

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 17th November, 1948.

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

BILL—WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Reports of Committee adopted.

BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South) [4.37]: I am going to support the second reading of the Bill, which proposes that three commissioners shall be appointed and they are to be under ministerial control. I have never been in favour of one commissioner with engineering qualifications only. The reason for my contention is that a constructional engineer has only about 10 per cent. of the qualifications required for such a position. Having been a railwayman for 35 years, I think that the chief commissioner should be appointed from the traffic side of the railways. By going through the traffic branch, a man acquires about 90 per cent. of the knowledge necessary for railway administration. He passes through the traffic branch, accounts and audit branch, the goods and signalling branches and, in fact, goes through all the sections. I have occupied every position in the railways from telegraph operator and cook right up through the whole service.

AYES.

Mr. Brady
Mr. Coverley
Mr. Fox
Mr. Graham
Mr. Hall
Mr. Hawke
Mr. Hegney
Mr. Hoar
Mr. Kelly
Mr. Marshall
Mr. May

Mr. Murray
Mr. Needham
Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Panton
Mr. Reynolds
Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Shearn
Mr. Smith
Mr. Styants
Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Brand

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Abbott
Mr. Ackland
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver
Mr. Cornell
Mr. Doney
Mr. Grayden
Mr. Leslie
Mr. Mann
Mr. McLarty

Mr. Nalder
Mr. Nimmo
Mr. North
Mr. Seward
Mr. Thorn
Mr. Watts
Mr. Wild
Mr. Bovell

(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES.

Mr. Triat
Mr. Wise
Mr. Leahy
Mr. Sleeman

NOES.

Sir N. Keenan.
Mr. McDonald
Mr. Hill
Mr. Yates

Amendment thus passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and returned to the Council with amendments.

BILL—STIPENDIARY MAGISTRATES ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Requested Amendment.

Amendment requested by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The Council's requested amendment is as follows:—

Clause 3: Add at the end of the clause the following words:—"That the increase of the annual salary payable as aforesaid shall operate as from fifteenth day of October, 1947."

I draw attention to the fact that the Council's message refers to an amendment which increases the appropriation and that, of course, conflicts with the Constitution Act.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: On the ground that the amendment is unconstitutional, I move—

That the amendment be not made.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not made.

Resolution reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

House adjourned at 11.38 p.m.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Will you be an applicant for one of the positions as commissioner?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: If a person acquired all-round experience similar to that, it would prove of great assistance to him if he were in control of the railways. With that knowledge in his possession, immediately he visited any part of the service he would know whether it was being administered properly. The same applies to a station-owner, or any other man in charge of a large business. If he is capable and has a complete knowledge of the organisation, he can successfully perform the duties of administrative head.

As to the present Commissioner of Railways, I do not suppose one could wish to meet or have dealings with a nicer man, but he has to rely largely upon the information given to him by his officers. Of course, he must possess a certain amount of railway experience and ability to enable him to use the information to advantage, but if a man is not fully competent to make decisions, it must necessarily be difficult for him to make the best use of the advice tendered him. I could name about half-a-dozen men in the service, any one of whom I believe would be quite capable of filling the office of commissioner. Those men have extensive experience of railway working and would probably be able to lift the railways out of their difficulties.

I am a firm believer in the principle of ministerial control. I daresay every member has had occasion to go to the Minister with some legitimate request, not asking for favours, and the Minister has been unable to do anything for him. The request has had to be referred to the Commissioner, and I know that on some occasions the replies have not been consistent. The understrappers have not always been of the obliging type that would do the utmost possible to be helpful to the Government. It seems to me that we lost an opportunity to effect an improvement some time ago. When Mr. Tomlinson was secretary, he was the right type for the position, and had we been able to secure another man of his calibre, I believe that the railways today would have been in a much better condition.

With reference to the proposed advisory board, I do not favour such an appointment because I cannot see how it can accomplish

any good as an intermediary between the Minister and the Commissioner. If we do have an advisory board, one of the members should be a man with practical experience, able to advise the Minister on railway matters. Members of the board might notice something that they considered needed attention. The crossing of trains at various points might be resulting in delays, and the members of the board, not having the requisite knowledge to guide them, might put up a suggestion to the Minister which, on being referred to the Commissioner, might be found to be impracticable, the existing practice being strictly in accordance with rules and regulations.

The Bill proposes the appointment of three commissioners, which is the system of control in some of the Eastern States. Of course, the railway systems there are much more extensive than ours and cater for considerably larger populations. One of the great difficulties here arises from the fact that we have such an extensive mileage of lines serving only a relatively small population. Many of our lines run through scattered areas and thus impose a heavy cost upon the department. If three commissioners are appointed, I should like to see two of the appointees selected from different sections of the railways. I think it would be wise to have the chief commissioner located in Perth so that he could attend to the main interests of the system and have one assistant in the South-West and the other in the Eastern Goldfields district.

As I view the position, the problem of our railways boils down to this, that if the requisite money is not made available to service the system, it must suffer, and undoubtedly there has been a shortage of money for a good many years. I believe that the railways would have been in a better condition today had they received proper attention; in my opinion, there has been a certain amount of neglect. Of course, we must bear in mind that the railway system is a public utility. To my way of thinking, railways and water supplies are the two essentials for opening up the country. If the Government sustains a loss on the running of the railways, the State doubtless obtains benefits in other ways. If there were no railway to Kalgoorlie, where half the wealth of the State is being pro-

duced, it would be impossible to continue operations on the present scale. Consequently, though we may be losing on the railways, we are certainly deriving revenue from other sources and thus the State is benefiting. To make good some of that loss on the railways, why not require the people in the city, who never use the system, to pay their proportion towards its maintenance? A heavy interest bill has to be met on railway capital, but I do not wish to dwell upon that.

In the railway service there does not exist the harmony and good feeling amongst the workers that we might reasonably expect. I often speak with drivers, firemen, guards and others, and I know that over a long period this lack of harmony has prevailed. Recently there has been a change in the traffic branch and I think that has brought about an improvement. Now the workers are able to approach the administrative heads and confer with them. The discontent previously existing was certainly not in the best interests of the service or of the public.

A different state of affairs prevails in the loco. department. If a hundred employees in that section were questioned, I doubt whether more than a couple of them would say other than that they were dissatisfied with the existing conditions and the lack of harmony. One of their complaints is that they cannot obtain a reasonable hearing from the administrative head. We have in charge of that department a man who, in my opinion, has been very expensive to the taxpayers of this State. Recently we have had experience of the mass production of spark arresters. Some time ago a funnel of a PR class engine was sent to America to be tested. This was done and a good job was made of it. However, alterations were subsequently made here by way of experiment and these experiments have proved a costly failure.

The spark arrester at present in use is causing loss of time and is responsible for other disadvantages, and the sooner the Government has them removed from the locomotives, even if they were thrown away, the better it will be. I believe that the best course to adopt would be to revert to the H.D.D. type of spark arrester that was formerly in use. It gave good service and did not hinder the steam-

ing qualities of the engines. Then consider the engines converted to oil-burners. I understand that in the first place, the jet of oil was directed to the front end of the fire box, but it was soon found necessary to alter that and direct it to the back end. They were converted at big expense and were satisfactory for a while, but then proved unsuccessful. After that, almost all of them were re-converted to coal and now they have been converted once again to oil.

Recently the A.S.G. engine on the Norseman line was converted to an oil-burner. That sounds all right, because oil can be obtained from Esperance and the cost of haulage of coal to the Norseman district is thus obviated. The conversion would have been sensible if it could have been worked successfully, but the burners have not been satisfactory. They have been causing a lot of trouble. I asked questions about the matter and was told some lies. The answers given were a pack of lies.

The Chief Secretary: I must ask the hon. member to withdraw that remark.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member must withdraw.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I will withdraw; but the answers were misleading. I asked questions and was told nothing was known about the matter. At the same time, a letter was written which showed that the board had been sent there and was making inquiries. I will not say that the Minister told me a lie. He may have been misinformed by the Commissioner and that is how the information reached this House. These A. S. G. engines are causing considerable expense. They were good wartime engines for a short period, but they were built with flimsy material sufficient to carry them over for only a certain period. The tender and water tank are on a skeleton frame with four standards, and splitting takes place on account of the vibration.

Very thin plates are used—only about one-eighth of an inch—and often they split and the oil is lost. An oxy-welding plant is obtained from the Norseman gold mine and the repairs are done on the spot at times, but usually the engines have been sent to the Midland Junction workshops for overhaul. These engines must be costing £150 per week in running repairs, and that is a conservative estimate. While they were in

action they put up a good job and without them I do not know where we would be today. When using coal they are good engines; but when oil is used, they have to stop several times on a section to regain steam. So the sooner they are converted to coal, the better it will be. They are hard to maintain and are very expensive.

We have had to fall back on the "L" engines which were purchased 40 years ago for £2,000 each. Today they are doing a good job and getting the department out of trouble all the time. Many years ago they pulled the Goldfields express. There is another reason for discontent amongst the men. The appointment of locomotive foremen was generally made from drivers. That is not the case today. Before the deviation was made at Swan View, there was a lot of discontent that could have been overcome with regard to engines going through the tunnel. The trouble extended over years and finally the deviation had to be constructed. I heard one hon. member say that railway men needed to be educated. He said that they were handling costly engines and yet were uneducated and that classes should be held.

The Railway Department gives instruction in all types of work done by railway men. Men from Kalgoorlie are sent down to Perth and go through these classes, being given a week or a fortnight's training. These classes have been in existence for years. There are classes in signalling, train control, telegraphy and so on. I would not say that an uneducated man was no good in the railways because I have known men with a first-class education who have proved to be the biggest duds it would be possible to find. They could not couple an engine or carry out any other work efficiently. Everything depends, of course, on the class of man one gets. Some railway men can just manage to write out their train waybills, and are quite all right as guards or porters.

If a man wants to be a station-master, then he must study and pass examinations in accounts. He would go into a different grade. Men performing jobs of that kind do need an education, but that is not requisite for a man who does not want to be any more than a shunter or a porter. What we require are active and reliable men, for they make the best railway men of the lot. Half the trouble in securing railway workers is due to the lack of amenities. The Royal

Commissioners told us that. In some place conditions are shocking.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Your party must take its share of the blame for that.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: We have all got to take the blame. When I approached the department recently I was told that I should see the conditions at Northam, but that is the show place. I could show them something at least 50 per cent. better on the Commonwealth railways. At Norsemar there are no barracks for the railway men. There are 50 railway employees there and recently, when they wished to have a send-off for one of their number who had been transferred, the function had to be held in the sample room at the hotel, with the result that some of the young men were not allowed on the premises and the wives of others would not attend. When first-aid or railway classes are to be run at that centre, there is no room available for them. Even the rest house is in a shocking condition.

At Esperance the old station building is used as a rest room. It is near the road and there are sleeping quarters there, but the men have to go across to the loco. to boil their billies. At Coolgardie there is a rest room on the station but, with all the traffic and the barrows passing, there is too much noise and the men get very little rest. The same thing applies at Southern Cross. I began pressing for a hot water system to be installed at Southern Cross in May last, but so far without result. Years ago the kitchen and wash-house there were constructed with an iron tank overhead, which was a good idea and the water system came from that. Eventually it rusted out and has been left in that condition ever since.

I was informed by the department that the materials are not available with which to provide a hot water system, in spite of the fact that I know of at least two hotels in which hot water systems are at present being installed. The railway men are very dirty after shovelling coal, for instance, but if they want hot water for washing purposes they must heat it up in a kettle. The position at Merredin is much the same. I know of one place where the rest room which was in a shocking condition, was accidentally burnt down, and that might happen at Merredin. Apparently the depart

ment will do nothing in such matters until the necessity for action is forced upon it.

Last night Mr. Simpson said that fettlers' homes had been improved, but I have seen no improvement in them in my district. Mention has frequently been made of placing a heavier service on our railways. I would like to see the unification of gauges brought about but, if we are considering putting heavier locomotives and trains on our lines the first essential will be to reconstruct the tracks. For the first 60 miles out of Perth we have a fairly heavy class of rail, followed by a light rail from there to Kalgoorlie. To carry heavier trains and locomotives we must begin at the bottom by putting down a foundation of heavier lines. After an engine is used on the Perth end of the line for a few months on the wide rails, those broader rails wear the flanges, and when it is sent on to the light rails vibration is caused in the wheels. That play can cause the rods to break and then they are likely to fall and disable the engine. An engine that is coming down from the lighter rails on to the heavier track does not have the same grip on the road, even when sand is applied to the rails.

When the Commonwealth Government was willing to give the State such a large sum of money for the purpose of installing the broader gauge, I think it would have been a good idea for us to have gone in for unification. The station at Perth has remained in the same condition for many years and although there was a little bit of new construction at one end, even that was done years ago. I might mention also that we still have the old system of interlocking control. I have attended meetings of engine-drivers and from what they have told me I believe that one of the factors causing trouble on our railways today—the Minister should take notice of this—is the poor quality of the coal. Perhaps I should say that it is the use of spark arresters in conjunction with poor quality coal.

The open-cut coal at present being used is unsuitable and, to ensure efficiency, the railways should be supplied with mined coal. The open-cut product is like dust and seems to lose a lot of its power. When it is shovelled into the fire box it simply flattens out, like sand. I think that, because

the Government takes such huge quantities of coal, Amalgamated Collieries Ltd. just slings in anything at all and foists it on to the railways. It is a case of big business again.

Hon. H. Hearn: Is it not due to the shortage of coal?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Recently our dining car service was changed over from the contract system to departmental control. For a while it supplied a good service but lately there have been cuts in the menu. I think they now allow one ounce of butter and three ounces of meat per passenger, and are supposed to get 400 cups out of each pound of tea. Such treatment of passengers will not result in the public patronising our trains.

The Chief Secretary: Do you think a cup of tea will attract them?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: If one pays 3s. 6d. for a meal in the dining car and receives water instead of tea, the reaction is not pleasant. The Chief Secretary might prefer a glass of something else, but we tea drinkers prefer our cup of tea. Most of the Goldfields travellers are tea drinkers. At the railway refreshment rooms the cost of a cup of tea and a scone has been increased. A couple of weeks ago a lady with two children showed me the scones with which she had been served. A cup of tea cost her 5d. and the scones 4d. I bought half-a-dozen scones for supper, at a cost of 2s., whereas they would have cost me 7½d. in a shop. If we use methods such as that to make our railways pay we shall simply drive the people away from them.

It has been contended recently that a board should be set up with a business man in charge in order to sell our railways to the public, but I do not think we could sell them. The public would not take them even as a gift. By cutting down on the food supplied to the travelling public we will not encourage patronage of our railways. The service between Perth and Kalgoorlie, with the exception of the trains connecting with the overland to the Eastern States, is poor, and many potential passengers are travelling by plane.

Hon. H. Hearn: Unfair competition.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The business section of the community would go by plane, because that would suit them.

The Chief Secretary: You get more than tea on the plane.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: At the booking office in Perth a notice tells the people, "Book here for the Eastern States." At page 1185 of "Hansard" last year, I asked a question and received a reply dealing with the booking of berths to the East. We know that the allotting of certain berths is placed in the hands of people other than the railway booking office, and those people do not make bookings without getting a commission for it. When people go to the Tourist Bureau they have to pay a charge over and above that of the railways. One of the results of it all is that when people have stood overnight in a queue, only to find that they cannot get a berth after all, they are very annoyed.

Not long ago when booking a berth to Kalgoorlie, I met a lady who had been to the booking office two days earlier and had stayed there all night in an endeavour to secure a berth. When her turn at the counter came, the booking clerk said he was sorry but that she would have to leave her name on the waiting list as all the berths had gone. I have her name and those of a couple of witnesses. The clerk said to her, "We have only a certain number of berths available." It was not his business to tell the public the whole story. She put her name on the waiting list, and next day it was still there. She was told to ring up or return later and that if there was a cancellation she would get it.

On the third day she met a friend of mine who said, "Go along to the Commissioner's office and you will get a berth." I do not know whether she was told to mention the name, or not. At all events, she went along to the Commissioner's office and got a berth and was told if there was anything further she wanted, it would be fixed up. I know that at one time the Commissioner's office had the allotting of four berths, which I suppose was quite right, if they were held only for a certain time. They might be set aside for Ministers of the Crown or others having to travel on urgent business. That is quite in order. However, what is noticeable is that the number of berths reserved for such purposes may increase from four to eight. Then when some other friends come along, the number reserved may be increased from

eight to some greater number and, in fact, to as many as may be wanted.

The woman I referred to went back to the booking office with the papers she had obtained, and I happened to be there. What she had to tell the people in the booking office about how to go about securing berths was certainly good to hear. That system should be changed, because under existing circumstances, if people cannot get berths, they say, "I suppose the booking clerk is looking for something." I have heard that suggested very often. That makes it bad for the men on the job.

Hon. H. Hearn: Have they not been known to take it?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I know that some do not take it, but, on the other hand, when people receive good service and are pleased about it, they like to make a small present of a few shillings. If the service they require is not available, they get annoyed and say, "He must be looking for a few bob." That is very bad. In my opinion, the allotment of all berths should be in the hands of the railway booking office only.

The Chief Secretary: Then you object to what Mr. Davies said when he suggested people should book from Fremantle?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: That booking would be done at the Fremantle railway station, and I would agree with that. The same would apply at Kalgoorlie and in the back country. For instance, at Leonora, Esperance or some similar distant centre, if a person desires to book through to South Australia, the local station-master wires to the booking clerk at Kalgoorlie, and, if a berth is available, it is reserved. I am certain this work should be carried out by the railway officials only and private individuals and concerns should not be allowed to participate.

Then, again, at the booking offices we see placards on the walls containing dope about air services. People are told that they can book there for the T.A.A. or A.N.A. and thus the railway booking clerks become agents for the air services that are run in opposition to the railways themselves.

Hon. A. L. Loton: But the railways get a percentage on the bookings.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Never mind about that! The department should encourage

people to book by rail and not by air. I certainly think that type of business should be dealt with by the railways quite apart from any outside concern. Another point I would like to raise in connection with the administration of the railways concerns the neglect of the engineers to take employees into their confidence. I will give the House an instance to indicate what I mean.

At the outbreak of the recent war a huge crane was installed at Kalgoorlie but those concerned were told by men who had worked there over a period of years, that the 3-ton crane being erected was not too suitable and that it should be at least a 5-ton crane with a longer span. However, the people who were dealing with the job took no notice of the advice. At that stage I was in charge of the Commonwealth side of operations, and a State man was in control of State matters. A tremendous lot of transport work was carried out in connection with the Armed Forces, and the first time the crane had to be used for discharging supplies, the advice that was tendered by the men proved only too sound. Through the dictatorial attitude adopted by the engineers, the crane had to be dismantled and the span increased by about three feet.

If the men were taken into the confidence of those in authority, such as the head serang at Midland Junction, the men who drive the engines and know what defects develop, would be able to provide sound advice to the engineer engaged in designing engines. The men have offered suggestions and it was proposed that the men should be brought together in conference to secure a smoother running of the service. But, no! The powers-that-be would not consider such a proposal. There is no chance of a conference to discuss such matters. As a matter of fact, there are many points that could be brought forward indicating why the engines in their present condition cannot do the job required in a proper manner.

Another point that may be raised concerns the transfer of railway employees from one district to another. Several instances have occurred recently of men being shifted from Kalgoorlie to the metropolitan area or to some other centre where no accommodation was available. The men themselves have to live in hotels and maintain their families at Kalgoorlie or else take them also to the

hotels. I think the Commissioner of Railways might be able to get over that difficulty by building special premises or, by arrangement with the Housing Commission, renting homes for railway employees at different centres. I shall support the second reading of the Bill and I may be interested in some of the amendments that will be moved in Committee.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [5.23]: I am afraid I cannot discuss the railways from the same point of view as Mr. Bennetts or provide the House with as much detail as he furnished. Nevertheless there are some observations I desire to make. First of all, it would need a good deal of justification for a member to say that he would oppose the Bill, although it contains some matters with which I do not agree.

The railway system has deteriorated into such a deplorable condition over the past years that almost any attempt made to improve it is worthy of support. We must remember that over many years Governments have resolutely declined to face up to the existing position of the railways. Many suggestions have been made and excuses advanced in explanation, but there have been no real attempts to improve the situation. The war has been claimed as one of the chief contributing causes of the trouble, and undoubtedly to some extent it was. But before that and during the period between the two great world wars, nothing at all worth-while was done to effect improvements in connection with the system. That is borne out by the fact that most of the rollingstock is from 30 to 50 years old and much of the other equipment is in a similar position.

As I said before, one would need quite a lot of justification for opposing the measure. At the same time, any member would be lacking in his duty if he did not emphasise that the whole blame for the situation that has arisen lies not at the door of the Commissioner of Railways but at that of Governments which, through neglect in the past, must be held definitely responsible for the present condition of the railway service. It was hopeless for the present Commissioner of Railways to expect to run the service effectively or to make it pay expenses. I am not well acquainted with the Commissioner himself and I do not suppose I have spoken to him more than half a

dozen times. On the other hand, I have great admiration for the persistency with which he has bombarded Governments in the past and made the position clear to them that if further help was not forthcoming and a greater measure of financial aid provided, together with a more sympathetic understanding, the results would necessarily be disastrous.

I certainly think the Commissioner has justified his appointment. In one respect I was very pleased during the war that Mr. Ellis was co-opted for service with the panel that was responsible for the running of the railways throughout the Commonwealth. That was a definite recognition of his merits and a distinct compliment to this State. As the Bill gives no indication as to who the future commissioners are to be, on this occasion at least I desire to voice my appreciation of his efforts. I certainly hope Mr. Ellis will be one of the trinity of commissioners, provided he wishes to be one of them. If he is not, I would like him to know that we certainly appreciate his efforts over the years.

The main feature of the Bill with which I disagree is the proposal to establish an advisory board. It provides for ministerial control, for three commissioners and an advisory board of three members—seven appointments in all. I do not know of any State in the Commonwealth that has anything like that set-up. If there is, I have not heard of it. Most of the States get along very well with one commissioner. It might be suggested that this is an experiment, but the idea of having three commissioners in charge of a railway service is not new. Victoria tried it out when I was a boy. Other States have had dual control, but in every instance they have reverted to a single commissioner.

The Chief Secretary: Victoria has three commissioners now.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I was not aware of that. I know that for many years one commissioner only was in charge of the Victorian railways, which, particularly when Sir Harold Clapp was in control, were certainly as good as, if not better than, any elsewhere.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Is Sir Harold Clapp still the Commissioner in Victoria?

The Chief Secretary: He may be.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I refreshed my memory by reading through the Royal Commission's report the other day and I presume that the idea of making a trial of three commissioners was decided upon as a result of its recommendation. However, it does seem to me to be cumbersome to have seven people in control of the railways. We are to return to ministerial control and take it the Minister will have his say and that he will not be behindhand in asking that his decisions be given effect. It seems to me that three commissioners are sufficient, without the three members of the proposed board. The parent Act provides, by Section 13, Subsection (1), paragraph (a), that the commissioner shall be suspended from office for misbehaviour or incompetence. That provision is not contained in the Bill.

The Bill does, however, make reference to misbehaviour or incapacity. I do not like the word "incapacity." Elsewhere in the Bill we find the word "incapable" used. I prefer the word "incompetent." This may seem a small matter, but there is a difference in the meaning of the two words. "Incompetent" means "wanting in adequate strength or qualifications." That meaning cannot be read into the word "incapacity." The word "incompetent" was sufficient for the parent Act and it should suffice for the Bill. Perhaps the Minister will tell us why the word "incompetent" was dropped and the other word used. Another provision contained in the parent Act which is omitted from the Bill is also contained in Section 13—

If he engages, during his term of office, in any employment outside the duties of his office I expect to be met with the reply that it is unlikely the Commissioner would engage in other employment, and probably he would not; but I point out that if we are to have three commissioners and three advisers, the way would be left open—if the provision is to remain out of the Bill—to allow any of those officers to engage in other occupations. That is undesirable. I agree with other members that some of the Bills introduced during this session have been loosely drawn; and it is quite competent for Parliament to suggest that more attention might be given to the framing of Bills. In many instances, the Bills are exceedingly weak and often ambiguous.

Reference has been made to Cyclone spark arresters, and as spark arresters concern my province, I wish to say that I think someone is to blame because the original spark arrester was not adopted. I understand it was an American patent; but a gentleman, calling himself an engineer, decided that he knew better and—perhaps with the idea of avoiding payment of royalty—he tinkered with the patent and set to work, as Mr. Bennetts said, to have his idea of a spark arrester made by mass production. I have it on the authority of a man, who is closely associated with the mechanical side of these spark arresters, that they will never be of any use and might just as well be thrown on the junk heap; perhaps it would be better so. Railway locomotives have been responsible for great and serious damage by fire, and therefore it is definitely the duty of the Government, as far as is humanly possible, to do everything to eliminate that risk. I understand the Government has sent this officer for a trip round the world. I wonder why. Perhaps the Minister can tell the House.

The Chief Secretary: I know of no officer making a trip round the world.

Hon. W. J. MANN: He has been sent abroad.

The Chief Secretary: He has been sent to England.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Perhaps later on the Chief Secretary will tell us why, because many people would not be much grieved if he did not return. That is the opinion of many people who know something about railway construction. I support the second reading, but I call attention to these matters with the object of improving the measure in a small way.

HON. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM (South) [5.38]: I shall not weary the House by speaking at any great length on the Bill. I shall wait to hear a good deal more of the debate before I decide how to vote, but I should like to say a little on the subject of A.S.G. engines. We have had much controversy about them, most of which has been adverse criticism. In order to satisfy myself, I took the opportunity recently of completing a trip of some length in the cabin of one of these engines.

Hon. E. M. Davies: That is contrary to railway regulations.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I am aware of that. I am not in any way attaching blame to the man who gave me the opportunity. What I did was for the benefit of the engine and for the good of the Government. At all events, on that trip the engine pulled a full goods train load. I even helped to fire the engine.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Was it a coal-burner?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Yes.

Hon. A. L. Loton: What was its name?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I do not know. I observed the fireman throughout the trip, and at no time had he to work what I would call hard. I myself am a stationary engine-driver and have had a good deal of experience. The fireman's job was really easy. I asked both him and the enginedriver their opinion of the A.S.G. engine. They replied, "They will do us at any time; we want no better engine to work." The fireman was an old man and he said his job was the most comfortable he had ever had. There was an absence of knocking about and bouncing of the engine. Members must understand that bouncing, over some period, would be very trying to an elderly man.

An A.S.G. engine, carried between two sets of driving wheels, will not jump or bounce. It makes for smooth and even running. The enginedriver and his men on the Esperance-Norseman line are all in favour of these engines. That was not only my own observation. I introduced the Minister at the time to several of the engine-drivers and firemen in the district, and one and all said the same thing. The Minister can bear me out in that statement, as he himself has made the trip. There is a structural weakness in the A.S.G. engine, but such weaknesses will be found in every innovation of a mechanical nature. Those weaknesses have to be corrected.

I do not know whether Mr. Bennetts was referring to the portion of the plate on the chassis that I am about to mention. He spoke about a $\frac{1}{4}$ in. plate. The structural weakness in the A.S.G. engine occurs mainly in the chassis at a point near the first bogie wheel where a portion of the plate is cut away to fit in the curve of the wheel. It is a point directly between the actual thrust of the cylinder block and the wheel that takes the thrust. That tends to tear the

metal apart and a fracture occurs on the chassis. That is not an insurmountable obstacle for an engineer, and I understand from the men concerned that that is the seat of the main weakness. That plate is $\frac{3}{4}$ in. to $\frac{7}{8}$ in. and it is not heavy enough for the job. If that is the cause of the frequent breakdowns, the fault is one that can be remedied.

One of the first troubles was that the leading driving wheel was flangeless and jumped the line on curves. That difficulty was easily overcome and there has been no such trouble since. The flangeless wheel was transferred from the front and put between the two end wheels, and a flanged wheel was substituted for it. The bogies can now take the sharpest curves with ease and there is no tendency whatever to leave the rails. It was formerly the opinion that these engines were dangerous and could not negotiate curves or run at speed. The rails between Esperance and Norseman are 60 lb., as against the 80 lb. rails in the metropolitan area, but the drivers on the Esperance line do not have to slow down at all and they can snatch the full load out of all stops and sidings without any effort whatever. Their speed is from 30 to 35 miles per hour. There was no sense of insecurity about which the drivers in the metropolitan area complained.

The drivers and firemen on the Esperance-Norseman line have told me that they understand the Minister intends to put A.S.G. engines on the "Flier" this year. They expressed the hope that it would be so and said that no express would arrive late once these engines were used. That is their opinion of the A.S.G. engine. I would like the Minister to tell the House whether it is the Government's intention to place an A.S.G. engine on the Esperance "Flier" this year.

One member mentioned that the drivers in charge of these trains should be educated. I think what was meant by that expression is that the men should be educated for the driver's job. I do know that a man who does not actually "drive" his engine can break the heart of a fireman. If the driver does his job properly and knows the line, curves and grades, and drives the engine accordingly, there is no waste of steam, overlapping or "carry-on" on the

hills, or the bumping and jolting that we frequently experience with express trains. It is true, however, that if the engine driver is a careless man and uninterested in his job, he merely leaves the throttle open and takes things as they come. In such circumstances the conditions are a drag on the fireman all the time.

Then again, mention was made by these men that it was essential for maintenance to be kept up. Apparently that is where the whole snag occurs. If the maintenance of these engines is expensive we might have to decide whether it is worth while working them. It cannot be denied that they do double the work that any other engine on the same lines will do. But does that warrant the apparent increase in their maintenance cost? If it does, the drivers say they prefer to have these engines, and they will get the work done.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Central) [5.46]: I support the Bill with certain reservations. The majority of speakers have suggested that the position of the railways is due to lack of finance. I cannot altogether agree with that contention. While admitting that finance has played a large part in the condition of the railways, if we look into the pros and cons we must put some blame on the administration as well. But we must make reservations in blaming the Commissioner and certain key men, because it is impossible for one man to control, from his office in Perth, the network of railways in Western Australia, covering the distance it does.

That is a good reason for the appointment of three commissioners, as suggested by the Bill. If the measure is passed we shall have one chief commissioner and two assistant commissioners. That will allow the commissioner to get around the system, see the various departments and out-depots, and learn for himself just what is going on. He will then be able to rectify the mistakes that have been made in the past. In any big industrial concern, the general manager is not tied to his office. I do not, therefore, see why the manager—that is what the Commissioner is—of the Railway Department should be tied to his desk. It is really his job to get out and meet his men, which, in the past, he has not been able to do. He has been almost unapproachable, and that applies to the departmental heads as well.

As Mr. Bennetts said, this state of affairs has caused a lot of dissatisfaction. The men who have the experience and actually do the job are the ones who can enlighten the departmental heads in regard to certain aspects of railway working. Unfortunately they have not received the consideration that should have been extended to them, and that is why I say the administrative officers are responsible to some extent for the deplorable condition of the railways. They have not given the suggestions that have been put forward by the men, the consideration they deserved. I think the separating of the railway and tramway departments will be of great assistance to the Commissioner. The managing of the railways is a big enough job without the other. This proposal will give him more freedom, and he will be able to concentrate on the railways.

To put the accounts under the control of the Auditor General is certainly a good move. I cannot see why the railway accounts cannot be kept so that we could know which lines or freights were showing a profit, and which were not. In any big business concern, with a good accounting system, a check can readily be made to see what lines or departments are paying. This, after all, is only a big business concern, and the accounts should be kept so that that information is available.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: The Commissioner's annual report gives that.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Only slightly.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The quarterly reports set it all out.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Only for certain lines and certain goods. Mr. Davies suggested that a portion of the land tax should have been applied to the finances of the railways. I did not agree with that, because the men who own the land are the ones providing practically the whole of the revenue of the railways as it is.

Hon. E. M. Davies: They are still paying the land tax. It would not matter to them.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Someone else would have to go short. In this case industry does not pay the freight, but the producer, who has to pay both ways, and that is why any further tax would be unfair. Industry certainly pays a certain amount of the railway losses, by means of taxation, but the producer is paying at the same time. The ques-

tion of education has been raised, and we can divide that in two parts—that is, in the first place, to educate the public to realise that the railways belong to them. We should not call them Government railways; the people should appreciate that they are there for the benefit of the State. Secondly, the workers should be educated to realise that the railways mean their job and their future, and if they want to remain in the service they must do their work satisfactorily.

A man should do his job without any education, apart from his actual training, but if we can educate him to take a pride in his work we shall get somewhere. Fortunately today we have quite a few key men in different districts who are taking a pride in their jobs. Although the process will be slow, the attitude of these men will gradually improve the outlook of the other workers, and that will be better for all concerned. Mention has been made of spark arresters. Mr. Mann said that according to information given to him the Cyclone arrester should be thrown out immediately as there was no possible hope of making it efficient. Recently trial runs have been made with two P class engines fitted with Cyclone arresters that had been altered, and both were 100 per cent. The delay occurred because the men responsible for working out something better had, for seven months, been putting in reports to the engineers in charge and getting nowhere. Eventually they got permission to try these arresters, and they worked 100 per cent. That sort of thing could happen all through the railways.

If the departmental heads took notice of the men on the job, half the present trouble would not be with us. I only hope the same adjustment to the Cyclone spark arresters will be as effective with other types of engines. I do not know that I am wedded to the advisory board. I cannot see what function it will perform that cannot be done in the ordinary course of events. If the Commissioner is amenable to reason, he could go to industry to get advice, without having this advisory board. I would like to hear a few more arguments in its favour before I vote for it.

With regard to ministerial control, we find today the Minister controls the biggest part of the railways, but I cannot see him altogether overriding the Commissioner in matters of railway policy. Ministers in charge

of other departments have to take notice of their departmental heads, and in this case the Minister will be subject to advice from his commissioners. I do not think the proposal in the Bill will make much difference. There is nothing further I wish to say at the moment. I support the second reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban—in reply) [5.57]: I am pleased the House has decided to pass the second reading, and then to discuss, in detail, the various clauses dealing with the major amendments of the law in regard to railways. I was certainly struck with the fact that every speaker mentioned the deplorable condition of the railways and how essential it was that some big alteration should take place. I was surprised to find so much of the argument revolving around the Commissioner. In my introductory remarks, I did not mention the present Commissioner in any shape or form. It does not matter, as far as I can see, whether anyone is to blame, or not. The point is that the railways are in a shocking condition.

Many members have gone out of their way to excuse the present Commissioner. We can leave him and his officers entirely out of the argument except, perhaps, where we might have to show why some alterations have become necessary. Mr. Watson asked, by interjection, whether we were carrying mail at the present time at the same old rates. The answer is that we are. Mails are carried for the Commonwealth at the same rates as formerly, but the amount has increased considerably with the result that more revenue is obtained.

Hon. H. Hearn: How long is it since you had a revision of the mail rate?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The agreement for the carriage of mails by rail applies throughout Australia, but as the result of a decision of a conference of railway commissioners held recently, representations are being made to have the rates increased. In answer to the hon. member, I do not know for how long, exactly. To say that under existing conditions, 90 per cent. of railway control rests with the Minister, is hardly in line with the facts. When the Minister for Railways introduced a similar Bill to this last year in the Assembly, he said—

So far as I am aware there is no other department or State instrumentality where ministerial control is so hopeless as it is in the

Railway Department, having regard to the Railway Act of 1904. My own personal experience is that I have found the officers of the Railway Department courteous to the last degree. But eventually their will prevails because of a policy of passive resistance against the Minister.

That is the position, so far as ministerial control is concerned. Mr. Simpson went further and said—

The Railway Department will be a headache for some time to come, and if the Minister desires to carry the whole burden, I say, in view of the seriousness of the position, let him carry it.

The Minister has no desire or intention of carrying the burden. It is the duty of the commissioners to carry it and they will do it. Experienced, practical railway men are therefore, men who will be capable of doing the work that lies before them. It is not fair that one man should suffer a big headache. Let us spread it over three men, and I will give reasons for saying that as I proceed.

It is highly essential that the ministerial head of the Railway Department should be in a position to effect a change when he sees that results are not being achieved. Let me quote an illustration of what I mean. At the present time our trains are running in a shocking manner. They reach their destination two, three, four or five hours late, and other serious and fully justified complaints are being made daily. In every speech that has been made on the Bill, there have been serious complaints made against the running of the railways, and the reason for the late running is always the same; it is stated that the locomotives are too old. Mr. Cunningham told us how the A.S.G. engines are excellent. I made inquiries myself when I was in Coolgardie and Esperance, and people who were conversed in these engines told me what excellent engines they are, after being modified. The Minister has been satisfied for some time that it is not engines alone that are the cause. He desired to get to the bottom of it and find out the real reason.

It was the desire of the Minister to appoint a personal representative who would be a freelance to go about the railway system wherever he wished. He was to be a man with a vast knowledge of locomotives, and it was intended that he should have power to inquire into all aspects of the system. The Commissioner put his foot down and said that he would not permit it, and, ur

fortunately, the Minister had no power to enforce his request. He was confronted with the immediate obstacle that the Commissioner would not permit a personal representative of the Minister on the railways. Mr. Seward is satisfied that it is not the fault of the engines alone that all this late running is experienced.

Many complaints have been received from the Engine Drivers' Union about spark arresters. The men stated that with spark arresters fitted, engines could not get up steam to negotiate the hills and hence had to be broken in two, and so on. Inquiries were made and it was only after a good deal of difficulty that tests were insisted upon. It was found finally that there was something decidedly wrong with these arresters.

Hon. E. H. Gray: So the enginedrivers were right!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, perfectly right, but it was only after ministerial insistence that an inquiry was held. What was said by Mr. Logan is perfectly correct. These arresters were finally adjusted correctly to other types of engines, and are now working very well. When properly adjusted and on the correct type of engine, they do an excellent job.

Hon. G. Bennetts: If they had taken notice of the enginedrivers at the time, all this trouble would have been averted.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The A.S.G. locomotives are another case in point. The whole 25 have been modified in accordance with the instructions of the A.S.G. Industrial Board, and have been pronounced fit and capable of operating successfully. However, 11 of these locomotives are at present lying idle awaiting repairs, one of them since May last. The Minister can do nothing because he does not have the power to do anything, but he is satisfied that something should be done. The Commissioner has complete control of the railways. Whatever Government is in power must bear the full brunt of anything that goes wrong with the railway system, and it is only right that the Government should have some say in its running.

There is an amendment on the notice paper under the name of Sir Charles Atham that will, if agreed to, curtail the Minister's power as regards the appointment of officers, except for a few senior ones. I agree with the proposed amend-

ment because I think it is only right that the appointment of officers within the railways should have no political significance of any description. The commissioners are the ones who will run the railways and they should pick the servants they require. However, it is only right that the appointment of men to senior positions should have ministerial approval.

The whole object of the board is to help the railways to run smoothly and to enable the board to inquire into complaints. Members have asked questions at different times as to why trains are running late, why perambulators are not allowed on certain trains and why various other things happen. When questions are asked by members they are sent down to the department and whether the officers concerned give the answers any consideration I do not know, but I regret to say that very often they apparently do not. The Minister cannot give the answers as they can be given only by the Commissioner and his officers. However, this board will be in a position, if it so desires, to find out what is wrong and will be able to thrash out any problems. After discussing such matters, the Commissioner's representative may have a very good answer or an explanation which will be entirely satisfactory. But if it is unsatisfactory, then, of course, complaint can be made to the Minister in order that he can then get things moving.

There have been many protests from farmers in the country districts that they have not been able to get sufficient trucks and I suppose there have been many complaints from men who send stock to Midland Junction that the stock had been too long on the road, not been watered and so on. All such complaints could be dealt with by the board and it would thus be extremely useful in dealing with matters like those I have mentioned. It would also be useful in overcoming industrial disputes before they come to a head. It is human nature that if a man has someone to whom he can go and unburden himself then, even if nothing is done, the man is more satisfied than he would be if he kept all his troubles to himself. It is hoped that this board will prove extremely useful and it must be understood that the members of it cannot give instructions of any kind to the commissioners.

Hon. H. Hearn: Will it be a full-time board?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It may or it may not be. That is why the remuneration is left to the Governor. If members will look at the Bill, they will see just what the board is permitted to do. The Bill states—

(1) When any matter relating to the direction, management, maintenance or control of the Government Railways, other than a matter of policy, arises for determination—

(a) The Board of its own motion, or at the request of the Minister, shall advise the Minister as to the determination of the matter;

(b) The Minister shall not determine the matter unless he has given consideration to the advice of the Board as to the determination of the matter.

(2) The Minister shall have the determination of all matters of policy.

There are complaints of not enough trains running to York, Northam and other places and the board will be permitted to discuss them with the commissioners' representative but the board cannot give any instructions to the commissioners. If the commissioners state that the reason is they have not enough locomotives, then the board must go along to the Minister and make a complaint to him. The Minister will then have no alternative, if he agrees that that is the trouble, but to get busy and start things moving.

If members will look at the composition of the board they will see that it represents all the users of the railway system and also the people who run the railways, so that when there is a matter to be dealt with it will be considered by a representative of the men—who might be a man from the footplate—a representative of the people who pay the freight and whose goods are being delayed, or detained or have been lost. That is an excellent board to advise the Minister. The board is for the purpose of helping the commissioners and not to blackguard them and I feel sure that if the board had been in existence over the past years, many things for which the Commissioner is now blamed would have been rectified.

Probably the Commissioner has never heard of a great many of them and perhaps he should have heard of others, but he has been one commissioner stuck in an office and he has probably never been told of

many of the complaints about the railways. In most cases when there have been complaints addressed to him, he has got hold of his secretary and the secretary has explained the position and that has been the end of it. However, that is something that can be overcome by the board and will be of considerable help to everybody. It is not intended that the board shall run the railways but only that it shall help to run them, without in any way interfering. No doubt the board will from time to time make complaints that are not well founded, but they will at least be investigated.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: During the course of my remarks, I was asked by Mr. Mann why Mr. Mills, the Chief Mechanical Engineer, was sent to England. The reason is that a number of locomotives are being built there at present and, on the recommendation of the Commissioner, Mr. Mills was sent to make himself completely au fait with them whilst they are being constructed and presumably, if necessary, to make any suggestions that might be required. It was thus advisable that he should go to England and see those engines in the course of manufacture on behalf of the Government for various and many reasons.

The question of the broad gauge railway interested Mr. Simpson. He said that he was unable to follow the figures regarding the probable reduction in transport costs if the standard gauge system was adopted. The economics of our railways have recently been examined by the officers of the Commonwealth Transport Department in order to place before the Prime Minister such information as would be necessary when dealing with the standardisation proposals. This inquiry revealed that there had been an increase of 41 per cent. in traffic during the past 21 years.

In 1947-48 the freight handled would represent 415,000,000 ton miles while 42,000,000 ton miles had to be transferred to road transport. That ton mileage of 415,000,000, based on a conservative estimate, would yield an increase of three per cent. in freight traffic per annum, so that in 10 years it would be 615,000,000 ton miles and 825,000,000 in 20 years. The

basic average cost per ton mile is at present 3½d. per ton mile but the effect of the increased volume, irrespective of the earnings due to increased efficiency, would reduce the average costs to 2.6d. and 2.1d. respectively in the 10 and 20 year periods. Those figures were compiled by the Commonwealth committee, whereas Mr. Simpson has stated that he had more or less worked out his own figures.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: They were correct, though.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member says they were correct but I am giving him the figures as worked out by that committee. The cost per ton by road transport is 7d. so it will be seen that unless we can improve our railways to take a far greater volume of the freight offering, our roads will disappear into quagmires. It was suggested that the freight will increase with the narrow gauge as well as with the broad gauge. Unfortunately, the Commonwealth authorities state that unless we bring our railways up to date and have the broad gauge our freight traffic may not increase. Anyway, the costs will not decrease to the same extent. Obviously, with a broad gauge railway there is a far larger freight train and more people are required to handle it.

The only other matter mentioned by the hon. member to which I desire to refer is his reference to the standard gauge. He stated that in South Africa, Japan and New Zealand the 3ft. 6in. gauge is found sufficient to meet the requirements of those countries. That is so, and the 3ft. 6in. gauge could meet the requirements of this State also if we had the proper railway bed and the 80lb. rails. But in order to bring the present system up to a proper standard the whole of our railways would have to be rebuilt, and it would be necessary for us to obtain the 80lb. rails.

We are told by the Royal Commission that it will cost £23,000,000 to bring our railways up to date on the narrow gauge. But if we can enter into an arrangement with the Commonwealth we can get a standard gauge at far less cost, because the Commonwealth will pay so much and each of the States will contribute so much, and we would thus get the standard gauge at a far less cost than £23,000,000 and have an up-to-date broad gauge railway.

Hon. W. J. Mann: That is only for one line.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No, for the whole lot.

Hon. W. J. Mann: They said £42,000,000.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, it may be £42,000,000. I do not know whether that figure is correct.

Hon. W. J. Mann: That is Clapp's figure.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am not sure that it is, but the Commonwealth would pay a portion of the total to each State and our contribution would be £11,000,000 or £13,000,000 instead of £23,000,000. The matter is under discussion at present. If this agreement is ratified we will get a standard gauge throughout Western Australia. Quite obviously many of the obsolete spur lines would have to go, but broadly speaking we would have a standard gauge railway for far less than it would cost the State Government to bring our railways up to date.

Hon. H. A. C. Daffen: Do not we have to contribute to every other railway?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is in the £23,000,000, but our contribution is somewhere about £11,000,000 or £13,000,000. The question is being discussed at present. There was another important point and that is the shortage of steel and the competition throughout Australia between the States for rails. If the Commonwealth standardises the railway the work will be performed much quicker because it will have first claim on the rails for the standard gauge railway. If we were competing with the Commonwealth and the other States, when would we obtain the necessary rails? Of course, we will no doubt have to pull up some of the lines that are not paying in order that we might use those rails.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That might mean the Esperance line.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: And the Garratt engines. Another important point discussed at some length by members was the appointment of three commissioners. The idea of three commissioners is manifold, but we have found up to the present that the railways, under the control of one Commissioner, are not efficient. What are we to do? We know from the report of the

Royal Commission that the Commissioner has, from time to time, applied to the Government for money and made certain suggestions to it. He has not received the money, and in many instances his suggestions have not been put into effect. However, it would be difficult for any Government to oppose such requests if they were supported by a board of three commissioners.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: Why not appoint five?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Because I do not think it is necessary to appoint five.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Surely a Government should agree to genuine requests by one Commissioner?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I cannot answer that question but the present Commissioner says his requests have been refused. I repeat that it would be difficult for a Government to refuse three experts, which these three commissioners will be. One will be the chief, or the man who is called the commissioner. He will be a person with a full and complete knowledge of administration and railway working generally. The other will be an engineer, and the remaining commissioner will have a good knowledge of traffic and railway business. Surely that combination will be an extremely good one! Mr. Mann has said that the Chief Mechanical Engineer has not done his duty, but if there are three commissioners, one being an engineer, it can be assumed that there will be a vast difference in the management of the railway workshops and that the matters of which Mr. Mann has complained will not occur. As pointed out by the hon. member, these things have occurred under one commissioner and, to avoid that, it is proposed that three commissioners shall be appointed.

We know that the traffic branch of the railways has not given satisfaction, but we are hoping that, by having a man well versed in traffic management as one of the commissioners, matters will be improved. By being in charge of their respective departments, they will be in closer touch with their activities, and the three commissioners in consultation will have a wider knowledge than one man could possibly have. It will also give the opportunity to a commissioner to study the particular sections of the railways that require investigation. It may be

a traffic matter within the knowledge of the commissioner dealing with the traffic side and he will also have an equal say with the chief commissioner at their meetings. When the commissioner goes to the Minister he will be fortified with the opinions of two men of great and complete knowledge; not of his servants as in the past but of two of his colleagues.

I cannot help thinking that whatever gentlemen occupy the positions of the three commissioners, we must get better service than in the past. It may be said that in some States they have three commissioners and in others one. In some States one commissioner works quite well and in others three commissioners work satisfactorily. We have tried all these years with one and we have found that the railways are not as we think they should be. Therefore, the only alternative is to get some other form of management and we have decided that three commissioners should fill the bill. The three commissioners will not be able to start off scratch; they will have to start off very much on the debit side. The House would be well advised to support the proposal for the appointment of three commissioners.

Reference has been made to the matter of railway accounts. I understand that at present it is not possible to ascertain which railways are paying and which are not. The Auditor General audits all other Government accounts, and I consider that he should audit the railway accounts as well. It has been suggested that special officers are required for this audit. If so, the Auditor General will employ special officers. We want the accounts brought under the Auditor General so that they will be in conformity with the accounts of all other Government departments. This provision should assist the commissioners considerably because there will be a fully competent staff under the Auditor General to do this work. I am not suggesting that the present staff is not competent, but the proposed arrangement will relieve the Railway Department of accounting work to a great extent. There will be a running audit and I think this will assist the administration considerably. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—WHEAT POOL ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Assembly with amendments.

BILL—STIPENDIARY MAGISTRATES ACT AMENDMENT.

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had declined to make the amendment requested by the Council.

BILL—NURSES REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—MOTOR VEHICLE (THIRD PARTY INSURANCE) ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 10th November.

HON. A. L. LOTON (South-East) [7.51]:

The proposal that local authorities should act as the issuing authority for insurance cover as well as licenses was, I understand, discussed at the annual Road Board Conference in 1947 and was not agreed to. In July, 1948, the Gnowangerup Road Board communicated with all local authorities and, of the 112 municipalities and road boards, a small majority favoured the proposal. Hence the introduction of the Bill.

My main objection to the measure is that there is no provision for the payment of local authorities for the work of collecting fees and issuing certificates, but Mr. Bennetts has given notice of an amendment that I think will meet requirements. I am wondering, since the Police Traffic Branch has been reimbursed to the extent of 12½ per cent. of all fees collected, whether it will continue to receive that percentage or whether, if we agree to five per cent. being granted to local authorities, the Traffic Branch will receive 7½ per cent. I should like the Minister to answer that question when he replies because it is a rather interesting point. I realise that the Traffic Branch makes disbursements of the fees collected, but surely the local authorities should be entitled to five per cent. for collecting fees!

One country municipality recently reduced its staff considerably in order to keep its expenditure within the revenue. If the Bill is passed without making provision for the payment of local authorities for this work, it will be a further charge on the ratepayers, and that municipality will have to augment its staff in order to carry out the collecting of fees, banking and other duties that will be required.

The idea of getting the employees of local governing bodies to undertake extra work for Government and semi-governmental departments is a legacy of the war years when everybody was called upon to do a little extra work in the national interest. During those years, I do not think that anybody took exception to doing a little extra work gratis, but the time has arrived when we want efficiency and we should not place additional burdens on individuals who already have plenty of work to do. Employees of local authorities have their secretarial duties to perform and have to keep their books up to date and ready for audit at any time, and I fail to see why they should not be reimbursed for this work.

Country municipalities have received practically no financial assistance from the Commonwealth Roads Grant. Some road boards have received quite a considerable amount, but municipalities have had to maintain their roads out of their own funds. Some of those roads are bitumen-surfaced, and once the construction work has been done, the upkeep is lessened, but the initial cost is much higher than for a surface of ordinary gravel. The resources of municipalities have thus been considerably strained, and I cannot understand why they should be asked to bear this extra burden.

There is another point to which I wish to direct the Minister's attention. The proposed new Section 3J provides that members of the trust shall be entitled to receive remuneration for their services and the remuneration shall be as prescribed from time to time and shall be paid out of the fund. In the Workers' Compensation Bill it has been laid down that each member of the board shall be entitled to such remuneration, allowances and leave of absence as shall be determined by the Governor. Why the differentiation? Will it all be done by regulation?

The Chief Secretary: Not necessarily.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Then why differentiate between the methods for remunerating the respective bodies? I hope the Minister will explain the point when he replies. I support the second reading.

HON. R. J. BOYLEN (South) [7.58]: I support the second reading. The Bill proposes that local authorities shall issue traffic licenses and insurance cover, which will entail extra work and responsibility for the employees of those bodies. During the war the administrative staffs of local authorities were called upon to do extra work, but they realised that it was a contribution to the war effort and willingly undertook the duties. Now, however, it is a different matter. I am a member of the Boulder Municipal Council and I know that some municipalities have cut their staffs to a minimum and the employees are fully occupied in carrying out the usual duties pertaining to their offices. This measure, however, will necessitate their issuing licenses and insurance cover, thus relieving the insurance companies of a certain amount of work but entailing more for the local authorities, work that might involve overtime. I consider that the local bodies are entitled to some remuneration for the additional work they will be called upon to do. I was pleased to see notice of the amendment given by Mr. Bennetts and I hope it will be accepted. It will certainly receive my support.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [8.0]: There has been an agitation for this Bill for some time, more particularly on behalf of local governing authorities. There is no question that it will simplify procedure for most people who register their cars. They will get their licenses and the receipt for their third-party insurance at the one place. It may cheapen costs, and that is what we should aim at. I cannot understand the argument that local governing authorities should receive five per cent. for the work they will be doing. If they are allowed that, it will come from the premiums.

Members: No!

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: If not from the premiums, from where will it come? The Government is not going to pay it.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: There has been no indication that there will be a drop in premiums if this is agreed to.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I am expecting a drop in premiums.

The Chief Secretary: There must be.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I should think there would be.

Hon. H. A. C. Daffen: A decrease is not an increase.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: If local governing bodies are to be paid five per cent., there will be an increase. All they will be required to do is to add the amount on to the one sheet and pass the license fees to the central authority. It will be a very convenient arrangement. I cannot see where all this extra work that has been referred to, will be entailed.

Hon. W. R. Hall: The first year will be the worst.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Yes, while they are getting into the working of it.

Hon. E. H. Gray: It will not be very difficult.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I do object to every move we make increasing the cost of industry. That is what is done every time. The day will come when all these small increases will have a considerable effect on both primary and secondary industries.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: They will lead to a depression.

Hon. W. R. Hall: This will not do that.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The Bill is a good one. I do not think road boards will find very much work put on their shoulders.

Hon. A. L. Loton: They are entitled to remuneration.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Five per cent. is a lot of money for putting a few figures on a sheet.

Hon. E. H. Gray: They get the traffic fees.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Yes.

Hon. W. R. Hall: As if they did not want them!

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I support the Bill.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban—in reply) [8.5]: There seems to be a lot of misunderstanding about the Bill, the aim of which is to reduce costs to the merchants. At present, as members are aware, before

a motorist can obtain a license he has to produce to the licensing authority—in the country, the secretary of the road board—his policy or a receipt for the money before the license is issued or renewed. So far as I can gather, it has been a terrible nuisance to the individual, when he has gone to license his car, to be obliged also to take his policy or receipt. Very often he may have overlooked the renewing of his policy and, if he is in the country, he has had to send to Perth for it.

Hon. A. L. Loton: That is only a 2½d. stamp.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I agree; but it is a confounded nuisance. Formerly, he simply handed in his license and received another one, and it was all done in a few minutes. Now there is this awful nuisance to the individual and to the issuing authority; because the issuing authority has to take the receipt, see it is up to date, see whether it is the correct insurance and go through the whole business, and then enter on the license certain figures showing that the insurance has been paid. To overcome all that, this Bill was introduced; so that the motorist will walk into the local authority's office and say, "Here is my license; I want it renewed." The man in the office says, "You paid £2 last year; your car is an ordinary private car, and I want another 18s. for insurance." So the man puts down the license fee and 18s., and I presume it costs the official no effort to add up the figures and put down the total. That is all he does. He does not do another solitary thing. He enters in a book that 18s. as being insurance.

Hon. A. L. Loton: That is one entry.

Hon. G. Bennetts: One extra job.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: He enters that and, at the end of the month I presume—

Hon. W. R. Hall: No, at the end of the day; the auditors demand that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: All right. He adds it at the end of the day. That is a tremendous effort! At the end of the month he sends the money down. That is all he does, and as a result of that—

Hon. G. Bennetts: What does he send down?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: A cheque, I presume.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Would he not have a statement?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: He has to pay money into the bank and draw money out. He has a lot to pay into the bank, or else perhaps his junior clerk does it.

Hon. W. R. Hall: He is not allowed to handle the money except under certain conditions.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Does he not go to the bank?

Hon. W. R. Hall: Not under present conditions.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: He does not even have to go to the bank! But money has to be paid in once a week.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Once a day, so far as big road boards are concerned.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: He has to pay in money in any event, so he does not do any more work. At the end of a certain period, he sends down a cheque.

Hon. L. Craig: With a list of insurers.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: He sends a list of insurers. Suppose it is done in quadruplicate; it is only a matter of extra carbon paper.

Hon. W. R. Hall: There are 12 insurance companies.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No, that is where the error lies. The insurance companies are wiped clean out.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Who is taking it over? The State Insurance Office?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No, the trust. Read the Bill! A list is sent down: "John Jones, private car, 18s.; John Smith, private car, 18s." That is a total of 36s. sent to the trust. That is all that is done.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: It involves extra work.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Let us assume it does. Members require five per cent. to be given to the local authorities. Who is going to pay that?

Hon. W. R. Hall: One shilling in the pound. What does that mean?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It means one shilling in the pound.

Hon. W. R. Hall: What about war damage?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Who will pay that 1s.? The motorist will pay it.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Let the insurance companies pay it!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: All right, let the insurance companies pay it.

Hon. W. R. Hall: They are getting plenty out of it; let them pay it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Very well; let the insurance companies pay it.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Yes, they are copping it all.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If the hon. member will read the third party insurance Act, he will find there is a premiums board which fixes the premiums to give five per cent. profit thereon. If we add another five per cent., that will be 10 per cent. out of the premiums. Another amount will have to be added to the premiums to obtain that extra five per cent. That is obvious. We cannot get money out of the air. So, whoever pays the local governing authorities, the cost will fall on the motorist. I do not care whether an insurance company pays it or this trust.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: Why should it? The insurance companies will be saved costs. Why should not they pay?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Where will it come from? I am afraid some members do not appreciate that the idea behind insurance is that people pay to insurance companies a certain figure in return for which they will provide compensation if the insurers meet with accidents. They base the charge on proper calculations, and those calculations are made by a board established under the Act. That board is permitted to fix the premiums so that the insuring company gets 5 per cent. profit on the premiums paid, and any balance there may be. The administration costs are taken into consideration as part of the premium to be paid. The Bill will cut down as far as possible the overhead charges that in the past the insurance companies have had to load on to the premiums.

Hon. W. R. Hall: What does the Perth Traffic Branch do for the motorists today?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It gets 10 per cent. of the license fees.

Hon. W. R. Hall: It does not build roads.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No, but it looks after the traffic. It is not intended to give it one penny for the collection of the insurance premiums.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Will they still get only their 10 per cent.?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: On the license fee, but not on the premiums. The purpose of the Bill is to relieve the motorist as far as possible of the burden of the present premiums. The extra work involved for the local authorities will be negligible. If they wish to charge five per cent. for a job worth one-twentieth per cent., that will be up to them. Their own ratepayers will have to pay.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Not altogether.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: They will be the only ones to register their cars in that district.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Not necessarily.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is almost always so.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: We think the insurance companies should pay it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That cannot be done. At the end of each year the insurance companies will receive five per cent. only of the premiums. If a loss is shown on the business they will have to meet it but if too large a profit is shown the premiums committee will reduce the premiums for the ensuing year. I am trying to make the position clear.

Hon. W. R. Hall: What percentage of the ratepayers have motor cars?

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Chief Secretary is endeavouring to explain the position and interjectors are simply making it more difficult for him. He is entitled to a courteous hearing.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The extra work entailed for road board secretaries will be negligible as they will have nothing to do with regard to insurance policies. The extra five per cent. would be a further burden on the ratepayers of the road board concerned.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 to 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—New sections inserted:

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I move an amendment—

That in line 4 of proposed new Section 3J after the word "time" the words "by the Governor" be inserted.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The position is already covered by the Interpretation Act. This wording is exactly the same as appears in the Workers' Compensation Act.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: On the assurance of the Chief Secretary, I ask leave to withdraw my amendment, which could be dealt with on recommittal, if necessary.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I move an amendment—

That at the end of Subsection (4) of proposed new Section 3R, a proviso be added as follows:—

Provided that the local authority may deduct by way of commission from the total amount of premiums received by it under this Act, and retain for its own use, an amount equal to five per centum of the total amount of premiums (exclusive of stamp duty) collected and received by it as aforesaid.

For a long period, particularly during the war years, local governing bodies did a great deal of work for which they received no remuneration or benefit. The Chief Secretary said that road board secretaries would have only to fill in two extra lines on the form concerned, but a lot more work than that would be involved. They would have to keep proper records and at the end of the month send the necessary returns to Perth, all of which would involve a certain amount of routine work. My district has a considerable road construction programme in hand and needs all the revenue it can get. It is a mistake to deprive road boards of some remuneration for doing a service to the insurance companies. Why should not the insurance companies pay? No business man would do work of that sort without receiving some return for it. Why should not local governing bodies be recompensed in similar circumstances? I hope all members repre-

senting country districts will support the extra five per cent asked for the local governing bodies.

Hon. H. A. C. DAFFEN: The proposal will save the motorist a good deal of time and will relieve the local governing bodies of a certain amount of work, but I think the fact that they are to render a service entitles them to some remuneration. I cannot accept the statement of Mr. Baxter and of the Chief Secretary that this will increase the cost of premiums to motorists. Premiums already include agents' commission, as well as profits to the companies. The five per cent asked for probably does not equal the amount of the ordinary agent's commission. It would be hard to convince me that no extra work will be involved for the road boards, particularly as the scheme will be subject to Government audit. I hope those who have so far favoured the five per cent. being deducted by the local governing bodies will stick to their guns.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The service rendered by the local governing bodies will be to their own ratepayers, and, after all, it is a very small matter. There will be one form only and the work entailed will be the filling up of an extra column. In addition, once a month a cheque will have to be forwarded covering the amount of premiums collected. The payment of the commission suggested must mean an increase of five per cent. on the premiums.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: Why should it?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Mr. Daffen referred to the profits that the companies were making. Members should realise that they will not be operating under the old premiums. The Bill provides that a premiums committee will be set up and it will fix the premium rates, and those rates will be lower. Local governing bodies have been asking for this system; and now it is suggested, they are seeking the payment of commission of five per cent. for doing practically nothing at all. The third party risk insurance business is not a very profitable one for the companies and more losses are recorded than profits made.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The compensation is pretty substantial under that heading.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Most of the companies do not like undertaking third party risks unless their clients place their other

business with them as well. The amendment means that the local governing bodies will actually be penalising their own ratepayers.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I support the amendment. I am speaking on behalf of a road board whose collections of third party insurance Premiums could run into well over £1,000. It is not like some small boards whose total revenue would not exceed £2,500.

Hon. E. H. Gray: That is a big argument for no commission being paid.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Rather is it an argument in favour of some of these smaller boards being eliminated. The institution of the new system will mean the employment of an additional officer by the Kalgoolie Road Board.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: But this will be only for one month in a year.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Not at all.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: A license can be taken out for three months.

Hon. W. R. HALL: It could happen that the one individual would take out his license four times in one year, and the same thing applies to third party risks.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Do not motorists take out their third party risk cover for the whole year?

Hon. W. R. HALL: Not always. If I owned a car and thought I would not keep it for more than three months, I would take out cover for three months only.

Hon. W. J. Mann: How many cars does your board license each year?

Hon. W. R. HALL: Over 1,000. The amount the board collects in connection with licenses for motor vehicles is over £8,000. During the peak licensing periods the work is very arduous. We are not asking for much when we suggest the payment of a commission of five per cent.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: All this is done for your own ratepayers.

Hon. W. R. HALL: That is so, but only a small section of them.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It is a section that contributes a considerable amount towards your revenue.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I think motorists will be very pleased to pay 1s. extra in the pound if they can avoid all the time wasted under the present system.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Contrary to what has been pointed out, this proposal will represent a great saving to the companies. Not much money is involved for them individually, but the various companies cover third party risks and from time to time they may be ranged against each other in connection with accidents involving costly litigation. With the establishment of the proposed fund, that litigation will be avoided and it will merely become a question of assessing the blame and making payments accordingly. The Kalgoolie Municipal Council last year collected £1,730 on account of premiums for third party insurance and five per cent. commission on that would involve payment of a mere £86 10s., which is not much to ask for the work involved. It would not amount to the commission paid to an agent of an individual company. I support the amendment.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Members acknowledge that this proposal is designed to save money. The insurers will save a good deal and the persons insured will benefit by the lowering of premiums. There seems to be a general opinion that road boards should not be paid for the work they do.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: They have been relieved of most of the extra work they were doing.

Hon. L. CRAIG: That is not so.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Tell me what they are doing without receiving payment?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Within the last few months, the road board in my district has been supplying a mass of information to the Town Planning Commission.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: But that is in connection with their own district.

Hon. L. CRAIG: It is not correct to say that no extra burden will be imposed on the ratepayers. The boards will have to provide stationery as well as carry out extra clerical work. Surely, the proposed charge of five per cent. would not be too much for the services rendered. They are really asking for 1s. per car.

The Chief Secretary: No.

Hon. L. CRAIG: People do not expect to pay more than £1 for third party insurance.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: But they do.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I am not talking about trucks or omnibuses.

Hon. W. J. MANN: In my opinion, road boards should not be called upon to do this work without remuneration. One road board suggested to me that it should ask for 10 per cent., but it was unable to justify that charge. The board then suggested it should be recompensed its out-of-pocket expenses for postages and stationery. Personally, I think five per cent. would be a fair charge. If it were practicable, I would prefer that a board should be refunded its out-of-pocket expenses.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I regret that I must disagree with some of my colleagues. This proposed new method has been discussed for over two years. Mr. Thomson first suggested it.

Hon. G. Fraser: That is not so. I introduced a motion some three years before.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I apologise. The Gnowangerup Road Board, chiefly through the efforts of Mr. Thomson, was the local body responsible for the commencement of the agitation. The new method would give service to the ratepayers; and, in view of the fact that the local authorities receive all the licensing fees, they ought to undertake the few minutes' clerical work involved. Furthermore, if the position were examined legally, it might be found that we were trespassing on dangerous ground, because we are inflicting a burden on the people. This Chamber is not supposed to do that.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Is not the appointment of a trust inflicting a burden on the people?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I oppose the amendment.

Hon. R. J. BOYLEN: I support the amendment. The proposed method would cause extra work for the administrative staff of local governing bodies, and consequently they should be paid for their services. It is doubtful whether an insurance company would ask an agent to undertake this work without pay. Therefore it is fair that the local authority should be paid.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Consideration should be given to the point raised by Mr. Gray.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Why not ask for the Chairman's ruling on the point?

The CHAIRMAN: I think the Chief Secretary is straining the point.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: If I thought that this proposal would inflict a burden on local governing bodies, I would support the amendment; but I have heard nothing which would influence me to say that they are entitled to receive the five per cent.

Hon. W. R. Hall: You have not been listening.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: As one connected with local governing bodies, I would be loath not to help them if I thought they should be paid, but I do not think that extra work will be thrown on them. There is a total of 79,000 odd vehicles to be registered for the purposes of third party insurance. The amount of 1s. per car will mean £4,000. I have had no request from road boards for any remuneration, but I have from one municipality. There are 127 road boards but only 12 municipalities. This will cost the local authorities very little. To say the cost will not go back to the motorist, is just too silly. If we reduce the license or the fee, the better off we shall be, and so will the motorist. As Mr. Hall has said, the motorist today is our biggest taxpayer, but here we are asking him to pay an additional £4,000.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: You are putting it on to the other ratepayers now.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The mere writing out of 1,000 names and a cheque once a month, will not entail much work. If the amendment is defeated, and I find in the next 12 months that I have been wrong, I shall be only too happy then to support an amendment to achieve this object.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: It is amazing to find that at last we have this Chamber agreeing to additional taxation. Ever since I have been here we have fought to keep down costs. Now we are asked to pay local authorities five per cent. of this revenue for a very doubtful service. I do not know why we should attempt to increase costs for the motorist. The main idea is to keep the premiums as low as possible to provide protection for people injured by motorists.

Hon. L. Craig: It is the cheapest work they get done.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Yes, but now we are asked to add an additional five per cent. to remunerate people who are willing to do the work in their ordinary office time.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: Why not get a private accountant to do it for nothing?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: These officials are servants of the people. I was surprised to hear that Mr. Hall, a business man, took out quarterly and half-yearly licenses.

Hon. W. R. Hall: I did not speak for myself.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: If a man takes out an annual license and sells his car, he can transfer the license. Something extra has to be paid for a quarterly license. I cannot imagine a business man paying 10s. or even 4s. a year, if, when he makes a transfer, he can recover his costs.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I cannot let Sir Charles Latham get away with his statement that I, as a business man, license my car each quarter. Thousands of people license their cars for quarterly periods. I have at all times licensed my car for at least six months and there has always been a reason for doing that. This is a good Bill, and whether the road boards get five per cent. or nothing, I want to see this provision become law because it will save motorists hours of time, and that means money.

The Chief Secretary: Do not risk its being thrown out in another place.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I am not worried about that. About 30 insurance companies will be getting profits out of the third party insurance premiums paid to the local authorities, and insurance companies are the greatest profit-making institutions in the Commonwealth. A considerable amount of money will be made out of third party insurance. The road boards will not receive a considerable amount from the premiums. Sir Charles Latham would have us believe that the motorists would have to pay one shilling in the pound.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Who is going to pay it?

Hon. W. R. HALL: If the premiums are collected by the local authorities, surely the insurance companies can afford one shilling in the pound to pay back to them.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: There is no authority for that in the Bill.

Hon. W. R. HALL: We should try to make it happen now.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: The trust must visualise having considerable funds at its disposal because of the provisions of proposed new Section 3K. If the person doing all the work—the road board secretary or the town clerk—is not entitled to his shilling in the pound, I wonder why the people enumerated here should be paid.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The real purpose of the measure is to pay compensation to the injured.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I support the amendment.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Members apparently misunderstand the Act. Section 26 provides that the Governor may appoint a committee to inquire into and report upon the question whether the premiums charged under this Act, or whether any term, warranty or condition contained in any policy, is fair and reasonable. The object of the Bill is to avoid all overhead charges so that the premiums paid into the fund shall be available for the people who suffer as a result of these accidents. The idea is to cut the costs as much as possible by forming a trust. The committee would meet and say, "We have so much in hand, next year the premiums will be considerably reduced."

At present the premium in respect of a private car in the country is 18s., and the highest amount is £36 for a hire vehicle—a taxi-cab licensed under the Traffic Act to carry eight or more persons—in the city. The amount allowed for overhead charges must be taken into consideration in the premium. That is always done in every type of insurance and in all walks of life. We cannot buy a pocket handkerchief without the draper taking commission into account. If members desire to make this Bill a taxing measure by charging 5 per cent. additional premium on all policies, then by all means let them agree to the amendment. However, when they go back to their constituencies, I trust they will inform their people that the Government strongly opposed this increased taxation. When the Bill leaves here, it must go to another place and the Government is making earnest endeavours to cut

down on overhead charges so that premiums will be reduced. The premiums committee is endeavouring to allow the insurance companies no more than 5 per cent. profit. Therefore, the less the overhead charges, the less will be the premiums.

Hon. L. Craig: You are antagonising the Committee.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not care whether I am antagonising the Committee or not; I must tell members the truth. Whether another place will accept this amendment, if agreed to, is another matter, and from the information I can gather it will not accept it.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: That is correct.

Member: That is threatening the Committee.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It would be entirely wrong for me to allow members to think that another place will accept this amendment if it is agreed to. Local governing bodies, who get all the license fees, should be prepared to collect the insurance money and send it to the trust. After all, it is a very simple procedure.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I wish to clarify a point raised by the Chief Secretary a few minutes ago, that the secretaries were to receive this 5 per cent.

The Chief Secretary: No.

Hon. W. R. HALL: In view of the fact that the Chief Secretary knows that secretaries do not receive this 5 per cent., I intend to support the amendment.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Regarding the 1s. in the £1 to be taken by local authorities, I would inform the Committee that that does not include the City of Perth, because cars in the metropolitan area must register with the Traffic Branch. We must take into consideration that in the country we pay the same premiums as in the city.

The Chief Secretary: No. It is £1 16s. in the city and 18s. in the country, for an average car.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: There will be a cost on local authorities, because they will be called upon to provide paper, different materials, and so forth.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes 11

Noes 11

A tie 0

Ayes.

Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. A. L. Loton
Hon. R. J. Boylen	Hon. W. J. Maon
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. H. A. C. Daffen	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. E. M. Heenan	(Teller.)

Noes.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. L. A. Logan
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. Sir Frank Gibson	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. R. M. Forrest
Hon. Sir Chas. Latham	(Teller.)

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

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 5 to 29, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—FAIRBRIDGE FARM SCHOOL.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) [9.29] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is to give effect to an agreement that has been entered into between the London society and the Western Australian society of the Fairbridge Farm School. For some time, certain difficulties have arisen between the two bodies. The war broke out, and no children were sent out here during that period. The funds have been provided principally by the London society, and the children, of course, have come from England. There are similar organisations in other parts of the Empire and it is desired that the London society should control all the organisations in the colonies. After certain difficulties had been overcome, an agreement was entered into whereby the London society will take over complete control, and the property of the Western Australian society is to be vested for six years in the name of the two societies or, if the Western Australian society ceases to function, in the name of the London society.

At present there is a board controlling the Fairbridge Farm School and it is expected that a number of children will be arriving here shortly. The local committee consists of the following:—Professor Currie (chairman), Mr. R. W. Brownlie, Mr. Justice Walker, Mr. Murray Little, Dr. Fairbridge, Mr. A. H. Christian, Mr. Tyndal, Professor Cameron, Professor Bayliss, Mr. Walter Harper and Mrs. Jones. Thus the society has a strong local committee and it is hoped that in future things will run smoothly. We hope that the wonderful work done by the school in past years will be continued. These young migrants are the very people we want. Many of those who have passed through the Fairbridge Farm School have been wonderfully successful in life. The Bill is necessary to meet legal technicalities and to give effect to an agreement entered into between the two societies. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [9.32]: This Bill is necessary because it is unavoidable. Kingsley Fairbridge came to Western Australia many years ago and founded the Fairbridge Farm School. He was successful in acquiring land and, starting in a small way, he struggled on with the help of a few people. Finances ran low and he eventually went to England and raised money. The Prince of Wales took an interest in the society and Fairbridge was responsible for raising a large sum.

There was then established in London a council of the Fairbridge Society which was a different organisation from the one in Western Australia, though the latter was the original and principal one. The function was to raise money to be transmitted here and to send out children. The running of the farm school was in the hands of a Perth committee. This continued for some time, but differences of opinion arose between the two societies as to the way the children should be handled and the method of administration. Subsequently further schools were formed—one in Canada and one in New South Wales.

The Western Australian society felt from time to time that it was not being treated fairly. It appears that there had been a withholding of money and a favouring of other societies, thus causing a rift. In the

end the London society said it would not send us any more money or children until the control of the whole society was in its hands. Western Australia was not the only country that had trouble with the London society. However, in future, money will be made available and children will be sent here. The Bill is really an agreement to provide for the handing over of the assets of the Western Australian society to the control of the London society.

An extraordinary position has arisen. Instead of the society being able to get an unlimited number of under-privileged children to come out, it is a matter of the greatest difficulty to find them. Canada and the Eastern States want children and find it impossible to get them. Consequently, it appears that the need that existed for the institution years ago is not now so great, for British children at any rate. However, this Bill is necessary because it is inevitable, and for that reason I support the second reading. The Bill sets out the difficulties that have arisen between the two societies and that statement is correct.

On motion by Hon. Sir Charles Latham, debate adjourned.

MOTION—HOSPITALS, STAFFING AND ADMINISTRATION.

To Inquire by Royal Commission.

Debate resumed from the 11th November on the following motion by Hon. G. Bennetts:—

That in view of the unsatisfactory hospital conditions in the Goldfields and the constantly recurring difficulty in staffing the hospitals, this House requests the Government to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into and report upon—

- (a) the provision of nursing staffs adequate to meet the needs of the hospitals;
- (b) the administration of hospitals.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [9.37]: During recent months I have heard varying statements as to the reasons for the present shortage of nursing staffs. These statements are of three types. The first is that women have temporarily changed their outlook towards nursing and that this has been brought about by the psychological effect of war and must therefore be temporary and that, so long as we

bide our time, the natural instincts of women to care for the sick will once more induce them to fill these vacant posts. The second statement is that we are making nursing as a profession such that it is beyond the possibility of the State to find people to fill those posts and that the only solution is to return to the Sarah Gamp stage. The third statement is that the trouble is world-wide and therefore we are absolved from any attempt to provide a solution.

Nothing could be further from the truth than any of those three statements. The fact that they are made makes one feel that there is as yet very little true appreciation of the problem that faces us. It is because those who have held authority or semi-authority, either here or in some other parts of the world, entertain those views that progress has been so slow. I suppose I could be fair and still say that I was depressed and disappointed by the reply of the Chief Secretary on this motion. I felt that the Minister had an opportunity to place before the House something of the changing views which sooner or later must be accepted by the State, and an excellent opportunity to tell members what will be done in future, both in regard to the provision of nursing staffs and the reorganisation of our hospital system.

But there was one gleam in his statement, namely, that the central training school idea had been more or less accepted, even though it was found at the present moment to be entirely impracticable, and its impracticability was due to the fact that accommodation would have to be found for the number that would be called upon to occupy the training school. It therefore became perfectly obvious that the idea of the student nurse has not yet appealed. If we are to make any progress at all, we must realise that the old order has gone and that the new one has not only dawned but is also fast taking an active place in most nursing centres where there are medical schools and nursing organisations that have to meet the problem of staffing large institutions. Everywhere there is a reference to accepting the student problem.

I find that the fact of women marrying on the completion of their nursing training is given as one of the reasons for failure

to provide nursing staff, but those who make that statement forget that in this particular instance the number who have married in recent years is accounted for by the war. A large number served in the nursing profession during the war and then left to be married and take up domestic duties as a whole-time task. There has always been a percentage of loss in the nursing profession, and it is estimated on a world-wide basis that that loss is in the neighbourhood of 10 to 12 per cent. annually. Therefore it is a figure which can be accepted and used when estimating the annual intake required to provide adequate staffs.

The first essential in the changing sphere of nursing is to realise that added pay and shorter hours do nothing more than temporarily alter the position. The real truth lies in the alteration of status. Let us look at the present methods of nursing and we shall find that it has been the general policy to accept the staffing of hospitals by trainees, whereas the future will see that the hospital is staffed by trained persons, and that the training of nurses is regarded as a student problem. It is only natural I should regret that my report has not been made available to all members, because the views expressed in it are those of people from large institutions, and of people who have devoted their lives to the problem of the provision of nursing staffs.

One must also realise that the views which I brought back to the Government are not purely those of a person travelling abroad in one country, but views that have now been, in the main, accepted by all the bodies which have reported upon this important subject. It would be interesting to give the views which I have brought back on certain problems and place them alongside the recommendations of the "Working Party" on the recruitment and training of nurses in England. If members desire to investigate the position further, they can look at the Athlone report, the report of the Medical Planning Commission in Great Britain, and the excellent articles which have appeared in the "Lancet" in regard to the provision of health centres in the United Kingdom.

Let me put this problem to members in the way it was put to me by one of the senior matrons of the investigating bodies

in the United States. Her words to me were—

When it comes to the question of the training of nurses, it will be necessary for you to forget that you ever had training schools attached to hospitals. You will find in the future that the training of nurses will be taken over by some body external to the hospital, and that it will be an educational body—possibly a university.

It is maintained, not only by the department in which that matron works, but by many others I visited, that the cost of nursing training should be borne by a body completely external to the hospital; and that the true cost of a hospital would be then known because the hospital would be expected to provide its own training staff, like other organisations, and a full staff to meet the obligations and services it proposed to undertake. If a railway company proposes to give a 24-hour service, it must provide staff to meet that service; and any other organisation proposing to give a 24-hour service must do the same thing. It is maintained that hospitals in the future should do that, and they will, of necessity, have to meet the cost of these obligations, but not of training nurses.

The training, as proposed in Great Britain, also envisages student nurses, and it is suggested there that the cost of nursing training be separate from hospital costs, and be met by a body appointed to undertake the responsibility of the financial burden of the training of nurses. It would, therefore, appear that we may have to face this problem in the same way. We certainly must face the fact that we can no longer regard ourselves as having the right to staff hospitals with student trainees. The same principle as I have outlined has been accepted in America. Now from England comes this statement from which I quote from Chapter 15 of the Report of the "Working Party"—

2. Nurses in training must no longer be regarded as junior employees subject to an outworn system of discipline. They must be accorded full student status so far as the intrinsic requirements of nurse training permit.

20 (c). The finance of nurse training should be independent of hospital finance.

There is the first essential basis upon which the changing world of nursing must be hinged. There are those, however, who still believe that a totally extra mural training for nurses is not in the interests of the

patient, and the decision as to how far the training of nurses shall be actually divorced from the hospital is one that will require a considerable degree of thought in every part of the world where the plan is introduced. There is such a thing as partial extra mural training, and it is a partial type of this extra mural training which I consider to be best fitted for Western Australia. This is in contradistinction to the form of training which we now have, in which the trainee nurse is regarded as being an employee on the staff, and in which the whole of her training is carried out by the hospital, and she is disciplined as well as trained by that institution.

In the extra mural training, the nurse does not do any more, in relationship to the hospital, than would the student of any other profession. It is maintained by those who believe in this principle that the medical man is not asked to carry out any tasks inside a hospital until he has become a graduate in medicine; the same thing applies to the masseur and the pharmacist. There is, therefore, no reason why the nurse should be asked to learn on any other basis of studentship than that. If this suggestion were totally adopted it would mean that there would be relatively little need to provide housing accommodation for the nurse, because she would spend only certain times in the hospital in order to receive actual instruction in nursing training.

It might be necessary to provide accommodation for the percentage of nurses who would carry out night duty. But it is maintained by these extra mural thinkers that the nurse should have only that amount of night duty which it is considered necessary for her to gain a knowledge of night nursing procedures. Whether as an individual one believes in partial extra mural training or full extra mural training, there is a definite consensus of opinion that it is no longer justifiable to take a young girl, without any preliminary training, or even with the limited partial training that she now receives, and ask her to work in a ward of elderly people, or in a ward in which certain surgical and other measures are carried out.

Of course it has been realised that the psychological shock to a young girl in meeting such social conditions is one which, in some cases, causes considerable harm and cannot be recovered from without mental effort and the lapse of time. It is regarded

that we no longer have the right to ask a young girl to meet such a strain. One of the other difficulties in the provision of adequate nursing staff in the hospital is that there is a considerable wastage in the present method of training. This wastage has been made one of the major subjects of investigation by this "Working Party." The statement made by that committee will, I am sure, prove of considerable interest to members. I will read portions of them. The following appears in paragraph 91:—

Any impartial investigator entering many nurse training schools encounters an atmosphere of dissatisfaction or even discontent. Generally speaking, there is a considerable sense of frustration, and discipline is felt to be harsh and cramping and quite out of accord with modern notions of personal freedom. We are not referring so much to disciplinary requirements in periods of duty, but more to the restraints imposed upon a nurse's freedom in her personal life when she is not on duty.

There is also this statement—

The impression is sometimes left that senior members of staff are not really aware of, or fail fully to appreciate, the outlook of the younger generation.

The committee makes this interesting remark—

The opinion studies which we have made of student nurses who are still in training, as well as of qualified nurses, suggest strongly that the difference in attitude between a nurse who gives up training and one who does not is a difference in degree, not in kind. Under the present system, a point is reached during the training period when many students "waste". They are not necessarily altogether different in kind from their fellow students who remain.

They then go on to deal with one of the most interesting results of their studies. I make reference to the wastage in the nursing profession because in the study made on nursing at the Royal Perth Hospital, it was regarded that about 30 per cent. of the nursing entrants decided to give up nursing within their first year of hospital work. We lose roughly about one in three or one in four of all probationers who enter the hospital service within the training schools of this State. If this wastage could be overcome in any way, it might help considerably to solve the staffing problem. The working committee has this to say—

It became clear during the course of the interviews that the crux of the whole problem of wastage seemed to lie in the sphere of human relationships.

A common complaint was the lack of help, co-operation, encouragement or sympathy from senior staff who were said to begrudge the newcomer opportunities for better training and greater freedom. "I went through it, so should you" was the unwritten formula. The nurses alleged that, in some instances, there was undue interference with their personal affairs, extending to their correspondence and their comings and goings when off duty. There was often an assumption of infallibility on the part of seniors when differences arose with student nurses. Many were described as "narrow-minded," "old-fashioned," "sour" and "bad-tempered." They might humiliate students in the presence of colleagues or patients and, in other respects, "make the student's life a misery." Several were described as "hard-hearted" and "inhuman," often unreasonably refusing simple requests without explanation.

I can assure the House that any working committee investigating the nursing situation would find the same thing in any city of the world. The working committee came to this conclusion—

As a result of these interviews, we formulated the provisional hypothesis that the chief causes of wastage fell into two groups:—

(a) those associated with the attitude of senior staff and their alleged lack of sympathy and understanding, leading to a cramping and over-disciplined existence.

(b) those associated with the amenities of life, food, accommodation, hours and pressure of work, privacy, etc.

I realise that I can never cover, in one address to this House, the great field of nursing training and its problems, but I am picking out what I think are the highlights of the interesting points in order to set before the House a possible plan of action. I have referred to the personal side of nursing wastage to emphasise that there are today, in America, two standards of training. There is the standard for the basic nurse, which is, on a standard of time, very similar to that of our own, with a course of three years. However, in America these girls have considerably more training than do our own nursing trainees. Then there is a course extending over five years and in that five-year course two years are devoted to academic or University instruction.

In this higher course considerable emphasis is placed upon administration and upon personnel control. It has been said in many hospitals that since it has become possible to institute a rule that only those who have carried through nursing to the five-year

course shall be given authority, difficulties in discipline within wards, either as applied to student nurses, trainee nurses, assistant nurses, or domestics, have almost ceased. It is interesting, in relation to that, to again realise that the English report now makes the plain statement in its summary that there is need for a new procedure in selection for appointment to senior posts in hospitals.

Wherever the plan is adopted, there will, of necessity, be local requirements. I do not believe, for instance, that the five-year plan of nursing could be adopted here on the basis on which it is prescribed in America. I am also of the opinion that the two-year period of nursing as laid down in Great Britain would not meet our requirements either but I believe that somewhere between those two, we could lay down a plan of action that would meet the requirements of Western Australia. In the report which I presented to the Government, I suggested certain details which we might then arrange into a programme of nursing training. It is essential, and almost imperative, that we adopt in part the principle of the nurse trainees being students and it should therefore be possible to take nurses into training at an age one year younger than we do at present.

Hon. E. H. Gray. That is, at 17.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Yes. We would therefore in some measure, close a very big gap which now exists. At the moment the young girls leaving school, even though they may desire to do nursing, drift into some other vocation in life. The first year should be used as one of academic instruction. It would cover, as all University courses do, a course of training for eight months which would constitute an academic year. This should give instruction in sociology and sociological problems and a certain amount of psychology, and possibly administration associated with the various necessary subjects which are taught today such as anatomy, physiology and elementary nursing. Upon completion of that training, the actual nursing training should be limited to a period of two years. The nurse would then complete her training as a basically trained nurse at the date at which we would now make her a staff nurse.

During her first year at her hospital she should, having chosen what we may term

her mother hospital, spend the whole of that year in that institution being taught the fundamentals of nursing principles. During her second year she could migrate to the various institutions such as the Infectious Diseases Hospital, Wooroloo, and country hospitals and in that second year do a course of at least a period of midwifery which might be decided upon to be two or three months. This training would not in any way make a specialist nurse of her but it would give to that nurse the knowledge that is required to meet the ordinary needs of nursing a sick patient.

If it were desired by that nurse to specialise in any particular branch of the profession, she could then spend one further year and follow a course that should be laid down, so that at the end of that course she would receive a certificate making her a specialist nurse in that particular branch. At the moment we waste a lot of time training nurses to be able to carry out all the finer procedures of modern medicine and surgery whereas in truth the biggest number of them never accept any real authority in the higher spheres of nursing. This principle is adopted in the suggested changes in Great Britain where they have courses, such as nursing administration, which will prepare an individual for the post of matron and requires one academic year of training. In preparing nurses for senior appointment, they also require 12 or 18 months of post-graduate training; and so one can go through the various stages until one comes to midwifery teaching which makes the girl a sister in midwifery and capable of teaching midwifery to other nurses. She would also need to pass a post-graduate course of one year in addition to her basic training.

Most of the major hospitals which I visited did give in their general training a course of instruction in midwifery, and this provided to a very large extent the basic nursing requirements for midwifery in such hospitals. We are, at the present time, in a sorry state with the training of our midwifery nurses, and I believe it is due to the fact that we have rigidly adhered to the old principle that we must accept for midwifery training only those nurses that have received their full general nursing certificates. In places like the Massachusetts General Hospital they have their sisters who have specialised by post-graduate

courses and are in charge of midwifery hospitals. They give to their general nurses a knowledge of midwifery nursing, but such training does not entitle a nurse to handle a midwifery case on her own and she can only be an assistant to a doctor.

When she has carried through her post-graduate year of training she can take her own hospital in midwifery such as we have now in private hospital spheres and carry through such cases as she feels capable of handling in midwifery and she becomes an established expert in her particular line of work with authority to teach midwifery. She really becomes the parallel of the midwifery nurse that we have here. There are many hospitals in our State that are short of midwifery trained nurses and if we adopted the principle that at a training school such as Kalgoorlie, each trainee was to be given a time in general midwifery nursing, the problem of staffing the midwifery section of the Kalgoorlie Hospital might quite easily be overcome. It is little use insisting that we adhere to old principles, when in the rest of the world they are fast disappearing. We must accept in principle many of the changes that are now established in so many other countries.

When I refer to nurses finishing their training in two years after having had a year's academic training, I am going further than the English system in which it is proposed that the whole basic training of a nurse be given to her in that two years. There they have not adopted the academic year beforehand, I believe, having studied both, that the principle adopted today in America will provide a higher status of nursing than is indicated in this report. I think we should aim at something between the two. I said we would then have a trained nurse at a date when we now have a staff nurse. I would like members to realise that we call upon staff nurses in our wards to do a task very similar to that of a trained sister.

Before the new building was erected, in the whole of the Royal Perth Hospital there was only one trained sister and one staff nurse on duty for the entire building each night, and the proportion of fully-trained staff on duty in the hospital is amazingly small. The number varies, and I hesitate to mention any because what I might state could be correct one day but might be wrong the next day. However,

the number is very small indeed. If we are to adopt the principle of student nurses, we must realise that the proportion of trained to untrained staff must be radically altered.

We have at the moment the proportion of one trained staff to seven to nine trainees. As I have said in this House previously, it is a dilution that no other industry would ever allow. There can be little or no instruction given to nurses within the wards, and it is an accepted principle in the training given here, and generally acknowledged by the nurses themselves, that they learn by doing rather than as a result of teaching. If we are to make them students, we must alter that principle entirely, and we must then adopt what applies in many American institutions where they have as many as one to two and one to three as the basis of trained to student nurses. We must bring to our hospitals, if we are to teach our nurses, a greater proportion of trained staff than we have ever had before.

The risk we have run—I maintain we have always run that risk—in the continuation of the present position in our hospitals with regard to the proportion of senior trained staff, is that we make nursing relatively a dead-end job. The number of actual posts in the Royal Perth Hospital—I speak of the period prior to the erection of the new buildings—that would become vacant annually for nurses, would not represent half a dozen, yet the number of trainees in each year would be over 100. The principle upon which we have filled our senior posts at the Royal Perth Hospital has always been in the past that we looked to the trainees of that institution and, in the main, reserved those posts, when possible, for them, which means that nurses trained in other Government hospitals have little or no hope of receiving senior posts in the Royal Perth Hospital.

With the institution of a student nursing service, we would eliminate many of the difficulties with regard to nursing as an avocation without a future, and we would provide avenues of promotion that today do not exist. These are the methods which I am sure we will have to adopt sooner or later, and I regret that in the time that must elapse between now and when we are able to provide regional hospitals, we have not yet accepted for this State a future plan for nursing. I have suggested a course of

training for student nurses. I admit that there would be a difficulty in that during the academic year we would have to provide payment for the nurses in training, but I am quite certain that the extra year's service which we would receive from the nurses by allowing them to finish their course and become basically trained nurses one year earlier, would amply repay our expenditure. There are certain other conditions that we must face. No longer can we expect that all the trained staff of a hospital shall live in.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: There are now a number of nurses who live outside our own institution, but we must come right down to the point where we will provide only accommodation for such members of the trained staff as are filling key positions. We must make it quite plain to all that we do not require discipline with regard to the trained nurse. If we have trained a nurse in whom there has not been established the necessary discipline, we have failed in our training. At various places living out has been accepted as a right of the trained nurse, and the employment of a nurse looked upon in exactly the same way as we would regard the employment of women in any other sphere. Considerable progress has been made in consequence, and much contentment has ensued.

For instance, I saw in Honolulu an experiment that had proved eminently successful, under which the hospital had taken over a whole block of flats. It was not so big as to allow of any possibility of there being empty flats, but it was done so that they could provide the nursing staff with accommodation close to the hospital. There has always been a considerable demand amongst nurses for accommodation in those flats. The hospital runs the institution as would any other owner of a block of flats. Miss Sleeper, a matron of Massachusetts, for whom I developed a very great respect, told me that the greatest single phase of progress made in connection with her institution was the handing over to a trained nurse of the whole of her salary, without any deduction. The nurse then received a statement of her account covering all the things she had used in the hospital, including charges for meals, laundry and so forth, and the nurse paid the amount due to the hospital.

Of course, they are big institutions over there but some of the buildings are larger than will be the Royal Perth Hospital. It means that the nurse, for instance, would pay for the meals that she had at the canteen associated with the hospital. If the nurse decided not to have her meal at the institution, she would not be involved in any expense there but would pay for her meal where she had it. Such changes have become accepted as part of the nurses' conditions. One other very essential feature in the large institutions where there are a number of trainees is the difficulty of discipline in the nurses' home, especially when some of the seniors may have, to some extent, lost the ideas of young girls.

Provision to meet that difficulty has been made with what is known as a lay counsellor. Most of our institutions have been accustomed to appoint what are called hom sisters. I first learned of the lay counsellor from Miss Sleeper, but in other institutions I found a similar type of officer had been appointed. The task of the lay counsellor is to act as an intermediary between the student nurse and the trainee, whichever she may be on the one hand and the sister on the other. The counsellor actually fills in the institution, the role of mother of the nurses. That in itself, I found had produced a sense of satisfaction amongst the training staff and had given them a considerable feeling of security in fact that they had someone to place their case before the higher councils of the institution. I have touched only briefly on this vast question of training changes, but I fear it is one on which we must make decisions very soon because it is quite impossible to go on hoping that conditions will alter. It has been proved in those countries that hoped for the alteration, that it did not eventuate; and thus new methods had to take the place of the old. I realise I have given members a very sketchy outline of what the future alteration in the training of nurses involves.

The motion before the House has two aspects—that of the nurses and that of hospitals. During the Address-in-reply debate, I had something to say about the handling of hospital institutions in our midst. I think we should accept the statement made to us by the Chief Secretary as being a very honest one, when he said that our hospitals at the moment are in an appalling condition. That is quite true. However,

there are means by which, I think, we can better the status of our hospitals other than by carrying on with our present methods and attempting to repair those in existence. I must again point out that there are in this State avenues for about 90 odd matrons, and matrons are not people that can be picked up here, there and everywhere. They are nurses who have completed their course of training and have an aptitude for hospital administration. Not every nurse can become a matron, or rather, should become one.

We must, if we intend to help ourselves, concentrate our hospitals in certain areas. Hospitals, too, have a new future. When one reads what I am about to quote—portion of an address by the Surgeon-General of the United States, Surgeon-General Parran—one begins to realise that there are changes ensuing for the hospital in its relation to the community. He says—

I believe that the hospitals today face a broader responsibility in their relation to society than ever before. The hospitals of the past have been dedicated primarily, if not exclusively, to the treatment of disease. I believe that the hospital of the future will have a broader function and will be more closely related to the problem of national health.

When one begins to look further at the health centres which I outlined in brief to the House on the Address-in-reply, one finds in the "Lancet" of the 4th January, 1947, this statement in relation to health centres which are to be built not only in rural but also in urban areas in England—

The days when a doctor armed only with his stethoscope and his drugs could offer a fairly complete medical service are gone. He cannot now be all-sufficient. For efficient work he must have at his disposal modern facilities for diagnosis and treatment, and often these cannot be provided by a private individual or installed in a private surgery. He must also have easy and convenient access to consultant and specialist opinion, whether at hospital or elsewhere, and he must have opportunities of real collaboration with consultants.

One begins to realise that in the future a hospital will no longer be merely an institution to which a patient is taken when sick, but something which must take its place as the essential part in the preservation of national health. Thinking in this way, one begins to realise that the hospital must form the nucleus of a number of health centres and that it must be provided with all the modern facilities for treatment that are so necessary today. Let me deal

with one or two practical suggestions on that basis, in view of what is happening within our own State.

So far, I have not heard that we are to adopt the plan of regional hospitals. I have not heard a definite statement that we have accepted this principle, nor have I heard any definite statement as to what a regional hospital is or what work shall be done in a regional hospital, or what number of beds shall be provided in a hospital before it can be regarded as regional. Those are factors which must be known before our plans can be completed. We must realise that there are very few towns in the State in which we can place more than one regional hospital. If, for instance, we are to accept the fact that Geraldton should have a regional hospital, it seems to me to be unwise at the same time to allow a large private hospital to be built there, because there would not be a sufficient number of patients to warrant the establishment of a regional hospital if they were divided between the two institutions. A hospital today must provide all modern facilities, and these are exceedingly expensive.

Nowhere do I know of any town in the State than can afford to have two large hospitals. If I were in charge, I would come to some common agreement with St. John of God Hospital, where there is that excellent body of women who are doing such a marvellous service for the State, and see how best we could utilise the services which could be provided by the State, and the services given by them. It would be unwise to contemplate a hospital, costing £100,000 or more, being built by St. John of God in Kalgoorlie, whilst we attempt to build a regional hospital there. Neither of them would be regional hospitals. One must realise the fact today that if one provides a building fully equipped, the cost will be in the vicinity of £2,000 per bed, and £100,000 spent at Kalgoorlie would only provide St. John of God with an efficient 50-bed hospital; the same amount spent by the Government would also only provide 50 beds. In neither of those hospitals would it be possible to install an adequate x-ray plant or a first-class laboratory.

I believe that we could, by reorganisation, build into the State a hospital service of which we could be proud. I am quite certain that all the bodies interested in the care of the sick would combine together to

do that. I speak as one who has had an opportunity of discussing hospitals in the State with the Reverend Mother of St. John of God. She realises the difficulties, just as we all do. I feel certain that there could be some plan evolved by which we could ensure the provision of effective regional hospitals in our big country towns, where there was the necessary population, whether those hospitals were run by the State, by St. John of God or any other body. But we must have some plan in our minds, because the spending of money on the small hospitals that exist today is unsound. We should be concentrating that expenditure in the areas which will ultimately have regional hospitals. Certain fundamental principles must be adopted. We cannot leave people in country towns without medical care; but we cannot afford to perpetuate the system of very small hospitals. We must attempt to aggregate them, so that we can provide adequate medical treatment with all modern facilities as close to those people as we possibly can.

Of course, the Chief Secretary may be correct in saying that there is nothing to be learnt from a Royal Commission, because the views of Royal Commissions are not always accepted and there are a number of reports which are available to members on the questions of training of nurses and hospital training. But I say there is a tremendous amount that could be learnt by means of a permanent commission. I believe we are fundamentally unsound in asking our Department of Health to control hospitals as well as to administer the Health Act. Ever since I have been a member, I have maintained—and my profession has made repeated requests to the Government on the matter—that a commission spending its whole time in caring for the hospital problem of the State should be formed. There is ample work for it to do and I think I have tonight given good reasons for the appointment of such a permanent body.

Let me give one more reason, and I shall conclude. We have one very serious problem that we have as yet entirely neglected; that is the care of the aged and chronically sick. It is one that must be faced by the community, because the methods we are adopting for the care of the aged sick are in many respects lamentable. In the provision of nursing attention for the aged sick, is it wise to employ young girls—trainees—

to look after people at the end of life? I do not think so. The effect of such work on young girls entering the nursing profession is bad. Under the present arrangement, whereby we have two chronic wards at the Royal Perth Hospital, the work is so depressing to these girls that one constantly hears the old building of the hospital held up as a place of despair. We have nurses and sisters there who are performing a magnificent task.

I wonder often whether we are fair. I wonder whether we should segregate these old people, or adopt the attitude that, when the new building is complete, the aged sick should be spread equally amongst the others acutely sick, rather than aggregate them. Or, if we answer that in the negative, should not we endeavour to arrange a system of nursing for these people? Should not people who have passed through long years of nursing service and who are reaching middle age be organised into a nursing body to care for those people? I have a feeling that members of this Chamber, or the majority of them, have reached the age when they can take a different and more compassionate view of the aged sick. That is a situation with which we must deal.

The Home of Peace deserves considerable expansion. The Nuffield report on the care of the aged sick would repay study by all members. I point out that five per cent. of the aged people are constantly in institutions. Is it wise, therefore, to provide some organisation or institution that would care for that five per cent.? These people enter the Royal Perth Hospital, their health restored to a certain extent and then they are sent to their home or to a convalescent home having little or no nursing facilities, so that within a very short time they are back again in the Royal Perth Hospital. Then there begins the old struggle once more. They could be kept in better health if some more permanent supervision could be kept over them, but one must realise that those people have their own views and ideas, which they must be allowed to express. They may prefer to live in their own surroundings.

There are multitudinous problems that a permanent hospital commission could study and investigate. I am sure we would never have reached this impasse, this tragic con-

dition of our hospitals, if we had had in existence a commission of the nature I suggest. At the present time we have the finest intermediate hospital in the whole of Perth, without a single patient. That hospital remains empty while doctors are struggling every day to obtain beds for patients in the private hospitals in Perth. I am referring to the private wards in the two top floors of the Royal Perth Hospital, which remain empty through lack of staff. In reply to a question recently asked in this House we were made aware that the finest private hospital in Perth exists on the two top floors of the Royal Perth Hospital, but the beds have never seen a patient, in spite of the fact that doctors spend hours every day trying to find room for people in the existing private hospitals.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: What is the reason for that?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: That we have not the nursing staff because we have never made up our minds what we should do about providing a nurses' home. We still have not decided what to do in order to provide a home for the nurses of the Royal Perth Hospital. I believe the chance of building a proper home for them was lost when we did not resume Macfarlane's building. I feel that we should even now go to the Commonwealth authorities and ask them to hand back that building so that we might utilise the site in implementing a proper programme.

Apparently nobody has yet realised what a great problem awaits us when we come to provide a home for these nurses. It is one that can be solved only when we face the first difficulty I have mentioned and come to a decision as to whether we are to adopt the student nurse principle. We must face up to that question and, having decided it, we can then make up our minds what to do about a nurses' home. It is unfair to ask the Commissioner of Public Health, a man trained intensively in public health matters, to control also the whole of our hospitals. The time has arrived when a thorough reorganisation of the department is necessary and when the whole of the maintenance, organisation and control of our public hospitals should be placed in the hands of a permanent commission, as has been done in so many other parts of the world, and even in parts of Australia.

HON. H. A. C. DAFFEN (Central) [10.50]: I was inclined to agree with the Chief Secretary that a Royal Commission to inquire into the position of our hospitals was unnecessary. I felt that, as was the case with the Royal Commission on our railways, it would probably tell us a lot of things we already knew, but since the appearance in "The West Australian" on Friday, the 12th instant, of the statement that a permit to build had been issued to a private hospital in Kalgoorlie, for the sum of £100,000, I have become somewhat alarmed. It is true that that statement has since been modified, but it leaves a feeling of uncertainty as to any definite programme, especially with relation to Geraldton, where there is still no sign of the long-promised regional hospital.

It is most important that country hospitals should be fitted into some well-considered plan, especially in the case of centres such as Kalgoorlie, Geraldton and Albany, which are situated so far from the superior medical services available in the metropolis. Those centres are thrown very much upon their own inadequate resources, in spite of the fact that the people of our country areas are entitled to the best medical and hospital services possible. Should an investigation on the lines suggested by Mr. Bennetts be held, it would prove that people of the more distant areas are not getting adequate medical services. Such a body of inquiry could make valuable recommendations with regard to the providing of the necessary facilities and the urgency of the establishment of regional hospitals at places such as Geraldton. That is a matter upon which that community, sometimes divided in other directions, is practically unanimous.

I quite realise the difficulties due to shortages of labour and material, but I feel that if we could get started on the preliminary work now, the necessary materials and labour would in all probability be in better supply by the time we were ready to use them. A little foresight should be shown in dealing with this most important question. Our outlying centres deserve the fullest consideration and that is especially the case at Geraldton where the old public hospital, built in 1887, is completely out of date. The maternity home also is a disgrace. It is at present situated in the old Residency, one of the first buildings erected

in what is among the earlier towns of the State. Of all the outlying centres, Geraldton is no doubt the worst situated in the matter of hospital facilities.

I favour the appointment of a Royal Commission, in the hope that it will establish and lay down a definite priority for the building of hospitals based on the needs of the various districts. At the same time it could very usefully review the proposals put forward to the Government by Dr. Hislop, who has given a general survey of the whole position. I move an amendment—

That after the word "of" in line two of paragraph (a) of the motion the word "the" be struck out.

If the amendment is agreed to the effect will be to apply the motion to hospitals generally.

Amendment put and negatived.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South—in reply) [10.57]: As a result of valuable information obtained tonight from Dr. Hislop's speech and the views expressed by members on the hospital position in the State, I think it is evident that the Government should take note of the present situation. Dr. Hislop has even stated that a permanent commission should be set up.

The Chief Secretary: On a point of order, Mr. President, I understood that the hon. member was asking for permission to withdraw his motion.

The PRESIDENT: No; he is speaking in reply.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: It has been stated that a great many of our available nurses are employed in attending to aged men in various homes, which is quite true. Further, it is not in the interests of young girls to do such nursing because when I was last at the Coolgardie Hospital, the nurses had to put up with a lot from elderly and cantankerous men, although they were quite attentive in their duties. Those men are not really sick, but are without homes. In order that this class of patient may be looked after, some special provision is required.

I am surprised to hear that the two top floors of the Royal Perth Hospital are vacant because of shortage of nursing staff. This again shows that some organisation such as a commission is needed to inquire into the whole system. Personally, I think that extra

pay would solve the problem. I say that because at the Norseman Hospital the nurses receive a bonus in addition to their pay. The local hospital board is recouped its electric light payments to the mining company and the board then distributes the money amongst the nurses, with the result that no difficulty is experienced in keeping a full nursing staff at that hospital. I wish to thank the Chief Secretary for permitting me to have this motion discussed, and I now ask leave of the House to withdraw it.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

House adjourned at 11.2 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 17th November, 1948.

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