

The MINISTER FOR MINES would be pleased to let the hon. member have them next day, if he called at the Mines Department.

Mr. Troy: Thanks.

Question (that the Schedule be agreed to) put and passed.

Title, Preamble—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment; the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 2.25 a.m., until the afternoon.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 6th August, 1908.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock p.m.

Prayers.

QUESTION—RAILWAY FENCING, GREAT SOUTHERN.

Mr. BARNETT asked the Minister for Railways: In view of the number of cattle and horses killed on the Great Southern Railway and the risk of accident to trains arising from that source, is it the intention of the Government to fence the Great Southern Railway line at an early date?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: No; but where financial considerations will allow, the Railways will be fenced in the more closely settled portions.

QUESTION—RAILWAY FREE PASS.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Was a free railway pass recently granted to a Mr. Simpson? 2, If so, why and on whose recommendation was this special consideration shown?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Yes, for 10 days. 2, On account of the work he has done in the interests of Western Australia by lecturing and otherwise making known its resources in New South Wales and other parts of the Commonwealth and New Zealand.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

Midland Junction Boundaries, introduced by the Attorney General.

Health Act Amendment (Rates), introduced by the Premier.

Permanent Reserves (Subiaco, two) Rededication, introduced by the Premier.

PERMANENT RESERVE (YORK) REDEDICATION BILL. In Committee.

Mr. Daglish in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1:

Mr. HOLMAN: The Premier had promised to give some information about this measure.

The PREMIER: This Bill was for the purpose of changing a reserve in York used for recreation purposes, and required now as a municipal endowment. This was done at the request of the municipal council and burgesses of York. The land was held and enjoyed by the people of York for recreation purposes, and the council pointed out now that the place was well provided with recreation grounds, and it wished this particular block to be dedicated for municipal purposes. The people of York were consulted at a public meeting assembled, and their assent

was given to the proposed change. The council was desirous of erecting municipal sale-yards on this block. The representative of the Lands Department at York saw no reason why the request should not be acceded to, and it appeared to be the wish of the council and the people that the alteration should be brought about.

Mr. HOLMAN: Having now the assurance of the Premier that the people of York were favourable to this change being made, we could not very well object to the measure. He had, however, known cases where reserves had been taken away from people who were not favourably disposed towards any change, and cases where municipalities had asked that various recreation reserves should be used for municipal purposes, which meant that the means of recreation would be taken from the people. When matters like this came before the House, there should be some information supplied. Members should be absolutely certain that the interests of the people of York in the matter of recreation were not being disturbed; but as we were assured that there were several recreation reserves in York there apparently was no objection to the passing of the Bill.

The PREMIER: The reply of the municipality when the Lands Department wrote saying that before the matter could be considered the department must know if the burgesses had been consulted, was to the effect that the burgesses had been consulted at a public meeting and were agreeable that the alteration should be made. There was already a reserve of 343 acres for recreation, and another reserve of park lands almost adjoining. The area dealt with by the Bill was about four acres. The interests of the people were apparently safeguarded in the matter of recreation reserves. He did not care to alter the purpose of any reserve from recreation, but in the circumstances there was no necessity for taking objection to this alteration.

Mr. TAYLOR: It was questionable whether the whole of the four acres was required for sale-yards, but if the land was really to be used as an endowment for the council, of course it could be used by the council in the general in-

terests of the municipality. But first the Government should consider whether it was wise to hand over four acres to the council as an endowment, and it would be well for the Committee to know what land the Government had already handed over to the York council as an endowment. [*The Premier: The council owned this piece of land now.*] Yes, for recreation purposes only. The land should only be used for recreation and not for municipal purposes. If it were given to the council as an endowment they would certainly use it for the advantage of the municipality, as was done with endowment blocks by councils throughout Australia. If we knew what area had already been handed over as endowment to the York municipality we would know whether it was wise to hand the block over or not for that purpose; and we would know whether the York municipality had been treated as fairly as other municipalities of a similar population and of similar importance. It was a good principle to hand over land for recreation purposes, and also to endow councils, but probably the York council had not been forgotten in the way of endowments in the past. The question was whether it was justified in getting another four acres, probably in a prominent part of the town. And another question arose that if the council did not need all the land for sale-yards the balance might be used by the Government for State purposes, especially, as the Premier has already said, since York had already sufficient land for recreation purposes. If the Premier satisfied him on the points raised there would be no objection on his part to the passage of the Bill. It was to be regretted that influenza prevented the member for York attending the House and giving the necessary explanation on the points raised.

Mr. HOLMAN: A glance at the plans showed that it was doubtful whether it was wise to pass the Bill. Although there were plenty of reserves in York, it was possible this block was the only area available for cricket, football, and other sports; and the block should not be handed over unless we knew that the people interested were properly con-

sulted in regard to the alteration. According to the file, a meeting of burgesses had been held, but it might have been a small meeting. The young men of the locality were entitled to say whether they agreed to the land being taken from them and made a sale-yard of. A portion of the park lands could be set aside for sale-yard purposes; and that land was more conveniently situated. He moved—

That progress be reported.

In the meantime members would be able to find out whether the people were satisfied in regard to this endowment.

Motion put and negatived.

The PREMIER: The solicitude displayed by two members was quite refreshing. He imagined that if progress had been reported these members would have spent the week-end in York making inquiries; and he could quite understand the member for Mt. Margaret (Mr. Taylor) seeing whether there was a suitable running ground there for holding a sheffield handicap, or if he could get 120 yards somewhere else in York than at this spot. There was a reserve in one block at York of 143 acres, another of 27 acres, another recreation reserve of not less than seven acres, while the park lands, almost adjoining the reserve mentioned in the Bill, contained about 10 acres, and in addition to that there was a recreation and show-ground of three times the area on the opposite side of the street, opposite the railway station. It would be to the interests of the people generally if this land were given to them for sale-yard purposes. Members would see York was very fortunately situated as far as reserves were concerned. He knew no other town in Western Australia were apparently there was so many reserves as in York.

Mr. HOLMAN: There were many reserves in York, but the question was whether those reserves were available to the public. We had a show-ground at Claremont, but if anyone desired to play a football match there a heavy amount would be charged. The same thing might apply in regard to the reserves at York.

The seven-acre park at York was not available for football and such games; it was more of a garden. It might be that the area which the municipal council of York were trying to get possession of was the only available ground for sports purposes. It was not right to take away a reserve in any town until we knew that the requirements of the public were met. In almost every centre of the State the youth were not provided with proper sports grounds, and he was opposed to taking away reserves unless others were provided of a suitable character. The file did not show whether any consideration had been given to the wishes and desires of the young people of York.

Mr. TAYLOR: The Premier avoided answering the pertinent questions put to him, but glibly pointed out the area in York that was available for recreation purposes. He avoided telling the House the area which already had been granted by the Government to the municipality as endowment blocks. If this information were given, members would be able to judge whether the municipality was amply provided for. Why should York receive more from the Government than any other municipality in the State? The endowment was one of four acres of land, but the Committee had not been informed what was the value of the property. Surely an approximate estimate should be given as to the value. Not only that, but the Committee should be informed what was the value of the other endowments held by the municipality. Parliaments were the guardians of the people, and it was now suggested we should trade away the land to the Municipality of York and not to the people as a whole. Progress should be reported in order that much necessary information should be provided. The York Municipality should not be placed in a better position than other municipalities in the State.

The PREMIER: The title-deeds of the land showed that the property was held by the municipality at the present time. [Mr. Taylor: Only for recreation purposes.] It was now desired that the municipality should be allowed to use the

land for sale-yards. One would think from the remarks of the member that the Committee was asked to make a special gift to the York council of the land. The value of the block was approximately about £300. The only question before the Committee was whether the municipal council were justified in altering the purpose for which the land was given. The statement by the municipality set out that the people concerned had been consulted at a public meeting. The Government had asked the officers of the Department to report upon it. No protest had been raised from any individual, club, or society against the alteration of the purpose of the reserve. While the defence by the member of the rights of the people was to be admired, in this particular case we should recognise that the York council already owned the land and it would be in the interests of the people there that the sale-yards should be established in so suitable a spot and be owned by the municipality rather than by a private individual.

Mr. HOLMAN: The Premier was hardly fair in saying there had been a public meeting, for the minute attached to the file said the burgesses of York had been consulted at a meeting. It may have been a small meeting of a few people desirous of getting the sale-yards established on that site. Had it been a proper public meeting and had no protest been made, he would have offered no objection. His sole object was to conserve the interests of the people who might desire the land for recreation purposes. It appeared that a few years ago the Government had to pay £50 an acre for 16 acres for a show-ground at York. That showed there was a lack of recreation grounds there. Progress should be reported and farther consideration delayed until the people of York had been communicated with. All that would be necessary would be to send telegrams to the secretaries of the recreation bodies at York and if the replies showed there were plenty of recreation grounds there no farther objection would be taken.

Hon. F. H. PIESSE: As to the purchase some years ago of land in a similar

position, he might inform members that a block was obtained some seven or eight years ago for a show-ground, and that it cost about £50 an acre. He knew York thoroughly and the people there. There were a great many recreation grounds in the vicinity of the town, along the river bank below Avon Terrace. It was decidedly in the interests of the town that the Bill should be passed, so that suitable sale-yards might be constructed in a convenient spot. Members opposite need have no fear that there were not sufficient recreation grounds in the town. The York people were well able to look after their own interests, and if there had been any objection to the proposed course, a protest would have been lodged some time ago. It would be quite safe to pass the Bill.

Mr. TAYLOR: Progress should be reported, to allow of a telegram being sent to the recreation bodies asking them whether they had any objection to raise against the proposal. At present it was suggested that the Bill should be passed on the bare, bald statement of the Premier that a public meeting was held. It now appeared, however, on a perusal of the file, that a public meeting had not been called. The debate should not be continued in the absence of the member for the district and on the very few facts presented to the Committee. There was no desire on his part to stonewall, but all he desired was that an injustice should not be done to a section of the community at York. There was a very great difference between land held for recreation purposes and that granted as an endowment to the council.

The PREMIER: In deference to the hon. member's wish, he would not press the third reading of the Bill. He promised he would send a wire to the member for York, if now in York, or send to someone else there, informing him of the objection that had been raised; and if there was any strong opposition, he would not press the third reading.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, report adopted.

MOTION—RAILWAY COMMISSIONER'S APPOINTMENT.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS (Hon. H. Gregory) moved—

That an appointment by His Excellency the Governor of Mr. J. T. Short as Commissioner of Railways, at a salary of £1,500 a year, in the terms of Executive Council minute, be approved.

He said: In regard to the motion, it will be remembered that in the Railway Act of 1904, Section 7, there is a provision to the effect that no appointment of Commissioner of Railways can be made without the approval of Parliament. I have much pleasure now in asking Parliament to approve of the appointment of Commissioner of Railways which has been offered by the Government to Mr. J. T. Short. Before dealing with this motion fully, I would like to have something to say about railways generally. When the Railways Vote was under discussion last night, I was asked if I was going to make some statement, and I informed hon. members that as I would be talking on railway matters to-night I would reply to statements which were then made and matters which were referred to as coming within the province of the Railway Department, and the cost of the administration of the railways for the past 12 months, during which time the department has been under the control of Mr. Short. I thought I would reply slightly to many of the criticisms which have been raised. One of the chief criticisms was that there has been a lot of sweating by Mr. Short in connection with the employment of workmen on the railway system. Many statements have been made, but the speakers have not taken care to try to find out whether those statements would bear examination. For instance, there was the statement made by the member for Leonora, who said that some of the railway men were employed from 12 to 15 hours a day. It is quite possible there may have been a single instance, or an occasional instance, where after an accident had happened a man was asked to work more than the ordinary hours. For example, there was an accident on the Collie Railway: the Commissioner went down, and

the men were at work there for nearly 20 hours after that derailment.

Mr. Bath: Is it not a fact that station masters after having put in their time have taken work home to do?

The MINISTER: I do not think so. It may be that some officers take some of their work home, men who take a little more than ordinary interest in their work and are trying to keep that work up to date; but there is no change to-day from what there has been and always will be. I asked the hon. member if he would tell me the stations where men are working these hours, and he failed to do so. In fact I thought he was not satisfied himself with the information that had been given to him.

Mr. Scaddan: What about the salaried class?

The MINISTER: I will deal with that afterwards. The point was raised in regard to the wages paid to fettlers. The Leader of the Opposition speaking here the other night referred to the fact that permanent way hands were receiving 7s. a day. That statement was also made before. The Leader of the Opposition pointed out that that action was taken by the Government at the time of the last arbitration award. In connection with that, I want to say the present Government were not in power when the workmen in the railway system applied for the increase in wages and applied to the Arbitration Court; then the Commissioner of Railways cited a case against the men also. The result was that all along the line the wages of the fettlers were reduced by the court from 8s. to 7s. per day and in many other instances similar reductions were also made. I pointed out recently in the Press that we insisted upon that 8s. being paid, and the Leader of the Opposition said "If you did pay it you simply made a virtue of necessity for the men would not work for less than 8s. a day." Now, they were never asked to work for less than 8s. a day. When the arbitration award was made the Commissioner pointed out to me that if he reduced the men from 8s. to 7s. a day we would save between £15,000 and £16,000 a year, and he made a strong recommendation to me that the wages should be

reduced to 7s. 6d. I would not have said this but for the fact that the late Commissioner had stated it himself, that it was his desire to make that reduction. I reported the matter to Cabinet and Cabinet considered that the wage being paid was only a fair wage and as long as we had good men we should pay them, and we gave instructions to the Commissioner that 8s. a day was to be the wage paid. Still we hoped to be able to make considerable reductions and economies in connection with the railway administration. I want to flatly contradict the statement, as far as the railway permanent way men are concerned. The Commissioner has power to put on probationers at 7s. a day, and in the whole of the railway service, when this complaint was made by the Leader of the Opposition, there were only five men receiving 7s. per day, and none of these men had been in the service for more than three months. A statement was also made by the Leader of the Opposition to the effect that men were employed in the Midland workshops at 6s. 6d. per day. Well, in a great big system like this it is easy to find out some little incident by which you can try to damn it. The question should be raised, Are the men being fairly dealt with? I asked whether there were any adult labourers in the workshops being paid less than 7s. a day, and the answer was that there was an old man there, 70 years of age, who was employed on odd jobs in the stores branch. He, after having had a mild dispute with the man in charge of that branch, left his employment. He was being paid 6s. 6d. per day. We gave this man employment at the workshops, and I do not think any member would object to an instance of that kind. There has been something said about porters. We have a number of adult porters who are only receiving 6s. 6d. per day. Those young fellows owing to the length of time they have been in the service should get an increase, but the Commissioner has given instructions that unless they pass an examination for safe working—a very simple examination it is; we give them every facility in the Institute to teach them safe working—these men were told that un-

less they passed the examination they would not get the increased wage. It simply means that if they do not succeed in passing, they will be discharged from the service.

Mr. Johnson: Have you gone into the examination papers?

The MINISTER: I know nothing about the safe working of railways, and unlike those members who talk about railways I do not pose as a railway expert. We have officers who look after the various branches. There is the engineer who looks after the existing railways; we have an engineer who looks after the workshops; and we have a gentleman who has had a long career in connection with the traffic department, and it is for these gentleman who control the railways to see that the men they employ should take a proper interest in their work and pass examinations to render them thoroughly capable.

Mr. Johnson: When you were in Opposition you were an expert on every conceivable occasion.

The MINISTER: The hon. member is now wearing the mantle. The examination is a very slight one—a very easy one to learn. Special facilities are given them to enable them to pass this examination, and we have made up our minds that unless these young fellows will take an interest in their work we must get others who will.

Mr. Bolton: Can they always go up for that examination when they are ready to do so?

The MINISTER: I think there are some 14 or 15 young fellows and we are giving them every chance to qualify, and we are prepared to assist them in every possible way.

Mr. Bolton: Some of these young fellows have two or three children.

The MINISTER: There are none over 21. There was another statement made in connection with the casual hands employed near the Perth sheds. The foreman there wanted a number of hands and we have made it a rule that persons who have been employed in the department before, men who were retrenched, should have the first chance of employment, and at the time this work was offering there

were none of these men available. As soon as it came under the notice of the workers' association they wrote to the department, who replied that when these men were taken on, there were no retrenched men offering, and that if the association informed the department that there were retrenched men available they would get the places. We have endeavoured to keep faith with the association, and wherever we have made any promise we have endeavoured to carry it out in its entirety. The member for Guildford made a statement that a number of workmen in the workshops who had been employed at 8s. were retrenched and put on again at 7s., and the hon. member promised to give me full particulars so that I might make inquiry into the matter. I did not ask the hon. member the names of the men to send on to the different officers, but I asked him to give me the particulars without mentioning names, and I said that I would only be too pleased to examine the complaint. But I may say there has been no attempt made in any sense to make a reduction in the working expenses of our railways by carrying on such a policy as that.

Mr. Johnson: I have given you the particulars.

The MINISTER: The particulars the hon. member gave were not what he promised in this House. The hon. member has written to me as follows:—

"When speaking on the Address-in-Reply I referred to the men employed in the Locomotive Workshops and also the Way and Works Branch who are only receiving 7s. per day, and you were kind enough to agree to make inquiries with a view to increasing these men's wages to 8s. per day."

I did not do that. The hon. member had said that certain men had been employed at 8s., and had been retrenched and put on again at 7s. I promised that if this proved to be so, these men would be put back to their old wage; but I did not say that I would interfere with the general wages being paid throughout the whole piece. The hon. member also wrote:—

"Since speaking I have made farther inquiries, and find there are several men in each branch carrying out work now

at 7s. a day, and for which at one time they or others received 8s. a day."

If the hon. member will give me particulars of where men have been retrenched from 8s. a day and put on again, or others put on in their places, at 7s. a day, I shall be only too pleased to inquire into them.

Mr. Johnson: I cannot give you any farther particulars unless I give you names.

The MINISTER: The hon. member can confer with me. I do not want him to mention names. It was stated that the reduction in the staffs of the railways had been carried out without trying to make a similar reduction among the officers of the department. I have here a return showing the officers who were retrenched. There were officers at £500, £400, £340, £325, £300, £275, £270, £265, and £230. Altogether 114 officers have been retrenched during the 12 months since Mr. Short took office as Acting Commissioner. I am sorry indeed the Acting Commissioner found it necessary to retrench our staff, but when we take the report of the South Australian railway system we see that comparing last year they employed about half the number of men we employed on our railways, though they have in South Australia about the same mileage as we have here. It is exceedingly hard to insist on these reductions being made. It is no matter of pleasure at any time to have to throw men adrift, and we can only promise that when new lines are built and our trade increases, with that increase of trade and extension of lines, men who have been retrenched and have good records will get the first opportunity of re-employment.

Mr. Taylor: How many have been retrenched?

The MINISTER: We retrenched 114 from the staff and, speaking from guess-work, about 550 to 600 workmen. The question also arises as to how the men are paid in Western Australia compared with other parts of Australia, and I think it is a fair comparison to make public. Here the wages of guards vary from 9s. to 12s. a day; in Victoria they run from 7s. 6d. to 9s. 6d. a day, and in Queensland from 7s. 6d. to 10s. a day, irrespective of allowances in each case. We pay signal-

men 7s. 6d. to 11s. 6d. a day; in Victoria they pay from 7s. to 10s. 6d.; and in Queensland from 6s. 6d. to 9s. 6d.

Mr. Foulkes: Are the hours of labour the same in these instances?

The MINISTER: While we have had the eight hours system in force as a general rule the last four or five years, it was only last year that they adopted it on the Queensland railways. We pay porters from 6s. 6d. to 10s.

Mr. Bolton: No porter gets more than 8s.; it must be the head man on the platform who receives 10s.

The MINISTER: In Victoria the porters receive from 6s. to 7s. 6d. a day. We pay shunters 7s. 6d. to 9s. 6d.; in Queensland they receive 6s. 6d. to 8s. 6d. We pay gangers 8s. 6d. to 15s. a day; while in Victoria they receive 7s. 6d. to 9s. a day, and in Queensland the same. As I explained before, fettlers during the probationary period of three months receive 7s. a day. We have five men employed at 7s. a day; the others receive 8s. In Victoria the fettlers get 6s. a day, and the same rate is paid in Queensland. We pay labourers from 7s. to 10s. a day; in Queensland they get 6s. 6d. per day. We pay examiners from 8s. to 11s.; in Queensland the rate is 6s. 6d. a day, but most of the examiners there get only 6s. We pay pumpers 8s. to 10s.; in Queensland they get 6s. 6d. We pay our drivers 11s. to 15s.; in Queensland the rate is 9s. to 12s. 6d. We pay our firemen 8s. to 10s. as against 6s. 9d. to 8s. 3d. in Queensland; and we pay cleaners 6s. to 7s. 6d. a day, whereas in Queensland, where to a large extent they use women as cleaners, the rate is from 2s. 6d. to 5s. a day. I have other returns in regard to boiler-makers and other men employed by the department, but it is not necessary to give them. The State that comes nearest the Western Australian rates is New South Wales: but as Queensland has been so often compared with ours, more especially because the conditions compare better with our own than those of any other State, I thought I would take the rates prevailing in that State for the sake of comparison. I think these figures show that there is no attempt to employ men here at a wage that can be in any sense

classed as unfair. I merely mention these matters because last night I promised to do so; and, moreover, believing to a great extent that the people have a right through their representatives in this House to say who is going to be Commissioner of Railways, I am sure members on the opposite side of the House wish to feel in connection with the appointment of Commissioner that they have someone appointed who will in the first place try to do justice to the State, and in the second place be honest and fair towards the men employed under him, and one who will look after their best interests. The Government have offered the appointment to Mr. J. T. Short, and Mr. Short has accepted the position subject to the approval of Parliament. The agreement entered into with Mr. Short is as follows:—

“Mr. John Tregarthen Short, subject to the provisions of the Government Railways Act 1904, shall be appointed Commissioner of Railways from the 1st day of July 1908, at a salary of £1,500 a year. (a.) The claim of the said William Tregarthen Short to superannuation allowance in respect to his services as Chief Traffic Manager shall not be prejudiced by his acceptance of the appointment of Commissioner of Railways.”

This was because we were not going to make a promise in any shape or form to Mr. Short as to what might happen at the expiration of his term of five years. We simply told him that any rights he might have would not be prejudiced by taking this appointment.

Mr. Johnson: You might let us know what, in your imagination, Mr. Short's claim is under the Superannuation Act.

The MINISTER: I want to deal with facts, not with imagination. But it is not a question of Mr. Short's retiring from the service or whether he should receive superannuation allowance that is now brought before the House. All we say is that we are not going to make him any promise. We know not what Government might be in power at the end of the five years. Mr. Short might not be re-engaged. Someone else might be asked to take the appointment. All we could

tell Mr. Short was that any claim he might make under the Superannuation Act would not be prejudiced by his accepting the position of Commissioner of Railways.

Hon. F. H. Piesse : Any claim Mr. Short might make would only deal with the years of his service to the present appointment.

The MINISTER: If Parliament does not approve of the appointment, probably Mr. Short will go back as Chief Traffic Manager; but once he accepts this appointment, to a certain extent he retires from the public service. But we are not making him any promise in the slightest degree.

Mr. Johnson : But you recognise the superannuation claim. If not, why mention it in the agreement?

The MINISTER: If Mr. Short wanted it we could have fixed up something with him, and made out an agreement showing that when he retired from the position of Commissioner of Railways he might receive a retiring allowance of so much; but that is a matter the Government in power at the expiration of Mr. Short's term of office should deal with, and not the present Government. The agreement goes on:—

“(b.) Leave of absence to which the said John Tregarthen Short was on the 30th day of June, 1908, entitled to in respect of his services as Chief Traffic Manager may be taken by him at the expiration of his office of Commissioner of Railways.”

Any long-service leave he may have earned to the present time he can take after the period of five years has elapsed. We remember in the agreement made with Mr. George there was a provision that at the end of his term of office he should get one year's leave of absence on full pay. We do not ask for that now, but we ask that Mr. Short shall be entitled to such leave of absence as may be claimed on the scale by a Chief Traffic Manager or any other head of a department, about the same as under the Public Service Act. Members will see that we make no promise other than this. We engage him for five years; when he retires from that position he will have to go to the Govern-

ment of the day and ask for any retiring allowance or superannuation which he thinks he is entitled to under the Public Service Act. These are the conditions under which Mr. Short has been appointed. Last year we advised the House that it was our intention to advertise for applications for this position. There were 47 applications received from all parts of the world, from America, Great Britain, India and Australia. We received some applications asking for as high as £3,000 and £3,500 a year, and we received one application from a person who was prepared to undertake the duties for £250 a year. We went very carefully through the applications, the majority of which were from engineers who had not had any experience in the management and control of men other than in building large works. It was surprising the few applications we received from people who had anything like life-long railway experience. We did get several, but I have no intention of mentioning names; and it took us a good while to consider fully as to who should receive the appointment. Some of the applications were from men who are beyond the prime of life, men with railway experience, but we were not prepared to bring a man here who had passed the prime of life, for he would hardly settle down, or we could hardly expect such a man, as we could a younger man, to make himself acquainted with the conditions of Western Australia at that age of life. We gave a lot of consideration to this question, and for these reasons, which are given in Mr. Short's paper, we appointed Mr. Short. He says:—

“My railway experience dates back over 30 years. I joined the South Australian railways in February, 1878, and was for eight years in charge of one of the most important junction stations; and during the time the Broken Hill line was under construction I had full control of same; the traffic, both passenger and goods, being very heavy, as in addition to the silver mines there was a gold rush on at Teetulpa, and more than 60,000 people to be catered for. On resigning in July 1889 I took charge of the Great Southern railway

under the Western Australian Land Company. I was offered promotion if I would stay in South Australia. I remained in charge of the Great Southern railway until the line was taken over by the Government at the end of 1896, when I was appointed Chief Traffic Manager of the Government railways."

Since Mr. Short has been traffic manager of the railways, on several occasions he acted as general manager, and on several occasions he acted as Commissioner for Railways; and as members know, for the past 12 months Mr. Short has been Acting Commissioner for Railways. When Mr. Short was appointed Acting Commissioner for Railways it was our intention to call for applications almost immediately, and this is what he says in his communication to me:—

"I thereupon addressed a letter to you, dated 28th June, setting forth what I considered to be my reasonable claims for consideration, and asking that I be given an opportunity to prove my capabilities. To this letter you replied on the same date, stating that before coming to a decision you wished me to lay before you a clear and definite statement showing how I proposed to make alterations which would ensure economy without reducing the efficiency of the service."

Then Mr. Short set to work, and the statement here shows that the earnings for the first nine months of the year 1906-7 were £1,187,000, as against £1,141,000 in 1907-8; or in that period a loss of £46,000, a reduction in our earnings during the first nine months in comparison with the previous nine months. This was due to a great extent to the disastrous timber strike, that made a great difference in the trade. We suffered a decrease in our earnings of £46,000. His working expenses were £754,000 for the nine months as against £872,000 for the preceding nine months, or a reduction in working expenses of £118,000; a net profit during that period of £106,000 as against £88,000 in the previous nine months, showing an increase in profit of no less than £67,000. The working expenses per train mile are also very im-

portant. I have the figures here dealing with last year. The earnings for 1907-8 amounted to £1,501,925, and the working expenses to £1,007,732. The working expenses in 1906-7 were £66,000 less than they were in 1905-6, showing that in the year previous they reduced the working expenses on the railway system by £66,000 less than in the previous year. Last year there was a reduction of £128,000 on the working expenses of the year before that. I desire to impress on members that that has been done right through the piece without reducing the wages of the men, but by reducing the train services and reducing the number of hands. The total reduction during the past two years shows that the railways now cost £194,000 less than in the previous year.

Mr. Bolton: You are receiving less as well as paying less cost of operations.

The MINISTER: I pointed that out. Last year we received £36,000 less than we did in 1906-7. Our earnings per train mile were better last year; although our receipts were less. Our earnings per train mile were 90.93d. in 1907-8; 88.25d. in 1906-7, and 89.98d. in 1905-6. The working expenses per train mile were 61.01d. in 1907-8, say 5s., 65.21d. in 1906-7, and 66.16d. in 1905-6. The working expenses per cent. of earnings were 67.10 per cent. in 1907-8; 73.89 per cent. in 1906-7, and 73.53 per cent. in 1905-6, showing a very good reduction. I do not give Mr. Short all the credit for the reduction in cost, but he has done very good work. We have been buying locomotives for carrying heavier loads; we have been improving the grades on the railway system, and there is not the slightest doubt the building of the Midland Junction workshops, instead of having the antiquated system which we had at Fremantle, has assisted in the reduction of cost. With all these things it would be a disgrace to our Railway Department if they could not show a considerable advantage, after all the expenses which we had incurred in giving them up-to-date plant. The figures show particularly good for the past year, and there is no doubt that during the period Mr. Short has been Acting Commissioner

he has tried to build up the railway system and to pull down expense. He has done many things that caused a lot of umbrage. At Newcastle there was a train service of two trains per day each way, which had been in existence for years past, I think ever since the railway service was built. It was no pleasure for Mr. Short to reduce that service, yet we felt that the district did not warrant two trains each way per day, and I remember the Minister for Agriculture told me that he would not come down here unless certain trains were put on. To the greatest extent we have hurt the people who sit behind us on these benches, because the greatest economy has been effected along the Great Southern and South-Western lines. We have reduced the train service considerably. [Interjection by Mr. Taylor.] I am very sorry that big mine closed down, because it employed a considerable number of men, and we would have been justified in again giving the train service. I hope we shall be able to give some cheaper means of locomotion in the suburban districts. We ought to be able to have something cheaper than the huge trains which are running on the suburban service, something on the lines of a tram service, and we should be able to carry on the same system in the back country, and having lighter trains we ought to be able to give a more efficient service than there is to-day. That is a matter that the Railway Department are giving the greatest attention to, giving the best service they can in accordance with the traffic. We want to try and keep down the expenses if we can. We wish to bring down the expenses and to reduce the fares and freights more than has been done in the past. I do not know that I can say more in regard to the work of the last year. The appointment that has been made by the Government has been received almost unanimously with acclamation. Mr. Short has been known to me for many years; he is a gentleman who makes a large circle of acquaintances, and I think the people appreciate the tactful manner in which he handles those under him, and the manner in which he deals with

those who come in contact with him. He has made a genuine effort to bring the Western Australian railway system up to a better degree of efficiency than has obtained in the past. Our railway service, more especially the Kalgoorlie service, compares very favourably with the Eastern States for efficiency. We have as good a service between here and Kalgoorlie as can be found anywhere in the Eastern States; and the carriages we are building now will be put on in other districts, giving more accommodation to travellers than has been the case in the past. I assure members my instructions all along were in these circumstances not to do anything in the nature of economy to interfere with the efficiency of the service. It was on the distinct recommendation of Mr. Hume, the Chief Mechanical Engineer, that the brakes have been perfected, and now less examination is required. He stakes his reputation on what he has done. Mr. Hume would never come forward and suggest in regard to the rolling stock that he has sufficient to meet all demands; he insists, however, that his stock is in a state of greater efficiency to-day than it ever was, and it ought to be with the efficient workshops which he has at his command; he, as Chief Mechanical Engineer, says that the rolling stock is in a better condition to-day than it ever was. The Engineer for Existing Lines was equally explicit; there was nothing wrong with his lines, and he was quite satisfied they were in the best state of efficiency. Altogether the reports of the work there are very satisfactory. With regard to the Chief Traffic Manager's department the reports were also satisfactory. Perhaps it would be possible for certain economies to be effected there, but that is a question for the railway officers to give careful consideration to. I claim that during Mr. Short's period of Acting-Commissionership the reports published and the figures I have quoted show that he has done considerably better than I anticipated, or any other member expected. He has had a long experience in railway work, he bears an exceptionally good character, he is a man who is respected by all classes of the community; and I

have very much pleasure in moving the resolution on the Notice Paper

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford): Before dealing with the question of the merits or demerits—if there are any of the latter—in connection with the proposed appointment of Mr Short as Commissioner of Railways there is another phase of the question I desire the House to give some consideration to. With that object in view, I propose to move an amendment. I will speak to the amendment, and then, after a decision has been come to on that question, I will express my opinion on the question of the proposed appointment by the Government, if it is necessary to do so.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must speak to the motion and conclude with the amendment.

The Minister for Railways: He cannot speak again.

Mr. JOHNSON: The point I desire to emphasise is this. I do not want to discuss the general question now. If I spoke to that, it would take consideration off my amendment; and my desire is to devote myself absolutely to the amendment, and when that question is decided, I will speak on the general question.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot do that, according to the rules.

Mr. JOHNSON: I desire then, at the outset, as I am compelled to do so, to say that if a Commissioner is to be appointed, then I have no objection to raise to the recommendation of the Government. I have always felt that we should appoint men from inside the service and from inside our own State, unless there is very strong objection to it. I hold the view that there is no incentive to a man to work his way up in the system if we do not give him an opportunity, after qualifying for a higher position, to take that office, should he be deemed thoroughly efficient. If we were to import a new Commissioner we would have the present Acting Commissioner returning to his position as chief traffic manager and the present acting chief traffic manager returning to his position as district superintendent. If this were done, the officers would realise it was no use working

or trying to qualify for the higher position, men being brought in and appointed thereto over their heads. It is a wrong system to make an importation for a position of this kind. We must realise that the railway system here is totally different from that of any other part of Australia. I have never taken part in criticisms of our system by the medium of comparison with other portions of Australasia, where the conditions are so different. I realise there is no analogy between the systems, and I have never followed those who argue that it was a fair comparison to draw, in discussing our system, to refer to the results achieved and the system of management in Queensland. Consequently, believing that the conditions are different here, I think if we imported a Commissioner it would take him some considerable time to understand the new conditions, or, in other words, to understand Western Australia. If we appointed him for a period of five years, it would mean practically that he would be serving an apprenticeship of two or three years before thoroughly understanding the system he was placed there to administer. We would therefore really only have his services for two or three years; during his apprenticeship we would be paying him the huge sum of £1,500 a year. I do not want, when moving this amendment, to be misunderstood. It is not an attack on the Government in connection with the appointment, and I do not desire that it should be deemed such. If a Commissioner is to be appointed, I say distinctly and emphatically I am in favour of Mr. Short. In speaking to the motion, the Minister referred to one or two matters on which I desire to express an opinion. He said that 114 officers had been retrenched. When I held the position of Minister for Works I retrenched a considerable number of men from the Public Works Department, that course being made possible and easy by concentrating the officers in one office. We concentrated the drafting staff, with the result that the chief draftsmen in the various branches were not required; we concentrated the correspondence branch with the result that certain chief correspondence

clerks were not required; we concentrated the engineer's branch under the Engineer-in-Chief, and the chief clerks there also were done away with. The whole work was made simple, as instead of having offices distributed in various parts of the city, we concentrated them all in one building, and it was possible to bring about this retrenchment. I desire to emphasise this point, that in every case where there was retrenchment we made certain that retiring allowances were granted. Before I started on the retrenchment I sent a circular letter to the various departments saying that retrenchment must take place, as economies were absolutely necessary, and pointing out that if men resigned from the service they would receive the same consideration as to a retiring allowance as men who were retrenched. That did not prevail in the department previously, for if a man resigned he did not always get the same consideration as a man who was retrenched. Those who retired in my time received a certain retiring allowance, as did others who were retrenched. Thus, as has been pointed out by the Attorney General (Hon. N. Keenan), in connection with Dr. Smith's retirement, a certain rule prevailed and was in existence for some years—in fact, almost since Responsible Government. The system was this, that an officer who had served the State for a term under 15 years received, on being retrenched, two weeks' salary for every year of service; and an officer who had served for over 15 years received one month's salary for every year of service. That principle was carried out to the letter, and every officer who resigned or was retired received that allowance. We find that in the Railway Department that principle had been departed from.

The Minister for Railways: In your letter with regard to the case in your constituency, you refer to the allowance as a pension.

Mr. JOHNSON: The particular officer I wrote about came to me with regard to the matter, and I told him distinctly I was not in favour of pensions. I said he was not entitled to one and that I would not support him in his claim for

it. In such circumstances, I cannot see how I could have written a letter conveying any other impression to the Minister than that I would not support a claim for a pension, but solely the claim for the retiring allowance on the terms mentioned by the Attorney General in Dr. Smith's case. I pointed out that the Attorney General of the Government said distinctly that the Government would follow the precedent established by other Governments and grant a retiring allowance of one month's salary for each year of service, provided the officer had served for over 15 years. The gentleman whose case I supported was in the service over 15 years, and I told him he was entitled, according to the authority of the Attorney General, to one month's salary for each year of service. He has not, however, received it up to date. I do not know whether other officers have been granted retiring allowances; all I know of is that in this one case the man, who is a constituent of mine, has a grievance against the Government in that he is not receiving the allowance to which he is entitled. I think it is distinctly unfair that he should not receive the same consideration as is extended to other officers in the different departments.

The Minister for Railways: You applied for a pension, as is shown by your letter.

Mr. JOHNSON: If my letter conveyed that, I will say now that I only intended it for the purpose of obtaining a retiring allowance, as I am not in favour of pensions. While I was a Minister I would not consider a claim for a pension. Equal consideration should be extended to all the officers of the service. When the Minister was referring to the portion of the agreement with Mr. Short relating to superannuation, I interjected; and I now repeat that if the Minister does not recognise superannuation in the department, why does he mention it specifically in this agreement? Surely the principle must have some claims for precedence seeing it is mentioned in this special agreement. I wish to emphasise the point that in dealing with Mr. Short the Minister recognises that the principle is right and just. If the right is

granted to Mr. Short, does it not follow that it should be granted to all the other officers of the Railway Department? I do not think the Minister would even suggest that because Mr. Short was the chief traffic manager he should receive any more consideration than any other officer of the department. Mr. Short certainly held an exalted position, but he received a considerably higher wage. He was entitled to a certain superannuation benefit, to a certain retiring allowance, if retired from the service; and the same precedent establishing that right to Mr. Short would do it for any other officer of the department. Consequently, I appeal to the Minister to go into the claims, not only of the man whose case I brought forward, but those of any others of the 114 officials who have been retrenched. I hope he will see that justice is done and that the same consideration is given to the other officers of the service.

At 6.15, *the Speaker* left the Chair.

At 7.30, Chair resumed.

Mr. JOHNSON: When the House adjourned, I was dealing with the question of superannuation, and was urging that officers from the Railway Department should receive the same consideration as is extended to officers retrenched from other departments. I will leave the question at that, and hope the Minister will consider these claims and see that justice is done. I desire also to refer to another matter I spoke about on the Address-in-Reply, namely that we have men employed in the service doing work at 7s. per day, similar work to which, before the retrenchment scheme introduced by the present Acting Commissioner was brought about, was paid for at the rate of 8s. The Minister stated that he would inquire into the matter, and I undertook to give him particulars. The Minister states now that the particulars are different from those I promised. I cannot give any more than I have already given, without mentioning the name of the particular work that these men are doing. The Minister states he does not wish to have the names but only the particulars. What more can I give than to say that in the

Locomotive Branch, men are employed to-day doing work for 7s. for which other men were originally receiving 8s. a day? That is definite enough. The more complete information that I could give would be to mention the names, but the Minister can find out those names for himself if he wishes to do so. In the Ways and Works, exactly the same conditions prevail; but I do not want to mislead the House into believing that there are a great many men employed at 7s. I am pleased to say quite a number of men in the Locomotive Branch are receiving 8s. a day. As long as there is one man receiving 7s. a day, so long will I raise my voice in protest.

The Minister for Railways: You should have altered it when you had the opportunity.

Mr. JOHNSON: It was never brought under my notice that men were receiving 7s. a day on our railways. These are all general labourers, men who are recognised to be up to the standard and doing the required work. They are doing work to-day that they will be doing ten years hence. It is necessary work, and work that is found for the general labourer, and they are receiving 7s. a day.

The Minister: The conditions are just the same now as they were when you were Minister for Railways.

Mr. JOHNSON: If they are, then they were wrong when I was Minister. On the authority of the present Minister I was Minister for Railways for ten minutes, and now I am taken to task because during my ten minutes' term I did not increase the wages of these railway servants. It is getting back to the old order when the present Ministry justify their bad actions by the cry that other Ministries did the same. We expect the Ministry to improve on previously existing conditions, and it is no argument to say that such a thing prevailed when somebody was Minister for Railways. Supposing it did prevail then, the conditions to-day are altogether different. The cost of living has gone up considerably and I am sorry to say it is still rising, and the natural result is that the money received by these unfortunate labourers does not purchase the same commodities that it originally

did. Taking the conditions and everything else into consideration, 7s. a day is not a sufficient wage for the labourers in our Railway Department, and I venture to say that if we could reach the motion I have on the Notice Paper urging that in the opinion of this House the Commissioner should start the recognised minimum of 8s. a day, it would meet with the approval of the majority of members in the House. I do not think there is one member in the House who will believe that a man can bring up a family and live under fair conditions on 7s. a day. I often wonder how these unfortunate men with large families make ends meet even with 8s. a day. Eight shillings a day is equivalent to £2 8s. per week and in the majority of cases men earning this wage have to pay rent. This at the lowest is 10s., and that reduction brings the wages down to 38s. per week. In a number of cases, in fact in the majority of cases, you will find that the average labourer is a married man, and that his family including his wife and himself consists of six or seven.

Mr. Gordon: Mr. Speaker, are we discussing the matter of wages, on the appointment of Commissioner?

Mr. Speaker: The subject matter before the House is the appointment of the Commissioner of Railways, but I think the hon. member is quite in order.

Mr. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was saying that the average labourer is a married man whose family consists of six or seven people, who have 38s. at their disposal to live on; that is practically 4s. 6d. per head per week. If we regard it from that point of view, we must realise it is utterly impossible for the men to get the necessities of life in order to enable them to become healthy, and strong enough to do a fair day's work. What are these unfortunates to do with 8s. a day? I know of instances, and hon. members have also heard of them daily, instances where a husband who has to do a hard day's work must see his children often go without certain necessities in order that he may have them to sustain his constitution to enable him to perform his day's work. I have known this to happen and I have

known of men going into the workshops quite unable to do a day's work because they had denied themselves necessary portions of food in order that their children might have them. That condition of affairs actually exists in Western Australia to-day, and I venture to assert if the hon. member for Canning who sits there and grins—we do not expect him to have any sympathy with the worker—instead of seeing that the meat ring received the consideration that all combines and persecutors of the workers always get in Western Australia, should see that sometimes a little consideration was given to the working man; but immediately reference is made to the meat ring the hon. member gets on his feet and he starts to protect them. When we speak of the worker, the member for Canning, who is one of the employers, sits there and grins while we make our appeal that these men should receive a fair day's wage. We do not expect anything else from the member for Canning. We in this House have to consider the position of the working man from the point of view I have described. We have to calculate the wages received by these men, and if we are fair and recognise our responsibilities, we should calculate the cost of living and ask whether it is possible to rear healthy families on the wages that are paid. I say 8s. a day is altogether too small, and I marvel at times how these men struggle under a wage of that description, but when it gets down to as low as 7s. it passes my comprehension altogether. I do appeal to the Minister to see that the minimum rate of wages in connection with the forthcoming agreement that will have to be entered into—and I believe it to be the opinion of the majority of members of this House—is fixed at 8s. per day and not 7s. as exists at the present time. Reference was also made by the Minister to the economies that were effected by Mr. Short while he was Acting Commissioner, and I was inclined to think that the Minister urged that the claim of Mr. Short to the position of Commissioner was largely because of the economies effected during his term. I am not here to judge Mr. Short by the economies effected, but the fact remains

I am not altogether in accord with the whole of the economies which I am not prepared to admit are true economies. For instance, I believe he has not given that consideration to the rates of wages paid to the employees he should have, that he has got below what we as employers consider a fair minimum. I assert again that the permanent way is not receiving that consideration required to make it absolutely safe. I say this without setting myself up as an expert, but when I go through the country I keep my eyes open, and in travelling through the country one comes in contact with men who are experts, men who are running the railways and who are directly connected with the railway system, and one cannot avoid learning their opinions. Consequently, from the opinions I have heard expressed and from my own observations, I am of opinion that the permanent way is not receiving the consideration it should. Also I assert again that the rolling stock is not receiving that examination necessary to make the train service absolutely safe. Consequently I am not in accord with the economies effected by Mr. Short. I give Mr. Short every credit for certain economies; and I think, as the Minister has already admitted, that the main economies are largely due to the fact that previous Governments improved the standard of the permanent way and erected workshops and incurred additional expense that made it possible to economise in the cost of administration by reason of that expenditure. That is all I have to say in connection with the appointment. I have already stated that if a Commissioner is to be appointed I absolutely agree that Mr. Short is the man. I am now going to deal with an amendment I propose to move which will have the effect, if passed, of delaying the appointment until after the general elections. Because we have to bear in mind that the people in Western Australia have never yet had an opportunity of expressing their opinion as to the system we should have in connection with the control of our railways. In order to emphasise that it will be necessary to go back to the general elections of 1901, after which the Leake Govern-

ment came into power. It will be remembered that a great deal of criticism at those general elections was levelled against the railway system, and the actions of the General Manager were severely criticised as were also the actions of previous Ministers for Railways; so that election speeches to a large extent were concentrated on our railway administration, the result being that after the elections, when Mr. Holmes became Minister for Railways, an inquiry was held. The outcome of that inquiry was not a change of manager but a change in the system of control. Now I am of opinion, as one who fought a contest at that time and as one who has since taken an interest in railway administration, that at that time the people did not desire a change in the system of control. It is true that they desired greater attention on the part of Ministers and that they were not altogether satisfied with the work being done by the General Manager of our railways; but without consulting the people on the question, the Leake Government amended our Railways Act and brought in a proposal for the appointment of a Commissioner of Railways, and Mr. George was appointed. That appointment lasted five years, taking us over the last general elections and the by-elections that have been held. Nobody could express an opinion then, because it had been decided that Mr. George should be Commissioner of Railways and that his term should last five years. Consequently up to date we have not had an opportunity of consulting the people as to the system of control; and now, a dying Parliament on the eve of general elections, we propose to make another appointment that will bind future Parliaments for another five years. In other words, if we make this appointment now we absolutely debar the people of Western Australia, debarred in the past by actions of previous Governments, from expressing an opinion of the system of control for the next five years.

The Minister: The public have not expressed any disapproval of the system.

Mr. JOHNSON: There has been no approval or disapproval expressed, because the people have not had an opportunity of expressing an opinion.

Mr. Stuart: What is the alternative—to pay 12 months' salary?

Mr. JOHNSON: I do not know anything about an alternative. The only thing I am fighting for is to give the people ample opportunity of expressing an opinion on the system. Apart from that, let us view the matter from the point as to whether a dying Parliament is justified in making any appointment for the term of five years. What right has a dying Parliament to make an appointment on the eve of general elections, when we have opportunity at the general elections to consult the people? We should consult the people on all points. There is no necessity for rushing into this appointment. We have had an Acting Commissioner for some time; and all I want is to have an Acting Commissioner until after the general elections at which the people may voice their opinions. The Government say they seek a mandate from the people, and they can come back with a mandate from the people on this important question. I do not desire to hide it—as a matter of fact I do not suppose I could cover up the fact that I am a strong supporter of the people's control. The people own our railways and should have a voice in the method of control. I believe in Ministerial control, and the nearest control we can have to people's control is to place the railways under the control of a Minister. For some considerable time I have urged that opinion; and if this matter is held over, I have no hesitation in saying that I shall be a strong advocate of Ministerial control. But apart from all that consideration, I appeal to hon. members as to whether we are justified in arrogating to ourselves the right to appoint a Commissioner for five years, practically on the eve of general elections, or to dictate to a future Parliament that Mr. Short shall be Commissioner for five years. I contend it is absolutely wrong, and consequently I move my amendment with a view to allowing the present Acting Commissioner to continue in that position, and to give the people an opportunity of expressing an opinion. It is worthy of note that we had in New Zealand a condition almost identical with the position of Western Australia to-day. In

that State there was control of the railway system by the Minister, assisted of course by a General Manager exactly as we had here previous to 1901. Then a proposal came in to reduce the number of Commissioners from three to one. An amendment was moved to that proposal that Ministerial control should be reverted to, but this was on the eve of general elections, and I think it was then the Balance Government who decided that, seeing it was on the eve of general elections, they had no right to continue even the old order of things or to create a new order of things and that they should rather go before the people and get a mandate from them on this most important question. Is there any more important question affecting Western Australia than the control of our railway system? Is there any other factor that assists or otherwise the development of our agricultural industry? In fact our industries in Western Australia are absolutely governed by the consideration given to them by our working railways, and I have said and say again that the railway system should be worked in accordance with the Government's general policy. If that policy is one to foster the agricultural industry, the railway system should be utilised to a large extent. Consequently when we realise that in a huge country like this the railways are absolutely essential for the development of the State, it necessarily requires that we should have railways so that they may be used in the general development of the country. And realising the importance of that fact, we must also realise that it is essential that we should give the people the opportunity of voicing their opinions. Consequently, without labouring this question to any greater extent, I move as an amendment—

That all the words after "appointment" be struck out, and the following inserted in lieu: "of a Commissioner of Railways be held over until after the general elections, in order to enable the people to decide the system of control."

Mr. J. B. HOLMAN: I second the amendment.

[Mr. Daglish took the Chair.]

Mr. J. C. G. FOULKES (Claremont): I only rise to call the attention of the Minister to the fact that his speech was rightly devoted to the good qualities of Mr. Short as Commissioner of Railways; but unfortunately he did not think himself justified in informing the House who were the other applicants for the post. It would be perhaps considered a breach of confidence on his part to disclose those names, so that many members must recognise that if we have not an opportunity of judging for ourselves what were the qualifications of the other applicants we are precluded to a great extent from forming an opinion as to who is the proper person to hold the position of Commissioner of Railways. That being the position of affairs, it appears to me that the Government of the day must take upon themselves the full responsibility of appointing Mr. Short as Commissioner of Railways.

The Minister: The Act provides that we must submit the appointment to Parliament.

Mr. FOULKES: I understand that; but as the Minister is precluded from mentioning the names of the various applicants for the post, it means that other members of the House are not in a position to come to a definite conclusion as to whether Mr. Short is the person most suited to hold the position. The Minister has told us that some of the applicants were engineers with perhaps not very good knowledge of railway management. Others he said had attained an age—I forget the exact terms he used; but they appeared to be men of rather mature years and perhaps on account of their age would not be able to do such good service as we would like. That being the case, it is to me quite clear that the full responsibility of making this appointment rests not on the House but on the Ministry, because the Ministers naturally are the people who have seen the various applications and had an opportunity of judging whether the applicants are likely to be capable Commissioners for our Railways. The Minister for Railways of course has fuller opportunities than anyone else here to judge

whether Mr. Short is a fit person to hold this post. I think a very strong point in his favour is that at present he is a member of the public service of this State, and holds the chief position in the Railway Department; and all things being equal, of course the benefit of any doubt should be given to the present occupant of the position. I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that the full responsibility of appointing Mr. Short falls upon the person holding the position of Minister for Railways. As the Minister cannot tell us what other people applied for the post, there is practically as far as we are concerned only one applicant, who should receive the most favourable consideration at our hands. The member for Guildford called attention to the fact that the people of the country have not had an opportunity of deciding whether the railways should be managed by the Minister or whether they should be managed under a Commissioner. I am satisfied in my mind the people of the country are practically unanimous, or at least a very large majority of the people would be exceedingly sorry to see our railways placed under political control. The whole tendency throughout Australia is to remove offices as much as possible, particularly trade concerns, from Ministerial control. Not only in this State, but in other States, there is an increasing tendency to remove from political control the various trade institutions. In the Federal Parliament there is a proposal by the Ministers of the day I believe, at any rate there is a proposal made that the Post Office should be placed under the control of a Commissioner. A majority of the Federal Parliament consider that the control of the Post Office should be removed from political control and placed in the hands of a Commissioner. Even in a Parliament that has only two departments to deal with—the Customs and the Post Office—even there the Parliament has come to the conclusion that it is not safe to trust one of these departments to political control. To my mind I certainly think that the application of Mr. Short, being the senior officer in the service, should be most favourably considered.

Mr. T. WALKER (Kanowna): The concluding remarks of the member for Claremont do not establish the necessity of continuing the commissionership in the form we know it. Really it is an extension of the tendency that exists throughout all Australasian Parliaments to delegate responsibility and authority to outside ranks; it is one of the features of this particular age. We get a tired feeling in Western Australia. Ministers are leaving their work in every department to allow boards, commissions, committees, and officers to do their work for them. The real work of administration is not done in any department. It is not done, I submit, in the Railway Department. If the member for Claremont wants an example of Ministerial responsibility, let him not go to another Parliament in Australasia, but let him go to England itself—the parent of Responsible Government, the best example that exists in all the world of Responsible Government. Do we there find all the work and functions of Government and administration delegated to boards and commissioners? Is there a single department of public life that has not as its mainspring, as its essential touch as it were, a Minister of the Crown? Even in matters of general trade, as alluded to by the member for Claremont, there is a Minister presiding over the department. In those delicate matters affecting the whole safety and peace of the world I may say, the government and management of the Navy, where least of all should inexperienced men interfere, even there is seen Ministerial responsibility; and throughout the most delicate structures of society, and the most intricate affairs of the life of a nation there is Ministerial responsibility in England, the parent and guide to every form of Responsible Government in His Majesty's dependencies. Here what are we doing? We are giving over the vital functions of Government to a Commissioner independent altogether of this House; and the example we have of the way in which the motion is brought to this House is a proof of what I am saying. What is the House asked to do? It is merely a form, that we are asked to decide who

will be the Commissioner? We have one name submitted to us, and only one; all we can say is "yes" or "no." We cannot compare the applicant or aspirant with any of his rivals; we do not know one of them. We are prepared to take for granted what the Minister said was true, when he told us that one person put in an application for the post at a salary of £250 a year. We are prepared to take it and drop that gentleman out of the contest; but I believe some applications were put in at salaries of over £3,000. I believe capable men they must have been or they would not have had the conceit to ask for such a salary as that; they must have been accustomed to drawing large salaries.

The Minister for Railways: Engineers.

Mr. WALKER: Was there no one who applied who had railway management experience; was there not any one?

The Minister for Railways: Not at these salaries.

Mr. WALKER: At any salaries were there railway men accustomed to railway management?

The Minister for Railways: I mentioned there were.

Mr. WALKER: Who are they; what railways have they managed; what is their personality; what are their qualifications? I am not saying one word derogatory to the abilities and qualifications of Mr. Short. Possibly he is the best man of all the applicants; and also he has this in his favour that he is in Western Australia, that he is connected with our social life and understands the conditions prevailing here; because you will have seen from what transpired in Sydney recently in the great tramway strike, the Commissioner of Railways requires not only to have a knowledge of the particular business in which he is technically qualified, but he requires to have a knowledge of the people he has to manage in his service. Therefore one has to be as it were one of the citizens of the State in order properly to appreciate the conditions prevailing here. All that Mr. Short has in his favour. There may not be one word to be said against Mr. Short on that score, forgetting little bits of stray history in the past, and more par-

ticularly I believe he has the confidence of the men working under him, as far as I have been able to judge by the expressions of opinion which have been made throughout the railway service. I believe if it were put to the vote the men would vote for Mr. Short being Commissioner in preference to any other person imported from any other part of the world.

Mr. Stuart: They would vote for a bit of gold braid any time.

Mr. WALKER: Possibly. This is the position we are faced with to-night. Whatever Mr. Short's qualifications may be, we have no others to compare him with. We are here to exercise our judgment; that is the folly of it. We are not here to give any decision, to indulge in any comparison, we are completely in the dark. That is the position we are in. We know nothing whatever of the knowledge the Minister may have; that is his peculiarity. Or if it goes farther, it does not extend beyond the bounds of Cabinet. Then what is the fignse for? Is it the supreme tribunal, or is it merely the machinery to endorse what the Minister or Cabinet chooses to do? Is that the position? Why submit the motion to us at all, for we have no alternative? If there is no option, why deliberate? There is no necessity for it, whatever is done. This is the position we are now in. If this House takes the position in its blindness or obstinacy, or any other quality, that it would not have Mr. Short, what would be the interpretation of the vote? Not that we decided there was any other man more capable, or that Mr. Short did not come up to the exaltation of our expectations; but that we had deliberately censured the Government, that we had declared their unfitness to govern, that we had emphasised our lack of confidence in their administrative qualities. That would be the interpretation. That is the only question now that we have to decide. The question, as submitted to the House, allows no other issue. Have we confidence in the Minister for Railways in his recommendation of Mr. Short? That is the only question now we have to decide. We have no materials for any other judgment. Unless we want to send the Ministry to the country furnished with

our disapproval in that respect, we must indorse the recommendation submitted to us through the Minister to-night. That is not a fair position to place the House in.

The Minister for Railways: I do not think the section ought to be in the Act.

Mr. WALKER: It does not matter about the section being in the Act; I submit if the section is there—I know it is—then what does it imply? The section being in the Act implies this. When the matter is submitted to the House every possible material that would add to its judgment shall be supplied to us; it means that, or nothing. No Act of Parliament, no section of that kind ever intended that this House should deliver judgment without deliberation, and no House can have deliberation unless it has materials for deliberation submitted to it. We should go over the ground again. The object of that section, if I understand it rightly, is to enable us to review the conclusions arrived at by Ministers.

The Minister for Railways: The action of the Government.

Mr. WALKER: No, the decision of Government, for the action of the Government has been arrived at now by a judgment of the materials placed in their possession. That is the only way the Government can come to any conclusion unless there is anything in rumours that sometimes have been made that Mr. Short was placed there on his trial on the understanding that he would get the position eventually. The Government have come to the conclusion, not from any foregone prejudices or any personal liking for the applicant, but they have come to the conclusion because they have had a number of applicants before them, with all their qualifications duly set forth. They had deliberated; they had put this, that, and the other application aside; they had reviewed the number until it was refined down to one. That was what the Cabinet had done after having received a report from the Minister. Before we can judge as to whether the conduct of the Minister is right or not in this respect, we must have the materials before us which the Minister had. That is clear. It means that we are able, by virtue of having this:

matter referred to us, to review not only the claims of Mr. Short, but also the claims of every other applicant who put in his testimonials. There is no other conclusion than that; otherwise this court—for this is the highest court in the land—is shorn of its power, its methods are absolutely nullified, and we are face to face with the tremendous farce that although we are supposed to be a deliberative Assembly, we are asked only to endorse the judgment or decision of a Ministry without having the power to consider or not. That is the position to-night. We are not capable of judging now, for it would be altogether abortive to vote one way or the other on this question with the matter we have before us, unless we are to be absolutely servile and vote for the motion simply because the Government brought it down. That would surely be degradation of our functions. If we did that the Minister would not respect a House that would so yield to demands, or so crawl to his bidding. Consideration is an impossibility where we stand on this matter; then what other course can we take? A way out of the difficulty is the suggestion of the member for Guildford to postpone the matter until the elections are over. Out of a desire—may I say it without being offensive—for decency, that should be done. This is a very important matter, this appointment of a Commissioner of Railways, because I know no agency in the whole of this State that is so interwoven with the possibilities for the future as our railways. They are not merely traffic and commercial concerns; they are not to be put on the level of mere carrying agencies; they are to a certain extent arteries of the country's development, they will decide in a great measure what the future of the State is to be. There is nothing so intimately connected with Ministerial policy as the management of the railways; therefore the importance of a great question like this is of itself a sufficient excuse for delay at a time like this. There is no need to hurry what is going to bind the country for five years; there is no need to rush into what might possibly be proved harmful, I do not say it will, in that period. I agree that there

has been no real appeal to the country on the question of Ministerial management. Unfortunately the weakness of Governments in the past has more or less disgusted and prejudiced the people against Ministerial interference with the railway management. I admit there have been all kinds of parasites connected with the railway management under Ministerial control. There are many evils which require to be removed in that respect; but when the pendulum swung against Ministerial ineptitude, inefficiency, and failure it did not swing back to stop there. In the course of time justice takes the medium course, and what is required for the country is independent management, with the sphere of management strictly defined, and with every item of policy connected with Ministerial responsibility. We must be able to deal with those railways, in matters of policy, through Parliament. That question has not been submitted to the people at any election that has taken place in Western Australia. Many have not been educated upon the question, or have even thought of it. Mere silence and lack of outcry is caused by the fact that the people in this State are getting used to the abuses of our political life. They are getting used to the dull, tired apathy that has apparently settled everywhere upon us, and they are getting used to the want of real, responsible nerve which responds to the touch of the wand of the people. They feel that no good will come from complaining. They have been silent, and no one has put the question properly to them; but I am firmly convinced they will say "We, as owners of the railways, through our members of Parliament, are the responsible people, and we must have a say in the management and direction of the railways." This, I hope, will be said during the coming elections. [Mr. Scaddan: Not if the motion is carried.] No, but if the amendment is carried, and therefore I think it is our duty to postpone a decision on the question in deference to the people. What harm shall we do by deferring the question? Shall we at all deprive Mr. Short of his chances? Shall we immediately relegate him to a subordinate position? Shall we alter, during

the next three months, the running of the railways? No. The conditions prevailing at this moment will prevail until after the elections are over. We shall disturb nothing. We shall make no alteration of the railway traffic. There will be no misfortunes to fear. The railways will go on as they have done during the last six months, during which Mr. Short was on trial. It is only another three or four months' probation, and should the more convince the country of that gentleman's qualities and his fitness for the post. In the circumstances what danger can there be in the postponement? I cannot see what harm will be done to a single individual; but on the other hand I feel sure that good will be done, for at the proper time, when the new House meets, at all events some of us will be able to take part intelligently in the discussion when the real issue is placed before us, when we shall have something before us to enable us to make comparisons and to determine what is best to be done. We shall be able then to feel that the country is behind us in whatever step we take, that the country knows we are taking that step, that we are expected to take it, and at the same time we shall be able to feel that we are beginning the new life, as it were, with a new Commissioner. It is a mere postponement, and as the decision has been postponed so long, what harm can there be in postponing it a little farther? There may be this feature, that whatever merit or credit there may be due might not be given to this Ministry. I am not at all prophesying any deluge that will swamp the occupants of the Ministerial benches during the coming elections. We all admit although some of us may not hope, that there is a possibility of the same men being in office, and they can then have all the honour and glory, and wear the crown of glory as well then as now. Surely it is not the case of a Minister making a desperate effort to get this through, lest he may never have a chance again. Surely there is no feeling like that about it. Why not postpone this question? Why urge it on at this moment? There has been all this dilatoriness and delay; is it not unseemly to rush this important measure on at the

eve of the closing of the doors of this building? It seems to me it is too important to do that. I can understand the York Reserve Rededication Bill being pushed on with, but not an important measure like this. This measure is too serious to trifle with in the dark when our hands are tied, and especially at this stage of our history. I am anxious that the new House should have the opportunity of deciding an issue of so great importance—not only as to the personnel of the Commissioner, but also the issue as to whether he, being Commissioner, shall have exactly the same powers he has had hitherto or whether those powers are to be limited so as to admit of the juncture with them of Ministerial responsibility also. That is the great question; so great, that I am exceedingly anxious that the amendment should be carried.

Mr. H. E. BOLTON (North Fremantle) : It has been pointed out that this amendment, if carried, would simply give the right to the people to decide as to control by Minister or Commissioner. I do not think the mover made it quite clear whether this was the intention of the amendment or not, and I therefore think it necessary to give my reasons for voting for the amendment. My own idea is exactly the same as the ideas of those who have advocated Ministerial control; and it is because I believe this is another opportunity of declaring for Ministerial control that I intend to support the amendment. I do not view this discussion as deliberating the point as to the capabilities or otherwise of the gentleman the Government have seen fit to appoint. From what I have learned from the Minister the applications of a suitable character for this position were very few indeed. We may gather from what was said that they were from gentlemen mostly engineers. In view of that fact, I am inclined to think that very few members in this Chamber would raise any objection to the appointment of Mr. Short. My opinion is that Mr. Short has an advantage over all foreign applicants. His local knowledge of railway matters in Western Australia—with reference to his previous experience I do

not care to go into it ; there are two sides to that—his local knowledge, as I have said, gives him prior right over all others to take this position. I believe now that he has received the appointment, that is if the House will confirm it, he will be able to do good work. I am of opinion he will have more work to do, and it will be somewhat more complicated than that which the old Commissioner had to perform. I remember when this question was discussed in this House as to a farther term for the late Commissioner, Mr. George, a great many members of this Chamber rose and said they were pledged to vote against Mr. George being appointed for a farther term. I do not expect that the same members will rise in their places and vote against Mr. Short because of that fact. But to those who believe that Ministerial control is best I would appeal to vote for the amendment. Delay could be obviated in this way. If the approval of Parliament were delayed until after the general elections, say for three months, it would not necessarily follow that the Government would be expected to advertise for applicants again ; but if then the people declared in favour of Commissioner control it would be necessary to just submit this motion to the new Parliament. If the people declared in favour of Ministerial control, then the position would be that the Acting Commissioner would not have his appointment ratified. Therefore, I do not see any reason for the Government opposing the proposal that the people shall decide as to whether the question of railway management should be by Ministerial or Commissioner control. At the same time, it should be distinctly understood that I have no intention of supporting the amendment with a view to stopping the appointment that the Government have made, for in the circumstances I am bound to say that they have chosen the best applicant.

Hon. F. H. PIESSE (Katanning) : My intention in rising is to say a few words with reference to the amendment. With regard to the original motion, it was a motion that could have been dealt with on its merits, irrespective of the

various side issues that have been introduced. The Minister no doubt felt it was a good opportunity to supply certain information regarding matters which had been touched upon previously in connection with the interior administration of the Railway Department, the question of wages and so forth. A good deal has been said with reference to these matters which probably would not have been referred to had there not been previous references with regard to the question of wages and what has been termed sweating. There was also another side issue—that which the member for Guildford (Mr. Johnson) has embodied in his motion, the question of removing the railways from political control. I have given my opinion on this subject to the House on frequent occasions, having had an opportunity to judge as to the expediency and wisdom of the control of the railways by a Commissioner and under a Minister. I feel now this is not the time to introduce such a question. We have had it discussed so many times, and the House has been very decisive in its opinion ; and its reintroduction now means prolonging the discussion on a matter which, in my opinion, has been so clearly and decisively dealt with. I have always felt that there was much in the argument of continuing the administration of the railways under what was called political control, because of the requirements of the country in regard to expansion, the question of rates and matters of policy. We have not altogether removed the railways from the control of the Minister. The Minister still has certain powers in regard to rates and questions of policy. With regard to administration, no doubt much is left to the Commissioner. Therefore, I feel we are to blame for a great deal if changes have been made that have not met with the approval of the country. The people themselves are afraid to leave a number of matters entirely under political control for fear of the influence which they say might be brought to bear, as has been done by Administrations in the past. That is the reason why the change has been made, and that is why Ministers have desired to shirk responsibility. I am not satisfied that Minis-

ters are prepared to accept all responsibility in regard to the management of the railway concerns. In the wisdom of the House in the past, and concurred in by the people, much of the political control has been delegated to the Commissioner at the head of this department; and yet at the same time we hold a very strong hand over a great many important matters concerning the management of the railways. [Mr. A. J. Wilson: The Minister controls the policy of the railways.] A great deal of the policy. I feel that this is not the time to bring such a motion forward; and I do not think this is a matter which should be raised at the general elections, because we have already dealt with it so very decisively. If we did refer it to the country, the people would respond as they did in the past and give a definite instruction to their representatives, as they did on the former occasion, that is that the system of management should continue. I therefore cannot support the amendment.

Mr. J. SCADDAN (Ivanhoe) : I desire to explain the reason why I intend to vote for the amendment in order that there may be no misconception afterwards. I do not desire to express an opinion as to whether or not Mr. Short is the best man for the position of Commissioner. I am not in a position to judge. I only know one applicant, and that is Mr. Short; therefore, I cannot give an expression of opinion. I want to point out to the House that we are merely asking, by carrying this amendment, that the permanent appointment of a Commissioner of Railways shall be delayed for, say, a period of three months. The Minister has already pointed out that Mr. Short has acted in the capacity of Acting Commissioner for twelve months, and apparently in that twelve months, in order to advance his chances of obtaining the position permanently he made the most of his opportunities; and the Minister presented a statement prepared by Mr. Short showing what he had accomplished while he was acting in the capacity of Commissioner. I do not complain about that; it is a perfectly fair attitude

to adopt on the part of Mr. Short; but it would not be asking much, in view of the work that Mr. Short has done, that he should continue to carry on for another three months in order that the people should be given an opportunity of deciding whether the railways should be managed by a Commissioner or controlled by a Minister. I want to point out that this opportunity is not likely to occur again. We are on the eve of a general election; three months at most will see Parliament reassembled, and the appointment of a Commissioner will be for a period of five years. That will run us into 1913, and the next general election, I would point out, will take place in 1911, that is two years before the Commissioner's term of five years will expire. Then we will discover that Parliament will not be able to obtain an expression of opinion on the question as to how the railways shall be managed, because the Commissioner will still have, at the time of the next elections, two years to run. The Government should therefore seize this, a favourable opportunity, of allowing the people to determine the question.

Hon. F. H. Piessé : It has already been decided.

Mr. SCADDAN : It has not been decided.

The Minister for Railways : The new Parliament will be able to amend the Railways Act, if it wants to do so.

Mr. SCADDAN : Can you tell me whether the question was prominently before the people at the last elections?

The Minister for Railways : I do not know that.

Mr. SCADDAN : That is the position. I doubt very much whether at the last elections the question of Ministerial or Commissioner control was ever raised. Now an opportunity is being given us to decide it. If the motion is carried and the appointment is made, the Minister can very well go to the country and say, "The appointment has been made for five years; you will have another general election before that term expires; why raise the question now?" It cannot possibly have any effect on the next Parliament, because that Parliament will only

sit for a term of three years, and Mr. Short, if appointed, will still be Commissioner at the end of that term.

The Minister for Railways : I have told you that Parliament has power to amend the Act.

Mr. SCADDAN : I think the proposition contained in the amendment is a fair one ; namely that the appointment should be held over for the short term mentioned. Mr. Short has done so well in the capacity of Acting Commissioner, that I am sure he would not object to continue to act for three months ; and it would not follow that fresh applications would have to be called. If the country decide we should continue under Commissioner control, the Government can bring down the motion they bring down to-night making a permanent appointment of Mr. Short to the position, and I am satisfied that there would be no objection from any members. I do not object to the appointment of Mr. Short if we must have Commissioner control, but I shall vote for the amendment in order that the people shall decide the issue.

Mr. J. EWING (Collie) : Perhaps as a member of the House who moved a direct motion in favour of Ministerial control of our railways I may be pardoned for making a few remarks on this occasion. With all confidence I moved in this House that Commissioner control should be abolished and that Ministerial control should take its place, but on that occasion the decision of the House was against me, though the majority was not large. Later on when the amending Bill came before the House there was another opportunity for members to vote in favour of Ministerial control, and I amongst others took that opportunity and voted in favour of Ministerial control, but also on that occasion we were defeated. Then it just becomes a question as to whether we, as members sitting in this House, are satisfied that the majority of members shall rule ; and on this occasion I see no reason whatever for delaying the decision the Government have arrived at of appointing Mr. Short if members of this House consider the appointment a good

one. As far as the next general elections are concerned, it is open to every member seeking the suffrages of the electors to again bring up the question of Ministerial control, and I have no hesitation in saying that I am going to bring it up. I believe in Ministerial control, and if I am returned to Parliament I shall move another motion and endeavour to rectify what I consider a mistake on the part of this Parliament in deciding in favour of Commissioner control.

The Minister for Railways : The only way to do it is to amend the Act.

Mr. EWING : If it should happen that the outcome of the elections is that a majority come back in favour of the system of Ministerial control, it will be for the Government in power to give effect to the opinion of the majority of members and to amend the Act either by curtailing the powers of the Commissioner or by reverting to direct Ministerial control. [*Member :* What will you do with the Commissioner ?] There is no reason why Mr. Short should suffer in any degree. I take it from the remarks of members of the House that Mr. Short seems to have not only the confidence of members but also the confidence of the service he controls. That being so, should the House arrive at any other decision than the one already arrived at, Mr. Short can be offered the position of General Manager under the system of Ministerial control. [*Mr. Angwin :* Even at £1,500 a year?] Or at £2,000 a year if necessary. In my opinion £1,500 is too low a salary to pay to any Commissioner controlling our railways. It is my intention to vote against the amendment for the reasons I have advanced. But with regard to the amount of money that seems to have been saved during the past 12 months in our railway system, I will say that on many occasions I have taken exception to the manner in which the saving has been effected. Many railway services have been curtailed and too much in the way of economy has been exercised to the disadvantage of people in the remote portions of the State. I farther emphasise the fact that the money saved should be used in the proper direction, that is, to see that every man in

the railway service gets at any rate a living wage. After that has been provided for, the great industries of the State should have a fair advantage of any money that may be saved. We are told by the Minister in charge of the department that £245,000 has been saved during the last three years. What is the right thing to do with that sum? As I have stated, I think that the whole of that money, after providing for interest and sinking fund in our railways and after provision has been made, as I have already said, for paying a living wage, should be devoted towards the reduction of our railway freights. I have heard a great deal about reductions having already been made in favour of certain industries, but I believe the whole salvation of the industries of the State depends upon reducing freights to a minimum, so that if we come into competition with the Eastern States and the outside world we will have full advantage of placing our commodities on the market at the minimum of cost. I intend to give my support to the appointment of Mr. Short; and I would like to say that in my opinion in the railway service of this State we have very eminent officers of high calibre well able to look after the interests of the State. My only regret is that we have not Ministerial control at the present time.

Mr. G. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret): Hon. members will remember that last session, when it was made known this appointment would take place during this session and that Mr. Short had been appointed Acting Commissioner of Railways, I expressed myself as satisfied with the appointment as Acting Commissioner and said that I hoped Mr. Short would receive the appointment as Commissioner. I have not departed from those views and I am pleased to support the motion moved to-night by the Minister for Railways. I do not think any good will come from the amendment moved by the member for Guildford. Beyond doubt we are within two months of the general elections, and what opportunity will we have of making the electors conversant with the running of the railway system

of the State in that time, as to whether it should be Ministerial control or control as at present by a Commissioner under the Minister for Railways?

Mr. Scaddan: They know now if you give them an opportunity of voting.

Mr. TAYLOR: We had our railway system until within the last five years under Ministerial control with a General Manager.

Mr. Angwin: But the people had very few votes then.

Mr. TAYLOR: Whatever votes the people had I suppose they recorded with the same amount of energy as they do to-day. [Member: But not with the same judgment.] Perhaps they have matured in their judgment to-day; but we had a General Manager whose services were dispensed with by the Government of the day. Those who were in public life at that time will remember the conditions under which that gentleman's services were dispensed with, and Parliament thought it necessary to remove the railway system as far as possible from political influence and place it under the control of a Commissioner, and I have not heard any great outcry in any part of the State in favour of Commissioner control or in favour of management under Ministerial control. On the other hand we find that the gentleman who could not satisfy the State as Manager of our railways immediately on leaving this State received an appointment, according to the Press, to control a railway system in England with more mileage and dealing with more loading and passenger traffic than we had in this State; and we learn that he has been conducting the business admirably, not under a Government but under a company. That gentleman failed here in managing a railway system under Government control, but he was highly successful in managing a railway system as managed under companies before he came here, and now he has been successful under similar conditions after leaving here pronounced a failure. [Mr. Scaddan: What does that prove?] It proves that the people of this State are not anxious to render any assistance to the Government or Parliament as to whether it should be Ministerial or Com-

missioner control of our railways. I am pleased the Government have selected Mr. Short, because we always advocate giving a man an opportunity of rising. Mr. Short has raised himself from the bottom rung of the ladder in the railway service; he has served many years in South Australia and many years in this State, and it is pleasing to the people of the State that after years of experience a man who has managed the traffic of the railways of this State for so long and so successfully has received the appointment to hold the higher post of Commissioner. It should be the aim of every Government to place it within the reach of any Government employee in any department to reach the highest post in the department in which he is working, because there is incentive for the servants of the State to do the best they can for the State. I maintain this alone would be sufficient for me to support the appointment of Mr. Short. As regards the appointment being made by a dying Parliament, I say that if this be an unsatisfactory appointment to the people of the State the Government will be carrying it with them during the elections, and the people will be able to express an opinion as to whether they believe the Government were wise or justified in making the appointment; but if we stay the appointment the people will not be able to judge whether the Government have done right or wrong. The Government have given ample opportunity for the last nine months for the people to say whether they wanted a different system in their railways or not, and there has been no outcry that I have heard to alter the system. I am indeed pleased that the Government have chosen the man they have for the position. I am not aware of the names of those who competed with Mr. Short, nor is any other member of the House I suppose. I do not suppose it is known outside Cabinet, and I do not think it would have been wise for the Minister to have made the names known to Parliament to-night, or that if he had Parliament would have been in a position to have considered what was the proper appointment to make or whose claims were best for the post. The Minister has

pointed out that most of the applicants were engineers not qualified in the direct management of railways, and I am satisfied to accept the position placed before us by the motion for the appointment of Mr. Short as Commissioner. Also I desire to say that if the people of the State believe the Government have not made a wise appointment they will be able to deal with the Government at the general elections. Any member who thinks Mr. Short is not a capable man to hold the position will have an opportunity during the campaign to put it before the electors and see whether the majority of the electors think as he thinks or as the Government think. [*Mr. A. J. Wilson:* To show Mr. Short's shortcomings.] The hon. member may perhaps be more qualified to give a decision on shortcomings, and perhaps after the elections he may be in a better position to do so than now. I only want to say I am pleased to support the motion moved by the Minister. I cannot support the amendment because I fail to see that any good will come from it if carried. No possible good can result. The present Commissioner has been acting for nine months, and to delay the settlement of this matter for three or four months for the new Parliament—and it is quite on the cards perhaps a new Government—coming straight into office to deal with it would not be right, for the new Government would not be as capable of deciding as the Government who have been conducting the business of the country for the last two or three years.

Mr. A. J. WILSON (Forrest): It is a most unfortunate thing one should find the House, so to speak, divided against itself. We have leading members of the Labour Party supporting the action taken by the member for Guildford, and we find a no less illustrious leader of that party opposing the attitude adopted by the same members. That may be shortcomings on the part of the member or on the part of other members, but the most peculiar thing about the matter is that for months past it has been in the air that the late Commissioner was going out of office, that there was no possibility

of his being reinstated and that a successor would have to be appointed within the time of leave granted to the Commissioner. And during the currency of the twelve months which have now elapsed since the retirement on full pay of the Commissioner, there have been at work in this State certain political organisations pulling the strings to secure, not Ministerial control, but the appointment of a particular Commissioner, the very gentleman who has been appointed and who has the honour of occupying the position of Commissioner to-day. How stands the position of those gentlemen who are members of that particular party, who are seeking the patronage and who are seeking the support of the 7,000 voters in the State to-day, who are members of the organisation that has been pulling the strings for 12 months to secure the appointment of the very gentleman who has convinced the Government that of all the applicants for the desired position he is the one entitled to hold it? I congratulate Mr. Short on the fact that he has been appointed. [*Mr. Stuart:* Do you congratulate the country?] I venture to think the country after an experience of Mr. Short's administration in the department will have occasion to congratulate itself, and that fact will be the highest commendation of the efforts of Mr. Short himself. What are we asked to do to-night? We are asked to condemn the principle of Commissioner control and to favour that of Ministerial control. And on what grounds? Has there been any logical reason advanced on which Commissioner control has failed? That is not the point, says the member for Mt. Margaret (Mr. Taylor). The fact remains that there has been no logical reason adduced why we should depart from the system that has been in operation for the past five years in Western Australia. In what particular has the system of Commissioner control failed? Did the member for Guildford, who moved the amendment, adduce any reason why the system should be changed? Has there been a logical reason advanced? In what particular has the system failed? That is what I want to know. And if we knew in what par-

ticular it has failed, we should know how to combat it. Even admitting that the system of Commissioner control had failed, one ought not to entirely overlook the peculiar circumstances under which the last Commissioner of Railways was appointed. Nor are we justified in absolutely condemning the system of Ministerial control because many people in the country have come to the conclusion that the late Commissioner of Railways in Western Australia was not the huge success that he might have been. That is no argument for changing our system. When we come to analyse the question of Ministerial control, has it been clearly shown to the House or to the country, or do electors clearly understand what is the position in regard to the present administration of our Railway Department? Where does Ministerial control begin and where does it stop short? How far does Mr. Short dictate the policy of the administration of our railways, or how far is he nothing more nor less than a General Manager of our railways? Assuming for the moment we dispense with the title of Commissioner, and for the nonce we say Mr. Short shall be appointed not as Commissioner but as General Manager; assuming we amend the Railways Act and make provision for the appointment of Mr. Short as General Manager, how many powers possessed by Mr. Short to-day as Commissioner would he be deprived of if to-morrow we made him General Manager? In what way would we curtail the powers now within his exclusive right? Before any reasonable person can be convinced that there is justification for altering or varying the existing conditions there must be something to show us what we are going to sacrifice and what we are going to gain. It is a significant fact that there are 7,000 electors who whilst believing Ministerial control is the one thing which is going to be the salvation of our largest spending and earning department, support the politicians who are in favour of Ministerial control, who are virtually the nominees of those 7,000 electors. Why do those 7,000 electors want Ministerial control, and if they want Ministerial con-

trol, why do they want Mr. Short appointed?

Mr. Scaddan: Why did you vote for Ministerial control last session?

Mr. A. J. WILSON: Because in those days I was not as enlightened as I am to-day. I was like the hon. member is to-day, in the dark. On this particular question I venture to submit there has been no justification for any alteration, and if any justification existed to-day, surely that justification existed just as effectually on the 30th June, 1907, when the late Commissioner of Railways was given leave in accordance with the agreement on which he was engaged. In spite of the pressing requisition of the organised railway vote of the country, in spite of the existence of an enthusiastic and energetic party in this Parliament, not a word was breathed about submitting the question to the country; but now, after waiting for twelve months we are asked to postpone the whole question, for the purpose of what? For the purpose of allowing the people to decide the question which everybody knows they are bound to decide in a particular way. You have only to go about the country to know how the people will decide this question. They have unbounded confidence in the Government, and they have unbounded lack of confidence in the Opposition.

Mr. Taylor: Why do you not go to the other side?

Mr. A. J. WILSON: Do not worry about my going there. I will be there in the next session of Parliament.

Mr. Scaddan: He is under Ministerial control.

Mr. Heitmann: And has been for months.

Mr. A. J. WILSON: The only justification that can be raised in connection with this question, absolutely the only thing that can be put forward for the postponement of the question, is the fact that the members sitting on the Opposition side of the House, with two exceptions, are so absolutely barren and void of policy to put before the country at the coming election that they must have some straw to hang on to while going out on the sea in which they are bound to drown. And the only thing they have to place be-

fore the country is that we must have Ministerial control, that the country is going to the dogs because this Commissioner control of the railways exists, that the biggest spending and earning department of the State should not be handed to a Commissioner and that the only hope of saving the country and themselves is to cling to the last straw of Ministerial control of the railways. One would be inclined to draw the conclusion that these members were hanging on to the straw because it is the only thing left to them. Their policy is gone, their land tax has gone—[*Member:* And their members have gone]—their members are absolutely deserting them.

Mr. Taylor: They have not deserted their principles to their constituents.

Mr. A. J. WILSON: Here we are faced with the position that certain members of Parliament know themselves to be entirely out of touch with the people. They know that their principles are against the best wishes of the community, and their desire is to break down the bulwarks of the Constitution and propose something to gratify their vanity and leave them one straw to go to the country with. I pity them in their remorse.

Mr. T. H. BATH (Brown Hill): In dealing with the motion brought forward by the Minister for Railways, and the amendment which has been moved by the member for Guildford, I desire at the outset to ask the Minister whether he has gone into the question of the legality of the clause which provides for the appointment of a Commissioner at a salary to be determined by Parliament, because the point was taken here during last session of Parliament as to the legality of that measure without an appropriation of Parliament, introduced by a message from His Excellency the Governor. That point was ruled out by the Speaker, but since then I have consulted the authorities on the subject, and I have spoken to those who are well versed in Parliamentary procedure, who have upheld the view I took on that occasion.

The Minister for Railways: Even if that were the case the old Act would remain in force.

Mr. BATH: The question would be, whether the old Act or the new Act was in force, if any action were taken that could be construed as being carried out under the clause passed last session, it might involve the legality of this act taken by the Government with regard to the appointment. I do not want to argue the point, but only to say that as a measure of precaution it is just as well that the point should be cleared up as authoritatively as possible. In listening to the portion of the debate I have had the opportunity of hearing, I have been very much astonished at the attitude taken by some members. For instance, the member for Collie (Mr Ewing) has referred to the fact that on two occasions he has voted for the principle of Ministerial control, and adds that, as the majority of the House have decided against Ministerial control, he intends to bow to their decision. [Mr. Ewing: For the time being.] My idea is this, that if a principle is worth fighting for, it is worth fighting for all the time; it is worth fighting for now, when we have an opportunity of putting the principle forward again, and an opportunity, perhaps, of winning the day. It is all very well to bow to the will of the majority, but it is better to strengthen one's muscles in order to prepare for any fight over a principle which one advocates. So far as the possibility of consulting the people at the forthcoming election on the question of either Ministerial or Commissioner control is concerned, I must admit that a great deal of difficulty is involved in getting a clear expression of opinion on it. For instance, what opportunity will there be of getting a clear expression of opinion on the question of Ministerial control in the fight for the Menzies constituency, where other issues, more burning issues, will be involved?

The Minister for Railways: There will be one issue there, "for" or "against."

Mr. BATH: What opportunity will there be of getting an expression of opinion on the point in the constituency of the Minister for Works, where the dock is the all-absorbing topic to the exclusion of all other issues?

The Minister for Railways: Or what opportunity would there be at Brown Hill?

Mr. BATH: In that constituency they do not worry about the dock or State batteries, for it is an electorate consisting of men who take an intelligent interest in the political questions of the day.

The Minister for Works: I cannot believe that if they send you to Parliament.

Mr. BATH: Of course, when we listen to an opinion, the weight we attach to it depends upon the source from which it comes, and in this case it is only the opinion of the member for Fremantle. I do not know what ideas to gather from the extraordinary eloquent efforts of the member for Forrest (Mr. A. J. Wilson). If there were anything tangible or definite—it is much like searching for a needle in a haystack, to look for anything definite in that member's speech—it was in the nature of an attack upon the present Government, who, he says, are the people we should support in the country. I want to say to that member that, even if the members of the Opposition are clinging to a straw, or if a straw will be their only support in the campaign about to begin, he has, in order to avoid the straw, gone a long way beyond the confines where members of the Labour Party can reach him. He has made no secret of the fact that he has gone to a constituency where no member of the Labour Party can go in order to denounce him for his treachery.

Mr. A. J. Wilson: He will be here by-and-by to denounce you for yours.

Mr. BATH: In regard to the question of control by a Minister or Commissioner, even in the Act passed last session, although there was an expression of opinion against Ministerial control, the measure, as passed, was only a hybrid one. The member for Forrest talks about 7,000 electors—I presume he means the employees of the Railway Department, who, he says, can bring influence to bear; but it can be said to the credit of members of this party that they are not being dictated to in their action on this question by those 7,000 people. When we remember that the number is split up

among fifty constituencies in Western Australia, one can see what the political influence is they could bring to bear. We have had it on the admission of the Minister himself that he wants to retain Ministerial control so far as fixing the rates for freight on the railway system is concerned. When you deal with that point you deal with an issue that can be determined in some constituencies by a majority of the electors who are vitally concerned with that very point, and who demand that while the Minister can be relieved from his responsibility as to wages and conditions where the workers are concerned, he should retain full control so that they might come along and ask for a reduction of the railway rates on produce carried on the lines. If political influence is undesirable, as some people say it is, in regard to the conditions under which the railway workers are employed, that political influence is just as undesirable so far as fixing the railway rates is concerned. The people of this State are the shareholders in our railway system, and if so, being the owners, they have a perfect right to have full control, and should be able to exercise that control through Parliament and responsible Ministers, whether the administration of the railways affects the wages and conditions of the workers or the railway rates on produce. That is the position now. We have a hybrid measure by which a Minister can exercise influence, an electioneering influence so far as the railway rates are concerned, and at the same time can repudiate any responsibility when there may be any grievance in regard to wages and conditions of the workers. In considering the question of the control of the railways we have to consider the men employed. They are just as much shareholders as anyone else, and we can never realise the full benefit of the State railway system until those charged with the administration, whether as members of Parliament exercising their opinion through the Ministry, or whether as Ministers themselves, realise they are doing something wrong if they benefit one section of the community while they are entirely indifferent to the welfare of another section who

happen to be employees on the railway system. The people, through Parliament and Ministers, as shareholders in our railway system, should have full control through whatever officer is appointed to the management of the railway system. Apart from any mistakes they may make, and I have no doubt they would make some, I am satisfied that in the long run we would have better results from the institution than if we handed it over to a Commissioner and gave him full control, free from any responsibility or influence from the Ministers of the day. I do not want the opinion to obtain that because we may have ineffective administration from the present occupants of the benches, such a thing is likely to occur in the future. We are going to have an improvement in that direction. It should be like the management of a municipal institution, where people elected by the people are seized with a sense of responsibility and carry out their duties without undue or underground influence.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The Minister for Works : Have you read about the West Ham municipal control ?

Mr. BATH : I will ask the Minister not to take one single instance, but all instances in the old country, where there is municipal control in many undertakings, and compare them with undertakings having private control ; but if he has read and studied this question he must know that the comparison is strongly in favour of those who have an enlightened policy of municipal control. However, this is apart from the question we are discussing. While I express the opinion that there is some doubt about getting a clear expression of opinion at the coming elections, I think we can get a general sentiment, and that there will be nothing lost by adopting the member for Guildford's suggestion to postpone the permanent appointment of the Commissioner until Parliament reassembles. My learned friend, the member for Mount Margaret (Mr. Taylor), in stating that the people can express their opinions at the election even if the appointment is made now, has lost sight of the fact that it is

a very difficult matter to retrace steps if the people decide on a different course from that embodied in the Railways Act of last year. If the appointment is made we have entered into an honourable obligation, and during the term of that appointment it would be a very difficult matter to make any alteration in the conditions under which the Commissioner is employed. The Minister will agree with that argument although he says we can amend the Act.

The Minister for Railways : The appointment is made.

Mr. BATH : Yes, subject to Parliamentary approval, and that is the condition specified in the bond ; but if we appoint the Commissioner now for a specified term we cannot review the conditions of employment under which he is engaged.

The Minister for Railways : Do you mean to tell me that you cannot amend the Railways Act ?

Mr. BATH : We could amend the Railways Act, but would that amendment apply to the appointment of the Commissioner, after we had entered into a fixed agreement with Mr. Short for a term of five years ? If we did that we could not honourably go back on the terms of that employment, either through the amendment of the Railways Act or through the decision of the new Parliament.

The Minister for Railways : Last year we made an amendment of the Railways Act.

Mr. BATH : We could amend the Railways Act to deal with a Commissioner, but we could not bring it into force until the termination of the term of the Commissioner's appointment, unless in the conditions of the agreement it was specified that he was subject to certain conditions. Would it be possible to amend the terms of the agreement during the period of its existence ?

The Minister for Railways : No.

Mr. BATH : That is the point. We can amend the Act, but we cannot amend the terms of employment, and therefore we would have to wait for the termination of Mr. Short's agreement be-

fore we could alter the conditions of the employment. Supposing we said we hand over the complete control of the railways free from Ministerial influence, and supposing the new Parliament said that course was not advisable, could the Minister for Railways alter that condition ?

Mr. Johnson : You cannot alter the conditions during the five years of the engagement.

The Minister for Railways : The Railways Act provides that the appointment shall be for five years.

Mr. Scaddan : Can you amend those sections dealing with the powers of the Commissioner ?

Mr. BATH : Most decidedly not, because those are the terms under which he is to be employed. It has also been stated here to-night that it was a matter of surprise that no mention was made of altering the control of our railway system during the 12 months in which Mr. George was under notice ; but I was never aware that 12 months' notice was given to Mr. George. We were not aware that Mr. George's services were to be dispensed with until shortly before his retirement, and in lieu of 12 months' notice he received 12 months' leave of absence on full pay. The opportunity has been taken whenever it presented itself, not only on the Bill presented last year, but on other measures as well, to bring forward this question of Ministerial and Commissioner control. I am satisfied we will never have satisfactory administration in the interests of the two parties vitally concerned—those who have to use the railways, and those who have to work on the railways—until we have control by Parliament through the responsible Minister, and I would urge those hon. members who supported the Minister last year by giving him a free hand in regard to fixing the railway rates, to also remember that the men employed on the railway system are just as deserving of consideration as the producers ; and if the condition of Ministerial control is desirable in the one instance, it is just as desirable in the other. If it is disadvantageous in the one case it is equally disadvantageous in the other.

I intend to support the amendment of the hon. member for Guildford.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (on amendment and in reply) : In connection with the debate on this matter the member for Kanowna spoke rather strongly when he said that the placing of this motion before the House, as was done to-night, put Parliament in a very extraordinary position, because members were asked to approve of the appointment when all the facts had not been placed before Parliament. I do not think that under any circumstances it would have been desirable to have dealt with the names and the qualifications of those who were not considered suitable for the appointment. I want to point out that when this Act was passed it was never intended for a single moment, in the event of applications being called for a position of this sort, that those applications should be placed before Parliament. The Act clearly states it is for the Government to make the appointment, and in this case the Government have done so ; but for the purpose of preventing the Government of the day entering into a lengthy engagement with someone in whom the House did not have confidence, the clause was inserted in the Railways Act. Thus the appointment would not be legal until it had received the approval of Parliament. The Act is very clear on this point. I merely submit, as we have done here to-night, the name of the gentleman who the Government thought was most qualified to fill the position. There has been a lengthy discussion in connection with the question of Ministerial versus Commissioner control. It seems too absurd to hear the statements made that if we pass this motion we would be tying the hands of Parliament in regard to our railway administration for a term of five years. Parliament has not tied the hands of any future Government or Parliament in the slightest degree. If Parliament, next session, thinks it wise that greater powers should be given to the Commissioner, or if it desires to restrict his powers it will be able to do so without, in the slightest degree, reflecting upon the Commissioner, or in any sense inflicting an injustice upon him.

Mr. Scaddan : Supposing you take away all his powers.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS : I am assuming, of course, that members of Parliament will not be so stupid. Last year we gave the Government greater powers, because we made provision in connection with the freights that the Governor-in-Council could override the Commissioner in connection with matters of that sort ; and that was not done, as some members would make other members believe, because we wanted to give special rebates. I hold this, that the Government should have control of the finances of the State, and control of the finances of the Railway Department. Under the amendment which the House passed last year, the Commissioner fixes the freights, but if the Government of the day desire to give some assistance to an industry they can override the Commissioner and take all the responsibility where it interferes with the Commissioner in his administration.

Mr. Bath : They look upon responsibility as an advertisement.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS : If you throw that responsibility upon them, and they use it wrongly, the people will resent it. I have known cases where we have induced the Commissioner to make rebates, and he took the blame for what was the action of the Government. Now if the Government desire to take any action in connection with the freights they also have to take the responsibility, and that is as it should be. We are not pledging any future Parliament in regard to our action. The Commissioner is appointed subject to the Railways Act, and all the agreement provides is that he shall be engaged for five years, and he shall be employed at a salary of £1,500 per annum. The next Parliament may take away a lot of his powers, and give extended power to the Minister : or take away powers from the Government and give to the Commissioner still greater powers. With regard to Mr. George, it is 12 months since he retired. He retired after a period of 12 months of extended leave. We called for applications and decided that a certain

person should be given the position. What reason can now be adduced for delaying the appointment which has been approved of by the Government, and which, on being submitted to Parliament, hon. members have declared, in effect, meets with their approval. That being the case, and there being no possibility of being able to amend the legislation, why should we delay the confirmation of the appointment, and let things remain in a state of chaos. I feel quite satisfied it would be a reprehensible thing if, after having called for applications, we were to delay making the appointment so as to give others an opportunity, not perhaps of amending the Railways Act, but to again consider the advisability of appointing Mr. Short as Commissioner. I hope the amendment will not be passed. There can be no justification for it unless it is on the ground that Mr. Short is not a fit and proper person to be appointed; and if that is the feeling it would be a reflection on the Government. I do not think members have that desire, so that I hope the amendment will not be carried.

Mr. Scaddan: That is unfair.

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

Ayes	11
Noes	20

Majority against .. 9

AYES.

Mr. Bath	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Bolton	Mr. Stuart
Mr. Collier	Mr. Walker
Mr. Horan	Mr. Ware
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Heilmann
Mr. Johnson	(Teller).

NOES.

Mr. Barnett	Mr. N. J. Moore
Mr. Cowcher	Mr. S. F. Moore
Mr. Davies	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Draper	Mr. Price
Mr. Ewing	Mr. Smith
Mr. Gordon	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Gregory	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Gull	Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Hardwick	Mr. Layman
Mr. Hayward	(Teller).
Mr. Keenan	

Amendment thus negatived.

Main question put, and passed without dissent.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at ten minutes to 10 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 11th August, 1908.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock, p.m.

Prayers.

Swearing-in.

Hon. B. C. O'BRIEN (Central) took the oath and subscribed the roll.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: Audit Act 1904—Transfers effected under Section 35. Fisheries Act 1905—Regulations. Mining Development Act—Statement of Expenditure for year ended June 30, 1908. Public Works Department—By-laws of Peppermint Grove Roads Board, and By-laws of Mourambine Roads Board. Health Act, 1898—By-laws of Local Boards of Health of Claremont and Subiaco. Municipal Corporations Act 1906—By-laws of the Municipalities of Busselton and Perth. Central Board of Health and Local Boards of Health—By-laws made between 20th December 1907 and 31st July 1908.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY, PRESENTATION.

The PRESIDENT reported that he had presented the Address-in-Reply to