

# Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 17th December, 1913.

	PAGE
Papers presented .....	3283
Personal Explanation: Mr. S. Stubbs and the Loan Estimates .....	4016
The Minister for Works and a Daily News report Urgency motion, Kalgoorlie seat .....	3983
Questions: Belmont-Kalamunda road grant .....	3983
Powellised sleepers, contract with Federal Government .....	3989
Perth Tramway's, sale of tickets .....	3989
Storm in agricultural areas, benefit race meeting .....	3989
Sewerage scheme, filter beds .....	3990
Dredging Swan River .....	3990
Public Service, salary increases .....	3990
Bills: Electric Light and Power Agreement, 3a. Plant Diseases, 3a. ....	3990
Game Act, Amendment, 3a. ....	3990
Local Option Vote Continuance, all stages .....	3990
Land Tax and Income Tax, returned .....	3992
Roads Act Continuance, returned .....	3992
Opium Smoking Prohibition, Council's Amendments .....	3992
Bills of Sale Act Amendment, Council's Amendments .....	3993
Mines Regulation, Message .....	4017
Public Works Committee, Com., 3a. ....	4017
Motion: Railways Commissioner, re-appoint- ment .....	3594

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 3.30 p.m., and read prayers.

## PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Minister for Lands: Report on the operations of the Agricultural Bank for the year ended 30th June, 1913.

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION—MR. S. STUBBS AND THE LOAN ESTIMATES.

Mr. S. STUBBS (Wagin): On a personal explanation I desire to say that a statement appearing in the *West Australian* this morning referring to me is absolutely incorrect. In the report of the proceedings in Committee on the Loan Estimates I am reported to have said that I hoped Albany would not be made a port of shipment for large quantities of wheat grown in my electorate while the present difficulties and expense of shipment existed there. I made no such statement. I was endeavouring to support the hon. member for Albany (Mr. Price) in the hope that the Minister for Works would take the earliest steps possible to improve the conditions for the handling of wheat at the port of Albany. I also said I hoped that large quantities of

wheat would be shipped from Albany, because until a line of railway was made from Wagin to connect with Bunbury, Albany must be the port from which all the wheat and cereals grown in my electorate, or most of it, would be shipped. In these circumstances, if this report were not contradicted, it would be unfair to me, and therefore my desire was to make this personal explanation.

## URGENCY MOTION—KALGOORLIE SEAT.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam): I wish to move a motion on a matter of urgency to draw attention to the position which has arisen in connection with the resignation of the hon. member for Kalgoorlie, as Clause 66 of the Electoral Act has been ignored. Under this clause it is imperative that the House shall declare the seat vacant.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received a copy of the motion the hon. member intends to move. The question is that the House do adjourn.

Seven members having risen in their places,

Hon. J. MITCHELL: May I read the clause of the Electoral Act to which I have referred? Clause 66, Subclause 1, states—

Whenever a vacancy occurs in either House from any cause (otherwise than by the effluxion of time in the case of a member of the Council), the President or Speaker, as the case may be, upon a resolution by the House declaring such vacancy and the cause thereof, shall by warrant under his hand, in the form numbered (17) in the schedule, direct the Clerk of the Writs to issue a writ to supply the vacancy.

I contend that that is a direction to this House, upon notice that a resignation has been received, to move that the seat be declared vacant. In this case more than seven days ago you, Mr. Speaker, gave notice that you had received the resignation of the member for Kalgoorlie. Yesterday I asked a question in connection with this matter and got no satisfactory answer. To-day, I understand,

the session will end and if this seat is not declared vacant by the House before we adjourn this evening, I do not know what is to be done. I am not certain how this seat shall be declared vacant but I suppose there is some machinery to make that possible. It is the duty of this House, upon receiving the resignation of a member, to act promptly. Why should there be any delay? Why should any electorate be disfranchised? If it is possible for Ministers to hold over the declaration of a vacancy for one week it is possible for them to hold over the declaration of a vacancy for weeks. Ministers might decide to disfranchise an electorate for many weeks. It is quite possible that if the seat of the member for Sussex became vacant Ministers could, at their option, decide that the seat should remain without representation in this House for any length of time. Why has the Premier delayed in this case? The usual practice is to act at once. When the resignation is in, the seat is vacant and another member is wanted immediately. The electorate should have a representative here. There should be no delay at all in bringing about an election. It is a mysterious thing that Ministers have taken up the position they have in this connection. The Premier must have some reason for delaying this matter. He told us yesterday he wishes to get the rolls in order. What would the public read into that statement? Is it because the rolls do not suit the Premier? Has he in mind the recent Geraldton election, where some names were not on the rolls because the claims had not been received in sufficient time? Is there something behind this determination of Ministers? Do they know that there are claims which have not been registered? If so, why have they not told the House? It is not for Ministers to inquire into the rolls when a position of this sort arises. It is for them to act, not wait for apparently what will suit them. I am not going to cast accusations of delay in order that they may stuff the rolls, but I say the public will want to know why there has been this delay, particularly after

the declaration of the Premier that the rolls are not in order. If they are not in order that is a reflection on the Attorney General, who is at the head of the Electoral Department. I believe the Electoral Department do their duty and I believe every person in this State, who has a right to get on the roll for Kalgoorlie, has had ample opportunity of registering if he desired. If that is the case what right have we to inquire into the position of the rolls, to inquire whether the rolls are correct, whether they are complete, whether every man and woman in Kalgoorlie is on the roll? Are Ministers going to take the same course whenever a seat is vacant and whenever an election is to take place? Ministers have taken upon themselves a very serious responsibility and one which I venture to say they will suffer for for a considerable length of time. It looks very suspicious indeed. There may be another reason, that Ministers desire to give Mr. Green an opportunity to stand for this seat if he is not selected for a more important position elsewhere.

The Minister for Mines: You know perfectly well it is not so.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is the lesser of the two evils, but I have the assurance of the Minister for Mines that the fact that the seat has not been declared vacant is not in order that they may extend help to their late supporter. I am very pleased to have that assurance from the Minister for Mines, because it makes it now necessary for the Minister to make a very clear explanation in regard to the other matter I have mentioned. Have we had a parallel case since we undertook responsible Government? I venture to say we have never had a parallel case; this House has never failed in its duty until now. However, I want to warn hon. members that they must determine how far their responsibility is to reach. If they support the Minister hon. members must take the full responsibility of their action in endorsing the action of Ministers. It is a breach of faith and absolutely wrong, and a violation, not only of the Electoral Act but of the Constitution Act also. It may be

that the Premier wishes to make sure of the return of his own candidate. I do not accuse him of that, but it is necessary to show the public that that is not his reason for the delay. Someone is shirking his responsibility, and I learned from the Premier yesterday that he had no intention of doing his duty in this respect.

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. T. Walker):** I am not at all surprised at the wholesale seeds of suspicion which the hon. member has broadcasted. Nothing can be done in any shape or form but the worst and most despicable motives are attributed as the cause. This constant throwing out of the suggestion that there is something to condemn, something despicable or corrupt—

**Hon. J. Mitchell:** I did not use the word corrupt.

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL:** No, of course not. I have not said the hon. member used the word; but what inference can be gathered from the hon. member's speech, except that there is some corruption possible on the part of the Government in order to keep the Kalgoorlie seat vacant? All the possible motives for keeping the seat vacant, which have anything honourable connected with them, the hon. member has not in any way suggested; every possible motive that is wrong, dishonourable or unworthy of a Government has been hinted at, if not openly asserted. The possible honourable purposes have not even been in the faintest degree suggested. Let me first of all inform the hon. member that he has entirely failed to put the proper emphasis on the section of the Act which he read to the House containing the instructions in the case of a vacancy. He read Section 66, which says this—

Whenever a vacancy occurs in either House from any cause (otherwise than by the effluxion of time in the case of a member of the Council), the President or Speaker, as the case may be, upon a resolution by the House declaring such vacancy and the cause thereof, shall by warrant under his hand, in the form numbered (17) in the Sched-

ule, direct the Clerk of the Writs to issue a writ to supply the vacancy.

That resolution may be passed at any time, or it may be delayed—and for honourable reasons. I want to remind the hon. member that the whole purpose of the Electoral Act is, not to give any party an unfair advantage, but to give every elector an equal chance to vote at election time to whichever party he may belong. Therefore if for any reasons there be cause for suspicion that the roll is not perfect it is the duty of the Government to see when an election is imminent that that roll is made as perfect as can be. It is a duty upon the Government and the House. The hon. member said that if the roll at Kalgoorlie is not perfect it is a reflection upon the Attorney General, because the Electoral Act is administered in his department.

**Mr. Monger:** Why did you not do it for Geraldton?

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL:** It should have been done. The hon. member taught us a lesson there. Is it not a fact that the hon. member the other night was criticising this side of the House, the leader of the Opposition was criticising the Government, and leaders in another place also were criticising the Government because the chance had not been given to put the electoral rolls in order? We were severely criticised in the Press, on the platform, in another place, and in this Chamber because the electoral rolls were not in order, and now, forsooth, because we are anxious to put it in order we are again criticised detrimentally. We have the example of the Commonwealth itself, a very recent one; in fact the example is still in progress—we have an example for delaying a brief time until every elector has a chance of being put upon the roll and every name not entitled to be on the roll be taken off it. We have the right to do that. Not only that, but it is our bounden duty to do it. What is the good of having an election with a roll known to be imperfect? That is not a fair election. It is not a test of public opinion, it is not a reflection of the will of the public. The man who contests an election under

those circumstances does not get the votes of the people, but only a portion of them. Whilst I have the honour of administering that department, having had the error of precipitancy—which was not my fault but which was to be put down to the purst and most conscientious of motives—of hastening the matter, having had that example we were determined to go about this election, and others which may follow, in such a way as to give us a roll that will bear the test of scrutiny, before we ask the electors to vote. That is the reason for the delay, and there is no other reason. The hon. member asked why are these electoral rolls not always complete? Every hon. member knows that during the interim between elections rolls are bound to become imperfect. We cannot be carrying on a weekly canvass. We can only make amends and recover the perfection of the rolls when an election is imminent, whether it be a general election or a by-election such as we are now going to undertake. We have the right then to take steps as speedily as possible to put the roll into at least as perfect a condition as the machinery at our disposal will permit of. That is all we are doing now. The hon. member asked is it in order to get Mr. Green back here? If we are to take Mr. Green's announcement, he will not be a candidate; in fact he cannot be according to the methods adopted on the Labour side. He cannot represent Labour as a candidate at Kalgoolie.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Why not?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Because the time has passed; he cannot do it without a violation of faith, and I have no knowledge of those on our side being so flippant in their breaches of faith as that. We can rely upon them to stand by a statement publicly made. It cannot be for that motive. Who the other person may be who will be chosen to represent Labour I know not; it does not enter into the question; but whether it be for the benefit of Labour or for the opponent of Labour this must be done: the most perfect roll possible under the circumstances must be obtained.

Mr. George: Are they making a house to house canvass?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes, we are taking a canvass of all who are eligible for the roll.

Mr. George: When will it be complete?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It will be done in less than a week. Every effort will be made to get every eligible name put on that roll so that when the vote comes on we may know it is a proper reflex of the people and not merely a catch vote on either side. The lesson we have learned is from those who have so freely criticised us in the case of the Geraldton election. I say it was a mistake to have gone so speedily to work with the issue of the writ and the closing of the rolls. Those rolls should have been open for correction and analysis up to a certain time so as to give everybody a right to vote, a chance to be on the roll. Having learnt that lesson, we are going to give the chance to everybody eligible—which I am sure hon. members must applaud—to be able to vote when the election comes.

Mr. ALLEN (West Perth): I gather from the remarks of the Attorney General that the object in delaying the declaring of the seat vacant is to enable those entitled to vote to get upon the rolls. That is commendable, and possibly good will come out of the discussion, because it will go out to the public that anybody who has the necessary qualifications can get on the rolls next week. Many people would not be possessed of that knowledge; they would think they could not get on the rolls at the last moment. I was given to understand yesterday that the election would be fought on the existing rolls. The Attorney General says that is not so, that the object of the delay is to enable those entitled to be on the roll to get there. I think, therefore, the motion will have done good, because it will not go out to the public. I think that good will come of it, and I am glad on that account that this motion was moved by the member for Northam. The people probably would not have known otherwise that they would have an opportunity of getting on the roll, and I am glad that is the object of the

Attorney General in delaying to declare the seat vacant.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (in reply): The hon. member for West Perth does not fully understand the position. At Kalgoolie there is an electoral officer paid by the Government to keep the electoral rolls in order and do the electoral work generally.

The Premier: Not for that purpose only.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is his business to keep the rolls in order.

The Premier: It is not his business to do anything of the kind. How can he go out canvassing every time somebody comes to the district?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The rolls are kept in order, not only by canvassing for new names, but by removing names that are wrongly on the rolls.

The Attorney General: Which necessitates a canvass.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It would be ridiculous to keep the electoral officer going all the year round if he could not keep the rolls in order. It is his business to see that names are put on the roll and that names are removed which should not be there. The Attorney General did not tell the House that the machinery is there to enable the rolls to be kept in order, and furthermore he knows that each quarter supplementary rolls are printed showing the names removed and those added. It is absolutely wrong of Ministers to delay a by-election in order that they may perfect their rolls. It is a different matter in connection with a general election, where the whole of the people of the State are entitled to vote for someone. If the principle the Attorney General affirms to be right is carried into practice in other elections we do open the door to corruption. I think the Attorney General said that in a week's time he will have the inquiry completed in regard to the rolls. That means that more than a fortnight has elapsed since the resignation was received, and it is just possible that a week before, a number of people, contemplating the resignation of the hon. member, moved into the electorate, we will say to vote for the Liberal candidate. We know

these things do happen. We know that names are wrongly on several rolls to-day. It is the duty of this Parliament to see that the elections are conducted in a proper manner and that there shall be no chance of getting bogus names on the roll. It would be possible for people to watch for a coming by-election and transfer votes to an electorate in which they could be useful.

The Premier: The electors are not as bad as you make them out to be.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is quite possible that an action such as we are now asked to affirm will have that effect. I know it has been said in the Bunbury electorate that a number of people went to Bunbury, stayed a night in a boarding-house and applied to have their names placed on the roll, and exercised the vote.

The Attorney General: Who said it?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I know the same thing was said about other electorates and the hon. member knows that the same thing was said about the Federal elections.

The Attorney General: Who said it?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Rumour.

The Attorney General: Street corner gossip.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I would sooner talk to the meanest street corner gossip than the Attorney General. When this debate is concluded I will tell the Attorney General if he likes of a conversation that took place between two members sitting opposite, although not in my presence. I protest against the attitude of the Government in this connection. If this system is to be followed there will be no need to have the rolls in order at any time. The people can neglect their duty to get on the rolls, they can wait until they get notice from the Attorney General and then go in and get their names on the roll before election day comes. The Attorney General says he has hesitated to declare the seat vacant, because he wants to get the rolls in order. Surely that means he is going to do that in every case.

The Attorney General: I will do my utmost to see that all the rolls are in order.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: In the meantime the Attorney General says there is no necessity for people to get on the roll because if any election occurs he will give them ample notice and opportunity. It is a laudable desire to have on the roll every person entitled to vote, but it is not a sufficient justification for delaying the election. The Electoral Department exists to keep the rolls up-to-date, and we should see that the election is fought on the fairest possible lines, consistent with the rolls as they were when the resignation occurred. The Attorney General can easily see that if he delays the election long enough he might include 100 votes that went into the electorate a day or two before the resignation was received.

The Attorney General: That cannot possibly be. After you have got your canvass there is a fortnight before the claims mature during which there is a sifting to test their validity.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: But those votes had been a month in the electorate including the fortnight which the Attorney General has allowed.

The Attorney General: Well, they would be entitled to the vote.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If the Premier opens a timber mill and sends several hundred electors into, say, the Nelson district a day or two before the resignation of the member is received, is it fair to wait until those people can be enfranchised before declaring the seat vacant?

The Attorney General: They must be a month in the electorate before they can vote.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Attorney General gives them over a month.

The Premier: Your protest is in order to prevent people getting on the roll who have a right to the vote.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: That is deliberate misrepresentation. I do not want to prevent anyone from voting, but the elections should be held on the rolls as they were at the time when the seat was declared vacant. The Attorney General cannot argue otherwise. A by-election will provide a glorious opportunity for wrongdoing if the Attorney General's practice is followed in future. I protest against

the attitude the Minister has taken up.

The Attorney General: Do you protest against the attitude the Federal Government have taken up?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The action of the Attorney General is absolutely wrong and he ought not to have taken this attitude.

The Premier: You ought to be ashamed of desiring to disfranchise people.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I complain of the action of the Government in giving people an opportunity to get on the roll who were not in the district when the resignation was received.

The Attorney General: You have not a scintilla of truth in that accusation.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I have as much right to say that as the Premier has to say that I desire to disfranchise people.

The Attorney General: You have no right to assert what you know to be a libellous falsehood.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. J. MITCHELL: As the Attorney General has said, his Geraldton lesson is one he is going to profit by, and he is not going to have the same thing happen again. I would like to know from the Premier what he proposes to do after the House adjourns.

Question put and negatived.

#### QUESTION—BELMONT-KALAMUNDA ROAD GRANT.

Mr. LEWIS asked the Minister for Works: 1, What amount has been granted by the Government for the Belmont-Kalamunda road? 2, How much was granted on the pound for pound basis? 3, What amount has been expended by the Belmont Park roads board? 4, Has the board honourably fulfilled its obligations? 5, Was his statement at Kalamunda about this road correctly reported? 6, Was this statement in accordance with facts?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, £1,125. 2, £300. 3, £759 5s., inclusive of £500 granted by the Government. 4, 5, and 6, I am of opinion that the Board have been using votes made for Kalamunda-road on Epsom-avenue, and

expressed myself accordingly. As the Chairman of the Board took exception to the remarks, instructions were issued on the 3rd December for an officer to visit the district and make a special report.

#### QUESTION—POWELLISED SLEEPERS, CONTRACT WITH FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

Hon. J. MITCHELL asked the Premier: 1, Is there any truth in the rumour that the contract for supply of powellised karri sleepers to the Federal Government is to be cancelled? 2, If so, upon what grounds?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes; I received word from the Prime Minister on the 10th inst., to the effect that unless the stipulations in the contract relating to the time of delivery were fulfilled, the Commonwealth Government would feel constrained, in the public interest, to cancel the contract. 2, The State Government promptly replied explaining in detail the circumstances which had caused delay in supplying the initial requirements for sleepers, at the same time pointing out that ere long 12,300 more sleepers would be out per month than is necessary under the contract, and by April, 1915, the Government would be fully up to contract requirements, and that the contract was confidently expected to be completed according to the terms thereof, in January, 1916.

#### QUESTION—PERTH TRAMWAYS, SALE OF TICKETS.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (for Mr. Gill) asked the Premier: 1, In view of the reply given by the Commissioner for Railways to the City Council re the sale of tram tickets, will he inform the Commissioner for Railways to the same effect as he did a deputation from North Perth Council some months ago, "That Cabinet had decided that no departure from the system adopted by the company until such time as the Government are prepared to go into the whole question of fares, etc."? 2, Seeing the present ar-

rangements for the purchase of tickets will be a heavy tax on families, especially during the holidays, will he insist on the decision of Cabinet being adhered to?

The PREMIER replied: 1, The reply which I gave on several occasions to deputations was intended to convey that no definite departure from the system adopted by the company would take place until such time as the Government were prepared to go into the whole question of extensions, alterations of routes, periodical and sectional fares, etc., but was not intended to refer to the sale of tickets. I repeatedly endeavoured to emphasise the fact that it would be impossible to arrange for extensions and innovations respecting passenger fares until the new power house was in operation, and more rolling stock available. 2, The present method of selling tramway tickets is being given a trial until after a heavy or "rush" season has been experienced under Government management, and the advisability of its retention or otherwise will accordingly be reviewed after the Christmas and New Year holiday season.

#### QUESTION—STORM IN AGRICULTURAL AREAS—BENEFIT RACE MEETING.

Mr. FOLEY (for Mr. Turvey) asked the Premier: 1, Whether he is aware that the Helena Vale race club desired to hold a race meeting to assist those farmers who suffered severe loss in the recent storms and was refused permission by the W.A. Turf Club? 2, In view of the necessity of assistance, that the proposed date is one of the W.A.T.C.'s vacant dates, and that the amount raised would approximate £1,000, can the Government do anything to assist the Helena Vale race club in its laudable desire?

The PREMIER replied: 1 and 2, The Government is not officially aware of the negotiations between the W.A. Turf Club and the Helena Vale Race Club, but I have been informed that the former has had under consideration the question of the best method of assisting the sufferers by the Quairading storm, and that in view

of the engagements of the horses at the Christmas and New Year period, it is not deemed advisable to acquiesce in the proposal to arrange a further meeting on the 27th inst., by any racing body. Further, I understand that the controlling body of registered racing proposes to again take the matter into full consideration after the New Year carnival.

#### QUESTION—SEWERAGE SCHEME, FILTER BEDS.

Mr. ALLEN asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is it a fact that the nuisance recently complained of, from the smell of the filters, has been lessened by reduction of the spray from the sprinklers? 2, If so, have any measures been taken to treat the noxious gases which are now added to the work of the filter medium, and, if so, what measures? 3, If not, is an increased volume of impurity being discharged into the river, and, if so, how long is it proposed that this state of affairs shall continue?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, The nuisance has been abated, but not by the method stated. The reduction on the work of the old filter bed has been due to the new filter bed coming into active work. 2, No. 3, There is no increased volume of impurity being discharged into the river.

#### QUESTION—DREDGING SWAN RIVER.

Mr. ALLEN asked the Minister for Works: 1, How many dredges are working and how many idle on the Swan River? 2, Why are they idle, and for how long have they been idle? 2, Where are the punts that are not in use? 4, What is the condition of the dredges not in use?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Two (2) Priestman grab dredges working. Three (3) dredges idle, viz., bucket dredge "Fremantle," and suction dredges "Shark" and "Premier." 2, The work on which they are employed has been completed. They have been idle nearly seven months. 3, At Mount's Bay, Perth Water. 4, On bucket dredge "Fremantle"

and suction dredge "Shark" the machinery is in good order, but the hulls require slipping and painting. Suction dredge "Canning" is obsolete and not worth repairing.

#### QUESTION—PUBLIC SERVICE, SALARY INCREASES.

Mr. LEWIS asked the Premier: 1, Will he issue instructions to pay before Christmas certain increases passed on Estimates to public servants in receipt of under £200 a year? 2, If not, why not?

The PREMIER replied: This matter was submitted for my approval a fortnight ago, and arrangements made in accordance with the usual custom.

#### BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Electric Light and Power Agreement.

2, Plant Diseases.

Transmitted to the Legislative Council.

#### BILL—GAME ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and returned to the Legislative Council with amendments.

#### BILL—LOCAL OPTION VOTE CON- TINUANCE.

*All Stages.*

On motion by the Attorney General Bill introduced and read a first time.

*Second Reading.*

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. T. Walker) in moving the second reading said: The Bill is introduced in consequence of the defeat to all intents and purposes of the Local Option measure introduced into this Assembly and transmitted to another place. The Bill was lost during an important stage of the discussion in another place last night. That Bill provided for the taking of the local option vote in 1915 instead of next year. By the Licensing Act as it now stands we were instructed to take the local op-



tion poll in April of next year, and we wish to bring the local option poll in line with the provisions made in the Bill which has just been defeated. This Bill has no further purpose than that of taking the local option poll one year in advance. No harm can be done in this matter. The law as it stands in the 1911 Act provides that we can do no real genuine good until 1920, therefore it is useless expenditure and waste of time and energy perhaps to take a poll next year. I beg to move—

*That the Bill be now read a second time.*

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

Mr. McDowall in the Chair, the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 2, 1911, No. 46:

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: It was his desire to congratulate the Minister upon bringing down this Bill. If the vote was taken next year it would mean that the country would be put to an enormous amount of expense. He believed in putting it off even further than 1915. Under the present Act the only question on which a vote would be allowed was whether people desired an increase of licenses or not. He was certain, because of his knowledge of the people who were likely to take an interest in these matters, that we would never get a substantial percentage of the people voting on this question. There was no interest whatever taken in the matter, and he thought it would be better if we dispensed with the taking of this so-called local option vote until we could either amend the Act or until 1920. Did the Attorney General not think it would be better to strike out 1915 and insert 1920, as we were simply throwing money away by attempting to take a vote under the Act as it stood at present.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: In order to take a genuine local option vote it might be advisable to wait until 1920, when the main questions of abolition and compensation could be decided, but that

was a matter for the Committee. Perhaps it would be advisable from an educational standpoint to have some public discussion on the matter before 1920. If the hon. member liked to move an amendment he would offer no objection. If the Committee wished to vote for 1920 he was not strenuously opposed to it.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS moved an amendment—

*That in line 4 "fifteen" be struck out and "twenty" inserted in lieu.*

One realised that education was necessary upon this question, but we would get no educational advantage by taking this vote under the existing Act.

Mr. Bolton: I am surprised that you are a 1920 man now.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: We might as well throw the money into the gutter as take a vote on the question of whether we should increase licenses or not. Parliament had decided that it would not allow the people to vote for continuance, reduction or no license until 1920.

Mr. DWYER: We should see the effect of the proposed amendment in regard to the applications for licenses before we agreed to pass it, and that could only be done by comparing the measure with the existing law. It would be difficult to judge the effect without looking at the Act.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The carrying of this amendment or the passing of the clause as it stood would not have any effect upon the existing law so far as the granting of new licenses beyond a radius of 15 miles from an existing hotel was concerned.

Mr. DWYER: Was it the intention of the Crown, when the necessity for an hotel arose within 15 miles of an existing hotel, to establish an hotel between the present time and 1920?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It was not possible for him to prophesy what might be done either by the present Government or by any succeeding Ministry. He could only declare that any matter of that kind would be dealt with on its merits. With regard to the amendment moved by the member for Subiaco; it had just occurred to him that, as this was the last day of the session, it would not be

possible to get this Bill through if hon. members suggested amendments to it. Therefore he asked that the hon. member might either withdraw his amendment or that it might be negatived on the voices. If we were to have a local option vote next April, the hon. member should withdraw the amendment, because it would be necessary to begin the process of getting ready almost immediately.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS : In view of the explanation of the Attorney General he would not press the amendment. He recognised that if we did not get the Bill through now we might be put in an awkward position. He hoped next session the Attorney General would bring down a small measure and give the House the opportunity of putting off the poll until 1920.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

#### BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

#### BILL—ROADS ACT CONTINUATION.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

#### BILL—OPIUM SMOKING PROHIBITION.

##### *Council's Amendments.*

Bill returned from the Legislative Council with amendments which were now considered.

##### *In Committee.*

Mr. Holman in the Chair; Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister) in charge of the Bill.

No. 1.—Clause 6, strike out:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This Bill was principally to prevent the smoking of opium which was carried on to a very large extent by the Chinese and Asiatics. He did not know that, so far as the white race was concerned in Australia, opium was smoked to any extent. It was necessary that every power possible should be in the hands of the authorities to prevent smoking of opium. In China to-day a man or woman caught smoking opium was condemned to death. He could not agree to the amendment of the Council striking out Clause 6. If the amendment was agreed to it would be almost impossible to prohibit what the Bill was intended for. It would be necessary to catch a person actually smoking opium to enforce the provisions of the Bill, because a person would only prepare the opium at the time when it was intended to indulge in the smoking of it. Persons would not prepare opium for smoking and keep it in stock because then they would be liable under the Bill. The principal objection lodged against the clause was that it was necessary for pastoralists and others to keep certain drugs which were necessary to deal with stock. Whilst he disagreed with the request of the Council in regard to striking out the clause, he proposed to move—

*That the Council's amendment be amended by substituting "add to" for "strike out" and by adding after "clause," "Provided that it shall be a defence to any proceeding for an offence against this section to prove that the opium was kept solely for the medical treatment of man or animals."*

Mr. GEORGE : What the Minister had proposed would meet the case entirely. When first he saw the clause he knew that it would press hardly on farmers and those in the country. Tincture of opium was used in cases of colic and no damage was done. So far as opium smoking was concerned, he did not think one half per cent. of the opium used was smoked outside opium dens.

Mr. DWYER : Without the clause the Bill would be of very little use. There might be a danger in the amendment proposed, however. A person might

have a doctor prescribe opium for him, and by virtue of the doctor having prescribed it might take in a large stock of opium and the possession of that stock. If he was able to treat it, would enable him to collect his friends and allow them to use it for smoking, and if charged with an offence the person could produce the doctor's certificate.

Mr. TAYLOR: The argument of the hon. member for Perth would not have any effect. If a person were ordered opium for dysentery, he would not be able to get in such a stock as would enable him to treat his friends. There were not two people in 500 in the Commonwealth who were habitual opium smokers. In Queensland and in the back part of New South Wales he had seen men who carried all the equipment for opium smoking, and were slaves to the evil. There was nothing which had such a degrading effect on a person as opium smoking, but he had seen such examples only in three or four instances. Those who had reached this stage of degradation were so ashamed of it that they would not ask anyone except a slave like themselves to join them, and there would be no danger of large stocks being obtained as was suggested. There was more opium eating than opium smoking. In all his experience on the mining fields of Western Australia, he had not seen a white man here smoking opium.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If a person sold opium in a large quantity he would run the risk of having his permit from the Commonwealth cancelled. Some of them had already been threatened. They had to keep a list of what they sold, and to whom they sold it, and the Customs Department would not allow them to sell it in large quantities. The Customs Department recognised opium in bulk for manufacturing medicines, tabloids of opium, tincture of opium, opium cure pills, extract of opium, fluid extract of opium, nepenthe, and opium cure powders, as capable of being prepared for opium smoking, but according to the Medical Department, a man must be almost an expert to prepare them for this purpose.

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

No. 2.—Strike out Clause 7:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This really dealt with the same question. He moved—

*That the amendment be not agreed to.*

Question passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 3.—Clause 9, line 28, after "justice of the peace" insert "or Collector of Customs":

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Customs officials had a good deal to do in connection with opium, and it was thought advisable that the collector should have the same power as justices of the peace to issue warrants. He moved—

*That the amendment be agreed to.*

Question passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported, and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of the Hon. W. C. Angwin, Mr. George, and Mr. Dwyer drew up reasons for disagreeing to one of the Council's amendments, and for agreeing to one with an amendment.

Reasons adopted and a Message accordingly returned to the Legislative Council.

## BILL.—BILLS OF SALE ACT AMENDMENT.

### *Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of fourteen amendments received from the Council now considered.

### *In Committee.*

Mr. Holman in the Chair, the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

On motions by the ATTORNEY GENERAL amendments Nos. 1 to 3 agreed to.

No. 4.—Clause 8: Bills of sale void against claim for wages:—strike out the clause:

The ATTORNEY GENERAL moved—

*That the amendment be not agreed to.*

Question passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 5.—Clause 9: Add the following words to the clause:—"and by adding to the section a proviso as follows:—provided this section shall not apply to any agreement for hire with or without the right of purchase of the chattels":

The ATTORNEY GENERAL moved—

*That the amendment be agreed to.*

Question passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 6, Clause 11.—Strike out the clause:

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Clause 11 repealed Section 46 of the Act, which said that every bill of sale by way of security for a sum not exceeding £30 should be void. He had taken pride in copying the Victorian and South Australian legislation to allow a bill of sale to be given as security for any amount. He moved—

*That the amendment be not agreed to.*

Hon. J. MITCHELL: There was no logic in £30. A bill of sale should be given for any amount that suited the borrower.

Question passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

On motions by the ATTORNEY GENERAL, amendments Nos. 7, and 10 to 14 agreed to, and Nos. 8 and 9 not agreed to.

Resolutions reported, and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of the Attorney General, the Hon. J. Mitchell, and Mr. Dwyer drew up reasons for not agreeing to the Council's amendments.

Reasons adopted, and a Message accordingly returned to the Council.

#### MOTION — RAILWAYS COMMISSIONER, REAPPOINTMENT.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS (Hon. P. Collier) moved—

*That the reappointment of Mr. J. T. Short as Commissioner of Railways, on the terms specified in the Executive Council Minute laid upon the Table of the Legislative Assembly on Thursday, 13th November, be approved.*

He said: I move this motion in compliance with Section 2 of the amending Government Railways Act of 1907. I may

explain briefly the terms embodied in the Executive Council minute. It is, that the Government have decided to appoint Mr. Short as Commissioner of Railways for a further term of five years as from July of the present year, subject to any amendment that may be made to the Government Railways Act which might, during the five years of his term of office, abolish the position of Commissioner of Railways. In that case, the Commissioner would then be appointed as general manager. I think I need not say very much with regard to the justification for the reappointment of Mr. Short. He has occupied the position for the past five years and I think there is a consensus of opinion throughout the State that he is entitled to a further term of office, but there may be some difference of opinion as to the increase with regard to the salary that has been provided by the Government. The Commissioner previously had been in receipt of a salary of £1,500 a year, and the agreement which is now being made provides that Mr. Short shall receive £2,000 per annum. I want to point out that, in comparison with the position of, say, a few years ago, the salary, in my opinion, and in the opinion of other members of the Government, is fully justified. For instance, when Mr. Short was first appointed to the position of Acting Commissioner in 1907, we had then 1,764 miles of railways opened for traffic, whereas on the 30th June of the present year, when he was reappointed for another term of five years, the mileage was 2,854, or an increase of 1,100 miles. Necessarily that means increased responsibility for the time being, on the man who is occupying the position of Commissioner.

Mr. Turvey: Has he shown increased proficiency in his management?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I think he has, and I will go so far as to say that I do not think any State of the Commonwealth possesses a more capable or more qualified railway expert at the head of its working railways than does Western Australia, and in justification of that statement I might quote a few figures, that is if we look at it from the

pounds, shillings, and pence aspect of the question. From the inception of the Government railways in 1879 to the 30th June, 1907, when Mr. Short took charge, the total profits in that period amounted to £616,725, and from 1907 to the 30th June of the present year, covering the period that Mr. Short has been Commissioner of Railways, the profits have amounted to £765,017, which is something like £150,000 more for those five years than the total profit for the other period I quoted. That is just one aspect of the question. As one who ought to be in the position to express an opinion—whether it is worth much will remain for hon. members to say—I can say that from my experience of the Commissioner during the past two years, he has shown a capacity for his work which I believe could not be excelled by any man we could obtain within the borders of the Commonwealth, or, in fact, without the Commonwealth. Following on the figures I have quoted, in addition to the mileage opened during the past seven years, the capital has increased from ten millions to 14 millions sterling. Then again, in addition to the increased mileage comes increased responsibility. If we are increasing the responsibility of a man who is in charge of such a big working department as the railway system, I say that man is entitled to some corresponding increase in the way of salary. The earnings of our railways during the same period increased from £1,537,333 to £2,037,853, an increase of half a million. Here again I say that whilst the Commissioner is not responsible for the increase, hon. members must admit that this increase brings added responsibility to the duties of the man who is in charge of the system. The expenditure during the same period increased from £1,135,907 to £1,506,600. Our interest bill has increased from £358,738 to £500,000; that is, in round figures, the interest bill amounts to half a million sterling. The tonnage of goods handled has increased during the same period from 2,330,333 to 3,282,361 tons, and the passenger journeys have increased in round numbers from 13 millions to 17 millions. Above all this, the number of the employees has increased

in the same period from 5,816 to 7,750. That covers the period during the time the Commissioner has been in charge of the railways. Anyone who has the slightest experience of the handling of men, more particularly in a large department of this kind, will realise at once the increased work and the added responsibility entailed by that addition of 2,000 hands. Even to-day at this salary of £2,000, we shall have the lowest-salaried Commissioner of Railways, comparatively speaking, in the Commonwealth.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Before tea I was endeavouring to show by a comparison with the salaries paid for similar positions in the Eastern States that the salary now paid to the Commissioner of Railways is a comparatively low one. I would point out that Mr. Davies who was at one time general manager of the railways, received £1,500 per annum, and that was as far back as 1900 13 years ago. I venture to say few will dispute the fact that if the position was worth £1,500 per annum 13 years ago, with the growth of our railway system in this State, more particularly during the past six or seven years, the salary now proposed to be paid to the Commissioner is in comparison a very low one.

Mr. Taylor interjected.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: What I am endeavouring to show is that even this proposed salary of £2,000 is the lowest paid for a correspondingly responsible position in any State of the Commonwealth, bar Tasmania, which is not a fair comparison, because that State has only 400 miles of railway. Let me take another comparison. The late manager of the Tramway Company, Mr. Somerset, received a salary of £2,000 per annum, and when we realise the fact that saddled on to the duties which the Commissioner had previously to perform, is the control of the tramways, there is no comparison whatever between the responsibilities of the two men. Surely, if the manager of the Tramway Company was

worth £2,000 per annum, the position now held by the Commissioner of Railways with the tramway work added to his previous responsibilities, is worth at least £2,000 per annum. In New South Wales the chief commissioner receives a salary of £3,000, and in addition he has two assistant commissioners each receiving £1,500 per annum, making a total of £6,000 paid to the commissioners who control and manage the system in New South Wales. The Victorian chief commissioner receives a salary of £3,500, and there again there are two assistant commissioners each receiving a salary of £1,500 per annum, making a total of £6,500, whilst in Queensland, a State which approximates most closely to Western Australia with regard to area, railway mileage, and other conditions, the commissioner receives £2,250 per annum. It will be seen, therefore, that even with this increase the Commissioner of Railways in Western Australia will receive a lower salary than that paid for corresponding positions in any one of the Eastern States. In addition to having taken over the control of the tramway system, the commissioner has also had added to his duties during the last year or two the control and management of the State saw mill, and I believe that even men holding positions as managers of sawmills of corresponding capacity to that which the Railway Department controls, receive at least £1,000 per annum. What would be the position if the Government endeavoured to get a commissioner for a lower salary? Is it to be supposed for a moment that if we advertised in the Eastern States for a commissioner to take up the duties at £1,500 per annum, we would receive applications from qualified men, taking into account the fact that the commissioners in the Eastern States receive salaries of from £2,500 to £3,500.

Mr. S. Stubbs: The position would not be rushed.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We would not have an application from men capable of taking the position.

Mr. Turvey: You may have capable men in your own department.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If we have a capable man in our own department, he is worth £2,000 a year. If the reappointment of Mr. Short as commissioner is justified at all, the Government are justified in increasing the salary to £2,000 a year. The manager of the Midland Railway Company, with 270 miles of railway under his control, receives a salary of £1,500 per annum.

Mr. Moore: Smith did not get that.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, but he receives a salary of £1,200 for managing 400 miles of railway in Tasmania. Is there any comparison between the responsibilities of a man managing 270 miles of private railway at £1,500 a year, or the manager of the tramways at £2,000 a year, and the position of the man controlling the whole of the railways and the metropolitan tramways in this State.

Mr. Foley: The commissioner would not take the same responsibility as the manager of the late tramway company.

Mr. George: He has to take it.

Mr. Foley: No, the Government take it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not follow the interjection of the hon. member, but the whole question boils itself down to this. Is the present commissioner the right man for the position? If he is, he is worth £2,000 a year; in fact, I think it is not sufficient. When we recognise that the capital invested in our railway system is something like 14 million pounds and the annual expenditure approximately 1¼ millions, we must appreciate the responsibility of any man who has in his charge a system of that kind, and it would be absolutely false economy to pay the man in charge of such an undertaking, in which so much public money has been invested, where so much money is being expended and where such a large amount is received in revenue, a salary inadequate to the duties he has to perform. That is the position of the Government, and viewing it in the light of the facts I have just mentioned, we consider if we are justified in reappointing Mr. Short we are justified in increasing the salary to £2,000. I said at the outset

that I did not intend to take up the time of the House in endeavouring to justify the reappointment, because I take it for granted that there is no objection to it, but if I may judge from some interjections that have fallen during the course of my remarks, if there is any objection—and I do not anticipate any very serious objection—it is not to the increase in salary, but to the reappointment. I do not think I need weary members in justification of that reappointment, because during the last four or five months when it has been known that Mr. Short has been engaged for another term of five years, so far as I have been able to gather not one word of protest has been expressed either in the Press, in this House, or on any public platform in the State.

Mr. George: Why not keep him as Commissioner?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: He will be retained as commissioner so long as the Government Railways Act remains as it is at the present time. But it was a necessary safeguard to insert a clause of that kind which provides that in the event of Parliament in its wisdom during the next five years amending the Railways Act to bring the system under Ministerial control—

Mr. George: You do not want that.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am not now going to offer any remark in regard to that, but even if I do not want it, it is not for me to say what the next Parliament may want. If Parliament in its wisdom during the next five years should decide to amend the Act in order to bring the railways under Ministerial control or in any way curtail the power now exercised by the Commissioner, it is a very wise and necessary provision to say that he shall keep the position of general manager. It is only fair to the commissioner to know that he will not have to give up the duties of the position, although his title may be changed and the powers he now exercises may be somewhat lessened or curtailed. That is an aspect of the question which I think we need not enter into at this point of the debate. I have nothing further to say except that after

having two years' experience of the present Commissioner's control and management of the railways, not only myself but the Government also unhesitatingly offer him re-appointment for another term of five years.

Mr. S. STUBBS (Wagin): I think the Minister has echoed the sentiments of members of this Chamber in the very forcible address he has given to the House in introducing the matter now before us. Personally I think no more conscientious or honourable officer could be found in any of the States. I hope the Minister when a suitable opportunity offers will allow the Commissioner to take a well-earned holiday, as it is patent to every public man who has business transactions with the Commissioner that the strain and stress of office during the last three or four years have told on him, and to recuperate his health, and so that we may retain the services of such a valuable officer, a well-earned holiday would be the means of giving him a new lease of life and give the State further benefit of the vast experience he has had as a railway officer in this State and South Australia. I have known him for a period of twenty years and can conscientiously say he has endeavoured to carry out the duties entrusted to him in every part of the railway service he has been connected with. In him I believe the Minister has a colleague and an officer second to none in the States of the Commonwealth. I have much pleasure in supporting the proposal for increase in salary and the re-appointment to which the Minister has asked the House to assent.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington): I had some hesitation in rising so early because I understood there were various members on the other side who desired to express their opinion in connection with this particular matter. The Minister has given the reason for the motion and very properly said that, comparing the Commissioners of Railways in other States, this State underpays that officer for the onerous duties which have to be performed by whoever holds the office. In my opinion this House would do well to carry

the motion without any dispute. Whoever occupies that position, and I suppose I may speak with some amount of authority on the matter, has to put up with a great physical and mental trial; he is a target to be shot at by every ink-slinger in the State and by every member of the Parliament of the State who chooses to do it, notwithstanding that his experience is in absolutely inverse ratio to the position he takes up. The Commissioner of Railways in this State and every State deserves to have the loyal support of every member of Parliament so long as he carries out his duty. Every man who occupies that position has to meet all the different absolutely unjustifiable attacks that are made on him, and I think the least that can be done so far as this Chamber is concerned is to recognise that even if he has failings and shortcomings the main principle of his duty is carried out in the interests of the State. I regret to hear from the hon. member for Wagin that the Commissioner's health has somewhat suffered in the strenuous times he has passed through in the last few years. I can quite understand it. There is no eight hours day so far as the Commissioner's work is concerned; he is practically on duty for the whole of the 24 hours. His home is on the telephone and he is likely to be rung up at all hours of the night in connection with matters affecting the railways. Consultations between heads of departments are carried on over the wire after the day's work is done; that is the only chance the Commissioner has to consult the chiefs of his department. Let us take a glance at the Commissioner's day: first, he has hardly time in the morning to go through the correspondence which pours in, and give instructions with regard to different points, before one or other members of the general public require to be seen; he has to advise the Minister on all matters affecting the railways, and the duties in that respect alone are more than should be placed on one man. In my opinion, in the interests of the whole of Western Australia, the best thing that could be done in this State would be to appoint a Board of three Commissioners,

to have a chairman and two commissioners with him, so that different portions of the Commissioner's duties may be divided and he may be assisted in carrying them out. Take for instance the question of interviewing.

Mr. Lewis: The heads of branches do a good deal of that.

Mr. GEORGE: So long as there is a chief of any business a great proportion of the public refuse to be satisfied unless they can come in contact with that chief and that chief only.

Mr. Foley: A great proportion of the people do not come into contact with the Commissioner of Railways.

Mr. GEORGE: A great number of people insist on seeing the Commissioner. When it comes to the question of details of policy, which the Commissioner, and the Commissioner only, can deal with, it is to the Commissioner that the public go.

Mr. Foley: How many questions of policy do members of the public have with the Commissioner?

Mr. GEORGE: If the hon. member occupied that position for a day he would find out. It would take too long to explain the whole lot, and I do not want to be led off the track. I consider that to have three commissioners, the same as they have in Victoria and New South Wales would enable the chief commissioner to be what he should be, the final arbiter in connection with various matters affecting the railways. His colleagues could each take one particular portion of the business and relieve the chief commissioner in connection with that matter. The chief commissioner and his colleagues would have their councils and discuss these questions, and the final decision would be arrived at in these councils. I have now to refer to a question lately agitating the State in connection with the condition of our railways and the conditions of employment of the wages staff. The Minister has published in the newspaper lately the details of a couple of interviews he has had with officers of different railway organisations. Is there any member of this House who would for a single moment defend the



attitude of those officers of the railway association who went and interviewed the Minister and practically told the Minister, the Minister of their own making, and belonging to the Government of their own making, and supported by their own party, actually told the Minister that he had practically been lying, refused to accept his word, and dealt with him almost as though he were the scum of the earth. I do not think there is one member of the House but will rejoice that the Minister of a Labour Government will stand up and defend his position in the way we must all feel was justified. If officers of this association and this department will deal with a Minister of a Labour Government, they have mainly created in that way, what may we expect is the position they would take up with the Commissioner of Railways? If Mr. Short would publish the result of interviews he must have had with these gentlemen, I feel sure the language used to him would be found to be stronger even than that used to the Minister. I have referred to this matter so as to urge members of this House and members of the public to give consideration to whoever occupies that position. No man can occupy that position unless he is placed in such a way that his own private concerns must be practically put on one side. The whole of his time and attention must be given to the big interests of his department. We have now nearly 3,000 miles of railway and nearly 7,000 employees of all descriptions, and the Commissioner is expected to deal with every phase of railway working and every industrial dispute, right on the spur of the moment. I do not want to say that the men have no consideration for the Commissioner; I know the great bulk of the men have consideration for their Commissioner, but they choose to elect officers in their association and those officers naturally try to carry out what they think best for the men; but I do not believe if a poll were taken of the railway service to-day there would be found more than a very small percentage of the employees of the railways would uphold the language and attitude taken recently by offi-

cers of that association. As I said before, I am very sorry indeed to hear that the Commissioner's health has suffered, but I am not surprised at it. The Commissioner is there practically the whole of his time, cooped up in an office dealing with matters which should be delegated and can only be delegated to someone of nearly equal rank.

The Minister for Railways: I have suffered a bit in health myself lately.

Mr. GEORGE: I am satisfied that if the Minister occupied the position of Commissioner of Railways for twelve months even his robust health would begin to fail under the constant strain. I have always held that the most fatal mistake that can be made in the management of the Railways is to keep the chief man locked up within four walls. He can do more good by travelling about the railway system to settle disputes, to arrange matters with the public, and with the staff. In this way he can do more good in one inspection trip than he could do in correspondence in the office in three months. Therefore, I consider the House would be acting wisely if they could see their way to appoint a board of three commissioners instead of one as at present. That was one of the things upon which the Moore Government and myself did not agree. The Government did not see their way to introducing the system, although, I believe, had it been carried out, £20,000 a year in salaries would have been saved to the State. My proposition was to take the Engineer-in-Chief from the Public Works Department and make him one of the commissioners, and Mr. Short the other, with myself as chairman, and then to take the construction of railways into the hands of the Working Railways. I have no hesitation in saying that if that had been carried out, if it could be effected to-day, the construction of railways would be carried out with much less expense and far more satisfactory to the public. The position is that the Working Railways have to run the new railways after they are constructed by the Public Works Department, and I do not think there is any instance of a new railway

being handed over to the Working Railways but what the Commissioner has had to draw upon his working expenses to remedy the omissions and defects of the railways so handed over to him by the Public Works Department. Understand me clearly; I do not wish to say that the Public Works Department is not carrying out its duties according to instructions, but I say there is no one who can tell what is requisite on a railway like the men who have to run it and make it pay. The conveniences and other requisites should be provided by the Working Railways, who can do it more cheaply and better than can the Public Works Department.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Who would decide the route of railways?

Mr. GEORGE: That would be decided by Parliament, or by the Government. It is only a question of construction. Assuming that an agricultural railway was being constructed by the Working Railways, immediately one section of the line was completed—and it would be to the interest of the Working Railways to complete as soon as possible—it would be opened to the public on the usual conditions of traffic which the people enjoy throughout the State. What happens today? The Public Works Department naturally wish to make as good a reputation for themselves as they can. If they can reduce the amount of money spent upon the construction of the railways by the traffic which they carry, naturally they are going to do it.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is not discussing the motion. I have allowed him to go to considerable lengths. He is now discussing the general policy of the department.

Mr. GEORGE: I thought this was inseparable from the motion. I do not want to dispute the ruling, but we are discussing the question of the Commissioner, as to whether there should be an advance made in his salary. I want to show that while that may be justifiable, the Commissioner would receive great assistance if the policy were somewhat changed. It is in the interests of the country that anything of this sort should be discussed.

Mr. SPEAKER: The motion is that the reappointment of Mr. Short as Commissioner of Railways, on the terms specified in the Executive Council minute laid upon the Table of the Legislative Assembly on Thursday, the 13th November, be approved. You can discuss the terms of the minute, but the motion does not allow the hon. member to discuss the control of the policy of the department. The only matter that can be discussed is the terms of the agreement.

Mr. GEORGE: May I submit that the Minister, in pointing out the duties which the Commissioner has to carry out, referred to tramways and to State sawmills. There is a certain amount of construction carried on by the Working Railways, and always has been; can I refer to that?

Mr. SPEAKER: I recognise that the Minister, in moving the motion, did touch on many matters for the purpose of drawing comparisons; but the mere fact that the Minister touched on State sawmills does not permit me to allow a discussion on the sawmills, or any other matter which he may have referred to for the purpose of comparison. I am going to give the hon. member all the latitude I can, but he has already had great latitude, and as he has pointed out to me that the Minister introduced other subjects, so I say the Minister can do so in introducing a motion.

*[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]*

Mr. GEORGE: I am sorry, but in the circumstances I cannot continue as I wished to do, although I think it would be in the interests of the State. However, I will defer that for another occasion. The Minister referred to the salaries paid to managers of sawmills and said the general pay was about £1,000 a year. The Minister in making out his case for the motion said he believed the general pay of managers of sawmills was about £1,000 a year. He is not very far wrong, for it is from £750 to £800. At the same time the management of the State sawmills is a very small matter in comparison with the duties which the Commissioner of Railways has to carry out.

The Minister for Railways: But it all adds to the work.

Mr. GEORGE: Certainly. Then there is the question of tramways.

Mr. Taylor: Who is stone-walling the resolution?

Mr. GEORGE: I am not. The question of the management of the tramways is one which I do not think there should be much dispute about. The Commissioner of Railways is the proper man in whom these tramways should be vested, for he has the workshops at Midland Junction, which can repair and even build the cars. But all this, added to his duties, makes his position more onerous than before. However, I do not intend to carry on the discussion any longer. I still think the Government would be wise if, in a future session, they could see their way to introducing a Bill to constitute a board of three commissioners. If that were done then I think the salary of the Chief Commissioner, with several thousand miles of railway to control, should not be less than £2,750, or £3,000 a year. I am satisfied that, with the great duties and calls upon him, the Commissioner should be placed in such a position that private financial matters should not in any way worry or trouble him. If we place any man in a position like this the remuneration should be sufficient to enable him to make a fair provision at the end of his term.

Mr. S. Stubbs: £1,000 is a good salary.

Mr. GEORGE: They pay more than that in other places, in businesses with not nearly the turnover of the Railways.

The Minister for Railways: Some men managing single mines on the goldfields are in receipt of £3,000 a year.

Mr. GEORGE: I know of places where the salaries I have named are fairly common. I think the House would be doing a graceful thing if they passed the resolution without further debate.

Mr. TURVEY (Swan): I am opposed to the motion, because I believe in ministerial control of the railways. One of the finest arguments advanced for ministerial control has been put up by the hon. member who has just resumed his seat. He eulogised the Minister for the stand taken in connection with the rail-

way employees' association, and went on to say he was proud to know that a Labour Minister would take so definite a stand, thus showing that he does not believe in his heart that if we reverted to ministerial control, even under a Labour Administration, the employees would be able to make the Minister accede to every demand from their association. Another reason which prompts me to oppose this motion for the reappointment of Mr. Short has been advanced by hon. members in the argument that that gentleman has for some considerable time past been in ill-health. I regret as much as any other member that the Commissioner, in devotion to his duties, should have practically sacrificed his health, but I do think that with that knowledge hon. members are not taking a right stand in supporting the reappointment of that gentleman to the control of our railways. If, as has been said, that is the case, then it is up to the Government and the State to see that a younger, more vigorous and more capable man is put in the position of Commissioner. I do not agree that the salary should be reduced. I listened very carefully to the figures quoted by the Minister, figures given to show the salaries paid to Chief Commissioners in the Eastern States. I do not think that we in our State should pay the same amount as is paid in the older States, where they have bigger railway systems, but at the same time I do not think the salary should be reduced. Again, I do not hold the opinion that the successful manner in which our railways are said by hon. members to have been carried out is due entirely to the Commissioner. It is due in a large degree also to the loyalty of the employees and some of the subordinate officers in the department, who, as has been pointed out by way of interjection, have in a great degree to control many of the matters affecting this department. I agree with the interjection made by the member for Williams-Narrogin, that there are many improvements which could be effected in our service.

Mr. S. Stubbs: So, too, in every railway service.

Mr. TURVEY: I do not hold the opinion that the railway service of Western Australia is one that we need boast too much about.

Mr. George: Nor need we be ashamed of it.

Mr. TURVEY: Certainly there is no need to boast of it. It is the opinion I hold. I think many improvements could be effected, but if the present Commissioner is not robust and is not vigorous, the Government are taking a false step in confirming his reappointment for a period of five years. If it is known that this gentleman is in ill-health, it would be better in the interests of the State to retire him and compensate him well for the service he has rendered to the State. We have a constantly increasing mileage.

Mr. Bolton: Then what would you advocate—the next man being appointed Commissioner?

Mr. TURVEY: I would advocate the reversion to Ministerial control. The Minister said he thought that if applications were invited from the Eastern States for Commissioner at the present salary, we would not have a rush of applicants. I believe we have in subordinate positions in our service younger men, vigorous men capable of filling the position. If for no other reason I think the motion should be defeated.

Mr. LEWIS (Canning): It is my intention to support the motion. The Minister drew a comparison between the cost of administration in the Eastern States and in Western Australia. He pointed out that New South Wales has three Commissioners, who cost £6,000 a year, and, in addition, several heads of branches who in some instances receive higher salaries than the heads of branches in this State. The traffic superintendent of tramways in New South Wales receives £900 a year. The mileage of railways in that State is 3,832 miles. In Queensland there is, in addition to the Chief Commissioner, a Deputy Commissioner whom the Minister did not mention. The Chief Commissioner receives £2,000 a year, and the Deputy Commissioner £1,250 a year, making the total cost for Commissioners alone £3,250, and they

have a mileage of 4,266 miles. In Victoria there are three Commissioners and the mileage is 3,622, while our mileage exceeds that of South Australia and Tasmania, being close on 3,000. Therefore, I do not think any hon. member can logically oppose the increase of our Commissioner's salary from £1,500 to £2,000 a year, especially after the Minister has emphasised the fact that the manager of the Midland Railway Company with a mileage of 277 miles, is now in receipt of £1,500 a year. To take charge of a great department such as this, embracing as it does almost every class of work and having to fix up agreements with the men, requires great knowledge, and it is wonderful what a knowledge the Commissioner has of the technicalities of the work of every man throughout the service. In the present Commissioner we have the advantage of his having been trained and reared in the service. He occupied the position of Chief Traffic Manager for some years, and during that time he gained an acquaintance of local conditions which must be of great service to a man in such a big department. I hope the day will be far distant when, in making appointments of this sort, we will seek applicants from the Eastern States or outside the Commonwealth. Other States have had experience of this. Victoria imported a commissioner from America at a salary of £3,500, and in a short time was glad to get rid of him and appoint a local man who had been trained in the service, and the local man considerably improved the administration of the Victorian railways. In New South Wales also there is an imported man in Mr. Johnson, and I venture to say that the people of that State would be very glad to get rid of that man also, and have a local man, because if they did the administration would be better.

The Minister for Railways: They are all getting back to Australian men.

Mr. LEWIS: There is a tendency to seek for applicants outside of the Commonwealth for high positions in the civil service while local men if given the opportunity would prove as capable and possibly more so. We had an example

in this Chamber. Our leader, the Premier, since he had an opportunity has demonstrated to the people of Western Australia that he can carry on the Government even better than the Liberals who were previously in power.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You can spend money well.

Mr. LEWIS: The main thing we require is to give these local men an opportunity. There are men in our railway service, who if a vacancy occurred, could fill the position with credit to themselves and with satisfaction to the people. At the same time I realise that there is room for improvement with regard to the administration of the railways. Drawing a comparison between the working costs of the Traffic Departments in New South Wales and in this State, the difference is one per cent. higher in Western Australia, which is very satisfactory. In the Ways and Works Department there is a difference of 5 per cent., and in the Loco. Department there is a difference of 9 per cent. This difference is too great and there is room for improvement and economy in some of the working departments.

Mr. George: Local conditions have much to do with it.

Mr. LEWIS: They account for a good deal of the difference, but working conditions in New South Wales are about the same as in Western Australia.

Mr. George: How about the wages?

Mr. LEWIS: They are very nearly the same. Western Australia is considerably in advance of any of the other States as regards working expenses per average mile worked.

The Minister for Railways: The conditions are not comparable.

Mr. LEWIS: The difference should not be so great; there is room for improvement. There are departments where economies could be effected, for instance, with regard to stores and other details, which would reduce the working cost per mile. The difference should not be put down to wages. They are not accountable for much of this expenditure. In New South Wales the working expenses per average mile worked is 4s. 6d.; in Victoria 4s. 11d.; in Queensland, which, as

the Minister pointed out, is the nearest approach to our own State as far as the mileage and the nature of the country is concerned, 3s. 8d., South Australia, 4s. 4d., Tasmania 4s. 2d., and Western Australia 5s. 1d.

The Minister for Railways: And what is the relative mileage per thousand of the population in the different States?

Mr. LEWIS: We have a greater mileage per thousand of the population than any other State.

Mr. George: What brings Queensland's rate down?

Mr. LEWIS: Heavy traffic on short lines.

Mr. George: They have long lines.

Mr. LEWIS: They have long lines to work also, and a bigger population. I recognise that the Minister introduced powerful reasons when he compared the great growth and development of this State during the present Commissioner's term of office in the last six years. These figures speak eloquently of the fact that Mr. Short has done much good work. Trams were mentioned and I intend to refer to the appointment of Mr. Shillington, which I consider was absolutely wrong and unjust and unfair to old servants, who have long experience and good records in the department. When Sir Newton Moore was Premier, he laid it down that all things being equal, seniority should count. What encouragement is it for men to remain years in the service and become acquainted with every detail of its working in order to satisfactorily fill responsible positions if, when an opportunity like this occurs to secure a position which promises promotion in future, the old servants are not given a chance to fill the position? There is no need to mention names, though I could refer to officers who have had 30 years' experience, and in some instances tramway experience also, and have as good records as it is possible for men to hold, officers who have had hundreds of men working under them and who have dealt capably and well with the men and done good work for the service, and yet when an appointment comes along, a junior officer who has been three years in the

Railway Department as traffic inspector is placed over the heads of old officers.

Mr. George: Do you suggest favouritism?

Mr. LEWIS: I have no doubt it exists. I defy the department or Minister or Government to justify Mr. Shillington's appointment in comparison with 20 other men who applied for the position during May last and who up to to-day have never received a reply. This is wrong. It is no encouragement for officers if they are overlooked in this way. We want our men to be ambitious, to build up good records and look forward to something in the future, but this sort of thing causes men to become lax and not to put forward that energy which they would if they were given an opportunity when such positions as this are offering.

Member: Who appointed Mr. Shillington?

Mr. LEWIS: As far as I can say the Commissioner endorsed the appointment, but it was inconsistent with the attitude which the Commissioner has previously adopted.

Mr. George: What is the salary?

Mr. LEWIS: The salary is £350 a year. There is an officer who has been 28 years in that department and 15 years as traffic inspector and is receiving £310 a year, and yet this junior officer who has had only three years' experience as traffic inspector and has never been in charge of men is given a position at £350 a year. Is that the way to reward long and faithful service?

Mr. George: I would like to see the papers.

Mr. LEWIS: It is inconsistent with the attitude which the Commissioner has taken up in other instances. Seniority has generally been given effect to. In one instance a chief clerk was appointed and the appointment was recommended by the head of one of the branches and the Commissioner vetoed the appointment and put another man in the position on account of seniority. If it was applied in that instance, why did the Commissioner fail to apply it in this instance? That is a matter that the Government should express an opinion upon and in-

struct the Commissioner in this particular instance that senior officers shall be given some consideration, otherwise there will be nothing for the officials in the Railway Department to look forward to. I contend that all things being equal the officer with the best record should always receive first consideration. In this instance the qualifications of those who were passed over were superior to those of the gentleman who received the appointment.

Mr. FOLEY (Mt. Leonora): In opposing the motion moved by the Minister for Railways, I desire to say I hold the opinion that if a man has a position, and that position happens to be too much for him because of ill-health or for any other reason, there is no monetary equivalent which will compensate him for the loss of health. If it is the position that gentleman occupies that caused him to lose his health, it is unfortunate. Still I consider that the salary given to that gentleman is fair, but even if we gave him £3,000 we could not restore his health. If, as the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George) declared, it would be well to appoint three commissioners, it would need good argument to support that, because if we did appoint three gentlemen we would have this aspect to face, that there would have to be a greater amount of money spent. The work that these three commissioners would be called upon to perform is now being done by the heads of the various departments in the service, who are doing excellent work and who, in almost every instance, are responsible for the efficiency of the railway system at the present time. In regard to the extra work that has to be done in consequence of the taking over of the trams, the Minister stated that the gentleman who held the position of manager when the system was owned by the company received a salary of £2,000. If the tramway company saw fit to give £2,000, the officer drawing that salary would have to be a keen business man and would be obliged to render services to justify the payment of that salary. That gentleman, however, did infinitely more work for his company than the Commissioner of Rail-

ways is ever likely to be called upon to do for the State.

The Minister for Railways: They never showed the results which we are showing to-day.

Mr. FOLEY: They might not have shown the same results, but the differences in the results have not been brought about by any improvement in the tramway system. In reply to every question which has been asked in this House in regard to the tramways since they have been taken over, the Premier has stated that until some alteration is made in regard to the plant no change can be made in the administration. My opinion is that the little extra profit which the trams have shown since the Government have taken them over has been brought about to a great extent by the action of the Commissioner certainly, but that action has only been the means of adding to the revenue at the expense of the people. We should not forget that at the present time tickets are not sold by the conductors, and that it is only possible to purchase them in certain places. I believe if the tickets were sold on the tram-cars there would be a considerable drop in the revenue. To that extent, therefore, the Commissioner has been responsible for an increase in the receipts, because there have been more payments by cash than by tickets, the purchase of which entitle the public to a concession. It is clear, therefore, that the interests of the public have not been considered, so that on that score the Commissioner is not entitled to the increase it is proposed to give him. Then, if, as the member for Murray-Wellington stated, the Commissioner had to work 24 hours, I contend that that gentleman should be relieved of his position. There is no man who should be allowed to remain on duty for 24 hours, and if that gentleman cannot escape working the 24 hours he should resign his position so that someone else might take it over who will be able to carry out the duties attached to it within reasonable hours. So far as the railway policy of the Government is concerned, in one sense it is well

to have the Commissioner free from political influence altogether. At the present time if anyone goes down to see the railway authorities on a matter of policy, in very few instances indeed is it possible to get into the office of the Commissioner. Another thing that has to be remembered is that the officers of the Railway Department are so efficient that they can attend to the wants of any person, and they will tell one what the rule is in the department. I have always found that if the head of a branch in the Railway Department says a certain policy is laid down by the department, one can go to the Commissioner as often as he likes and the answer will be the same. I have heard the figures quoted by the member for Canning, and when we compare them with the figures of the other States we must admit that ours look well. We pay a little more for coal, and our expenses are a little higher than those of the other States.

The Premier: And in regard to water supplies there is no comparison.

Mr. FOLEY: So far as the water supply is concerned, I know that the Railway Department of this State in past years, particularly in goldfields towns, have had the first call on the water in the various dams, and the residents of the goldfields in many instances have had to pay an increased price because the present Commissioner of Railways considered that the railways should have that first call, and we may rest assured that the Railway Department did not pay as much as the private consumers.

The Minister for Railways: We pay 6s. a thousand gallons for water from Mundaring to Kalgoorlie, and that is higher than anyone else pays.

Mr. FOLEY: If that is the case, what becomes of the argument that the present Commissioner is such a good man for these railways and that he has not only made good conditions in connection with the running of the railways, but has also taken into consideration and rectified the trouble which existed for so long in regard to the water supply. If the present Commissioner has not improved the water

supply difficulty for the railways then that is another argument in favour of the calling of applications for this position. I believe that whenever it is necessary to fill an important post like this, no matter what Government is in office, applications should be called, and even if an alteration is to be made in the administration of a department every man in that department and others in the State should have an equal opportunity of applying for the position.

The Premier: But you never call for applications to fill a position which does not happen to be vacant.

Mr. FOLEY: But we are going to refill this position.

The Premier: No, we are not, we are continuing it.

Mr. FOLEY: Then the motion is worded wrongly. If we are only continuing the position where is the necessity for the motion which has been moved by the Minister for Railways?

The Minister for Railways: The need is contained in the amending Government Railways Act of 1907.

Mr. FOLEY: If the present Commissioner has filled his post for the term specified in the agreement, I contend it is the duty of the Government of the day to call for applications for the position. I believe that there are men in Western Australia whose qualifications would be well worthy of consideration, and in many cases would have entitled them to consideration in connection with a position of this kind. Let us take the case of the gentleman who fills the position of manager of the Midland Railway Company at the present time.

The Premier: Comparisons are odious in a matter of this kind.

Mr. FOLEY: They may be, but they are going to be made to-night. This gentleman who now fills the position of manager of the Midland Railway Company's line has, since his appointment, brought down the expenses to a marked extent.

The Premier: That does not prove anything because there is no comparison between the working of a line like that of the Midland Railway Company and a

complete system such as that which belongs to the State.

Mr. FOLEY: I grant that, but if the services of that gentleman had been retained by the Government, and we have to admit the undoubted ability that gentleman possesses, our own system would have been materially improved. I believe very recently an officer of the Railway Department was sent abroad to ascertain the best means of doing a certain class of work in our railways. After the State had paid this gentleman's expenses to gather this information, he came back to the State and gave the State the benefit of the knowledge he was paid to acquire. The gentleman managing the Midland Railway Company's line got that information for nothing. He merely got a man belonging to the Midland Company to enter the service of the State for a while and that man secured for nothing what the State had to pay a considerable sum for. I believe that in the appointment even of manager of the tramway system the Commissioner of Railways did not show that merit alone was taken into consideration.

The Minister for Railways: You are only going on hearsay. What do you know about it? It is only information which you have gathered about the street corner.

Mr. FOLEY: I have never heard the Minister for Railways attribute such a thing to me in this House.

The Minister for Railways: I say that on this question you have no personal knowledge, and that you are only repeating what you have heard—gossip about the streets.

Mr. FOLEY: If the Minister for Railways attributes that to me on this occasion, I trust he will attribute it to my arguments on other questions as well. The information I have on this subject has been given to me by men who knew as much about railway administration as any member of the Ministry at the present time. So far as knowledge of the Western Australian railway system is concerned, I grant that the Minister knows a great deal about it in an official capacity, but when it comes to an ap



pointment like the one to which I have referred, I think I am entitled to use the information which has come to me from men in the department who know the merits of all those who have applied. I contend, therefore, that when I base my arguments on information of this description the interjection which has been made by the Minister is blown to pieces.

The Premier: Quite a number of people lose their deposits at elections, but they always consider the electors were mad.

Mr. FOLEY: So far as this appointment goes, I am not one to say that because a man has been in the service many years he should have the benefit of every position which is going. I believe there are men in any calling who can gain as much knowledge in a few years as men who have been at work for many years, but I am led to believe by men who know that in connection with this appointment the Commissioner of Railways did not take into consideration the long and faithful service that had been given to him by many officers in his department.

The Minister for Railways: You do not believe in seniority.

Mr. FOLEY: Not altogether. I do not think the appointment was justified, because I believe there were better men with greater knowledge of the running of railways and tramways, and I believe if some of them had been appointed to this position the work of the Commissioner of Railways would have been made much lighter than it is at the present time. So far as the position of the Commissioner is concerned, the actual taking over of the tramways by the Government is not reason enough to qualify him for a higher salary.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: What about the increase in the railway system?

Mr. FOLEY: The increase in the railway system is all very well, but as the railway system increases the officers increase with it, and each and every officer appointed lightens the burden of the Commissioner.

Mr. Lewis: What about the comparison with the other States?

Mr. FOLEY: The hon. member dealt with that. The present Minister for Railways takes a great deal more of the brunt of administering the system than any previous Minister did, and while we have a Minister who bears the burden to the same extent as the present Minister, I say the Commissioner of Railways is not justified in receiving more than £1,500. I am going to vote against the increase and I trust the House will vote against it, not because they do not consider the position worth more than £2,000 but as a protest against the position of Commissioner of Railways being filled by one man and only that one man having an opportunity to fill it.

Mr. GILL (Leederville): I intend to say only a very few words on this motion. I want to make it clear at the outset that although I am opposed to the reappointment, I am not opposed to a salary of £2,000 being paid to a commissioner to manage our railways; in fact, I think we would be justified in the present state and extent of our railways in paying £3,000 to have them managed as they should be managed. The member for Murray-Welington has raised tonight the issue as to whether one commissioner is sufficient to control our railways, and he discussed the advisability of having three others. There is no doubt that if the system of commissioners is to continue we would have far better results from three commissioners than we have from one. I have always been impressed with this fact, that while we have a commissioner managing our railways and workshops, permanent ways and everything else connected with the system, he is too much tied to his office to have that oversight of the railways which he undoubtedly should have in order to control them to the best advantage. Perhaps the Commissioner is not to blame, but I have always been of the opinion that the railway commissioners have shown bad judgment in the choice of their officers, and in that respect the present commissioner is equally guilty with those who preceded him. I do not know whether he is altogether to be blamed. The

Commissioner is tied to the office so much that he has not had time to get about and see the work that is performed, and that may account to some extent for the bad selection of officers at times. There is no doubt that the successful operation of the railways depends on the outside men. It is all very well for the commissioner and the inside officers to get a large amount of credit, but the successful working of the system depends more on the outside men than the men inside the office, and if we are appointing officers outside who do not understand practical railway work we are going to have the expenses increased very considerably. That has been the experience in Western Australia for a number of years. Comparisons have been made in regard to railways in this and the other States. That is a poor guide for anyone, because the conditions are not the same, and consequently I am not going to dilate on that subject, but I feel convinced that if the Commissioner were to pay more attention to the selection of his officers not only in the Working Railways, but in the workshops and other departments, there would be found great room for improvement—and he would save very considerably in the cost of management. We have the instance of the selection of the superintendent of the tramways. We were informed in reply to a question last week that applications were invited from the railway staff. Experience, record and general qualifications were considered, and the officer considered most suitable by the Commissioner was appointed. If that reply is absolutely Mr. Short's opinion, I say he is absolutely the worst judge of railway men in Western Australia. I have no hesitation in making that statement. Mr. Shillington and I are the best of friends, but Mr. Shillington himself would not pit his abilities as a railway man against those of 20 others in the department.

The Premier : This is not railways.

Mr. GILL : He has not had any experience of tramways. I am going on the qualifications, and in dealing with a

position such as this I maintain that seniority should come into play

Mr. Underwood : No, ability should come in.

Mr. GILL : If the hon. member had any experience of Government employment he would not say that ability should come into play all the time, and not seniority. I have had a good many years' experience of Government employment in this State and South Australia, and my experience has been that ability comes into play sometimes but not very often.

Mr. A. A. Wilson : It should.

Mr. GILL : If ability was taken into consideration every time I would agree with the member for Pilbara, but unfortunately we cannot get that. This position was posted as being vacant and applications were invited and submitted. I maintain that the ability of the applicants should have been taken into consideration, and if two or three were about equal in regard to ability and record—and many of them have had a number of years' experience—seniority should take precedence.

Mr. A. A. Wilson : Who should be the judge?

Mr. GILL : The Commissioner, of course.

Mr. A. A. Wilson : He was the judge.

Mr. GILL : Well, he is a bad judge. If this is his candid and honest judgment, he is not fit to be a judge.

The Premier : Would not somebody else recommend to him?

Mr. GILL : It may be so. That is the trouble in all the railway services. Recommendations are made not always on ability but very often for other reasons. That is the stumbling block to some of our officers. If we recognise the principle of seniority the man who was senior and very often had the superior ability as well would have an opportunity of showing whether he had that ability or not. The difficulty to-day is that the men who are senior and undoubtedly have some ability have not the opportunity of showing their superiority. I maintain that if a senior man is passed over it is due to him that the authorities should show that the person who received the appointment has

superior ability. There are one or two other matters I wish to deal with. As I said before, I am opposing the re-appointment of the Commissioner, because I consider it would be of advantage to have some new blood at the head of our railways. If we had that, it is just possible there would be introduced some new system in connection with the working of the railways. We have got into a rut that was cut 15 years ago, and we are likely to go on travelling in it judging by the present state of things. There is nothing new of any description introduced into the system, no matter what happens in other parts of the world. I admit that railway people and Government people generally are pretty conservative, but in other portions of the world there has been a departure from the present ticket system. That has been mentioned in this House on several occasions but we still have the same old cumbersome and expensive system that has been in operation ever since the railways were started.

The Minister for Railways: They have departed from it in one State of the Commonwealth.

Mr. GILL: But they departed from it in New Zealand and America.

The Minister for Railways: If you would like us to increase the single fare we can introduce it.

Mr. GILL: There is no objection to increasing the single fares.

The Minister for Railways: You ask the public about that.

Mr. GILL: There is no need to increase the fares. If it pays to carry a person two journeys for 30s., would it not pay to carry him one for 15s.?

The Minister for Railways: No; that shows you do not know much about that part of the system.

Mr. GILL: I am not going to debate that question now, but for the hon. Minister to say I do not know anything about it does not settle the matter. I have contended all along we should have the single ticket system and give the people the right of buying their tickets to-day if they want to travel to-morrow. There is no necessity why if a person buys a

ticket to-day he ought not to use it to-morrow. The whole of the ticket system has been revolutionised in some other countries; America is the most striking example. But here we stick to the same old thing. I simply mention this as one instance where we are in the same old rut. In many other instances I am convinced that if we had a Commissioner more up to date than the present one the railways would be far better than they are to-day. We want a man who is up-to-date in connection with railway systems. The member for Canning (Mr. Lewis) mentioned that he believed there are many men in the service who are competent to fill the position. I am not in accord with the hon. member in that; there may be some, but I do not know of any with sufficient general experience of railway working to occupy that position.

The Premier: Is not the General Traffic Manager up-to-date?

Mr. GILL: He has been in the State 20 years and is in the same rut as twenty years ago.

Mr. S. Stubbs: A very good rut he is in too.

Mr. GILL: Western Australia should be ahead of the Eastern States in the matter of railways, having a newer system and some of the greatest advantages, we should be ahead of the Eastern States.

Mr. S. Stubbs: We are.

Mr. GILL: I am pleased to hear the hon. member say that, and I hope he will always stand by it.

Mr. S. Stubbs: We are in lots of ways; we do not have a lot of accidents here.

Mr. GILL: With reference to the matter of tram tickets I maintain it is the duty of the Premier to carry out his statement made some time ago that there would be no departure from the system of selling tickets.

The Premier: I did not give you an assurance that there would be no departure in methods, but that there would be no change with regard to sectional fares and so on until we had made provision to cope with the demands that would have to be met through the increased number of passengers.

Mr. GILL: The Premier gave the impression that there would be absolutely no departure. There is no doubt that people with families are going to suffer considerably during the holidays on account of the present system of selling tram tickets. People have to come into town particularly to buy tickets to take their children to a picnic.

The Premier: They are sold by different newsagents; you will see that on the time table.

Mr. GILL: If the Government are having these tickets sold by newsagents that relieves the position considerably. It is a pity they have not made the fact known to the public. It is a pity that people with families should be penalised during the holiday season. I wish to say in conclusion that my reason for opposing this motion is that it would be to the advantage of the railways to have an infusion of new blood, so that we could get better results more particularly from officers controlling the big departments of the railway service.

Mr. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret): I am very pleased to further the cause of this motion for the reappointment of Mr. Short as Commissioner of Railways at an increased salary. When the arguments of those opposing the resolution are analysed we find that the whole burden of the complaint is because the Commissioner recommended Mr. Shillington to be appointed to the position of superintendent of Tramways at £360 a year. When we take into consideration the fact that Mr. Short is responsible as Commissioner of Railways for the success of the tramway system, just as he is for the success of our railway system, one would at least think that his experience of many years would enable him to appoint a man under him to supervise the tramway system. One cannot think that Mr. Short would make a recommendation as has been suggested from motives other than the merits of the man he appointed. We have heard the member for Murray-Wellington support the motion, and in this Chamber the hon. member is more capable of speaking

on railway matters than any other member. We heard him support the motion, and of the other members who have had railway experience we had some supporting and the member for Leederville opposing, and last but not least we heard the expert railway and tramway member from Leonora, who gained his experience of railways and tramways I presume on that single line which runs about four or five trams a day from Leonora to Gwalia. We have heard all these statements. The statements of members opposing the motion, when boiled down, are found to hinge upon the appointment of a superintendent of the tramway system. There has not been one tangible complaint against the administration of the Commissioner since he held that office.

Mr. S. Stubbs: One member said he was too old.

Mr. TAYLOR: That is not a complaint against his management. The member for Swan advanced an argument which was unjust and unbecoming for a young man like the member for Swan to advance against a man like the Commissioner. If the Commissioner's health is broken as the result of services to this State, it is due to the State to see that he shall not want; but perhaps, as pointed out by some members, it is only a temporary breakdown and a rest will recuperate him. The Commissioner of Railways has risen to his present position from the very bottom rung of the railway service, and that is indeed something of which he should be proud. I am pleased to know that there have been no complaints against him, even going back to when he was Traffic Manager under Mr. Davies, or under the late Commissioner, the member for Murray-Wellington. With reference to the tramway system I want to say that if Ministers heard all the complaints from people in the metropolitan area about the restriction of the sale of tram tickets they would indeed change their opinion on that point. The Premier said newsagents sell tickets now; that is indeed news to me. I did not know it was in the *Tramway Guide* that tickets were to be obtained from newsagents until I heard it on the floor of this House. Even that is not sufficient, as I hold there is no reason why

tram conductors should not sell the tickets now as they did in the past.

The Premier: We have had members complaining that the conductors do not gather all the fares; if they had to sell tickets there would be probably a greater loss in that regard.

Mr. TAYLOR: I have been riding in the trams for about 13 years, and I do not know that they have failed to collect a fare from me once, no matter how big the crowd. I do not think the tram conductors miss many fares. Before the late tramway strike it was impossible to dodge them for a fare, but after that strike and new hands were put on there may have been some difference, but I do not think there is any necessity to advance the argument that the tramway conductors' time is so taken up that they would lose fares whilst selling tickets. I hope the Government will reconsider that aspect of the question and give the same facilities under Government control of the tramways as used to be given by private enterprise. I desire to support the motion.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin): I desire to support in its entirety the motion submitted by the Minister for Railways. I think every hon. member listening to the speech of the Minister must admit that he made out a very good case for the reappointment of Mr. Short as Commissioner of Railways, and must also admit that those hon. members who have spoken in opposition to the motion have really advanced no arguments at all of any weight. I am sorry the suggestion of the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr George), that the motion should be passed without discussion, was not carried into effect. As far as my limited knowledge of railway matters is concerned, I must admit I think the Minister is right when he says the present Commissioner is the right man in the right place, and I hope he will stay there, whether the present system of administration is continued or whether the railways are brought under ministerial control at a later date. If they are brought under ministerial control I still think the Government have done right in providing that Mr. Short shall remain at the head of the service.

There is no doubt the immense length of new railways being built by the present Government must largely increase the responsibilities of the Commissioner, and on that account I think the Government have done well in increasing the salary to £2,000, quite apart from the fact that the recently purchased Perth tramways have been placed under the Commissioner of Railways. I think the Commissioner's time should be fully taken up with railway management, and I hope he will not be burdened with too much of the detailed work of the tramway system. One point I would like to emphasise is that Mr. Short is an Australian who entered the railway service on the very lowest rungs and has worked himself, on merit alone, right to the head of the service. I think it ill-becomes any hon. member to suggest that we should advertise for an imported railway commissioner as long as we have an Australian able to do the work.

Mr. Foley: No hon. member has advocated that to-night.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I was under the impression that some hon. members had advocated that applications should be called for the position of Commissioner. If it was intended that those applications should be called outside the Commonwealth I protest against the suggestion, and say again that when there is a man in the position capable of doing the work, and who is an Australian at that, there is no necessity to even suggest calling for fresh applications for the position. It must be admitted that the difficulties confronting any officer holding the position of Commissioner of Railways are very great, and comparisons with the figures of railway working in the Eastern States are always unlikely to convey a correct meaning, when we remember that in this State we have a much smaller population per mile of railways, and also that many of our railways are out in dry districts where water is a very expensive item, and where this defect makes the railway working very much dearer than it would otherwise be. The Minister mentioned by interjection that Western Australia has at least done one thing in leading the way in railway man-

agement in the Commonwealth, namely by the provision of second-class sleeping cars. In this connection I would like to remind the Minister that he has promised second-class sleeping cars on the Great Southern, and it is high time that promise was carried into effect.

Mr. Foley: More parish pump.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: There is no parish pump at all about it.

The Minister for Railways: No, it is a big national question.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The member for Leonora would object to going to his constituency without a sleeper, and I think the hon. member would be doing a lot better in supporting my remarks which aim at giving women and children going from the goldfields to Albany the right to travel in second-class sleepers.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member must confine himself to the motion.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: On a personal explanation, my constituents are not affected to any extent, but I often see women and children from Perth and the goldfields travelling to Albany, and I want them to have the benefit of second-class sleepers. In regard to the remarks of one hon. member concerning Mr. Short's health, I was very sorry to hear anyone say that because the Commissioner is temporarily a little indisposed, that should be regarded as an argument against his reappointment. I say that a man who, like Mr. Short, has spent most of his lifetime in the service, if his health is a little run down, the Government might well give him any necessary holiday for the purpose of recuperation.

The Premier: He will be all right when he comes back.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: Any civil servant who has devoted most of his life to the service of the country ought to be given a holiday at the end of his time, and the fact that he is a little run down should not be used as an argument against the reappointment, as I am sorry to say was done to-night. The Commissioner has now more ripened experience and mature judgment than ever before, and I think the Government are doing very

wisely in submitting this motion for his reappointment at a salary of £2,000.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara): I do not desire to speak at any length. I am supporting the motion, but I would have approved of a motion affirming that the Minister for Railways should have absolute control instead of the Commissioner.

Hon. J. Mitchell: He would be a very happy Minister.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: He might or he might not. According to all accounts we have not a happy Commissioner and, after all, we are not looking to make happy positions. We are looking to run these railways for the benefit of the people, and Parliament is responsible to the people, while the Minister is responsible to Parliament. Therefore, I contend that the Railways, or any other department of Government, should be under the control of the Minister. The Minister should have absolute control and should take the responsibility. I have never agreed to the system of appointing a Commissioner outside of Parliament who is going to run a great department in defiance of Parliament.

Hon. J. Mitchell: He does not do that.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: He does do it. I am still going to protest against handing over to any man, I care not who he is, a great public department and allowing him to have control without being responsible to the people. I want the Commissioner to be under the control of the Minister. If the Minister is not worthy we can deal with him. We can get another Minister. If the Parliament is not worthy the people can get another Parliament at the end of three years, but the Commissioner is appointed for a longer term than three years. It has always appealed to me that in the appointment of commissioners Ministers are trying to shirk their responsibilities. After all, Ministers are responsible to the people, and having the responsibility they should have control. I would not think of taking a position in which I had responsibility unless I had absolute control, and, therefore, I contend that we should alter our Railway Commissioners Act, I think it is, to the extent of saying that the Minister has absolute control over the Commis-

sioner. After all, the Commissioner should be only an adviser to the Minister. Then if anything goes wrong we in Parliament can go to the Minister or, if out of Parliament, we can go to the members of Parliament who support the Minister. I have no desire to say anything in regard to Mr. Shillington's appointment. Mr. Shillington may or may not be the best man. In the opinion of the Commissioner Mr. Shillington is the best man. We have appointed the Commissioner, and when we appoint a man to control things he must control until we are satisfied that he is unworthy. Once we are satisfied with that we will turn him out, but until then we cannot interfere with any of the details of his work.

The Premier: He has absolute power to appoint to all positions under £400.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I admit that; but he should not have that power. It should be with the Minister. However, seeing it is with the Commissioner I am going to support it. When I am convinced that he has made a blunder sufficient to put him out of his position I will move in the matter, but I am not satisfied of that yet. I am not going to attempt to interfere with the Commissioner's work unless he makes a very serious blunder indeed, one that would be sufficient to put the Commissioner out of office, and the Government also, and in the appointment of Mr. Shillington, so far as I know, he has not made that mistake. In regard to the salary of the Commissioner, if we can get a Commissioner who will run the Railways to the best possible advantage he is worth £5,000, let alone £1,500. I have never yet quibbled about paying a salary to a good man. If we think he is competent to run the Railways then he is worth far more than £1,500, while if he is not competent he is not worth twopence. I would support a considerably greater increase than has been agreed upon. If we get a man absolutely competent he is worth thousands to us. We cannot put his value in pounds, shillings and pence and, in my opinion, £1,500 is a small salary indeed for a railway commissioner.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam): I have no wish to detain the House very

long and I am not going to be very severe with the Minister. I am very pleased that the Minister has seen fit to increase the salary of the Commissioner from £1,500 to £2,000 a year. In doing so he is doing the Commissioner but bare justice. What the House has to consider are not the questions of detail which have been discussed here. One member stated that the Commissioner should be immune from political influence and presumably we will have to inoculate him so that he will be safe from attack by any microbe which the Minister may administer to him.

The Minister for Railways: And in the next breath someone said that I should interfere with his appointment of tramways superintendent.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: That is wide of the mark. The question is—is this position worth £2,000 a year and is the Commissioner the right man for the position? I say unhesitatingly that it is worth £2,000 a year and that the Commissioner is the right man for the position. We are pleased that the Minister agrees with us.

The Premier: That is not correct; you agree with us for once.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If I may be permitted to say a word or two in regard to other senior officers generally, their salaries are altogether inadequate for the very serious responsibility they have to face. With this increase the position will be that the Commissioner will be on the £2,000 mark and the next official will be drawing £1,000 and the Chief Traffic Manager draws less.

The Premier: The Chief Traffic Manager is well paid.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The railway service will not be well run unless the controlling officers are satisfactorily rewarded for their services. We have a splendid set of men connected with the railways from the Commissioner downwards, but they are for the most part drawing far too little for the positions they occupy and the work they do. But we are not here to-night to discuss these officials, though I wanted to voice the opinion I hold in regard to the positions they fill. Mr. Short has no doubt done his work as Commissioner very well indeed and whilst

I do not agree that everything done by the Railway Department is right, we are getting a very good service indeed. The great questions which the Commissioner has to consider are the running of the railways economically and profitably and at the same time providing an adequate service at a reasonable price to the public. I am sorry to find that in some cases the Government have recently considered it necessary to put up freights. This is to be deplored, and I hope it is not to be the forerunner of a general increase in freights throughout the country.

The Minister for Railways: We will let you down lightly.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If the Minister does not, there will be a row, and that row will not be with the Commissioner of Railways but pretty near to the Ministerial bench. I do not wish to detain the House at this late hour. We were sitting until nearly 6 o'clock this morning and here we are at nearly 10 o'clock at night still going.

The Minister for Railways: You have been to bed; I have not.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We have approved of the action of the Government in this direction. It is not often that I have an opportunity to support a proposal from the Ministerial bench whole-heartedly, but I do so in this case.

The Premier: You are like good wine, you improve with age.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: But the Minister is like bad wine, he does not improve.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. P. Collier, in reply): I have not very much to say in reply to the debate which has taken place, but I want at once to remove an impression that seems to have spread throughout the Chamber during the past hour or two, I believe as a result of a remark unwittingly made by the hon. member for Wagin (Mr. S. Stubbs) that the Commissioner for Railways is in ill-health.

Mr. S. Stubbs: He has not been well for some time.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: But the impression seemed to get abroad—

Mr. S. Stubbs: Not from me.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am not accusing the hon. member at all. The hon. member mentioned that the Commissioner had not been well, and from that, the point was taken up by subsequent speakers that the Commissioner was in ill-health until one would imagine that he was a very sick man indeed. I want to remove that impression. The Commissioner is not in ill-health; he is a strong, robust man. It is true that he is somewhat run down, even as most hon. members of this Chamber are at the present moment, and as most men who have had a strenuous life during the year become more or less run down. That is the position in regard to the Commissioner of Railways. He can do with a few weeks' holiday. He is simply slightly run down in health, but is by no means in ill-health. I want to remove that impression, because some hon. members based their opposition to the re-appointment of the present Commissioner on the ground that it was not a fair thing to the State to re-appoint for five years a man who is supposed to be in very bad health. The Commissioner is, comparatively speaking, a young man and seems capable of giving not only five years, but a much greater length of time to the service of this or some other State. I find it very hard indeed to fasten on to anything tangible in connection with the objections which have been raised. There have been vague, indefinite ideas expressed that we ought to have new blood, and that we ought to get out of a rut. I confess I am wholly unable to answer these arguments.

Mr. S. Stubbs: You are in a good rut.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Why should we desire new blood? It is an insane idea to want new blood unless there is good justification for getting rid of the old blood. It is an advantage to have old blood which has 30 or 35 years' experience behind it. We ought not to put a man out when he is just in the ripened part of his life, and in a better position to give the State the full benefit of his wealth of experience; this, I say, is an advantage over bringing in a young and inexperienced man. Will hon. mem-



bers who have used this argument advocate it to the electors in October next as a good reason why the people should change their members, and offer no other reason than that they should have new blood?

Mr. S. Stubbs: I hope some of them will.

**THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** There is no reason why we should have new blood or why we should make an insane attempt to get out of some peculiar rut which we seem to have got into if the rut is all right. In order to justify the statement that the Railway Department ought to get out of the rut, it would be necessary to show that the rut is a bad one and that it is desirable to get out of it. But to merely say that we ought to get out of the rut without pointing out what kind of a rut it is or why we ought to get out of it is no argument at all. It has been urged that we ought to have improvements to the service. Of course we ought. Is there any railway service in Australia, is there any railway service in the world which would not stand improvements? Every day on every line and in every section of the railway service we can see where improvements could with benefit be introduced. Is that any reason why we should turn the present Commissioner out and put another in? A new man would be up against exactly the same difficulties as the present Commissioner, but this, generally speaking, is due to lack of funds to carry out the improvements. We could carry out improvements to the railway system which would be to the benefit and advantage of the general public or customers who use the railways, if we had £200,000, £300,000, or £400,000 to spend with which to effect these improvements. The Commissioner of Railways, whoever he happens to be, is not always responsible for the lack of facilities of which we hear complaints. It is because the Government of the day may not be in a position to give him the necessary funds to enable him to carry out the improvements which he desires. So in a young and growing State like Western Australia there will always be a need for improve-

ments to the railway service just as in all other public departments of the State. I want, without posing at all as an expert or as one having any technical knowledge of railway work to demonstrate to the hon. member for Leederville that at least on the point of single fares I know a little more than he showed to the House he knew about them. He asked if we could issue a return ticket for a certain amount why should not we issue two single tickets for the same amount. I will point out why. If, for instance, a second-class return ticket from Perth to Beverley costs 30s. and a single ticket to Beverley costs £1, and we issue two single tickets for 30s. we would be reducing the single fare from £1 to 15s. The two single fares we now collect bring in £2, but if we issue two single tickets as the hon. member says we should do for the equivalent of the return fare, we would get only 30s. The department would have no objection to introducing single fares, but would not be prepared to issue two single fares for the equivalent of a return fare at the present time, because we would lose a very large amount of revenue. If the system were introduced it would be necessary for us to increase the fares. I want also to point out that it has been tried in only one State in Australia.

Mr. Lewis: Two States.

**THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** I will not dispute the hon. member but as far as I know it has been tried in only one State.

Mr. Lewis: The *Commonwealth Year Book* mentions two.

**THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** One State introduced it only last year and I believe they rushed into it without very serious consideration, and from the information I have they are now seriously contemplating a reversion to the old order of things. In any case, that again is a matter of detail. This is no reason why the man who occupies the position should not be re-appointed to it. In reply to the hon. member for Leonora there was no need to advertise this position because it never became vacant. The hon. member said he believed there was a number

of men in this State who could worthily fill the position. So far as the Government are concerned we have no knowledge of any man in the State who is equally fitted and capable, or better fitted for the position. If we had such knowledge we should have appointed him instead of the present Commissioner.

Mr. Foley: You could not find out before calling for applications.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS : We have a fair knowledge of all the men of railway experience in the State. They are, of necessity, confined to the railway service. We do not find men qualified to take the position of Commissioner of Railways wandering around the streets, or following any other occupation; they are associated with our railway service, and consequently, the department have a better knowledge of the qualifications and capabilities of the men in the service than any outside person could possibly have. With all due deference to hon. members who have spoken, they are not in a position to pass judgment on a matter of this kind. How can an hon. member, whose only acquaintance with the working of our railway system is when he happens to travel in a train or to do business with the department, make comparisons or express views which would carry weight in regard to the relative merits of several railway officers in this State. I do not wish to make any invidious comparisons, but I want to admit that Mr. Stead, now managing the Midland railway system, is a very excellent officer. It was on the recommendation of his superior officers in our Railway Department, that he acquired that position, and we were very sorry to lose him, but because he was an excellent officer we did not consider that we would be doing justice to him if we stood in the way of his promotion when the opportunity offered. This applies also to other officers whose names I do not wish to mention. I say with a full knowledge of all the officers in the different departments, that the Government believe that in re-appointing Mr. Short we have appointed the best man in Western Australia for the position.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS moved—

*That the resolution be transmitted by Message to the Legislative Council and their concurrence desired therein.*  
Question passed.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION — THE MINISTER FOR WORKS AND A DAILY NEWS REPORT.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. D. Johnson) : I desire to crave the indulgence of the House for a moment or two in order to draw attention to a report which has been brought under my notice appearing in to-day's issue of the *Daily News*. The report refers to a remark which was supposed to have been made by the member for Roebourne (Mr. Gardiner) last evening. I might say that when the hon. member was speaking on the Loan Bill I was not in the Chamber, but the *Daily News* attributes to that hon. member remarks in regard to myself which are distinctly offensive and very extravagant indeed. I want to say before going further, in fairness to the hon. member, that the report in the *Daily News* is not correct according to the *Hansard* report, and even so far as the report of the *West Australian* is concerned. The parliamentary report in the *West Australian* this morning is identical with the report of *Hansard* as supplied to me. Therefore, I want to say that evidently the *Daily News*, in order to make the most of this attack—if I may so call it—added words which were more extravagant and decidedly more offensive than the remarks which were uttered by the hon. member. The hon. member stated that I had promised him that an amount of £3,000 would be placed on the Estimates for some work in his constituency. I have no recollection of saying that, but if I did say it, the promise has been carried out, inasmuch as over £3,000 was placed on the Estimates for works at Onslow. For one item alone there is a vote of £3,000, that is in regard to the tramway, and there is a

further item to be found in the Estimates for improvements to the jetty. The hon. member went on to say that I made a distinct promise that £3,000 would be given, and that I had broken that promise. That, Sir, is contrary to fact, because if I did make the promise—and I have no recollection of having done so—it has been faithfully kept, because the sum is to be found on the Estimates, although it was not in the Loan Bill. I regret extremely that I was not in the Chamber when the remarks of the hon. member were made, and even though they are toned down to the extent we see them in the *Hansard* report, I want to say that it is not the first time he has made extravagant remarks of this kind.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member can only make a personal explanation.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Possibly it is just as well to leave it at that. All I want to say in conclusion is that there was no provocation, so far as I am concerned, and I resent the remarks of the hon. member, more especially as the facts as disclosed by him were absolutely incorrect and that also the remarks were made during my absence from the Chamber. In fairness to myself I make this personal explanation.

#### BILL—MINES REGULATION.

Message received from the Council acquainting the Assembly that it pressed amendments Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 28, 29, and 30; did not press amendments Nos. 8, 16, 17, 18, and 24; did not agree with the modification suggested to Clause 7, but agreed to the modifications suggested in regard to Clause 35, Subclause 15, paragraph (b), No. 11, and to the modification suggested in Clause 35, Subclause 20, No. 12.

#### BILL—PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE.

##### *Message.*

Message received from the Governor recommending the Bill.

##### *In Committee.*

Mr. McDowall in the Chair, the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1, 2, 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Extraordinary vacancies:

Mr. GEORGE: On a new Parliament coming into power, members of the Committee elected by a previous Parliament, and who perhaps had done valuable work, might in the interval have lost their seats. What would be the position in those circumstances? In all matters dealing with big items continuity of work would be a great advantage.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The members who would be appointed to this committee would be those who would be likely to be returned. If we could have continuity of service it would be a decided advantage, but it was impossible in a Bill of this description to bind succeeding Parliaments.

Clause passed.

Clauses 4 to 9—agreed to.

Clause 10—Power to sit during recess and in open court:

Mr. GEORGE: The committee might be allowed to sit and transact business during an adjournment of Parliament. There was a proviso to the clause that the committee should not hold a meeting on any day on which the Legislative Assembly actually sat. It might be very convenient to have a meeting in the morning of the day on which Parliament would be sitting, and that would not interfere with parliamentary business. In fact, it would be a convenience in the event of some of the members of the committee being country members of Parliament. The committee would be able to get from members of Parliament information they could not get at other times. Towards the end of the session the days of sittings were increased and there would be only Saturdays and Mondays left on which the committee could sit. If the committee could sit on the mornings of the days on which Parliament met it would be an advantage to all concerned.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If members were encouraged to sit on this committee during the session, it enabled them to hold sittings in the country and

neglect their Parliamentary duty, which was distinctly undesirable. The object of the clause was to make it clear that by working on a public works committee they were not to neglect their ordinary public duty to their constituents. There was nothing to prevent them from holding a meeting to get information from other hon. members, but of course they could not draw fees for such meetings.

Mr. GEORGE: There was no danger of the committee holding meetings in the country while Parliament was sitting unless the occasion was of such great urgency that Ministers and Parliament desired that the committee should do so. Seeing that probably the whole programme of public works would be submitted to the committee, there was a chance of an undesirable delay taking place.

The Minister for Works: They have still three days in the week.

Mr. BOLTON: The succeeding clause pointed to the fact that most of the work would be done in recess, because it provided that before each session the committee should make a report to the Governor of their proceedings.

Mr. GEORGE: During a session members brought under notice of the Ministers works of more or less importance, and they would not tolerate any large work being left over for the committee to deal with in recess. However, the clause could be allowed to pass and then if it were found to operate badly the Act could be amended.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 11 to 15—agreed to.

Clause 16—Assessors:

Mr. GEORGE: How far did these provisions go in the case of any officer of a Government department being required to give evidence before the committee?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The clause only permitted the committee to call experts outside the Government service. Officers in the departments who could give the necessary evidence would do so in the ordinary course of official duty, but this provision was inserted in

case it was necessary for the committee to obtain technical evidence which was not obtainable in the service.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 17 to 26—agreed to.

Schedules (5)—agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

*House adjourned at 10.14 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Thursday, 18th December, 1913.*

	PAGE.
Bills: Illicit Sale of Liquor, 3R. . . . .	4018
Bills of Sale Act Amendment, Assembly's message . . . . .	4019
Traffic, Assembly's message . . . . .	4022
Game Act Amendment, Assembly's amendments . . . . .	4026
Initiative and Referendum, 2R., amendment, six months, carried . . . . .	4029
Electoral Districts, 2R., Com. . . . .	4038
Plant Diseases, 2R., Com. . . . .	4056
Illicit Sale of Liquor, message . . . . .	4059
Criminal Code Compilation, 2R., Com., 3R. . . . .	4060
Stamp Act Amendment, 2R., Com. . . . .	4060
Electoral Districts, 3R. . . . .	4062
Local Option Vote Continuance, 2R., Com., 3R. . . . .	4062
Railway Surveys, 2R., Com., 3R. . . . .	4062
Opium Smoking Prohibition, Assembly's message . . . . .	4066
Flinders Bay-Margaret River Railway Purchase, 2R., Com., 3R. . . . .	4067
Public Works Committee, 2R., Bill defeated	4068
Electric Light and Power Agreement, 2R., Com., 3R. . . . .	4070
Loan, £2,000,000, 2R., Com., 3R. . . . .	4072
Stamp Act Amendment, Assembly's message	4077
Electoral Districts, Assembly's message . . . . .	4077
Opium Smoking, Prohibition, Message . . . . .	4079
Resolution: Railways Commissioner Re-appointment . . . . .	4072
Adjournment: Close of Session . . . . .	4079

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2 p.m., and read prayers.

## BILL—ILLICIT SALE OF LIQUOR.

Read a third time and returned to the Legislative Assembly with amendments.