managing policy of about 20 different railways. He was interested in £100,000,000 worth of railway stocks.

The Minister for Railways: What was his income?

Mr. WILLCOCK: His income was drawn from the value of his stock. Our Commissioner does not get his income out of the earnings of the railways; he has his salary.

The Minister for Railways: What did this man get as manager?

Mr. WILLCOCK: That does not count, because he had an income of about a million a year.

The Minister for Works: But what was he paid to manage the railways?

Mr. WILLCOCK: It does not matter. He controlled the railways because he largely owned them. The question of salary does not enter so long as the business is making a good profit. The present proposal means that we are going to appoint two or three departmental heads as Commissioners in order to avoid the circumlocution that obtains at present, perhaps the proposal has some merit; but if it means that we are going to maintain the present set of officers and, in addition, appoint three Commissioners, it is only burdening the country with a lot of unnecessary expense. In each branch of the service we have one officer devoted to staff matters. It is very seldom any of those matters gets as far as the Commissioner, and if it does it is only for some very good reason that he agrees to alter the recommendation of the staff officer. If there is to be a head Commissioner, as laid down in the Bill, practically all definite matters of policy will reach him in time, and so the position will not be altered.

Hon. P. Collier: These are not matters of policy, but matters of detailed working, all of which go to the Commissioner.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The same position exists in regard to Ministers. The life of each Minister is made a burden by the formidable bundle of files placed in front of him. Whoever the Commissioner may be, he will have

to put up with that sort of thing. If the Ministers can devise a system whereby the Government can appoint some individual to look after the files of the office, the position will become pretty rosy. But so far as the three Commissioners are concerned, we find that there are three in New South Wales and the position has not been altered there. They are suffering from loss of revenue and they are adopting a whining tone. They say that the war is the cause of all their trouble, and the only remedy that they are able to suggest is that there should be a $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. increase in the fares and freights. That appeared in the Press some six or seven weeks ago.

The Minister for Railways: They have also an increasing revenue and they are still losing.

Mr. WILLCOCK: And they say that the only remedy is an increase in the fares and freights. One Commissioner could just as well make a recommendation of that kind as three. I have no brief for the present Commissioner. There are several things that he has done that must meet with my opposition, but so far as his work is concerned, that has been well done, and there were no serious faults to find until the war broke out. Until then the position was comparatively satisfactory. I have figures here for the past 10 years which show that the railways had up to 1914 made substantial profits. In 1908 the profit was £128,000; in 1909 it was £156,000; in 1910 it was £153,000; in 1911 it was £224,000; in 1912, £101,000; in 1913, £25,000; and in 1914, £128,000. Besides that the Commissioner kept the whole of the system in decent order and granted substantial increases to the employees, and during the whole of that time he contributed to the Treasury no less a sum than about a million pounds sterling.

The Minister for Railways: No one is setting out to blame the present Commissioner for anything.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It seems that the desire for a change comes about because the position of the railways at the present time is not satisfactory. My opinion is that so far as the position is concerned, it would have been quite satisfactory if the war had not occurred. Now, because something happens for which the present Commissioner is not in the slightest degree responsible, the Government want to make a change. Last year the train miles, which had previously averaged about six millions annually, showed a falling off to the extent of one and a half millions. If the non-paying services were cut out, as they would be on a private railway, we would have to cut out another one and a half million train miles.

Mr. Thomson: You would not advocate that, surely?

Mr. WILLCOCK: If we are to run the railways on commercial lines we must look into the position which is causing the present loss. Then, of course, we have to take into consideration the present high cost of material. Take one small line only, namely paper. We find that there are 50 or 60 different forms used in connection with the payment of wages alone. I venture to say that if the Chief Ac-

countant were asked how many forms were used in his branch he would say that there were 30 or 40. The Minister, when introducing the Bill, said that there would be three Commissioners, one of whom would be the chief and the other two might have control of traffic and engineering. He did not give any indication as to the qualifications that it would be necessary for those Commissioners to possess. We want to set out exactly the kind of man we require before we can expect to get applications from suitable candidates for the position. What I require to know is that if the railways are to be run by three Commissioners, and two of them have the qualifications, of say, a mechanical engineer and a traffic man, what is to become of the heads of those particular branches, the mechanical engineering and the traffic? At the present time we have a Chief Mechanical Engineer, who is drawing £1,000 a year. If one of the Commissioners happens to be a man with mechanical experience, what will happen to the officer at present in the department? What, in my opinion, is required is a thorough reorganisation of the present brains of the service. The department should be divided into three or four branches. First, we should have a transport branch, which would have nothing else to do but to attend to traffic. Then we should have an engineering department and not have the present engineer running about bothering people in regard to running arrangements, which he understands nothing at all about, and all the time, while he is messing about with those things, the works manager has to attend to his duties.

Hon. P. Collier: Would it not be wise to put the Commissioner in charge of those branches?

Mr. WILLCOCK: If we did, what would we do with the men who are there? Would we dismiss them from their positions?

Hon. P. Collier: We cannot discuss that; it will be a matter for the Commissioners.

Mr. WILLCOCK: We have a lot of heads.

Mr. Smith: Is there anything in them?

Mr. WILLCOCK: I have not cracked any of them so I do not know. Another thing that strikes me as being peculiar is that the staff has been reduced to the extent of 2,000 during the period of the war, yet there has been no alteration so far as the departmental heads are concerned. There are just as many departmental heads as there were four or five years ago. The Railway Department should be divided into four branches, the transport, the manufacturing, the existing lines, and the accounts, and if there were a good officer in charge of each one of these branches, who in turn would have to report to one Commissioner, it would be found that the position would be satisfactorily met. The Chief Mechanical Engineer should look after the workshops and manufacture everything required, and have nothing to do with the running arrangements at all. The Existing Lines Department should look after the material and the upkeep of it.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think the Bill deals with any of these matters.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Bill provides for a change in the railway service.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, so far as the Commissioner is concerned.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The whole of the policy is affected and all the departments come under review.

Mr. SPEAKER: Hardly at this stage.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It would be well, when the Commissioners are appointed, that they should take into consideration the fact that they could divide the railway work and create three or four departments, placing a proper manager at the head of each. The Commissioner should be there only to control matters of policy and should not give attention to matters of detail. Personally, I can say that most hon. members on this side of the House prefer that one Commissioner should remain and that there should be Ministerial or direct control. Whether or not three Commissioners are appointed, as the result of the passing of this Bill, I hope good officers will be placed at the head of each department, and that the Railway Department will once more occupy the position it did when it was making a profit instead of a loss. So far as the Bill is concerned I intend to oppose the second reading.

Mr. NAIRN (Swan) [7.55]: We are dealing to-night with one of the most important departments of the State, one which undoubtedly affects the well being and future prosperity of Western Australia. I agree entirely with the remarks of the leader of the Opposition affecting his experience as Minister for Railways. With regard to the criticism in connection with the introduction of the measure at this late stage, I shall leave the Minister to defend himself. I entirely approve of the principle of three Commissioners for the simple reason that I do not think it is humanly possible for one Commissioner, whoever he may be, to thoroughly encompass all the various ramifications of the department which spread themselves over the State. Someone suggested that control by one Commissioner has been successful in other places. I am not going to discuss what has been done elsewhere, because we can find arguments pro and con so far as that is concerned, and we should know our own difficulties in this State.

Hon. P. Collier: In America and in other countries where they have one officer at the head of affairs, they also have a board of directors, who devote the whole of their time to the affairs of the system.

Mr. NAIRN: Our position is one about which we ourselves should know most, and it does not necessarily follow that because in some places the one Commissioner system works well, it should also work well here. As a matter of fact, during the various years of our experience of the railways, it has worked more or less satisfactorily, and there has certainly been a considerable profit derived. But we do know now that, through one reason or another, and very largely brought about by the war, though not entirely, the railways are not up to date. I say without

hesitation that during the past six or seven years, the railways of the State have deteriorated in almost every department. They have not kept abreast of the times and without attributing the blame to any particular person I say that has been largely brought about because of the impossibility of one man handling all these departments. There is one point that is more or less overlooked, and that is the business aspect of the Railway Department. It is run on false principles on the assumption that a certain number of the people require to use the railways for any purpose, and that they are of necessity compelled to go only to those places to which the railways run. I do not agree with that. I say that the Railway Department, like any other trading concern, should be popularised and should be brought abreast of the times, and that all those who use the railways, no matter in what manner, should be considered. That is unfortunately one of the reasons why the department is losing money, and why its revenue is falling and will continue to fall. That branch of the department has been entirely overlooked. We know that one Commissioner can hardly be held accountable for all this. How would it be possible for one man sitting in his office to have control over all these things?

Mr. Smith: It is done elsewhere.

Mr. NAIRN: How can he be expected to know what should be done over the vast expanse of this State?

Mr. Willcock: You can say that about every Minister.

Mr. NAIRN: It is said that the Commissioner has his superintendents. That is true, but there is no superintendent who possesses that which is essential, namely authority. Whatever a superintendent does can only take the form of a recommendation to the one man having this impossible task imposed upon him, who is called upon to take the full responsibility, obliged to make an investigation into every matter, and waste his time over things which should be controlled by subordinate officers, if they had the responsibility to act.

The Minister for Railways: If they had the same status.

Mr. NAIRN: These superintendents have no responsibility, for it all falls upon the Chief Traffic Manager. The position would be much the same as though the whole of the wisdom and judgment of the Ministry were only to be expressed by the Premier, and the Premier alone held responsible. That is the position in which the department finds itself to-day. It is a position which forces whoever may occupy the position of Commissioner of Railways into being an autocrat. I do not say this in any antagonistic way, but because of compulsion the Commissioner becomes an autocrat. He has to carry the full responsibility for almost every detail of his department, and only those who have come into contact with the Commissioner know that even on the question of granting a siding, or some other more or less insignificant matter, it has to be confirmed by the Commissioner, and no one else has any authority to act.

Hon. P. Collier: It is the same in regard to putting a man on a station.

Mr. NAIRN: Yes. That is not right, nor is the position tenable. With regard to the question of a division in the power of control, it is not always necessary for the board to sit in Perth. These members could visit, and must visit, the various parts of the State, and gain that knowledge from personal observation which, after all, is the only good and useful knowledge. It does not matter how many deputations or letters come before the Commissioner, it is his judgment, which has come as a result of his personal observation, which will make his decision useful and valuable. We seem to have dropped into a groove. We do not realise that there are other railway services outside this State. It should be the duty, and would redound to the benefit of the State, of someone in authority to go abroad and see what has been done in other parts of the world. All the knowledge of these affairs is not brought here by books, magazines, or newspapers. It can only be acquired by visits abroad, as is the case with almost every big trading concern in the world. What would a big private employer do, in the circumstances? Let us take the case of Millars' Jarrah and Karri Company, for instance.

Mr. Money: Get someone from abroad.

Mr. NAIRN: In some cases these big firms have sent abroad for a man to take charge of a particular branch of their operations. I think, however, members will all agree that one's own man, coming back from abroad and being full of his observations and knowing the local conditions appertaining to his own country, is the better of the two. I have not that pathetic faith that some people have in the belief that the men from abroad are the men we require. I want to see our own men get an opportunity here. I believe that the intelligence, capacity, and desire for good are as strong in our own men as in men from outside. I say it is not possible for these men to get that knowledge which is so essential if they are not permitted to go abroad, and look into things for themselves. There is one reason more important than another why we should have three Commissioners.

Mr. Willecock: One to be tripping round the world all the time.

Mr. NAIRN: I do not care where he goes so long as he gets the required information. Some people, through lack of experience, think that unless a man has his nose on a grindstone he is not earning his salary. It is the knowledge that a man brings back with him after a trip abroad, or gets into his brain from whatsoever source is at his disposal, that is for the benefit of the community, and if it is necessary for a man to go abroad on behalf of the Railway Department, just as such organisations as Millars' Jarrah and Karri Co., Foy & Gibson's, Boan Bros., and others of the kind deem it necessary, in order that their servants may come back with their minds refreshed and brought up to date, I cannot see what objection there can be to it. If this had

been done before with the Railway Department, we would not be in the position that we find ourselves in to-day. There is one other thing which I look upon as accountable largely for the present condition, and that is the railways have never been placed on a business basis. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin), who has always manifested his enthusiasm for State enterprises in this Chamber will bear me out in this. I have in mind the efforts of the hon. member in the direction that the State enterprises should be treated as business concerns. The Railway Department, as I have said, is not placed on a business basis. Any member here taking the figures quoted by the member for Geraldton (Mr. Willecock), which are spread over a considerable period will see that the department has brought revenue and profit to the State of upwards of a million of money. What has happened to that money? It has gone into consolidated revenue. No provision has been made for the inevitable lean years, which every business enterprise should make provision for. If we are continuously taking away the profits from the department and, in effect, losing them, we shall always be faced with the difficulty that is confronting us to-day. We know that it is the settlers of this country who keep our railways going, those who are in the far out back places and on the goldfields. We all know what a tremendous amount of money these settlers are paying to the Railway Department, as high as £8 and £10 per ton for commodities. These are the people who have helped to earn the profits, and it is largely to them that we must look for the profits in future years. The moment we strike the lean year, down comes the Commissioner with his inevitable desire to increase freights and fares. The very people who have had to contribute to the profits of the railways in past years are compelled again to pay up, because the department is not established on a business basis.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And those lean years are bad for the public as well.

Mr. NAIRN: They are a bad thing everywhere. It is incorrect to say that this department is on a business basis, because it is not. We will always be faced with this difficulty whilst that position remains. I have voiced this sentiment before, and I do not know that it particularly concerns the question of three Commissioners.

Mr. SPEAKER: I was thinking that myself.

Hon. P. Collier: The three Commissioners may effect this change.

Mr. NAIRN: The three Commissioners undoubtedly will, I imagine, be men who will be competent to speak, and to exercise that influence in defence of their department which some day may ensure its being placed on a proper business footing. I do not wish to emphasise the matter further except to say that I do believe it will be in the interests of the State if the responsibilities at present held by one Commissioner of Railways is divided between three Commissioners. By that means there should be better and sounder judgment brought to bear upon questions, and a better understanding concerning the general

management of the railways of the State, as well as a more strict attention generally to those matters which are continuously facing the department.

Mr. ROCKE (South Fremantle) [8.10]: I intend to support the second reading of this Bill. I think the time has arrived when our railway system should be put under a new form of management. No reflection whatever has been cast upon the present Commissioner by any hon. member, and I do not think anyone would do such a thing. As has already been pointed out, the railway system of our State is unique, inasmuch as the distances that it runs in opposite directions are so great as to necessitate the Commissioner travelling for a greater portion of his time over the railways, but the very extensive nature of the railways renders it impossible for him to do so. When the Minister was introducing the Bill he gave as his reasons for his desire to change from one Commissioner to three, the financial position of the department and the necessity for its reorganisation. Much, if not everything, depends upon organisation. For that reason we are in need of a man at the head of our railway system capable of understanding thoroughly how to organise it, as it should be organised. A trading concern with a capital of nearly 18 million pounds, and bringing in nearly three-fifths of the total revenue of the State, is one which calls for very serious attention and the very best management that can be introduced to it. Several of the other States in the Commonwealth, we are told, have three Commissioners, and their systems should not be so difficult to manage as ours. They may have to run a greater train mileage on the lines from the capital to the out-districts, but certainly they are not so great in extent as is the case with our system. With reference to the personnel of the three Commissioners, I notice that Clause 7 gives the Chairman a sort of autocratic power. His opinion may over-rule that of the other two Commissioners. Probably the Minister will explain that position to the House, and tell us why it is that the opinion of one man should be of more importance than that of the other two.

Mr. Willecock: He is in charge, no matter what the others may think.

Mr. ROCKE: Probably if the House agrees to the appointment of three Commissioners the different tasks will be allotted to the different Commissioners, but I should like to see one Commissioner allotted to the task of looking after the interests of the workers in the department. It is a big department, and employs a large body of men. If a man is going to represent the workers in the department he should be one who thoroughly understands the industrial conditions of the State, as well as the industrial aspirations of the men who are engaged in the concern.

Mr. Smith: Will you be satisfied with his decisions?

Mr. ROCKE: If he were a man specially selected for that branch of the service I certainly would accept his decisions.

Mr. Teesdale: You might.

Mr. ROCKE: Lately there have been some appeals heard against the decisions on

charges which have been made against members of the railway service, and the board's findings have given us something to think about. Most unsatisfactory, I consider, they have been. In fact, as regards one case the man has been exonerated after some years of consideration. In another case, heard quite recently, I fear injustice has been done to the employee.

Mr. Smith: That is an argument against your proposed Commissioner; not against the board.

Mr. ROCKE: It is an argument for the setting apart of one Commissioner to consider industrial matters. As regards salaries, the proposal is to pay the Chief Commissioner £2,000 and the other two Commissioners £1,500 each per annum. The question of salary, I hope, will not be allowed to weigh in this matter so long as we are going to get ability. Ability is the essential; without it the three Commissioners would be useless; and we shall have to pay for ability.

Mr. Smith: You will not get the man that is required, for a salary of £2,000.

Mr. ROCKE: I trust that the very highest ability obtainable for the money will be secured. Certainly, I would prefer to have men of our service promoted to these positions, so long as they show the requisite ability. But if we have not the men here, we must go abroad to get them; and we must obtain them, even if we have to offer higher salaries still for the services which we hope the Commissioners will render. As the member for Swan (Mr. Nairn) has said, it would be a very good thing if we sent some of our leading public servants on travel. I object to parochialism in any respect. I believe that true and effective knowledge is to be gained by travelling the world, by examining into systems in force elsewhere. We cannot expect to possess all knowledge here in Western Australia. In fact, we are a little community all on our own, so to speak, because of our isolation; and I hope that isolation will be broken down as soon as possible. It has always been noted that a Western Australian Government finding themselves in difficulties turn to the plan of imposing new burdens upon the railway system as one of the first means of getting out of their difficulties. If the railway system is to be made profitable to the State finances, that system must be improved so as to show, instead of a loss, a profit. One of the most effective steps towards the attainment of that end would be to agree to the appointment, suggested by this Bill, of three Railway Commissioners. Accordingly, I support the second reading.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [8.20]: I oppose this Bill, on the ground that at the present juncture it is inadvisable to incur additional expenditure in connection with our railway system. I hold that one good man, with full authority, should be able to make our railways pay.

Mr. Teesdale: That is the solution—full authority.

Mr. THOMSON: Under present conditions it would not make any appreciable difference

if we had ten Commissioners. The leader of the Opposition has said that as things are the time of the Commissioner of Railways is very largely occupied with detail matters which he should not touch at all—matters affecting the staff. The making of such a statement by an ex-Minister for Railways, in my opinion, certainly casts a reflection upon the responsible officers under the Commissioner. If those responsible officers are not competent to deal with small questions of that nature, then the present Commissioner has been lacking in the performance of his duties as Commissioner insofar as he has not secured officers competent to perform their duties. I cast no reflection whatever upon a previous Government, and I acknowledge that they did merely an act of justice when they raised the wages of the railway employees. But that act of justice involved an increase of £50,000 or £60,000 in the working expenses of the railways, and that at one fell swoop. It was done over the head, and against the wish, of the present Commissioner of Railways.

Hon. P. Collier: And the district charges were abolished against the present Commissioner's wish. Do not forget that.

Mr. THOMSON: We are not permitted at present to disclose the charges of the Railway Department. I am quite prepared to discuss the district charges with the leader of the Opposition at any fitting time.

Hon. P. Collier: You are permitted to discuss those charges just as much as you are permitted to discuss the increase in railway wages.

Mr. THOMSON: I was merely showing that it is possible to affect the railway finances without the concurrence of the Commissioner. I am even prepared to admit the hon. member's contention that the district charges were abolished against the Commissioner's wish.

Hon. P. Collier: Undoubtedly that is so.

Mr. THOMSON: I admit it. But, after all, it was an act of justice.

Hon. P. Collier: And the reduction of the fertiliser rates was made against the Commissioner's wish, too.

Mr. THOMSON: That is so. Assume that we have three Commissioners; then, what provision of this Bill is going to obviate similar things happening in the future?

Hon. P. Collier: No provision.

Mr. THOMSON: I thank the leader of the Opposition for that admission.

Hon. P. Collier: And that admission applies also to increases in railway wages.

Mr. THOMSON: But the wages are governed by the Arbitration Court, which fact does away with the suggestion of the member for South Fremantle (Mr. Roche).

Hon. P. Collier: There are numerous phases of the wages question which the Arbitration Court does not touch and cannot touch.

Mr. THOMSON: That interjection bears out the view I am trying to place before the House—that in the present condition of the Railway Department not even the appointment of three Commissioners can have any effect on the wages question. The three Commissioners might say

that in their opinion the railways could not possibly afford to pay increased wages, but if the Arbitration Court granted increases the department would have to bear the expense; and quite rightly, too. It is argued that three Commissioners would be able to inspect the system more frequently and examine into its working more closely. The Minister himself, in moving the second reading, said that with three Commissioners there would be a closer and more personal inspection of the details of railway administration, and that the inspection of the railway lines would be more effective if made by a Commissioner having authority and exercising control.

The Minister for Railways: That is correct, is it not?

Mr. THOMSON: That is absolutely correct. But the Minister knows just as well as I do that the present Commissioner of Railways in almost every instance is governed by the men who are under him. Any recommendation put up to him by them he abides by.

Mr. Smith: Then he is only a rubber stamp.

Mr. THOMSON: My statement is perfectly justified. Now, the Bill proposes to make the additional two Commissioners mere rubber stamps. That must result from Clause 7, under which the opinion of the Chief Commissioner is to prevail as against the opinions of the other two Commissioners. Supporters of the Bill argue, on one hand, that in the interests of better administration of the Railway Department we should have three Commissioners, and yet, on the other hand, they are prepared to pass Clause 7, which would place the proposed Chief Commissioner, relatively to the other two Commissioners, in exactly the same position as the present single Commissioner occupies relatively to his Chief Traffic Manager and his Chief Mechanical Engineer.

Mr. Nairn: Clause 7 refers to cases in which the three Commissioners come in conflict.

Mr. THOMSON: If they come in conflict, that is the attitude the Chief Commissioner will be able to adopt. The member for Swan (Mr. Nairn) admits it. To-day we have highly paid officers under the Commissioner, and we know that if even a district traffic superintendent is making an inspection tour the fact is known all along the line. The buzzer goes. We know that, just the same as the railway employees know it. In the circumstances, I fail to see how better results are to flow from inspection by the proposed Commissioners. The district traffic superintendent to-day has a certain district to look after, and if he does his duty well and faithfully he should know every inch of the lines throughout his section.

Hon. P. Collier: He might know every bolt in the road; but that does not affect this question.

Mr. THOMSON: The matter is purely one of opinion. The Bill proposes that we should pay about £5,000 annually for three Commissioners. In my opinion, it would be a far better proposition to pay that sum to one first-class railway manager, but giving him full authority. I care not if we have three, or four, or even more, Commissioners: unless we abolish the present system of control and give the

Commissioners full power to act in all matters, they cannot exert much influence towards placing railway affairs on a satisfactory financial footing.

Hon. P. Collier: A Commissioner with full powers would not increase those fertiliser rates, would he? I would like to see him up against your party when he was exercising those full powers.

Mr. THOMSON: In such a case I would still exercise the right which I have in this House of criticising the actions of the Commissioner.

Hon. P. Collier: You cannot have full power, and the Commissioner have it, too.

Mr. THOMSON: I am sorry to hear an ex-Minister of Railways make a statement of that description. He is practically inferring that the Commissioner has not absolute power.

Mr. Willcock: Who does not know that?

Hon. P. Collier: And who ever claimed that he had?

Mr. THOMSON: He is supposed to have full power.

Hon. P. Collier: Supposed!

Mr. THOMSON: The Railways Act definitely lays it down that the Commissioner of Railways shall be above political control.

Hon. P. Collier: That is the end of political control.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Act is wrong.

Mr. Willcock: Why do we discuss Railway Estimates?

Hon. P. Collier: I have heard the member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) seriously complain of the Commissioner because he would not instal a weighing machine on some railway station in the hon. member's constituency.

Mr. THOMSON: That may be so. I do not say that I concur in all the acts and decisions of the present Commissioner.

Hon. P. Collier: In that instance the Minister over-ruled the Commissioner.

Mr. THOMSON: The Minister did not over-ride the Commissioner in that case.

Hon. P. Collier: You tried to get the Commissioner over-ridden, though. You brought the matter up in this Chamber.

Mr. THOMSON: I am quite prepared to prove that the present leader of the Opposition, when Minister for Railways, frequently tried to over-ride the Commissioner.

Hon. P. Collier: That is so.

Mr. THOMSON: Then it is just a case of the pot calling the kettle black. It does not get away from this, that the mere placing of three Commissioners in charge of the railways system will not serve to effect reforms. So far as I am able to judge from the Minister's second reading speech, there is no sound reason for the proposed change. Accordingly, I shall vote against the appointment of three Commissioners of Railways.

Mr. DAVIES (Guildford) [8.30]: I will support the second reading and the appointment of three Commissioners, provided the Government agree that one of those shall be taken from the workers in the Railway service. One of the speakers to-night said that he would like to see this principle followed.

The question was asked whether he would be prepared to accept the decision of that particular man. That has nothing to do with the question at all. The House will have to realise that the workers in an industry have a right to representation on the management of that industry. I think it would be very becoming if a State enterprise such as the Railways were the first institution in this country to adopt that principle. Sir Robert Borden, the Prime Minister of Canada, proposed that the workers in the State industries should have a say in the management of those industries. I listened carefully to the speeches of the Minister for Railways and of the leader of the Opposition. One is bound to give great heed to what is said by those members, for the reason that, while one of them is to-day Minister for Railways, the other held the position for a period of three years. They both agree on the point that it is practically impossible for one Commissioner to give sufficient oversight to the details of the Railways. Particularly is that so in questions of agreements with the men. Some have asked what is the reason for the industrial unrest in the Railways. One of the chief reasons is that while the men may get redress for their grievances, the redress is too long in coming, because the grievance has to go through a whole retinue of servants before reaching the Commissioner. That system would be improved by the appointment of three Commissioners. The Minister for Railways says that the chairman will be expected to have railway experience combined with commercial and financial training, and that the other two Commissioners will be expected to have, respectively, traffic and engineering experience.

The Minister for Railways: I said that provisionally. It depends on the applicants for the position.

Mr. DAVIES: If we are to appoint three Commissioners on the lines indicated by the Minister we shall have a man such as we have to-day in the Commissioner, another such as we have to-day in the Chief Mechanical Engineer, and a third such as we have to-day in the Chief Traffic Manager.

The Minister for Railways: But they will not be permanent officers.

Mr. DAVIES: They will be there for five years, which is getting on towards a condition of permanency. What does it mean? It means that we are to duplicate the staff at the expense of the Railways and of the State. Of course the question of salary should not come into consideration.

Hon. P. Collier: It is a question of how to get the best service.

Mr. DAVIES: But the question of salary matters to this extent, that if we are merely to duplicate the officers, even £1,000 spent in that direction is too much. If we require to get over the present difficulty of assisting the Commissioner, there is a better way than the appointment of three Commissioners, namely, to give plenary powers to the Chief Mechanical Engineer over his staff, and to give the same powers to the Chief Traffic Manager over his

staff. Then the Commissioner will not be bothered with the details of working.

Hon. P. Collier: You might have one branch pulling against the other, the one improving the conditions and the wages and the other standing back.

Mr. DAVIES: But I am assuming that the Arbitration Court will continue to fix all such questions, as it does to-day. Whatever conditions are laid down for the lowest or for the highest paid in the service, those conditions should apply to all. I do not believe in the discrimination shown to-day in the Railways. I do not know whether one would be in order in referring to the non-payment of the officers—

Mr. SPEAKER: Certainly not.

Mr. DAVIES: I have here a little pamphlet giving some gems from America. I should like to show from these what is done in America.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member may quote it so far as it relates to the subject matter of the Bill.

Mr. DAVIES: This pamphlet sums up the position and says—

Labour will have to be represented in the management before the worker can be made to feel that the prosperity of an enterprise is of direct and vital moment to himself.

A direct representative of the workers is appointed to the appeal board. If the workers are not to be represented on the management, why give them representation on the appeal board?

The Minister for Railways: How would you place the other two Commissioners?

Mr. DAVIES: One should represent the users of the railways, and the other should be appointed by the Government.

Hon. P. Collier: Which would fix the wages?

Mr. DAVIES: The Arbitration Court would continue to fix those. If there is anything required in the management of the concern it is sympathetic treatment, and that is what is most lacking. We find bomb shell after bomb shell being dropped every day, and no one knows where they come from.

Hon. P. Collier: I think Alcock is running the Railways a good deal now.

Mr. DAVIES: He may be. I plead with the House to give this question sympathetic consideration. One could go on for half the night pointing out the different views held throughout the world on the question. If we are to look to private employers to give the workers a share in the management, we should give them a lead in our State enterprises.

The Minister for Railways: It would be a different proposition if the three Commissioners were looking to make a profit.

Mr. DAVIES: I ask the House to give this particular question serious consideration. There is a good deal to be said in favour of the views of the leader of the Opposition regarding the past administration of the Railways. The present occupier of the position has presumably done his best, but his time is at an end. I regret that this matter was not brought forward earlier, as it now looks as though the Commissioner were under suspension and that the

Railways were not being administered in the best interests of the State. I think it is owing to the fact that Mr. Short is so much over-worked and cannot give that attention to the enterprise which he should.

Hon. P. Collier: He has never spared himself.

Mr. DAVIES: No, and he is not the man to-day that he was six years ago. As a representative of the industrial centre of Midland Junction, I can say that for a number of years past no Commissioner of Railways has visited the works at Midland, nor has any Minister for Railways been there during the same period. If it was only to get into closer touch with the workers, I think it would be proper that the House should appoint at least two, if not three, Railway Commissioners.

Mr. PILKINGTON (Perth) [8.43]: The change suggested in the Bill is a very important one, and one which should not be made unless we are quite satisfied that it is a right course to adopt. Personally I have not enough knowledge of the subject to express an opinion of any value as to whether the system of three Commissioners or of one is the better system, but I am entitled to say that until a case is made out for three Commissioners, I am right in voting for the retention of the present system. It seems to me we are moving somewhat in the dark. I suggest that the Government should appoint one Commissioner under the present system and that, having appointed that one Commissioner, and he having become acquainted with the conditions under which the business of the Railways has to be carried out in Western Australia, the Government should then, after a consultation with him, come to the House and express an opinion as to whether or not there should be two assistant Commissioners. I should feel very much more inclined to vote for a change if the Government could tell us that, after consultation with the Commissioner then in charge, they had come to the conclusion that the appointment of two assistant Commissioners was essential. I should feel then we were acting upon expert advice, and if we were making a mistake, we would, at any rate, have taken the precaution against making a mistake. We are told by the Government that they think three Commissioners are necessary. We are told by the leader of the Opposition that one man cannot do the work of the Commissioner, because he has such an immense amount of detail to attend to. I do not say the leader of the Opposition is wrong. It may be necessary to have three Commissioners, but it is clear to me that there may be a solution other than appointing the two extra Commissioners, and that would, of course, be what has been suggested by the member for Guildford (Mr. Davies) that the Commissioner should be authorised and should delegate a considerable amount of his power to other officials, as is done in the case of the Chief Traffic Manager. I cannot believe that one Commissioner would not be capable of managing a business of the size of the Railway Department in Western Australia. So far as I know, other businesses, certainly

as large and possibly larger, are managed by one man, and it is done by a delegation of his powers. Of course it is quite true that the conditions in Western Australia are probably very different from the conditions anywhere else, and it may be that in comparing ourselves with other countries we may be led astray. If we once appoint three Commissioners we will be saddled with them for some considerable time, and we may find we have made a mistake. I think we should appoint only one Commissioner for the present and later appoint, if necessary, two assistant Commissioners. If the Government came to the conclusion that it was a wise course, after consulting with the existing Commissioner, to appoint those two assistant Commissioners, I should feel much more satisfied with the course adopted. I suggest that as the wisest course to follow. Let me put it this way: it seems to me that the man it is intended shall be the chairman of the Commissioners, should be consulted as to the question of one Commissioner or three. It may be that one man as Chief Commissioner and head of the Railways will be able to manage better if he has two assistants with him.

Mr. Davies: He certainly would say yes.

Mr. PILKINGTON: It may be, on the other hand, that another man may take another view, and he may be of the opinion that the railways would be better managed if he were left alone. I certainly would take the expert advice of the Commissioner himself, who would be the future chairman if three Commissioners were appointed. That would be essential to enable us to come to a wise and reasonable conclusion. This Bill seems to me to provide for a somewhat clumsy method of procedure. The three Commissioners have apparently to act as a body corporate. They have to meet and if there is a difference of opinion then the Chief Commissioner, ultimately, after certain adjustments which are provided for in Clause 7, will finally give a decision, overriding, if necessary, the other two Commissioners. The whole procedure appears to me to be clumsy.

Mr. Nairn: It works well in Victoria.

Mr. PILKINGTON: It appears to me to be clumsy and it might result in very serious consequences. It might be very important for the Commissioners to come to a decision at once, but under this Bill it would not be possible for them to do so, if the two assistant Commissioners differed from the Chief Commissioner. I submit the proper course to adopt is that a single Commissioner should first be appointed and that very great care should be taken as to the person receiving the appointment. I quite agree that it will be a wise and economical policy to pay a big salary in order to obtain a first class man. At any rate, I suggest that a man should be appointed in the first instance Chief Commissioner and that the assistant Commissioners should be appointed after consultation with him and not before.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [8.50]: I have been listening attentively to the speeches of hon. members on this

question and what struck me forcibly was the want of sincerity in regard to this matter. In fact, if I spoke my mind I should say we were all nothing but a lot of hypocrites, and that I am as bad as the rest. There is scarcely an hon. member sitting here to-night who, if the Commissioner of Railways were given full power to control the railways, would not go about yelping just as a dog which had been beaten with a stick. We all know well that the Commissioner does not manage the railways and that the Act does not give him the power to manage the railways.

The Minister for Railways: Not full control.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Commissioner can deal with the wages men if he likes and he can also deal with the officials whose salaries are up to £400 per annum, but he cannot deal with the merchants and he cannot deal with the primary producers.

Hon. P. Collier: Hands off there.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: He cannot say we must pay this and we must pay that. His hands are tied entirely. Let us be honest. Ever since I have been in this House Parliament has had a voice in the control of the railways. Parliament has dictated the policy of the railways, not the Commissioner. Parliament has at all times taken control of the management except in matters of detail. That being so, why have a Commissioner at all? If we did not have a Commissioner, the idea of the member for Guildford would be carried out immediately, because the workers would be represented through their members in Parliament. The mercantile and commercial community would be represented through their members in Parliament, and the other interests would also be represented through their members in Parliament, and the control would be on the shoulders of the Minister. We have been told that some years ago the railways were a paying proposition. But, unfortunately, the money went into Consolidated Revenue, and was spent. During that period the railways were under Ministerial control. There was no Commissioner at all. However, shortly after the Commissioner was appointed, they began to lose money. Why? I want to remind hon. members that sinking fund was never charged against the railways. It was a charge against the Consolidated Revenue. Parliament managed the railways and through the Ministers then in power a batch of farmers were placed here, and a batch somewhere else, hundreds of miles apart, and it was necessary to build railways to where those people were settled.

Mr. Pilkington: And the Commissioner advised that that should not be done.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes, repeatedly. Parliament again took control as far as the railways were concerned.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): For the good of the country.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member by his interjection has assisted me in my proposal that we should allow Parliament to control the railways. Hon. members have pointed out that the heads of the various departments should have more control. The responsibility should be in their hands. Why not take the heads of the various departments who are all

first class men, form them into a board, instruct them to meet once a week, and to advise the Minister? Then they could also settle the policy under which the railways should be worked. There is not the least doubt in my mind that we would be able to get over the difficulty. We would not be able to say to the Commissioner then, "You are responsible for this." We would hold the Minister responsible. Hon. members have submitted that the management of our railways by a Commissioner has failed. The Government have admitted that by introducing this Bill. They have stated, by submitting this measure, that Commissioner management has not been a success and that they want to try another method. On the same basis I say, let 50 members of Parliament take a hand in the management of the railways with the Minister in control and receiving advice from the officers of the department. There is too much management by commission in Australia. Only a few years ago we never heard of commissions at all. Why? Because during that period the people had no say in the management of the country. Australia has been managed by commissions and the War Precautions Act. I trust the Minister will think over my suggestion and if he adopts it he will find that greater satisfaction will be given by appointing a board in the manner that I have indicated. The control of the railways will then be purely Ministerial subject to the approval of Parliament.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [9.0]: I agree with a great deal of what has been said by the member for Perth (Mr. Pilkington). If three Commissioners are to be appointed, we should be perfectly certain that we are taking a step in the right direction. We should at any rate have sufficient arguments laid before the House in favour of the three Commissioners as to convince members that it is right to make a change. The control of the railways is largely in the hands of the Minister. The leader of the Opposition will agree with me that the Minister for Railways has a great deal to do. He has to approve of every increase in freights and reduction in freights, and the expenditure in connection with the creation of trucking yards and so on. He has a great deal more to do than I thought a Minister had some 2½ years ago. It is undoubtedly very convenient to have a Commissioner. When railway freights are being increased hon. members have been only too ready to blame the Commissioner, but as a matter of fact the Commissioner cannot increase them except with the approval of the Government.

Hon. P. Collier: And when they reduce freights they take the credit for it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Naturally, they take credit for any reduction in freights. Tonight hon. members have accused us of reducing the freights on fertilisers.

Hon. P. Collier: And you gloried in it and took any amount of political kudos for doing so, but when you increased the freights you put it upon the Commissioner.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Of course, but the Commissioner did not agree with the reduction. The Minister is responsible to a

large extent. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Augwin) expresses himself in favour of Ministerial control. I think that would be the worst thing that could happen to our railways. The hon. member said that the railways did not pay sinking fund. I would point out that for the eight years previous to 1915 the railways earned nearly one per cent. on account of the sinking fund. They paid interest and practically the whole of the sinking fund of one per cent. Some of the money does not bear interest at one per cent., so that the railways did earn interest and sinking fund. The question of the profits is largely controlled by the charges made by the railways. Freights have been considerably reduced on many things during the last seven or eight years. For instance, there has been a reduction in the freight on wheat and farmers' products, which must have meant a considerable loss to the railways. What we have to consider is whether the management will be better under three Commissioners than it has been under one Commissioner?

The Minister for Railways: That is the whole point.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: And every detail of the railways may be discussed under that heading. The Minister's proposal is for three Commissioners with a Chairman whose judgment alone will count when there is the difference of opinion between the three.

The Minister for Railways: How would you have it?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: But still there would be only one Commissioner in control.

The Minister for Railways: Would you have a majority rule?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Minister has said that the same clause is found in the Victorian Act. I think the Eastern States have shed their Commissioners by the way. In Victoria they have only two Commissioners now, I believe, and I doubt if there is any necessity for a third.

The Minister for Railways: Oh yes, but they cannot get a third man just now.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I do not think they have a third man there.

The Minister for Railways: They are not yet in a position to appoint a third man.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The position has been tried, but apparently has been found wanting. There is no such hurry about the appointment of three Commissioners, as to justify us in giving our approval to the system without mature consideration. We shall be meeting again in six months, and I venture to say that the Government will not be able to secure any Commissioner from outside the State by that time. For a railway Commissioner merely to be a good manager of the railways is not enough for the position in this State. The policy of the country is to use these railways for developmental purposes.

The Minister for Railways: You want a commercial man?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: There is more in the position than that of merely running the

railways, for they will be of great developmental assistance to the State for many years.

The Minister for Railways: You want a variety of capabilities then?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The railways must be managed in accordance with the policy of the country. It has been argued that the railways are difficult to manage, because we have a tremendous mileage of something over 3,000 miles and very few people. That does make the position of the Commissioner more difficult, but it is the policy of the country to have these lines. It has been urged in the House by hon. members, including the member for North-East Fremantle, that we should build lines ahead of settlement.

Mr. Malay: A thousand miles of railway at a thousand pounds a mile?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I do not know that we could get a very much better system than that of management by a Commissioner, assisted by adequately paid and competent officers at the head of the various branches. If three Commissioners are to be appointed, one of the three will certainly be a departmental head. Are we to have the chief of the Midland Junction workshops, the Chief Mechanical Engineer, and, in addition, the Commissioner who will be connected with that branch of the service?

Hon. P. Collier: We have the workshops manager and a Chief Traffic Manager.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We need two, but surely not three.

Hon. P. Collier: There is a question as to whether one of these could not be made a Commissioner.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It seems to me to be the suggestion of the Minister that the heads shall remain there, and that the Chief Traffic Manager shall also remain, as well as the head of the engineering branch, and that in addition to the departmental heads there shall be two additional Commissioners. If this was going to be of advantage to the railways one would readily agree, but we want to be perfectly convinced that this will be the case. Something has been said about the Commissioners attending to the men employed in the service. I agree that the Commissioner's hands are pretty full if he has to attend to all the disputes and troubles that may arise.

Mr. Smith: Why should there be all these disputes?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: There should not be any. Since the Arbitration Court has fixed the conditions by award these disputes should cease. If the railway men have the same opportunity of having their conditions and wages fixed, as is the case with other employees in other industries, they should soon become satisfied. It would be quite impossible for the old system to obtain again. The men have gone to the court and will get their award, and I hope they will abide by it. It is suggested that one of the Commissioners should represent the users of the railways. I am afraid he would have a very bad time.

Hon. P. Collier: He would never be re-appointed.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am certain of that. I think these limited appointments are very bad. A term of five years is altogether too short. Does the Minister expect at £2,000 a year to get any man to come here for a period of five years? It is pretty certain such a man would not be reappointed.

Mr. Davies: How many years would you suggest as the term?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I think seven years at the least. There ought to be some means by which the services of the Commissioner could be dispensed with—

Hon. P. Collier: There is already.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Without setting up a limitation.

Hon. P. Collier: The limitation is superfluous, because the Government have power to dispense with the services of a man.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: That is the term of the appointment, but I do not want such a limitation. The leader of the Opposition has said that the salary is not a matter for consideration, but that it is a question of ability in the men appointed.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must address the Chair. He is looking for interjections.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I was not doing so. Even an hon. member can look at another. If we are to get a man from outside I hope he will be a good man. I believe the experiment is a very doubtful one. It is not a question altogether of the management of our railways, but it is a question of their management in accordance with the policy of the country. These railways are used for more than the mere carrying of freight for profit. If that were all it would be a simple matter, but it is not all. The Minister would do well to postpone the consideration of this Bill for a time, possibly until we meet again. It is inadvisable to have a Commissioner in charge of our railways merely on a temporary appointment. The matter should be settled as soon as possible, of course, but we have to live under the system for a long time, and it is better to devote some time in order to arrive at a right decision, than to come to a hasty conclusion and probably set up a system which will not work satisfactorily. I would like to hear some further argument from the Minister before I can agree to support his proposal.

Mr. SMITH (North Perth) [9.12]: It seems to me that we have taken a considerable time to find out that the present system is a wrong one. Our railways have been run by one Commissioner for a considerable number of years. The revenue of the department has been very much larger in the past than it is to-day, and yet, now we are meeting with bad times, we apply the remedy of three Commissioners. The present time is not an opportune one for the change. I am sure hon. members will agree with me that the best brains for controlling transport are at present in those men who are doing their bit at the Front, and are likely to be there for some time. If we pass this Bill and make the three appointments, we shall be debarring some of the best men, who would be most fitted for these positions, from

applying for them. For that reason I think we should postpone the passing of this Bill. Another objection I have to it is that the salary provided for the Commissioners is quite inadequate.

The Minister for Railways: We are not bound to that.

Mr. SMITH: The salary of £2,000 a year for the Chief Commissioner of Railways is absurd. Some business places in Western Australia are paying their managers considerably more than that, and are not handling anything like the amount of business that the Commissioner of Railways is expected to handle. Why place any limit on it if he can make our railways pay? Two thousand pounds is indicated as the minimum salary to be paid by the Government. It is the minimum; and I suppose, like so many minimums, it is the maximum as well. Here is a department losing about £400,000 or £500,000 per annum, and we consider a salary of £2,000 a year sufficient for a manager who can turn that loss into a profit. What is a paltry £2,000 a year if we can get hold of the right man?

The Minister for Railways: Hear, hear! Or £3,000.

Mr. SMITH: Or £4,000. Some businesses in this State pay their managers £5,000 a year, and those businesses are not handling anything like the volume of business of our State railways.

The Minister for Railways: New South Wales pays its chief commissioner £3,000 and Victoria £2,500.

Mr. SMITH: We cannot gauge the business of the railways by the mileage. To my mind, that is a wrong view altogether. The business of the department should be gauged by the revenue. It does not increase the work of the Commissioner if he has 1,000 miles of railway and runs a train once extra per week. That does not appreciably increase his work. Our system is not to be compared with that of a small country carrying a network of railways and containing millions of people. The manager of a railway system in Great Britain is in a totally different position. If a large British railway system can be satisfactorily managed by one man surely we should be able to secure one man to control our railway system.

The Minister for Railways: Has not the English railway manager officers under him?

Mr. SMITH: That is the point I am coming to. He appoints those officers and knows what they have to do.

The Minister for Railways: But they are not permanent officers like public servants.

Mr. SMITH: They are permanent; and the general manager is, as a rule, permanent as well. True, the boards of directors are not permanent; but they are not in the same category as the general manager. If we appoint these additional commissioners we shall simply be overloading the service with other officials, because we are not getting rid of the present sub-managers. There is a Chief Traffic Manager, a Locomotive Engineer, and a Chief Engineer for Existing Lines. If these men do not understand their jobs and cannot conduct

them efficiently, they should be got rid of; and the new commissioner, when appointed, should have authority to get rid of them, and appoint in their place men whom he knows and can trust, and can look to for carrying out their work efficiently.

The Minister for Railways: Will you give notice of an amendment to that effect?

Mr. SMITH: Certainly I would not be a party to putting a Commissioner there and tying his hands in the matter of whom he is to employ. It would pay the Government to pension off the present principal officers if they are not carrying out their duties satisfactorily. We cannot expect the new Commissioner to be responsible for the satisfactory working of the railways if he is bound to continue the employment of those lieutenants though they may not be giving satisfaction. He should be empowered, if he thought it desirable, to get rid of those officers, and appoint others in their stead. The argument has been put forward by the Minister and several speakers that, because there are two or three commissioners in other States, that is the solution of Western Australia's difficulty. The best railway commissioner Australia has ever seen was Mr. Eddy of New South Wales, and he was not saddled with additional commissioners who could block him in any reform he might undertake. Mr. Eddy had absolute control.

Hon. P. Collier: He was only chief commissioner, I think, and had other commissioners under him.

Mr. SMITH: Yes; but he was supreme. These other commissioners were really departmental managers under him.

The Minister for Railways: That is what these additional commissioners would be under this Bill.

Mr. SMITH: But I think Mr. Eddy appointed the additional commissioners himself. They had not the same authority as is proposed to be given to the additional commissioners here. We are also told that the work is far too much for any one individual. However, we can get rid of one section of the work, and that is the tramways, which might well be handed over to local authorities. Still, I do not think the tramways worry the present Commissioner very much.

Hon. P. Collier: I do not think they worry anybody very much, except the public who use them.

Mr. SMITH: And perhaps myself.

Mr. Munsie: Yes, as regards penny sections.

Hon. P. Collier: I think the tramways just run themselves.

Mr. SMITH: If the Government feel that they are giving the new Commissioner too much work, they can very well hand the tramways over to the local authorities, when I undertake to say they will be much better managed than they are at present, or when, at any rate, the users of them will have a say in their management. In my opinion, the member for Perth put the position very well when he said that if there is to be any change at all, the Government should appoint one Commissioner, and when he has had a little experience of the railways he can have a consultation with the

Government, who can then come to the House and place the position before us, whereupon we can decide whether the number of Commissioners should be increased or whether we should continue with one Commissioner. That course, I consider, might very well be adopted. The Government should appoint a general manager of railways. Under a previous general manager the railways were managed very well. Further, a Minister with practical experience could be placed in charge of the department. I do not say this at all offensively to the present Minister.

The Minister for Railways: Quite so.

Mr. SMITH: But there is a member of the present Cabinet who has had a good deal of railway experience; and, with all due respect to other members of the Cabinet, I think they should avail themselves of that experience gained whilst the hon. gentleman was Commissioner of Railways. In that capacity he did good work, and I urge the Government to avail themselves of his experience and knowledge. I move an amendment—

That the word "now" be struck out, and "this day six months" be added to the motion.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [9.25]: I second the amendment.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Geraldton, having already spoken to the second reading, cannot second the amendment.

Mr. Willcock: But I spoke in opposition to the Bill.

Mr. JONES (Fremantle) [9.26]: I have much pleasure in seconding the amendment.

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

Ayes	14
Noes	25

Majority against .. 11

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Smith
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Holman	Mr. Troy
Mr. Jones	Mr. Walker
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Mitchell	Mr. O'Loghlen
Mr. Munzie	(Teller.)
Mr. Pilkington	

NOES.

Mr. Broun	Mr. Money
Mr. Brown	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Collier	Mr. Nairn
Mr. Davies	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Duff	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. Foley	Mr. Roche
Mr. Gardiner	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. George	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Maley	(Teller.)

Amendment (six months) thus negatived.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; Minister for Railways in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1, 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Commissioners of Western Australian Government Railways:

Mr. THOMSON: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 the word "three" be struck out with a view to inserting "one."

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is against the principle of the Bill to attempt to restore "one," because that is in the original Act. We have carried the principle of three Commissioners.

The CHAIRMAN: I must accept the amendment.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I support the amendment to strike out "three," but not with the object of inserting "one." If "three" be struck out I will move to insert "two." All who believe in either "two" or "one" will support the amendment to strike out "three." Of course if "one" is inserted there will be no need for the Bill, because it will leave the position as it is. It would have been better to defeat the Bill on the second reading, because the principle of the Bill is to have more than one Commissioner.

The Minister for Railways: It would be somewhat of a travesty to now insert "one."

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

Ayes	17
Noes	21

Majority against .. 4

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Munzie
Mr. Broun	Mr. Pilkington
Mr. Brown	Mr. Smith
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Collier	Mr. Troy
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Walker
Mr. Holman	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Jones	Mr. O'Loghlen
Mr. Mitchell	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Davies	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Draper	Mr. Nairn
Mr. Duff	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Foley	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. Gardiner	Mr. Roche
Mr. George	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Maley	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Money	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—agreed to.

Clause 5—Salaries of Commissioners:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This is something like a bad clause in the Forests Bill. The salary is not fixed here. The Governor may fix the salary, and once it is fixed it comes under a special Act and we shall have no power to deal with it on the Estimates. I think the salaries should be put in the Bill, as

in the existing Act. The Government must have decided what salary shall be paid to the Commissioners.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: When introducing the Bill I said I had not made any alterations in the existing law except as to the number of Commissioners, and consequential amendments. The Governor fixes the Commissioner's salary to-day, and I have taken the provision from the existing Act and its amendment. It does not matter very much, but, judging from the remarks that have fallen from hon. members to-night, it is a question of the qualifications of the applicants we are likely to have for the position. If we require good men we should be prepared to pay them as they should be paid.

MR. TROY: There is a danger in fixing a salary which will be a charge on the Consolidated Revenue but which Parliament has no power to revise. There may be among the three Commissioners one most unsuitable man, who will be appointed for five years. Parliament may see the advisability of giving that Commissioner a gentle hint that he is not required.

The Minister for Railways: Provision is made for his suspension.

MR. TROY: For his suspension, not by Parliament, but by the Minister. I am not too sure that a Minister, coming into personal association with a Commissioner, will not be swayed by that association rather than by Parliament. Personal association goes a long way. I move an amendment—

That in line 4 the words "which is hereby appropriated for the purpose" be struck out.

HON. T. WALKER: The object of the amendment is to give the House a chance of considering the matter when it is submitted to members. These appointments will be made in recess and the House then loses all power of control. The object of the amendment is to subject it to the review and criticism that is given to others occupying important positions in the service. This should be so in connection with the Railway Department, too. I advise that we should keep that in the hands of the House and that we should not give the Government *carte blanche*, but that we should retain the privilege we possess. It would be a safeguard not only to Parliament and its rights but to the officer himself if he knew that he was under the eye of Parliament, so to speak.

THE PREMIER: Clause 3, which we have passed, provides that Parliament shall have the revision of the appointment.

HON. P. COLLIER: What is the machinery by which Parliament may do that?

The Minister for Railways: Just the same as when Mr. Short was appointed.

THE PREMIER: The intention of the Government is to get the best man possible for this position. The salary is not fixed in the Bill and it was not fixed in the principal Act. If the Government see an opportunity of getting a high class man to fill the position, it may be advisable to offer that man more than £2,000 a year. I have not one word to say against Mr. Short.

Mr. Short has never spared himself in endeavouring to make a success of the railways. He certainly has been hampered during the last few years, through lack of freight, which has decreased his profits. At the same time he is going, and it is necessary that the position should be filled, and the Government are desirous of having every latitude so that they may make the best selection possible. The Government are anxious that the position should be filled as early as possible. One of the reasons responsible for the delay in the introduction of the Bill is that it was considered during the progress of the war that it would be difficult to obtain the services of a thoroughly qualified man. We all know that all the best available men have been engaged in war work. Now the position is different and we are bound to have a wider choice.

HON. P. COLLIER: The remarks of the Premier are beside the question. First of all, he dealt with the appointment of the Commissioner and stated that the House would have the opportunity of approving of the appointment, but the clause under review does not deal with that. It deals entirely with the salary. When Mr. Short was reappointed in 1913 by the Labour Government, I had to introduce a motion to the House to the effect that the reappointment of Mr. J. T. Short as Commissioner of Railways, on the terms specified in the Executive Council minute, laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly on Thursday, 30th November, be approved. These terms provided for an increase in salary of £500 a year, which was then given.

The Minister for Railways: That is the procedure.

HON. P. COLLIER: When a new appointment is being made, if an increase in salary is given, the House has a right to say whether they approve of it or not, but under this clause the Government can increase the salary at any time during the five years of office.

The Minister for Railways: It is the same law.

HON. P. COLLIER: Yes, but we are amending legislation now, and now is the time to rectify any weakness in the law.

MR. TEESDALE: Has the power been abused?

HON. P. COLLIER: I do not know, but in 1904 the salary was specified, and it remained at that until the amending Act of 1907, which struck out that clause and inserted another, saying that the salary may be fixed by the Governor from time to time. We have made an important departure to-night. The Government, after fixing the salary of £2,000 for the Chairman of Commissioners and £1,500 for the other two, may increase those salaries by £500 or £1,000 if they like.

MR. SMITH: The appointment will be subject to an agreement between the parties.

HON. P. COLLIER: An agreement can always be broken by increasing the salary.

The Minister for Railways: That is a re-appointment.

HON. P. COLLIER: Not at all. If an employer is willing to increase the salary of his employees, the latter will not object to a

The Minister for Railways: What if we make provision that the salary could not be increased without the approval of Parliament?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The amendment will achieve that, and will make it necessary for the Government to make provision each year on the Estimates.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The amount cannot be altered if the man is under an agreement.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It will be necessary to make provision annually on the Estimates for the salary. If there is any increase set down then Parliament will have an opportunity of reviewing it. The striking out of these words will not operate detrimentally in the way of securing the services of the best man, but Parliament should be allowed to review any increase in salary that may be desired to be given by the Government.

The Minister for Railways: I quite agree with that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is all we ask for. The Premier: We agree to that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But the Premier opposed it for a quarter of an hour. Hence my remarks now.

Mr. NAIRN: What is the meaning of Subclause 2? Does it mean that any appointment that is made must be confirmed by Parliament?

The Minister for Railways: We have agreed to that.

Mr. NAIRN: Will not the whole question of appointment and salary come up again when we confirm that?

Hon. P. Collier: During the currency of the term of office the Government may increase the salary, and Parliament should have a right to review it.

Mr. NAIRN: I think the amendment is already provided for. Every appointment and reappointment shall be subject to the approval of Parliament, and when that is brought up does not the question of salary come in?

Hon. P. Collier: It is necessary to have the approval of Parliament for any reappointment.

Mr. NAIRN: I understood the Premier to agree that the Government would not increase the salary on reappointment without the approval of Parliament.

The Premier: I do not think the words will make much difference.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The clause says that each Commissioner shall receive such annual salary as may be determined from time to time by the Governor. With these words in, after the salary is approved by Parliament, the Governor may increase it.

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

Clause 6—agreed to.

Clause 7—Powers of Chairman:

Mr. ROOKE: It seems to me that the Chairman of Commissioners can overrule the other two. I believe this has been copied from the Victorian Act, but I should like to have an explanation of the clause.

Mr. THOMSON: In what position will Parliament be in connection with the overruling by the Chairman of the decisions of the other Commissioners? What authority would Parliament have to interfere with the decision of the Chairman, if it is in the interests of the country so to do?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: This provision is taken from the Victorian Act. To it there is only one alternative, that the majority of Commissioners should rule. The adoption of that alternative, however, would involve placing the Chief Commissioner in a somewhat invidious position, namely, that of being overruled by his comparative subordinates. If, on reconsideration of a question, the three Commissioners are still in disagreement, the chairman has to record in writing his reasons for overruling the opinion of his colleagues; and this publicity is a sufficient check on his doing anything wrong or unreasonable. Parliament is supreme in all these matters, and the provisions of Clause 10 are such as to enable the Governor, which is to say the Ministry, to take some action if the Chief Commissioner acted in an arbitrary manner or in a manner detrimental to the interests of the Railway Department. However, it would be wrong to permit the two junior officers to overrule their senior.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Can the Minister state how many times this power has been exercised in Victoria?

Mr. MONEY: Clause 7 affirms the principle, or rather the necessity, of sole management, and the Bill would be clearer if, instead of calling the three officers to be appointed "Commissioners," it called one of them "Chief Commissioner" and the two others "Assistant Commissioners."

The Minister for Railways: No. If they were Assistant Commissioners they would not have these powers.

Mr. MONEY: Though I did not vote against the second reading of the Bill, I have all along felt the absolute need for having someone responsible; and this clause does make one man responsible, namely, the Chief Commissioner.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Has the Minister any information to give in reply to my question?

The Minister for Railways: No, I have not.

Mr. WILLCOCK: This clause is not consistent with the previous clause, and I am not satisfied with it. The two junior Commissioners can decide any matter of policy in the absence of the Chief Commissioner. In his absence they might decide on a line of policy which, were he present, he would have the absolute power to veto. In any case, I am opposed to the principle of the clause. Suppose that one of the three Commissioners is an engineering expert, and that he can convince one other Commissioner that a certain engineering proposal is good; then the Chief Commissioner should not have the power to veto that proposal. The clause should provide that in the event of a disagreement between the two junior Commissioners on the one hand and the Chief Commissioner on the other,

Parliament would have the power to decide the matter.

The Minister for Railways: That would probably be the effect of the clause.

Mr. WILLCOCK: But the clause should provide that. It does not lay down any procedure.

The Minister for Railways: Parliament could carry a resolution that a certain thing should be done.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The laying on the Table by the Minister of a paper referring to the exercise of the veto by the Chief Commissioner would not attract much attention.

The Minister for Railways: It would have to be a vital question. Would you allow the majority to rule?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Certainly. Unless the Minister can tell us how the corresponding provision has worked in Victoria, I am not prepared to support this clause.

The Minister for Railways: It has been the law in Victoria since 1893.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Unless the Minister can give some definite justification for the clause, it should be defeated.

Mr. THOMSON: As a possible solution of the difficulty, I move an amendment—

That the words "and such decision may be subject to review by both Houses of Parliament" be added to the clause.

The Minister for Railways: That is purely declaratory, because the power already exists.

Mr. THOMSON: We could only discuss a disagreement and pass a pious resolution; but under my amendment Parliament would have a positive power of reviewing the Chief Commissioner's decision.

The Minister for Railways: Parliament has the power of review now.

Mr. THOMSON: We could only dismiss the Chief Commissioner and we might not care to go to that length.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I hope the amendment will not be carried. It implies that there is now a limitation of the powers of Parliament. Moreover, the amendment would not confer on Parliament any power of review which it does not already possess. In any case, I hope the Chamber will not make itself a court of review in respect of differences between the Railway Commissioners except in a very serious matter, such as a charge of dishonesty or corruption against a Commissioner. But Parliament has power to deal with such a matter at any time. Clause 10 makes the Government the sole judges of incompetency on the part of a Commissioner, subject, of course, to endorsement by Parliament; and the Government have ample power to suspend or dismiss a Commissioner. Let us not take over the management of the railways, because satisfactory results are not likely to ensue from Parliamentary management.

Mr. Thomson: I will withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. NAIRN: The clause ought not to be deleted until we have a good and reasonable substitute. So far nothing has been offered, except the suggestion of the member for

Geraldton that majority rule should obtain. I do not think that is practicable in a council of only three. The whole value of the clause lies in its giving opportunity for reflection before agreement is reached. The member for Bunbury assumes that the three Commissioners will be in continuous conflict. That is an entirely wrong conception. Not one quarter per cent. of all the scores of cases that will have to be considered will bring the Commissioners into conflict.

Hon. P. Collier: Then we come to the question of whether the two juniors should override the senior.

Mr. NAIRN: They certainly should not do so.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I am not satisfied that the provision will work satisfactorily. We may possibly get an obstinate man as chief Commissioner. A second man will be appointed Commissioner because he is an expert. Surely if the expert can convince one other Commissioner, his proposals should stand. We have a safeguard in saying that the opinions of two should hold sway.

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

Ayes	25
Noes	10

Majority for . . . 15

AYES.

Mr. Broun	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Brown	Mr. Money
Mr. Collier	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Davies	Mr. Nairn
Mr. Draper	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Duff	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. Foley	Mr. Smith
Mr. Gardiner	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. George	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Maley	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Troy
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Walker
Mr. Holman	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Jones	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Lambert	(Teller.)
Mr. Munslie	

Clause thus passed.

Clauses 8 to 13—agreed to.

New clause.

Mr. LAMBERT: I move—

That the following be added to stand as Clause 14: "The Commissioners shall appoint a board equally representative of the department and the salaried and wages staff, the chairman to be mutually agreed upon, to annually review and give effect to the classification of salaries and wages of all positions in the Railway service."

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think this is relevant to the subject matter of the Bill. I cannot accept it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Title of the Bill is, "An Act to amend the Government Railways Act."

The CHAIRMAN: But the proposed new clause is not relevant to any clause in the Bill.

Hon. T. WALKER: We have here several clauses dealing with the Commissioners and their powers. Anything that relates to the control of the service and the employment and dismissal of men can be included in this. This is a Bill to amend the existing Act, and anything relating to the duties of the Commissioners is quite relevant to the subject matter of the Bill.

Mr. LAMBERT: I have not yet heard you, Sir, say that the proposed new clause is out of order.

The CHAIRMAN: I have ruled it out of order.

Dissent from Chairman's Ruling.

Mr. Lambert: I move—

That the Chairman's ruling be dissented from.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The Chairman: The member for Coolgardie moved to add a new clause to the Bill which reads as follows:

The Commissioners shall appoint a board equally representative of the department and the salaried and wages staff, the chairman to be mutually agreed upon, to annually review and give effect to the classification of salaries and wages of all positions in the railway service.

I ruled that the proposed new clause was not relevant to the subject matter of the Bill and the member for Coolgardie has disagreed with my ruling.

Mr. Speaker: The effect of the hon. member's proposed new clause would be to amend the existing Railways Act and it will not be competent for him to move the proposed clause in this Bill. I must, therefore, uphold the ruling of the Chairman of Committees.

Mr. MUNIC: The whole of the discussion to-night on the second reading of this particular Bill was in connection with the amount of work that one Commissioner had to do and that was put forward as one of the reasons for the appointment of three Commissioners. If that argument was relevant, the proposed new clause will also be relevant, inasmuch as it only defines what the Commissioners should do.

Mr. Speaker: I found some difficulty during the course of the second reading debate to entirely confine the remarks to the purpose of the Bill. I admit I allowed a certain amount of latitude, but I did so to permit hon. members illustrating the position so far as one Commissioner and three Commissioners holding the office was concerned.

Hon. T. Walker: May I draw attention to Clause 6, which says, "Any of the two Commissioners shall form a quorum and shall have, and may exercise and perform, all the powers, authorities, and duties which by this Act are invested or imposed upon the Commissioners."

That deals with the powers, authorities, and duties of the Commissioners. The amendment proposes to add a new duty. Therefore it is relevant to Clause 6.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot agree with the views of the hon. member. Clause 6 sets out the duties of the three Commissioners. The additional two Commissioners under the Bill will be appointed for the purpose for which the hon. member's new clause desires.

Dissent from the Speaker's ruling.

Mr. Lambert: I move—

That the Speaker's ruling be dissented from.

I contend that if my amendment is adopted we shall considerably enlarge the functions of the Commissioner of Railways, and seeing that from our point of view there is a principle involved which is very essential, and to reach which there is no other way, I submit that the clause which I desire to move is relevant. It would be absurd to say, whether we appointed one, two, or three Commissioners, that they should not control the rank and file of the service.

Motion put and negatived.

Committee resumed.

[Mr. Stubbs resumed the Chair.]

Title—agreed to.

[Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—CHURCH OF ENGLAND DIOCESAN TRUSTEES AND LANDS.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [11.3] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill for an Act to amend the Act of the Legislative Council 52 Vict., No. 2, and the Church of England Lands Act, 1914, and to incorporate the trustees of the Bunbury, Kalgoorlie, and Northern dioceses of the Church of England in Western Australia, and for other purposes. The preamble of the Bill is a lengthy one, and it sets forth the object of the Bill. The primary object is to incorporate the trustees of the three new dioceses of the Church of England, namely, Bunbury, Kalgoorlie, and Northern dioceses. The trustees of Bunbury and Kalgoorlie were incorporated under "The Associations Incorporation Act, 1895," but no trustees for the Northern district have yet been appointed, and consequently were not incorporated at the same time as those for Bunbury and Kalgoorlie. Doubts have arisen lately as to the legality of the incorporation under this Act, and consequently the Synods of the several dioceses desire to have the incorporation of their trustees under it dissolved, and that they should be incorporated under this Bill in the same manner as the original diocesan trustees of the church were incorporated under 52 Vict., No.

2. The diocesan trustees of the Church of England were originally incorporated by Act of Parliament. At that time there was only one diocese in Western Australia, and consequently only one body of trustees managing the property in connection with the whole of Western Australia so far as the Church of England was concerned. Owing, however, to the creation of three dioceses in this State it was necessary to give the power to each diocese that was given to the whole of Western Australia when it formed one diocese.

Hon. P. Collier: That is to appoint trustees?

The PREMIER: Yes. The Roman Catholic Church, the Congregationalists, the Presbyterians, and the Wesleyan Methodists are all incorporated by separate Acts of Parliament. When, however, the dioceses of Bunbury and Kalgoorlie were constituted the Associations Incorporation Act of 1895 was availed of, and they were incorporated under that Act. The Church of England are doubtful as to whether that is entirely legal, and wish to place the matter upon secure grounds. It is very doubtful whether the Associations Incorporation Act was ever intended to authorise the incorporation under its provisions of dioceses of the Church of England as separate dioceses, and the object of this Bill is to put the dioceses of Bunbury and Kalgoorlie on a legal footing, and also to incorporate the Northern diocese. It is only a doubt, and the whole thing may prove to be quite legal, but naturally the Church of England desire that the matter should be perfectly clear, and that there should be no room for doubt.

Hon. T. Walker: Is this a private Bill?

The PREMIER: No.

Hon. T. Walker: Why should it be a Government Bill?

The PREMIER: It is introduced by me on behalf of the Government.

Hon. P. Collier: Should it not be a private Bill?

The PREMIER: Not necessarily. When the hon. member's party was in power it introduced a Bill of this kind.

Hon. P. Collier: It ought to be a private Bill.

The PREMIER: It has always been customary for the Government to put forward these Bills. One of the kind was passed on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church when the Opposition were in power.

Hon. P. Collier: Is this Bill entirely approved of by the Church of England authorities?

The PREMIER: Yes, and by Mr. Burt, their legal adviser. I have his notes here. So far as the Bill amends the Church Lands Act, I do not think any exception could be taken to the provision. No powers are conferred which will not be found in the Acts relating to the Roman Catholic and other churches. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etcetera.

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

House adjourned at 11.12 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 5th December, 1918.

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 3.0 p.m. and read prayers.

BILL—EARLY CLOSING ACT AMENDMENT.
Introduced by the Colonial Secretary, and read a first time.

THE WAR—PEACE ARMISTICE—LETTER IN REPLY.

The PRESIDENT [3.4]: I have received from the Commonwealth of Australia the following letters:—

Department of Defence, Melbourne, 28th November, 1918. Dear Sir, I desire to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 14th instant, embodying a resolution carried by your Legislative Council conveying the thanks of the people of Western Australia for the magnificent services rendered by Australian sailors and soldiers during the war, and expressing congratulations upon the victory which their efforts have helped to achieve. I shall gladly convey this resolution, as requested, to the General Officer Commanding the Australian Imperial Force. I have also sent a copy of your letter to the acting Minister for the Navy, who will doubtless despatch a similar message to the Admiral in Command of the Australian Fleet. Yours faithfully, (signed) G. F. Pearce.

Department of the Navy, Melbourne, 22nd November, 1918. Sir, I have the honour to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your letter of 14th instant, transmitting a resolution passed by the Legislative Council of Western Australia, conveying the thanks of the people of that State for the services rendered by the Australian Navy and Army in the defence of the Empire, and in reply to inform you that a copy of the resolution will be transmitted to H.M.A. ships. I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant, (signed) A. Poynton, acting Minister for the Navy.

MOTION—AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCES, RAILWAY CORPS.

Debate resumed from the 26th November on the motion by the Hon. J. Cornell—"That in the opinion of this House it is unjust that railway employees who have enlisted, or who may enlist, in the Railway Corps should be made forfeit what-