

Scaddan's remarks. I quoted from his second reading speech in connection with the provisions of the Mine Workers' Relief Act. So I was under no misapprehension as to what that Act contained, as the Minister for Mines inferred. But when the Minister for Mines replied to me he produced a table in connection with these cases which purposely carried over from one year to another the cases existing the previous year, making it appear that there were quite a number of cases. The Minister gave the number of miners receiving benefits under Section 56 as follows:—Three in 1936, 12 in 1937, 10 in 1938 and so on down to 1944. But the table prepared by the board, from which the actuary made his calculations, stated, in connection with Section 56, that there were three in 1936, four in 1937, one in 1938 and so on down to 1943. There were no more than two in any subsequent year. So even in this table submitted by the Minister we are apt to be misled.

I regret that I have had to deal with so many figures in connection with this subject this evening because figures become boring. But I reiterate at this stage that the value of the goldmining industry to this State is determined not only by the tonnage of ore raised and the ounces of gold recovered. It is not attractive to investors only on that account. We also have to consider the number of men whose services are required in any one year to raise and treat the tonnage that is raised and to recover the ounces of gold that are recovered.

On motion by Mr. North, debate adjourned.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 9.40 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 4th October, 1944.

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

QUESTIONS (2).

ECONOMIC WASTE.

As to Complaint from Wiluna.

Hon. A. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary:

(i) Has the Minister's attention been drawn to a letter appearing in the "Daily News" over the signature of F. C. Overheu, Meekatharra:—"A large poultry farmer at Wiluna closed up because he had to send his eggs to Perth to be branded before he could sell at Wiluna. A pastoralist making 20 lbs. of butter a month could not dispose of it to a local store. He has turned his cows out and is now on boxed butter. He was trying to alleviate the local shortage. Why cannot there be some compromise in war time, such as there is in private enterprise, instead of red tape and bureaucratic stupidity. Fred C. Overheu, Meekatharra"?

(ii) If this statement is correct, will the Government take the necessary steps to prevent this economic waste?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(i) Not until this question was asked.

(ii) The information contained in the letter is very vague, and if the hon. member can supply the names of the parties concerned, further investigations will be made.

GOLD SALES.

As to Prices.

Hon. H. SEDDON asked the Chief Secretary:

In view of the importance of gold mining to Western Australia, will the State Government ascertain—

(i) What was the price per ounce received by the Commonwealth Government for gold?

(ii) What amount was received as a result of the sale of gold to India and other countries in which the price of gold exceeded the Australian price?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(i) and (ii) Consideration will be given to these questions by the Government.

RESOLUTION—COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS.

As to Extension of Appointment.

Debate resumed from the 20th September on the motion by the Chief Secretary to concur

in the following resolution received from the Assembly—

That the appointment by His Excellency the Lieut. Governor of Mr. J. A. Ellis as Commissioner of Railways for five years commencing on the 15th January, 1944, in the terms of the Executive Council minute laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly on the 12th September, 1944, be approved.

HON. J. A. DIMMITT (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.38]: Much criticism has been indulged in with respect to the appointment of the Commissioner of Railways. Some of the criticism has been against the system and some against the Commissioner. I suggest that a good deal of the criticism indulged in should have been levelled against the several Ministers of Railways involved rather than against the Commissioner. When Mr. Ellis took over the commissionership in January, 1934, he assumed control of rollingstock and plant, a good deal of which was in a deplorable condition. I speak with some knowledge of that because, during the course of my business operations round about that period, I had many occasions to visit the Government Workshops at Midland Junction and saw for myself the very dilapidated condition in which a lot of the plant, equipment and rollingstock was at that time.

Members will realise that Mr. Ellis took over the commissionership at the end of what was the greatest depression that this country and, in fact, the world, had experienced; and during those depression years the Railway Department was starved for funds, with the result that the plant and rollingstock reached the condition I have described. Since that date sufficient funds have not been made available to overtake the arrears of maintenance. I agree with Mr. Craig that we have little right to criticise the Commissioner for the tremendous annual losses on the railways while the Commissioner is deprived of the right completely to control the department of which he is allegedly the head. We all know that during the 10 years of Mr. Ellis's commissionership wages and salaries have increased by approximately 50 per cent., while materials for the purpose of maintenance and the building of new plant and equipment have greatly increased in price, and the cost of coal over that period of 10 years has practically doubled.

What happens in any business or industry when the cost of production in-

creases? The natural thing for a business to do is to increase the price of its commodity to the public. Now, the Commissioner of Railways, whose commodity is railway service sold to the public in terms of freights and fares, has not been allowed to increase the price of his product to the public. If he attempts to raise fares or freights, there is immediately a public outcry; and members of this Chamber are to some extent responsible, because probably we can all remember several occasions when regulations which sought to increase railway freights were disallowed by members here. It is obvious that the Railway Commissioner has not been allowed to increase freights and fares to overtake his costs. Further, it is obvious that year after year we have losses on the railways.

During the last five years something in excess of £1,000,000 has been lost by the Railway Department. But the Commissioner is not allowed to do what an ordinary businessman is allowed to do, and so we must realise that the Western Australian Government Railways cannot be regarded as a business undertaking. They must be considered in their true character as a public utility and a developmental instrument. I am afraid that some of us in this Chamber are inclined to overlook these two very important aspects of the Railway Department when railway accounts are being criticised. If the Railway Department is to be used as a developmental instrument, then it is logical that a developmental fund should be provided to reimburse the Railway Department for losses on developmental railways. Members are aware that extensions are made to our railway system into districts with the full knowledge that those lines cannot pay.

Railway lines are built into districts in full knowledge that the freight and passenger revenue will not be sufficient to pay for working expenses, without taking into consideration interest on the capital cost and a sinking fund to meet the capital cost. Yet we find in the annual accounts of the Railway Department substantial sums set aside for interest—something in excess of £1,000,000 every year. Railway lines are built into such districts for the purpose of development. As a result of the proximity of railway facilities to the adjacent lands, those adjacent lands naturally increase in value; and surely it would

be reasonable to give the railway revenue some credit for the incremental value created by those railways. Would it be unreasonable when Crown lands served by developmental lines are sold that a considerable proportion of the revenue from those sales should be credited to the Railway Department, or to a developmental fund for the purpose of meeting the losses on developmental lines?

A review of the railways of New South Wales reveals that in the annual accounts for 1943-44 the Railway Department of New South Wales was credited with a sum of about £800,000, which was paid by the developmental fund into railway revenue to meet losses on developmental lines. If we are going to be fair to our Railway Department and our Commissioner of Railways, then we should inaugurate some such scheme. As a matter of fact, I believe that Mr. Ellis has done a remarkably good job in spite of all the difficulties associated with the office of Commissioner of Railways.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Nobody could have done better.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I agree with the hon. member who interjects. But what we are concerned about, what every member of Parliament is concerned about and the public is concerned about, is the fact that we suffer huge losses on our railways.

Hon. G. B. Wood: What line do you travel on?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I travel mostly on the roads.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Oh!

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: If we examine our own railway accounts we shall come to the conclusion that the department, as far as its accounts are concerned, is bankrupt. What happens to any concern which reaches that stage in its life? It goes in for a policy of reorganisation and reconstruction, and I am convinced that that is the only method by which our Railway Department can ever hope to put itself on to some reasonable basis. I feel sure that if the Commissioner were permitted to give free rein to his undoubted organising ability, and certain alterations were made in the Government Railways Act, these railways would be put on a much better basis, if not on a profitable basis.

I was rather interested in an interjection from Mr. Williams, which I think was made when Mr. Craig was speaking. The hon.

member, interjecting, made reference to the "rotten conditions" under which fettlers employed by the Railway Department live. That interjection seemed to me to be an indictment of the Government, because the Government which Mr. Williams supports has been in power for 16 or 17 years and has had ample opportunity to remove or correct the rotten conditions referred to by Mr. Williams. Fettlers are not the only people who work and exist under bad conditions in the Western Australian Government railways. One has only to go to the railway yards around the Perth station to find employees working in ramshackle iron sheds that are blazing hot in summer and freezing cold in winter, ill-lit and ill-ventilated. Those men are working under conditions which would not be allowed if the railways were run by private enterprise.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is the unfortunate part of it; the Government can do no ill.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: As a matter of fact, the Government should be a model employer.

Hon. A. Thomson: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: But I am afraid the Government is far from being a model employer. It is probably the worst employer in the State.

Hon. T. Moore: Have you seen the Midland line?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Yes.

Hon. T. Moore: Does it compare favourably or unfavourably with the Western Australian Government railways?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I do not think the Midland Railway Co. provides good conditions, either.

Hon. T. Moore: Why not pick them, then?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: We are dealing with the Western Australian Government railways.

Hon. T. Moore: The conditions provided by the Government are certainly better than those provided by the Midland Railway Co.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: In the same way that the Government should be a model employer with regard to its fettlers and other employees, so should it be a model employer with regard to the Commissioner of Railways and give him an opportunity to control the department he is employed to control and not hamstringing him for want of funds. He should not be prevented from controlling

ing his own sources of revenue. I support the motion.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South-East): I regret that the position is such that I am forced to oppose the motion. It is also a matter for regret that although this appointment was, I understand, made as from the 1st January of this year, this is the first intimation we have had that it is not possible for us to move any amendment to the motion as submitted. It is unfortunate that the responsibility for the shortcomings of the railways have to be laid at the door of the Commissioner. I will concede that the responsibility is that of the Government.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Quite right.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: We have observed that, as a result of this matter having been ventilated in another place, the head of the Government has been prepared to admit that all is not well with the railways. And yet we have no suggestion from the Government—nothing whatsoever beyond this motion for the re-appointment of Mr. Ellis—for any correction of this state of affairs. It seems that the policy is to drift along and trust in the Lord, hoping that in the dim and distant future something will happen which will effect some alteration for the better. I have not had as intimate a knowledge of the railways and their workings as have other members. Since I have been a member of this House, we have lived under war conditions.

One thing that has impressed itself on my mind more than anything else in connection with the higher administration of the railways is the extraordinary complacency with which that administration is prepared to listen to complaints or suggestions for improvement in certain respects. I have not had a great deal to do with the railways. I suppose that in the four years I have been a member here I have provided more for the department in the way of freight than I have cost it in the form of a free pass, largely because the railway service is not convenient for me. I have had occasion to take up the matter of the transport of sheep. On one occasion a considerable number of sheep were lost in a very short trip. In effect, the reply I received to representations in that connection was that it could not have been the fault of

the railways. That was the end of it, or pretty well the end of it.

A country town which I know very well put up a proposal to the department for specified alterations. They would certainly have cost money. They might have cost £1,000 or £1,500, but the business of the people having dealings with the railways would have been considerably facilitated. The reply received was largely to the effect that the existing arrangements suited the railways quite well. Of course, the convenience of or assistance for the customers did not matter, because, through the railway administration seems to run the idea—or rather it is a fixed idea—that the Act precluding competition with railway transport will continue for all time and that the department will be free from any suggestion of competition from road transport. Although I have not always held this view, I do today consider that the railways are entitled to a certain amount of protection in that regard. But if the administration of the railways is going to continue to be conducted as it appears to be at the moment, in a complacent, self-satisfied manner, because the department is free from competition; and if the poor unfortunate customers have either to like or lump it, then I think it is high time there was a complete re-organisation of railway administration.

In regard to the district I know best, the department has certainly made one innovation, namely, the institution of a bus service. That has been a very great boon to the district which it has served. Unfortunately, it seems to be drifting, and there are difficulties in maintenance. No one who can be appealed to is interested, except the Commissioner, who is overworked, apart from the fact that he has been out of the State a good deal. Consequently, things have reached a stage when very shortly I am afraid we may be told that the service is too costly for the department to continue to run, or delays and breakdowns will bring the service to the same condition as that of the railways. People will begin to feel that they are more the victims of the service than its customers.

I agree with Mr. Dimmitt that the railways capitalisation should be overhauled, and that the department should be given an opportunity to render efficient service to

the public. I also think that control of the railways should not be centred in one man, as at present. It is far too much to expect one man to carry out those duties and at the same time keep a hold on the administration and—as I think one prominent Minister in another place said—spur on the administration to greater efficiency, or shake it somewhat out of its complacency. A board or commission of three or four members should be appointed to control the railways and there should be a review of the capitalisation of the whole system. That would give us something like the service to which I consider the users of the railways are entitled.

We can justifiably ask for consideration at the hands of the Government in respect to these matters before there is over-emphasis concerning the need for an increase in freights. Admittedly Mr. Dimmitt dealt with that question from his point of view, that of profit and loss and the figures involved. I think that country members, particularly, must deal with the subject from the point of view of the facilities that are afforded to the users of the railways. It seems to me that the freights that are being paid today are based on the principle of charging as much as the traffic will stand, and I do not think it will stand very much more.

The Chief Secretary: Are you referring to superphosphate or wheat?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Although I oppose the motion and although unfortunately a great deal of the criticism offered can be held to be directed at the Commissioner, I do not think the responsibility is really that of Mr. Ellis. The responsibility lies with the Government. If a little more interest were taken in the administration of the railways I think it would be found that most of the men in the service were anxious to do their job. Possibly some of them would be better off if they were transferred to other jobs, but I believe that the rank and file in the railway service are as keen as other men it is possible to find in most undertakings. There is, however, a large proportion of the railway employees who have become absolutely dispirited. They find it is no use trying to suggest anything or trying to bring about some improvement. They think it is no use trying to be efficient or give efficient service, because not only do they get no

encouragement from higher up but no interest at all is taken in them.

Seeing that the Government has been pushed into the position where it is prepared openly to admit that conditions in the railways are not satisfactory, I hope it will be able to devote time and energy to giving serious consideration to an alteration in the administration so that people who are forced to use the railways may gain something in the form of reasonable service for the cost such use occasions them. I also trust that the administration of the railways may have brought home to it the facts that transport is improving throughout the world, that the people of this country are prepared to concede quite a lot in favour of the system, and that they are prepared up to a point to give a certain amount of monopoly to the service. On the other hand, if these impositions continue much longer, I foresee a very earnest and strong revolt, particularly on the part of country people after the war, if they are not allowed to avail themselves of the more efficient services that have been provided in recent years by others than the railways.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East): I am not so concerned as Mr. Dimmitt appears to be as to whether the railways are paying or not. I do not think that in a huge State like Western Australia, where we have more railway mileage to the population than is found anywhere else, it is reasonable to expect the Commissioner to make the railways pay. Is not that, however, all the more reason why the officials should give a much more efficient service? If Parliament or the Government is not concerned in making the railways show a profit, surely the Commissioner should give a more efficient service on that account. Definitely we are not getting efficient service today. Mr. Roche said the people were dissatisfied. I do not know exactly with what they are dissatisfied, but I feel that there is something wrong with the service. The officials do not mind the trains running an hour or two late on the Great Southern line, and no-one seems to care or do anything about it. I refer to the Great Southern because I use the trains that run on that line more particularly. If a Great Southern train happens to clash with the Kalgoorlie train it has to wait at Spencer's Brook until the latter train comes

along and makes a start for the run to Perth.

Hon. A. Thomson: Even if the Kalgoorlie train happens to be late.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Yes. Even if the Kalgoorlie train is some minutes late it is nothing for the officials to hold up the Great Southern train for half an hour so that the former train may go through. People who use the line to which I refer will bear me out in this statement. It should be possible to run the Great Southern train so that it will get ahead of the other and reach Perth on time. Such delays should not be permitted to continue. Then we have the fiasco of the Greenmount tunnel. I do not believe in stop-work meetings or anything of that kind, but I was with the men 100 per cent. when they stopped work and refused to take any more trains through the tunnel.

I come into contact with a lot of railway men and they have told me the position. We know that one man died after going through the tunnel, and it is sheer luck that others have not been killed. One man fell off the footplate of the engine but he was ultimately picked up. Railway men have told me that it is not possible for them to fall off the Garratt engine because there is no room in the tunnel for them to do so. The Greenmount tunnel has been constructed for 40 years, and trouble has been occasioned with it ever since. It became necessary to break trains in two so that they should pass through the tunnel in two sections. The Government then rightly decided to by-pass the tunnel, but it took a strike to bring that about.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: You do not blame the Commissioner for all that.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Why not? Whom would the hon. member blame?

Hon. L. B. Bolton: You do not blame the the Government?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Someone must carry the blame. I believe that this debate in Parliament will do a lot of good, and that members have been genuine in their criticism and in their claims that all these troubles connected with the system should be put right. We know that endless delays occur at Spencer's Brook. That is nothing new, for it has been going on for a long time. The troubles should have been rectified when the going was good. I understand that from 20 to 30 men are now engaged on the by-

passing of the tunnel, and that the work will take about a year to complete.

Hon. C. B. Williams: No doubt the Yanks would be able to do it in a few days.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I know it is stated that the U.S.A. Forces could do the work in a few days. It is most essential that the job should be done as quickly as possible. I have no intention of opposing the motion. The Commissioner is probably doing a very good job, but something is definitely wrong with the system. Mr. Dimmitt referred to freights. Why does not the Commissioner take off the surcharge on bulk wheat? The Midland Railway Co. has been able to do that and still show a profit on the haulage. Mr. Ellis is not asked to show a profit on the railways. Seeing that he is allowed to run them without the necessity for showing a profit, he ought at least to provide greater efficiency.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West): I support the motion. I am of opinion that so long as the present system is permitted to obtain neither Mr. Ellis nor any other Commissioner would be able to balance the railway budget. For the past few years there has been a period when there has been a very substantial increase in the passenger earnings, but as soon as the railway earnings reach a reasonable figure and the system indicates the possibility of a surplus over working expenses, we find there is either an increase in the basic wage or someone comes along and hands out increases in pay to the railway employees, and thus any increase in revenue is immediately absorbed. I do not intend to discuss the point as to whether such increases are warranted or not, for probably they are. As has been said this afternoon one has the right to expect that the man who is managing an institution and finds costs growing up all the time should endeavour to recoup his losses in some way.

No matter how we look at the railway system I think we must absolve the Commissioner from any blame for the financial position into which the railways have fallen during his term of office. It has been suggested that three commissioners should be appointed to control the system. I recollect that on one occasion the Victorian Government had reached a position where it believed that the salvation of its railways lay in appointing three commis-

sioners. Not only did the position fail to improve when that was done, but it very soon became worse. It was not until the Government imported a gentleman from abroad, who took a very strong stand, that the leeway was made up and an improvement in the railway service was effected. We are not in the happy position that Victoria is in. We can electrify only a very small portion of our railway system, even if the current were available, so that we could not in that respect follow Victoria's lead.

I agree with the statement that there is some blame attachable to the several Governments over past years in that they have not endeavoured to assist the Commissioner to any great extent. I cannot recollect a single instance of a Government having shown any real desire to help to better the position. The Government has simply appointed a commissioner and let him take his chance. He has had to do the best he could, and whatever happened, had to bear the blame. I say we would be unjust if we blamed the present Commissioner and his executive for what is happening.

Getting down to minor points, I think a little more supervision might be exercised over the running of country trains. Let me give an experience of some months ago to show what happens to country travellers. A train runs from Margaret River to Perth each Sunday. It is timed to reach Perth at about 11 p.m. On the occasion I speak of, I was a passenger. Comparatively good time was made until we reached Rivervale, just on the outskirts of the city, but there, on the south side of the Bunbury railway bridge, we were held up for at least 20 minutes for no reason that was apparent at the time. Later, however, it was disclosed that we had had to wait for a goods train to cross the bridge.

Hon. G. B. Wood: That is nothing new.

Hon. W. J. MANN: The result of that delay was very much worse. The train reached the central railway station at about 25 minutes to 12. All the suburban trains had gone and the buses had ceased to run. Probably there were 300 people on that train, perhaps more, a great proportion of whom were stranded in the city without any means of getting to the suburbs. That is a scandalous state of affairs. I wanted to get to South Perth. I was fortunate

enough to have a motorcar and someone at home whom I could ring and ask for the car to be brought over in order to take me home. This was done. I went down the Terrace to the starting point of the Government buses that serve that part of the metropolitan area and saw two young girls, probably 18 to 20 years of age, in khaki with huge bags.

These girls were stranded; there was no chance of their getting a taxi. Two or three taxis came along and the drivers looked at them, but evidently they were not the class of passenger desired and the drivers moved on. When I asked whether they had missed the bus, the reply was, "We live at Canning Bridge and that is six miles distant. I do not suppose we can get a bed in the city at any price." I said that they would probably have some difficulty. I was in the happy position of being able to take those two young women and no fewer than seven others who came along later. We left the city with 11 in the car and there was not room to put a newspaper into it with that load on. We dropped them at various places between the city and Canning Bridge.

This scandalous state of affairs was brought about by some railway officials who were such blithering idiots as to prevent a country train from coming into the city before the suburban trains and buses had ceased to run. I complained to one of the officials, and he agreed it was most undesirable that such a thing should happen and promised that it would not occur again. It has not happened to me again, but I have heard that other people have been similarly inconvenienced by the late running of trains in that way. I voice this complaint because this sort of thing can be and ought to be prevented. Those in authority should be told that if it recurs, suitable action will be taken against the delinquent.

There is one other minor point to which I would like to direct the attention of the department and that is the deplorable state of the accommodation on some of the country trains, particularly the lavatory accommodation. This is a long-standing grievance and, in spite of the fact that there is a war and that manpower difficulties may be quoted, it is a state of affairs to which strong exception can be taken. I support the motion for the reappointment of the Com-

missioner and wish him luck in the job. I hope the Government will endeavour to provide additional money in order that the Commissioner may effect at least some of the improvements that he cannot make out of earnings.

HON. T. MOORE (Central): I support the motion. The Commissioner cannot fairly be taken to task for the faults that have been alleged because he has not been here to supervise the running of the railways. During the greater part of the last two or three years, he has been away, and so no fault can be found with him. In his absence other people have had to look after the job as best they could. I take exception to some of the statements made by Mr. Dimmitt regarding the railways generally. He spoke about the awful state of affairs and made out that the Government system is the worse of the two railways in this State. In my view it is not. The sooner the private line in my district is purchased by the Government, the better it will be for the country and the people living along it.

Hon. G. B. Wood: The people along the Midland line do not say that.

Hon. T. MOORE: The people in the hon. member's area might not. I make this suggestion for the consideration of the Government. The time will come when the Government must take over that line. It is difficult to get co-operation with the Midland Company at the top end. Even in the matter of bringing stock down the line, in spite of proposals we have made, we have not got much improvement. Still I hope some improvement will yet be made. I am positive that if the whole of that line were owned by the Government, it would be a good thing at any rate for the stockowners who send their stock to Midland.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: There is a very good service for stock at my end.

Hon. T. MOORE: Yes, but the hon. member should go to Northampton and Yuna to find out that it is not so good. The Government line has to feed the Midland line, and we do not get co-operation because the Midland authorities do not worry. Surely the time has arrived—and as a post-war measure it should be done—when that line should be taken over by the Government so that we would have the one system of railways and one system only. It is ridiculous that we

should have two systems in the State. State-ments have been made that the Midland Railway Company has been able to do better than the Government railways and show a profit. Anyone ought to know that that statement is open to argument, because I understand that the profit made by the Midland Railway Company is derived mainly from the sale of land. One cannot differentiate between its profits from the sales of land and from a railway running point of view, because this is a company owning land and selling land. Therefore in that respect, the Midland Company cannot be held up as an example.

I ask the member who interjected a few minutes ago whether the Midland Railway Company should not long ago have provided second-class sleeping coaches on its line. The Government railways, on all long-distance lines, provide second-class sleepers. But on this line they are not provided. Carriages are filled and people, both men and women, have to sit up all night, and the seats are not very comfortable. An improvement in that direction, I think, can only be looked for if the Government takes over the line. In the matter of second-class sleeping coaches, the Government caters much better for the people on its lines. People travelling from long distances prefer to go from Geraldton through Mullewa because they get better conditions on the Government line than they do on this much-boomed line—the Midland railway.

Hon. G. B. Wood: We have not boomed it.

Hon. T. MOORE: The hon. member has implied that it is all that can be desired.

Hon. G. B. Wood: What about the surcharge on wheat?

Hon. T. MOORE: That surcharge is infinitesimal and does not matter a rap to anybody. It is a mere nothing when we take into consideration the advantages we enjoy from having super carted at a ridiculously low rate. Another point to be remembered is that before the war almost everybody was using the motor car, and so many people would not now be patronising the railways if they had not been forced into the position of doing so. Before the war, the railways were merely being used to shift our produce from the country and that is all they will be used for when the motor cars come into their

own again. People should take that fact into consideration.

It is of little use taking a short view; people do not want to travel by railway nowadays. They have got out of the habit of doing so. But when petrol was rationed, they found it a great convenience to be able to go back to the railways. The fact that they are using the railways has caused inconvenience to the department, because arrangements had not been made for the extra traffic. There has been a shortage of labour, material and other essentials which prevented the necessary provision being made. Let us be fair. Let us face up to facts as they exist. Reference has been made to the conditions under which railway men live and work. We have forgotten to look after these conditions on the Midland line as well as on the Government railways—the conditions of the men who work and maintain the railways.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: That is a responsibility of your Government.

Hon. T. MOORE: My Government has been in office for a number of years, but there were other Governments in office a long time before.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Not so long.

Hon. T. MOORE: Many of those shacks have been there since the lines were constructed. They were there 20 years before Labour took office. Let members be fair in that respect. No Government has given thought to improving the accommodation of these men, except the present Government, which did effect some improvements to these cottages. We now have a few nice cottages; they are not elaborate. The time has arrived when all these cottages should be put in proper order for the men who have to do the hard work. The fettler is one Government employee with whom I have no wish to change places. We should take off our hats to him for the work he does. He is the man who keeps the line right; if he did not do his work properly the enginedrivers and other men could not do their work.

The fettler in times past has had, and still has, a very hard time, and he is the only task worker that I know of, at all events in the Government service. The fettler at the end of each day has to show exactly what work he did, and consequently there cannot be any loafing on the job. At the end of each day, or at the end of each week, an inspector comes along and wants

to know from the ganger exactly what work the fettler has done. I understand the task set these fettlers is a hard one. I not only take off my hat to them, but also to their wives, who live with them under awful weather conditions, particularly during the summer. I hope the Commissioner will take some note of the fact that we desire an improvement in the conditions of these men. They are certainly entitled to it. Their present conditions have continued too long.

Hon. G. B. Wood: You have been a long time thinking about it.

Hon. T. MOORE: I have?

Hon. G. B. Wood: Yes. It took somebody else to bring the matter up first.

Hon. T. MOORE: I have mentioned it to the heads of the department. Do not forget that! They will tell you I have.

Hon. W. J. Mann: I thought your district was a summer resort.

Hon. T. MOORE: I can invite the hon. member to my district at any time and will convince him that it is a fine holiday resort; but conditions out of Geraldton are not so good. Our railways have been put to the test and have done very well. When speaking to the Address-in-reply some 12 months ago I said that our railways had stood up to their job manfully. From the Commissioner downward, every worker deserves great credit and great praise for the manner in which he dealt with the transport of goods carried over both the Government and the Midland lines and distributed throughout the State. I am pleased to think that we have such an efficient staff. The Commissioner and his men certainly deserve the highest praise for the way in which that work was done. I support the motion.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East): No-one can doubt the fact that our railways are rendering a shocking service and have been doing so for some time.

Hon. T. Moore: Some time—in wartime, too!

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The Government of which I was a member was only in office for three years out of the past 18 years. What could we do in the period of the financial crisis, especially in view of the fact that the previous Government had not left us a penny piece to work with?

Hon. G. Fraser interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Mr. Fraser is talking again. Has he finished? The position is that our passenger trains frequently run hours late and that our goods are held up, but the blame for that cannot be laid on the Commissioner of Railways or on his staff. What happened in the past? During the three years, 1930 to 1933—those three awful years when not only Western Australia, but Australia, indeed the whole world, was plunged in financial chaos—

Hon. T. Moore: Why? I do not know why, and never will.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: —neither the services of other countries nor their goods were wanted here. We were in a state of financial chaos.

Hon. T. Moore: Oh!

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: This State in fact suffered less than did other parts of the world and other parts of the Commonwealth. Our railways suffered badly, as did every other Government service. In August, 1933, when the Government with which I was associated went out of office, the incoming Government, of which Mr. Moore is so proud, loaded the Railway Department with 1,693 unemployed men for whom the Commissioner had to find work, in addition to the staff he was carrying. Why blame the Commissioner for that state of affairs? That was an obligation thrust upon him. Following on that, he could not possibly catch up with the repairs that should have been effected during the three years' crisis. In 1939, the then Government, of which Mr. Moore is so proud—

Hon. T. Moore: Yes.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: —cut out £100,000 of belated repairs and left the railways in such a position that the plant and rolling stock were going to pieces. Then the railways were faced with the war position, so why blame the Commissioner or his staff? In the circumstances, they did an excellent job.

Hon. T. Moore: Hear, hear!

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: There is another side to the question. We demand and get cheap freights that show a loss to the railways, yet some people seem to blame the Commissioner and his staff because the railways do not pay and the trains do not run to time. I point out that even the locomotives running on the East-West and Kalgoorlie lines could not be given time to cool

down so that the packing of the joints and other necessary adjustments could be made to keep the engines in running order. Naturally, there were delays and breakdowns. But why blame the Commissioner? A more competent Commissioner might be had, but personally I cannot blame the present Commissioner for the unfortunate position in which our railways are placed. Then there was the enormous increase in wages owing to the rise in the cost of living and there was also the higher cost of everything that the railways required.

Hon. A. Thomson: What about the price of coal?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Consider what a tremendous burden that is on our railways. People are clamouring for better services; we all want them, but how are we to get them? Not by harassing the Commissioner and his staff; they cannot give us better services. The only way is to provide the money necessary to put our railways on a sound footing and bring the repairs up to date. That will cost a huge sum of money, and the prospects are not so bright as to make it altogether possible to find that money.

Hon. T. Moore: There is plenty of money available. There is no shortage now.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: That is pleasing to learn. There is no shortage of finance.

Hon. G. B. Wood: The Premier said the State's financial position is sound.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Of course it is, because the State is spending no money. The Commonwealth is spending it. We will be faced with the expenditure of money when the war is over. Time and time again it has been urged that we should reduce the capital of the railways. How far can we do that? Suppose we reduce the £26,000,000 to £16,000,000. Very good! Then the Government will have to provide interest and sinking fund on £10,000,000 which will seriously affect the State's finances. If we reduced the capitalisation to £16,000,000, naturally the railways would show a surplus. When that is done, the employees will want better conditions and better pay. God knows, they can do with these in many places. I agree with Mr. Moore there. Then everybody will be clamouring for cheaper freights and fares, and pressure will be brought to bear upon the railways to grant these

concessions, and so the railways will be worse off financially than ever.

Hon. G. B. Wood: All that has nothing to do with the motion.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The facts are plain to any commercial mind. I cannot see any benefit in that direction; but I repeat that I take the stand that the Commissioner and his staff are not to blame for the present position. The Commissioner has not failed in his duty in any respect. He has a hard row to hoe. Mr. Moore said he would not change plates with the fettler. Neither would I, nor would I change places with the Commissioner. The Commissioner has been and is being subjected to much chiding; perhaps a little encouragement would be better for a man placed in his unenviable position. I support the motion.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East): The tone of the debate and the general ground covered will give the public the impression that Parliament appreciates, as the Premier said, that all is not well with the railways. Indeed, all has not been well with the railways for a great many years. The present position, however, is undoubtedly due to the fact that the railways have been feeling the brunt of the war activities, as well as of the Commonwealth's policy of taking our railway employees and placing them in work in other directions, especially war work. I do not like to make comparisons; but, after 44 years' association with the railways I think three Commissioners stand out. The first is the late W. J. George, the second is the late Harold Pope, and the third is the present Commissioner. Each had a definite policy.

The late W. J. George introduced the locomotive with a very heavy tractive power. This resulted in an increase of trainloads and that innovation was reflected in the earnings of the railways in relation to the working expenses. Harold Pope had one policy that was not a good one; he regarded a great deal of maintenance, such as painting, as unnecessary. It was a bad fault, but he had the idea—and it was sound—of initiating a suggestions board. The trouble was that the work of the suggestions board was not carried out in the proper way. The suggestions were made to a committee composed of officials of the department. That is where the

board broke down. The suggestions should have been sent to the Minister for Railways and referred by him to the committee for comment. The investigation of those suggestions should have been made from an independent angle. I will give one illustration. At that time the question of the housing of railway employees arose and one suggestion made was that there might very well be instituted among the railway employees a building scheme, supported by the Government, so that a standard house could be established for all the men working for the railway service. After a good deal was done in that direction, it was dropped.

Now, the policy of the department, as Mr. Moore pointed out—and when I say the department I hold the Government responsible—is largely to ignore the requirements of the men along the track, and it has made no provision for housing, or for many other matters. I would like to know how members would like to find, at the end of a hot day, that their meat had been lying exposed to the weather for the whole of the time since it had been delivered at the siding, and then be expected to have it for their tea in that frightful condition. That has happened more than once. The supplies for the men along the line have not been delivered in the condition that is expected in a modern community. That is just one of the factors that make one despair of Governments running a utility of this description.

Hon. T. Moore: The Midland railway is bad, too.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I am not suggesting that the Midland railway can be regarded as a criterion. But I would like to make one comparison and that is with the South African railways, which operate on the 3ft. 6in. gauge. That system comprises 12,000 miles. The conditions governing the control of those railways, in my opinion, are reflected in the results obtained there. When an officer in South Africa reaches the retiring age, he is called in and given six months' long service leave. He is also given the opportunity to travel to some other country in the world, and he is given facilities to meet the heads of the railway systems in those countries. He is required in that holiday, which is financed by his Government, to report on the aspect of

railway work that he has been familiar with in his own service. When he returns at the end of his holiday, he puts in his report. The result is that the South African railways have all the time got first-hand information as to the practices obtaining in other railway systems.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Have any come over here?

Hon. H. SEDDON: As a matter of fact one did, and it was as a result of meeting him that I became acquainted with the policy adopted in South Africa. It was also as a result of meeting him that I managed to secure annually, for two or three years, a copy of the South African Railway Commissioner's report, and each made most interesting reading. Let me give another illustration. Members have referred to the deviation to avoid the tunnel at Swan View. That tunnel has been there for nearly 44 years, to my knowledge. We have had trouble with it time and again. Any member of the running staff will say that trouble existed for many years before the latest accident occurred. Yet we were content to carry on. We now propose to deviate the trains, but to adopt an antiquated method of preparing that deviation, although we have had demonstrated to us again and again what can be done with modern machinery in the way of shifting muck and building a railway line.

We are frequently told in the Press of the wonderful work done by modern machinery in the constructing of airfields for the Air Force. We are tinkering with that deviation, whereas it should have been completed weeks ago. These illustrations are directed towards the running of an inefficient concern due, in my opinion, to the short-sighted and antiquated policy of the Government. Members who know anything of the railways are aware of what has been done during the war years. We know how the engines have been worked, and anyone who has studied running conditions will realise that the men in the sheds, when they get an engine in, have to patch it up by tinkering to get it out again. Of course, this is due largely to the war conditions.

Now, however, is the time when we could reasonably say that as a part of the war effort our railways should be put on an efficient basis. We should not be able to read, as we do in the Commissioner's report of 1943—the latest available—that there are

still belated repairs, when our railways should be the first priority so far as war work is concerned. The war with Japan is not yet over. Australia still has a tremendous amount of work to do in connection with that war, and in order to carry it out efficiently the Australian railways must be brought up to date. Now is the opportunity to see that the Commissioner is supported, firstly with finance and, secondly, with a modern policy and modern equipment to give him a chance to do his job as he desires. The outstanding feature of the present Commissioner's administration was his early policy of re-grading. As a result, he again increased the load per train. The increasing of train loads is what helps to keep working costs down.

I want to refer to something that happened after the last war because conditions today are very similar to what they were then. I was in the railways at that time. Repairs had been hung up year after year in accordance with the usual Government policy and, when hard times came, retrenchment was put into operation, and put into operation in the usual way—just about as blindly and short-sightedly as possible. Men were put off with a view to making a few savings here and there, and all the time recognised necessary maintenance work was being left to Providence, until something happened. Within a week three derailments occurred, and one was of a passenger train. The Government then woke up. That is what is going on now. I am not speaking off my own bat altogether. I would like to refer to some passages contained in the 1943 report of the Commissioner. It is, as I have said, 15 months old. At page 8 of the report we find this—

During the past few years, maintenance of the permanent way, buildings and structures has for various reasons been below the desired standard. In the pre-war period restriction in finance was the primary factor, but more recently limited manpower and the shortage of sleepers and other materials have accentuated the position.

The age of many of the lines necessitates heavy sleeper commitments, rail renewals, re-ballasting and repairs to bridges and culverts, while buildings and structures, excluding those under the track, are not receiving adequate attention and renovation. Through inability to obtain sufficient sleepers in the last three years renewals have been considerably below what should be the normal standard of replacements.

I want to sound a note of warning now in order that the necessary support may be given to the Commissioner to carry out his maintenance, which is long overdue, instead of just settling down and accepting, as we have done, the excuse of the war conditions for having to tolerate this state of affairs. To do that we must give the railways a high priority. I referred a little while ago to the difference between South Africa and Western Australia. I have some figures which will emphasise the point I wish to make. Unfortunately the last report from South Africa to which I can refer is that of 1931, but I think the figures will bear me out.

When comparing the South African railways with ours, one point stands out immediately. When we take the figures per mile, we find that the paying traffic, in tons, on the South African railways was, at that time, 1,671 tons per mile. That is to say, during the year 1,671 tons were carried for every mile in the system. In 1938, our figure was 699 tons. In 1944, our figure is 584 tons. It is the goods traffic that pays the earnings of the railways. Members can see from these figures the tremendous advantage South Africa has in the density of traffic, which tells the story. The Western Australian population per mile of railway is 106. But that figure is no real indication because 50 per cent. of the people of this country live in the metropolitan area. Then, a large number of our people are to be found in different goldfields and country towns.

Hon. T. Moore: And many long distances apart.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Yes. There again we have conditions which reduce the traffic per mile and, therefore, impose on our railway system a burden far greater than applies in a more closely settled country. When we examine the traffic, apart from the Goldfields and the timber traffic, we find that it is mostly seasonal. Our traffic in wheat, wool and superphosphate is all seasonal, which means that at certain times of the year the railway system is taxed to capacity and that for the rest of the year we have a thousand miles of railways which could not support a full train load once a fortnight, even with our small engines. All these factors have a definite effect upon railway finances. The greater amount of the seasonal traffic is low-grade traffic.

The high-grade traffic went on to the roads years ago and the State Transport Co-ordination Act had to be passed to bring it back to the railways, and it only brought back the traffic that could not dodge the application of the Act. After this war, we shall have returning to Western Australia people who are accustomed to air transport and high-speed motor transport, and who have been accustomed to say, "We want the goods today," and getting them today! The members think that they will be satisfied with the spectacle of a passenger train taking four hours to go from here to York when a motorcar can get there in an hour and a quarter?

Hon. C. B. Williams: And a train taking three hours to go from Kalgoorlie to Coolgardie.

Hon. H. SEDDON: That is a goods train.

Hon. C. B. Williams: The passenger train, too.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The Goldfields passenger train today takes an hour longer than it did 40 years ago to do the trip. At the same time, in America goods trains taking coal are travelling at the rate of 40 miles per hour. There, coal is delivered 50 miles from the pit-mouth, and the land cost at its destination is lower than the cost of our coal at the pit-mouth at Collie. What is the result? In Winnipeg industries have been established that are flourishing on a count of the cheap fuel and the goods are being supplied throughout the countryside. Yet let members consider the position in connection with our railways! They have made use of inferior coal the price of which at the pit-mouth is more than is expended in supplying coal 500 miles away from the pit-mouth in America. That is what the people in our rural areas are up against, and that accounts for much of the trouble of our railways. It may be asked: To what are the deplorable conditions of our railways largely attributable? The reason for the state of our railway system is that the incentive is not there and, secondly, the outlook regarding the system is entirely wrong. To quote again, here is another comparison with the South African railways. The working expenses of the railways in the Dominion for all traffic represented £1,300 per mile. In Western Australia the working

ng expenses on all traffic were as follows:—

	Per Mile.
	£
1938	619
1939	665
1940	645
1941	629
1942	690
1943	786
1944	866

Where will it all finish? What are the increases due to? We have an Arbitration Court in this State. That court was supposed to be armed with all the information necessary to enable it to issue an effective award. What do we find? At a most critical period in the history of the railways, the Premier issued an award of his own—completely doing away with the Arbitration Court altogether.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And it cost the railways £100,000.

Hon. H. SEDDON: It involved the Railway Department in a very large sum. That was an entirely irresponsible action, for which the Premier must accept full responsibility. Yet what has happened? The Premier gets by with it! How can we expect the Commissioner of Railways to run the system efficiently when that sort of interference takes place, when any effort on his part to introduce better methods and more efficient services are countered? The whole attitude towards the railways is wrong. Sooner or later this sort of thing must come to a head, because the railways are kept alive by export traffic; and export goods have to live on the markets of the world, not on the local market.

Hon. A. Thomson: Those who say that the increased costs should be provided for forget that important point.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Obviously increased charges and costs will be reflected in increased freights. In our present railway system that can be done only by increasing freights, and that means added costs for the producers. In a little while the farmers, as they have been in the past, will again be up against it largely due to our absurd Australian economy which seeks to base our basic wage upon conditions that obtain in sheltered industries and entirely different conditions in exporting industries. In an endeavour to follow up this trend, what do we find? On one hand we have a system of protection and on the other we give subsidies granted here and there. The

whole of our economic conditions are becoming such a hotch-potch that it would take a Philadelphia lawyer to determine exactly where we stand. No wonder there are people who say, "Look at our system of economy. We have not seen anything like it in our lives!" Then again the question of maintenance of the running plant is of importance. Here are the Western Australian figures regarding the men employed on the working railways and on capital works. The following table shows the number so employed:—

	Working Railways.	Capital Works.	Total.
1938 ..	7,535	1,038	8,573
1939 ..	7,711	1,309	9,020
1940 ..	7,539	846	8,385
1941 ..	7,137	750	7,887
1942 ..	7,133	1,015	8,148
1943 ..	7,244	1,078	8,322
1944 ..	7,545	954	8,499

It will be noticed that in 1942 the number of men employed on capital works was 1,015. What were those capital works? That was the period when the manpower difficulty was making itself felt in all directions. Yet we find that at that stage over 1,000 men were employed on capital works, and the Commissioner of Railways in his report complained that work had fallen into arrears!

Hon. J. Cornell: You must remember that they extended the refreshment rooms at Chidlow and elsewhere.

Hon. H. SEDDON: That is so. The figures I have quoted show that the total number of men employed in 1944 was 8,499 whereas in 1938 the total number was 8,573, indicating that, from the standpoint of railway employees, the system is practically back to the position it held before the war. Despite that we see the railways in their present deplorable condition. What is wrong? On what capital works are the men being employed? Why is not their work reflected in the efficient and effective working of the railways?

The Chief Secretary: You must remember the rollingstock and the locomotives.

Hon. H. SEDDON: That is another phase. What are the figures in that regard? I would remind members that our greatest troubles arise from the density of traffic. I have already quoted figures comparing the South African railways with our system. When we compare the tare and the truck loading in South Africa with what applies here, we see what has hap-

pened. At the time I first made the comparison Western Australia had shown an average ratio between tare and load of about 1 to 1½. In South Africa the ratio was 1 to 3 and 1 to 4. The position has improved somewhat but I do not think we yet have anything to be proud of in regard to the ratio between the tare of the truck and the load it carries. In other words, with a trainload of 600 tons, it is no comfort to us when we realise that 200 or 300 tons of the weight represents that of the truck and the balance the load it carries—and it is the load that pays. In other countries successful experiments have been carried out with roller-bearings for the railway rollingstock. These have been very effective and have increased the traffic loading enormously.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: That is no longer at the experimental stage.

Hon. H. SEDDON: We have not heard anything about it here. I have been quoting these instances and making these comparisons in order to make the point that the attitude towards our railway system is entirely wrong. We must adopt a different basis if we are to entertain any hope of our railways being able to carry on successfully and to show an improvement financially. I referred to the distribution of population, but there is one factor that I must emphasise. When did our railway system commence to make losses? It was when we started the ridiculous policy of pushing out our railways ahead of development. We put down 1,000 miles of such lines, and that is the part of the system that constitutes the millstone that has been strangling the efforts of the Commissioner of Railways for years past. The traffic over those branch lines is seasonal, and yet they have to be maintained despite the fact that they do not pay for axle grease. It was not until an inquiry was conducted by a Federal Royal Commission that an end was put to the ridiculous business. Certain railways were referred to that Commission, which promptly turned them down.

There is another illustration of the short-sighted policy that has worked detrimentally to the interests of this State and is continuing to do so today. I have pointed out that we cannot increase freights. The country is kept going today by its export industry, and we shall discover that for ourselves later on.

If we have to compete with the products of people elsewhere, we are handicapped apart from the question of internal inefficiency. Our wheat, which is marketed in Europe, takes twice as long to get to the market as wheat from the Argentine does and very much longer than the wheat from America and Canada. That is a terrific handicap. That is one adverse factor in addition to the handicap imposed by the recurring railway losses. In view of these circumstances we may very well find that we are the people on the outside while the others reap the advantages due to their proximity to the markets.

Hon. J. Cornell: We will be the marginal area.

Hon. H. SEDDON: And will get the marginal return. Next I shall deal with the cost of coal. The latest report of the Commissioner of Railways contains a table showing the cost of coal supplies. It gives the tonnage and average price ex store of imported coal and the tonnage and average price at the pit's mouth of Collie coal for the years from 1934 to 1943. This shows that the cost of native coal at the pit's mouth at Collie in 1934 was 12s. 4.8d. while in 1943 the average price at the pit's mouth was 20s. 0.1d. I have worked out the figures for coal over the years and I find that the fuel costs in connection with the railways represent about 9.4 per cent. of the total. Members can see what an important factor the cost of fuel becomes. I understand that the price at the pit's mouth now for Collie coal is 21s. 6d.

I had an opportunity a little while ago of seeing some figures regarding production in the various countries of the world and the coal production per head and inefficiency in Australia were deplorable compared with what obtained elsewhere. The figures indicated that our production per man was 2 per cent. less than in other countries. When we were discussing the Collie Miners' Pensions Scheme over a year ago the question was raised concerning the condition of the mines at Collie and it was suggested that the ventilation system there was not all that could be desired. Naturally men cannot work unless there is good ventilation.

Hon. C. B. Williams: With what country are you making a comparison?

Hon. H. SEDDON: Chiefly with America. The output per man in that country is four

times the output of the coalminers of Australia. There is this point to be considered, too, that in the coal mines of America elaborate precautions have to be taken against the risk of explosion and that does not apply to the mines at Collie. When it comes to a question of production per head we are a long way in arrears. Unfortunately we are apt to accept the position and attribute it to conditions arising out of the war. We should not accept unsatisfactory conditions with the mere suggestion that they are due to war causes. We should not take that for granted. One would think that war conditions would impose conditions of efficiency rather than those of inefficiency. The fact that the war is in progress should, one would think, have resulted in the introduction of modern mining methods.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Prior to the tea adjournment I was dealing with the question of coal, and I pointed out that the cost of fuel was 9.4 per cent. of working costs according to the 1943 report of the Commissioner of Railways. It would be interesting to know what the percentage is today. But a point arises there with regard to the efficiency of our fuel. The locomotive boiler is notoriously inefficient as a prime mover. One of the main reasons for this is that it has to respond to very quick alterations with regard to power developed. Some 18 years ago an experiment was carried out with regard to the use of low grade coal in the form of powdered fuel. It was most interesting. The use of Collie coal has definitely demonstrated that in this form it is most efficiently used, and yet one hears of very little having been done in exploring that application of our fuel to the locomotive boiler. It is known that there is loss on Collie coal in storing. As most people know, this coal tends to powder up and thus to become useless for locomotive purposes. It might well have paid the Railway Department to undertake experiments on this aspect.

That leads me to another point. As members are aware, in 1938 a number of Diesel cars were obtained for use on our railways, and are still being used by them. They have supplied the need, especially on the line on which they are used, for fast passenger traffic. When they were introduced the point was raised with the Commissioner whether

it would be possible by utilising the metropolitan bus engine and working it with gas, to instal a similar unit for the country lines, especially for goldfields lines where the people are in urgent need of frequent communication. The Commissioner's reply at that time was that the subject had not been sufficiently explored to warrant anything being done. I suppose if there is one there are a thousand motorears on the road, which are working quite well with wood gas. We found out that the power ratio, even with the petrol type of engine, was between 60 per cent. and 70 per cent. It seems to me this is another direction in which greater intelligence might have been displayed by the Railway Department.

On long passenger runs rapid and comfortable service is required, and that can only be achieved by these small units. As regards employees on the track, there is one thing that could be developed with a fast service which would add greatly to the comfort of these people. The refrigerated cars could be made use of for fresh food in the manner I suggest, and the results would be all to the good as far as comfort of the men on the line is concerned. The first condition of good service is a reasonable standard of comfort. There is another aspect of our railways which has not yet been fully developed, and that is the use of the outports. In the bulk traffic of wheat we are making use of such outports as Esperance, Bunbury and Geraldton, but not for ordinary imported commodities.

Hon. A. Thomson: You might mention Albany too.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Yes. Esperance should be the natural port for the goldfields railway system; the whole of the goldfields traffic should go to and from Esperance. While the Esperance line has been developed as regards Diesel fuel for the mines, it has not been developed as it should be for the use of the goldfields people. For that, I think, we have to thank the coastal influences. As regards Geraldton, it is well known that sea transport is very much cheaper than transport over railways; and from that angle I can see that the community would benefit by making more use of those outports than is being done at the present time. The result would be the cutting down of considerable train mileages.

Now I desire to refer to the question of the railway finances. For that purpose I

will quote from page 4 of the Railway Commissioner's report. This emphasises the point I made earlier in my speech with regard to the effect of basic wage increases. The report states—

Basic wage increases and higher payments on account of Sunday time and overtime account for the payment of an extra £123,000, and represent the largest individual item in the increase of £421,593 in working expenses. Repairs and renewals of rolling-stock account for an extra £38,500, whilst the debits for fuel and sleepers were £63,000 and £36,000 higher respectively. War damage insurance for a full year as compared with six months in 1941-42 increased by £17,500. Payments on account of pensions were £10,000 higher, and an additional £20,000 was contributed for accidents and fire insurance.

I quote next from page 5 of the report, with regard to goods traffic—

There was a substantial decrease in the tonnage carried of bulk trade such as local coal, wheat, timber, fertilisers and miscellaneous class, all of which earned less than the average rate per ton mile, but compensating increases in tonnages of wool, "C" class and other goods at higher freight rates resulted in an increase in earnings over 1941-42.

While I am quoting figures, I may say that the gist of the paragraph is that when we return to normal much of the higher grade traffic will disappear from the railways and will definitely go back to its natural channel, and that the result will be to leave the low freight traffic to the railways. I have quoted figures on page 8 referring to particulars of coal, and have also dealt with the question of maintenance. With regard to the finances, I wish to direct the attention of members to page 26 of the report. There they will find a statement which is very interesting. In table No. 2 it is pointed out that the total accumulated deficiency on the railways to the 30th June, 1943, was £3,431,999.

Figures appearing on page 2 of the report show that as far as working expenses are concerned, there was a surplus over total earnings in 1943 of £907,895, but that in 1944 the surplus was down to £590,594. Members have, from time to time, referred to the fact that it was necessary to do something with regard to the railway finances, and I would like to make the suggestion that we cannot put the problem on to the people in the outback areas, because that would simply mean putting on them a burden too heavy for them to bear.

Hon. A. Thomson: You are about the only member who has stated that highly important point!

Hon. H. SEDDON: There is not the slightest doubt that the rest of the State is living on the producers. Both sections should contribute their respective shares toward providing for the shortage in the railway accounts. Therefore I suggest that the only satisfactory way out would be for us to divert the whole of the interest charges on the railways to the shoulders of the general taxpayer.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: The amount is over £1,000,000 a year.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The surplus of earnings over working expenses should be taken to the sinking fund each year and be applied in reduction of the amount of the capitalisation of the railways. On the figures of the past 20 years that runs to a very considerable total. The effect would be to bring down very rapidly the capital cost of the railways and thus lighten the burden on the people more quickly, for by redeeming the loans in question we would reduce the total of interest payable each year. It would enable the Railway Department on its side to provide those conveniences to which I have referred; and it would also offer an incentive not only to the Commissioner but to the men themselves.

I consider that one of the finest things that Colonel Pope did was to adopt a principle which operates in most institutions and which has done such remarkable work in America, namely, that of appealing to the individual employee to develop an interest in the undertaking. Promotion should be entirely by merit. Seniority in America takes a very secondary place to that which is given to natural ability; and that is the only way in which one can develop an efficient system and obtain a body of employees who are bound together to create a system of which they can be proud—a system which will give service to the general public and pay its way. Especially before it is too late, our railways should be placed in a satisfactory condition, with maintenance up to date, thus enabling the system to cope with the tasks imposed upon it. I have much pleasure in endorsing the Assembly's resolution.

On motion by Hon. A. Thomson, debate adjourned.

BILL—NURSES REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.*Second Reading.*

THE CHIEF SECRETARY [7.48] in moving the second reading said: The importance of this Bill lies in the fact that it seeks authority to effect a change in the Constitution of this State, by altering the franchise for this House. The proposals in the Bill, if agreed to, will substitute what is commonly called adult suffrage for the present restricted qualification of electors, will make enrolment and voting compulsory and, in addition, will restrict the voting power of any elector to one vote only, no matter how wide his interests may be. These proposals are in accord with the democratic ideals for which we stand and indicate the desire of this Government to give effect to its undertaking at the last general election that, if it were returned, the earliest opportunity would be taken to seek Parliamentary approval for the adult franchise to apply to the Legislative Council.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: When was that undertaking given?

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: It was given by the Premier in his policy speech. It will be noticed that, to bring this about, it is proposed to amend the Electoral Act and to take out of the Constitution Act Amendment Act of 1899 those sections dealing with the qualification of electors for the Legislative Council. This is the same procedure as was adopted in 1907, when the qualification of electors for the Legislative Assembly was removed from the Constitution Act and placed in the Electoral Act. This will have the effect of placing the qualification of electors for both the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council in the Electoral Act, and making the qualification for both Houses uniform. The present franchise for the Legislative Council is really a relic of olden days, when the possession of property was necessary before one could have a vote at all, or nominate as a candidate. It is interesting to note that Section 18 of our Constitution Act of 1889 provided that no person could be qualified to sit as a member of

either House unless he was possessed of property to the value of £500 clear, or £50 annual value. The section read as follows—

No person shall be qualified to be a member of the Legislative Council or of the Legislative Assembly unless he be a natural born or naturalised subject of Her Majesty, of the full age of 21 years, nor unless he be seised at law or in equity, of an estate of freehold for his own use and benefit, in lands or tenements within the Colony, of the value of £500 above all charges and encumbrances affecting the same, or of the yearly value of £50, and shall have been possessed of such estate for at least one year previous to his election.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: That is not the law to-day.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: I am pointing out that even in our own Constitution Act of 1889 we had a property qualification, not only for electors but also for those who desired to nominate for either Chamber. I think it is just as well for this House to have a little knowledge of the way in which we have travelled since 1889. Under Section 19 of the same Act, every member of either House had to make a declaration before sitting or voting in Parliament that he was possessed of property of the necessary value, while the latter part of the declaration is particularly interesting, referring as it does to the possibility of a person purchasing property of the requisite value for the purpose of qualifying for election to either House. The declaration reads as follows:—

I, A.B., do declare that I am seised at law or in equity of an estate of freehold for my own use and benefit in lands or tenements in the Colony of Western Australia of the value of £500 sterling money (or of the yearly value of £50 sterling money) above all charges and encumbrances affecting the same; that the said lands and tenements consist of (describing them sufficiently for identification) of which I am seised in fee simple (or as the case may be) that I have been possessed of the said lands and tenements since the.....day of....., and that I have not collusively or colorably obtained a title to or become possessed of the said lands and tenements or any part thereof for the purpose of qualifying or enabling me to be elected a member of the Legislative Council (or Assembly) of Western Australia.

Hon. J. Cornell: Those were the good old days.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes. The latter part shows that there was strong objection to any person, in effect, purchasing his qualification to sit as a member, and the latter part of the section provides for a

penalty of £200 per day in the following circumstances:—

Every member who, before making such declaration, shall sit and vote in the said Council or in the said Assembly after the election of a speaker shall be liable, for every day on which he shall so sit and vote, to a penalty of £200, to be recovered by any person who shall sue for the same in the Supreme Court.

Sections 20 and 21 provide that any member selling his qualifying property so that the residual value of his property is less than the value required to qualify, shall also be subject to a penalty of £200 for each day that he shall sit and vote under those circumstances.

Hon. J. Cornell: Were members paid in those days?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am coming to that. It is also provided that if any member shall sell or otherwise dispose of the property described in the declaration, even though the value of his property does not fall below the qualifying value, he shall make a new declaration. We have travelled a long way since those days. In the 55 years which have passed since the Constitution Act of 1889, a number of changes have taken place in regard to the franchise. Today, every person of 21 years and over has the right to vote for the Legislative Assembly, and there is no property qualification for persons who desire to nominate for membership of that House. It is not necessary for a person to have a property qualification in order to nominate for membership of the Legislative Council, but he must be of the age of 30 years. Yet we still retain a property qualification for voters for the Legislative Council.

Whatever arguments or justification there were in the early days for denying the vote to large numbers of adult persons, they cannot or should not be applied today. It is quite easy to understand why the vote was the prerogative of the wealthy and land-owning classes in the early history of our race. They were the privileged classes in many ways, and particularly in regard to education, which was not available to the masses generally. With improved education of the masses, enlightenment came, and demands for better representation and the right to vote had to be conceded. In recent years there have been insistent demands from various sections of the community that the franchise for this House should be liberal-

ised and even abolished. Several attempts have been made to liberalise the franchise, but they proved abortive. In 1927 a Bill was introduced to abolish plural voting and to replace the £17 householder qualification by the householder franchise. This was rejected. Again, in 1938, the Qualification of Electors (Legislative Council) Bill, which sought the replacement of the householder qualification by an inhabitant-occupier qualification, was also rejected by this House.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is not so.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member will be able to explain his ideas of the position later.

Hon. J. Cornell: It was dropped by another place.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: And so it is that the section of the Constitution Act dealing with the qualification of electors for the Legislative Council has only once been substantially amended since the legislation was passed in 1889, with the result that those qualifications do not differ materially today from the franchise laid down when the Legislative Council ceased to be a nominee Chamber. The Act originally provided that the following persons shall be qualified to vote at Council elections, namely, every person of the age of 21 years, being a natural born or naturalised British subject, if he—

- (1) has a legal or equitable freehold estate in possession situate in the electoral province of the clear value of one hundred pounds sterling; or
 - (2) is a householder within the Province occupying any dwelling house of the clear annual value of twenty-five pounds sterling; or
 - (3) has a leasehold estate in possession situate within the Province of the clear annual value of twenty-five pounds sterling; or
 - (4) holds a lease or licence from the Crown to depasture, occupy, cultivate, or mine upon Crown lands within the Province at a rental of not less than ten pounds per annum.
- Or if the name of such person is on—
- (5) the electoral list of any municipality in respect of property within the Province of the annual ratable value of not less than twenty-five pounds; or
 - (6) the electoral list of any road board district in respect of property within the Province of the annual ratable value of not less than twenty-five pounds.

It is possible by these provisions for one man to enjoy a vote for each of the 16 electoral provinces in the State. In fact the enrolment card in use at present draws

particular attention to that fact. There is a note on it that reads—

Enrolment may be claimed for each Province in which the claimant possesses a qualification.

In 1911, an amendment was passed by Parliament, which reduced the freehold and leasehold property qualification to £50 and £17 respectively. That is the only amendment in all these years.

Hon. J. Cornell: It reduced both the householder and the ratepayer qualification to £17.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is so. Labour Governments have been consistently hampered over the years in legislation which they have brought forward. The Legislative Council has always proved obstructive to measures designed to improve industrial conditions, or of a reform nature. I could not help thinking, while Sir Hal Colebatch was speaking on another question yesterday and describing his experiences in the Senate of the Commonwealth Parliament, how consistent are the Conservative elements in our community. When anti-Labour is in power in this State, there is little for the Legislative Council to do. It is satisfied with the status quo. When Labour is in office in the popular House, the Legislative Council becomes active, and, indeed, quite hostile on occasions.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: But look at the legislation you bring down!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is a repetition of the experience Sir Hal Colebatch spoke about regarding the Senate. The archaic outlook of some of its members is given full rein in their opposition to reform and, because of the restricted franchise, the voice of the people is denied the expression which it should have in this legislature. Hostility to this House as at present constituted is not confined to the Labour Party. From time to time various sections of the people, including primary producers, have expressed themselves in no uncertain manner and carried resolutions seeking—not its reform—but its abolition.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: To what body are you referring?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Sections of the primary producers.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Which section?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Wheat-growers' Union, for one.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The members of that organisation are Labour.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Different branches of the primary producers' political organisation.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Mention one occasion and one branch.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Many branches have done so.

Hon. G. B. Wood: You are wrong there.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I think I would be correct in saying that those sections have used language stronger than even that of the Labour Party when dealing with need for the reform of the Legislative Council. This hostility to the Legislative Council is really of its own making, for, while we have the adult franchise for the Lower House, its political effectiveness is completely nullified by this Chamber when progressive legislation is submitted to it. It is because of this attitude that the demand for a single Chamber arises. The Bill we are now considering does not propose to abolish the Legislative Council, but I have referred to this aspect in order to emphasise how unpopular it is becoming.

It is generally believed that the Labour Party first agitated for a single Chamber, but reference to the records shows that the idea was first conceived by the Imperial Government in 1888. At that time the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Sir Henry Holland (later Lord Knutsford) communicated to the Governor, Sir Frederick Napier Broome, in connection with the question of self-government for Western Australia, and strongly advocated a legislature consisting of a single elective Chamber. Mention of a second Chamber was made, but in terms which implied that the establishment of such a Chamber was not looked upon with favour. Subsequently, the whole question was debated in the then-existing Legislative Council.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: In that case, the Assembly would never have come into existence.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The suggestion was to have one elective Chamber in place of the nominee Legislative Council.

Hon. J. Cornell: Not on that franchise.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Never mind the franchise. I am pointing out that even in 1883 the idea of the authorities in the Old Country was that there should be a single Chamber for Western Australia. Mr.

A. P. Hensman, who at the time was member for Greenough and later became Mr. Justice Hensman, moved that the legislature should consist of a single Chamber to be called the Legislative Assembly, which should have certain powers, including that of creating a second Chamber at a future time if a majority of two-thirds of the members should consent thereto. Within a few days following the moving of that resolution, another resolution was moved by Mr. S. H. Parker, member for Perth, in which he asked that the Constitution from the first should provide for the establishment of a second Chamber, that Chamber to be elected by the people. The debates on those resolutions have a particular application to the proposals embodied in the Bill with which we are now dealing, and it is indeed interesting to read the opinion of members of the Legislative Council at that time. For instance, Mr. S. H. Parker, afterwards Sir Henry Parker, Chief Justice of the State, and father of the sitting member, dealt with the matter at that time.

Hon. J. Cornell: You might as well go back to the divine right of kings.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is well to have some record of what happened in the past. Fifty years ago we had members of the then Legislative Council who were far more democratic in their outlook than are some members of the Chamber today. Let me quote Mr. S. H. Parker—

They knew, whether we had one or two chambers, that eventually the will of the people must prevail. Their object in proposing that there should be two chambers was in order that the second chamber should act as a check upon hasty action on the part of the more popular assembly, and in order that the people themselves might have an opportunity of reviewing the position, and of forming an opinion, after calm and mature reflection. If after that period of calm reflection the people came to the conclusion on any subject that the action taken in the first instance by the Assembly was the correct one, they might be sure that, whatever obstacles the Upper Chamber might raise, the will of the people would prevail.

I shall now make a further quotation from the debate—

Mr. Hensman desired to say—before addressing himself to the subject of the resolution—that he had no idea that any arguments he could use against the proposition before the committee would secure the assent of the majority of the members; and, if he thought this matter was going to be finally decided by the present Legislative Council, he would save his

breath, and not take up time by putting forward arguments to which he knew the majority of the members of the House, as at present composed, were opposed. But there were two other points to be considered. There was first the fact that the Secretary of State had given his views in favour of a single chamber; and, secondly, the fact that the matter had never been put to the people of the colony, who would have to return that Council under which responsible Government would be inaugurated.

Hon. J. Cornell: What was said in rebuttal of that?

Hon. C. F. Baxter: We are not going to get that information! You are expecting too much!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not propose to quote the whole of the debate, but I have spent some time in going through it. I say without hesitation that Mr. Hensman and one or two of his colleagues had a far greater democratic outlook 50 years ago than have some present members of this House when dealing with measures which come before them.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: They are different kinds of measures. Different sectional interests were represented at that time.

Hon. J. Cornell: I think that could be applied to another place.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: But we are dealing with this place for the moment. The debate continues—

Mr. Hensman: They might put someone over the people to control them and tell them they were not fit to govern themselves, but he did not think that the people would ever assent to that. When the will of the people had been got at, it occurred to him that they could go no further. He was perfectly aware that in the old countries of Europe there had been, naturally, causes at work which had produced upper chambers—the remnants of the old hereditary aristocracy of those parts of the world, and no one could shut his eyes to the fact that Englishmen, in carrying their colonisation over the world, had taken their two chambers with them, and therefore those who favoured two chambers were undoubtedly in a numerical majority. They must always remember that mankind, as a rule, was very prone to follow in the steps of those who had gone before them, and often kept up forms long after the necessity for them had ceased. It was said by some that wealth and intellect should be represented in the parliament of the country. How were they to represent wealth and intellect, except by allowing them to have their natural weight? Intellect would always command respect, for knowledge was power, and if they attempted to give any extra representation to intellect and wealth they would be doing a great injustice. It was the poor man who always had a difficulty in making himself felt, for as a rule he was too busy to

spend time in propagating his views, and all he had was his vote. The influence of the rich could not be given by rule, but it always prevailed, and to say that they must make a constitution in which due provision should be made for men of landed property, or money, and men of intellect, was to advocate the impossible.

Mr. Hensman went on to say—

The Upper Chamber would gradually become more powerful, more inclined to opposition, and would create more mischief than the good it was intended to produce, because, as the hon. member for Perth had said, those who were elected by the people must eventually have their way. They could get a second House of wealthier men, or older men, but was it desirable that such a House should control the energetic, busy and practical representatives of the people? Men generally got more conservative as they got older and more timid. I have here, Mr. President, two additional extracts from the same debate, but I propose to content myself with what I have already read. Apparently the representation of property interests in the Government of this State has not only exercised the minds of the community in recent years, but was, indeed, a very sore point even prior to responsible government, as is indicated by the extracts I have read. Surely the time has now arrived when the limitations imposed on the franchise for this Chamber, by which property owners protect their interests and at the same time are in a position to veto the interests of others, is a situation which should not be allowed to continue any longer. The broadening of the franchise for this Chamber has been at a standstill since the amendment to the Constitution Act in 1911. In the meantime, the world has progressed in many ways, and in submitting this Bill the Government is not only giving expression to its own desires and those of the people, but is moving with the times.

I have no doubt that those in opposition to this reform will prophesy that fearful consequences will ensue if this Bill be agreed to, but that is an argument which cannot be taken seriously. There have been no serious consequences as a result of the limiting of the authority of the House of Lords so that it cannot now reject legislation indefinitely; and the fearful consequences which were prophesied as a result of the abolition of the Legislative Council in Queensland have completely failed to eventuate. That State enjoys what is regarded as one of the most progressive legislatures in the Commonwealth. Then again—although this was criticised by Sir Hal Colebatch yesterday—both Houses of the

Commonwealth Parliament are elected on an adult franchise, without imposing any safeguards based on the ownership of property.

Hon. J. Cornell: Canada is doing very well.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have not much knowledge of Canada. I believe Canada has what is considered to be an excellent system in some of its provinces.

Hon. J. Cornell: The members are nominated for life.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: With all this before us it cannot be seriously contended, in my opinion, that property protection is necessary so far as this State Parliament is concerned. It is anomalous that the people of Australia can be entrusted, without regard to the possession of either wealth or property, to exercise a vote for both Houses of our Commonwealth Parliament, which deals with national matters, but cannot be entrusted to elect two Houses of the State Parliament to deal with matters covered by the State legislature. We have heard much of the declining birthrate.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: You are not blaming the Legislative Council for that!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: As I say, we have heard much about the declining birthrate, yet the basis on which our Constitution is framed implies that it is more desirable in a citizen that he acquire property than that he should raise a family.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: A man would need a house in which to raise his family.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I raise that phase deliberately, because it has a very pointed application to something I shall say later. I would suggest, as I did many years ago—I think in 1927—that men and women have a bigger stake in this country if they rear a family, than they would have if they become property owners.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: But the rental qualification is only 7s. a week. Where does the man live?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member well knows that there are many people who are possessed of considerable wealth but yet do not live in a home of their own. Nevertheless, they play an important part in the progress of the State. I could quote the case of one citizen who has contributed very considerably in recent times to the war loans; his investments run into many thousands of pounds, yet because he refuses to possess landed property he has not a vote for this Chamber.

Hon. J. Cornell: How does he get his money?

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Is it out on mortgage?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In order to show the limitations imposed by the present Legislative Council franchise, I desire to refer to the last elections for the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly. We find that 274,856 persons were on the roll for the Legislative Assembly election, and that only 78,889 electors were on the roll for the Legislative Council. These figures show that less than one-third of the people entitled to vote for the Legislative Assembly were enrolled for the Legislative Council, and it is particularly illuminating to examine the figures in relation to female voters. These are as follows:—

For the Legislative Assembly—137,100 males and 137,756 females.

For the Legislative Council—56,021 males and 23,868 females.

The disparity between the figures for the various provinces and the Legislative Assembly voters in those provinces is more marked in some than in others, and for the purpose of reference I propose to quote them.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Tell us the whole story. One is compulsory and the other is not.

Hon. C. F. Baxter interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member will have plenty of opportunity to reply to what I have to say. The following are the figures for the various provinces, and the comparable Assembly districts, together with the differences in the enrolments:—

ENROLMENT.														
Council Province.			Assembly District.											
		No. on Roll.			No. on Roll.									
Central	4,969	Geraldton	....	4,018	South-West	....	7,024	Bunbury	....	5,481	
			Greenough	....	4,815				Collie	....	4,562	
			Irwin-Moore*	....	11,109				Forrest	....	3,701	
			Mt. Magnet*	....	11,112				Murray-Wellington	....	4,821	
			Murchison	....	3,237				Nelson	....	5,727	
					114,091				Sussex	....	3,871		
												28,184		
			Difference :	9,122							Difference :	21,160		
East	9,857	Northam	....	4,812	West	....	8,859	Fremantle	....	9,271	
			Avon	....	3,329				Fremantle, N.E.*	....	11,000	
			Beverley	....	12,090				Fremantle, S.	....	8,501	
			Irwin-Moore*	....	12,220				Canning*	....	1381	
			Mt. Marshall	3,463							19,078		
			Swan	6,370							Difference :	10,219	
			Toodyay	4,302									
			Yilgarn-Coolgardie*	150									
			York	2,740									
				120,976			Total	70,889			Total	274,856
			Difference :	20,619								Total Net Difference :	194,967	
* Part.		† Approximately.				* Part.		† Approximately.						

TOTAL MALES AND FEMALES ON EACH ROLL.

		Males.	Females.
Assembly	....	137,100	137,756
Council	....	56,021	23,868
Difference	....	81,079	113,888

Hon. G. B. Wood: Tell us what were the figures before compulsory enrolment.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know what they were then. We have no need to worry about the position prior to compulsory enrolment. We are making provision in this Bill whereby it will be possible to have compulsory enrolment for the Legislative Council. These figures conclusively disclose, to my way of thinking, that the time has arrived when we should be prepared to say that all those people who today are denied the vote for the Legislative Council should have it. These figures are a clear indication that many thousands of the best citizens of this State are denied the vote for this Chamber.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: They are not denied it; they are entitled to the vote, but they do not get on the roll. That is the trouble.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Some of them are, but many thousands are not. I will shortly deal with those who are not entitled to be on the roll.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Will the Minister resume his seat? There is far too much noise. When members are speaking the Minister is always very courteous. He never interrupts. I must ask members to show the same courtesy to the Minister that he always extends to them.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is anomalous that adult persons who have played their part in the progress of this State may be denied the vote simply because they do not possess property to the value of £50, or do not pay to a landlord rent of not less than £17 a year. I would ask this question: Is it right that men who spend the greater part of their lives in the outback parts of this State in the development of our country, and more particularly, our great pastoral and mining industries, should be denied a vote for this Chamber? It is well known to many members that there are numbers of men who have devoted their lives to pioneering work in the outback parts of Western Australia and who, as a result, have never been in a position to qualify as electors for the Legislative Council.

I often hear members talk about the good work that is performed by the men who blaze the trail and the men who have been prepared to take great risks in order that we might further the interests of one or other of the two industries I have mentioned. With them I say that if there are any men in this State who deserve well of us it is those who have been prepared to live the life that those men have. The least that we can do for them is to see that they are entitled to a vote for both the Legislative Houses of this State. Then again, I ask this question: Is it right that men who are good enough to fight for this country—risking all they possess, even to life itself—are not deemed fit and proper persons to exercise the right to vote for the election of members to this Council? We had an opportunity not long ago to give those men the right to vote for this Chamber. Those men have gone oversea and risked everything they possess, but we refused them that right unless they had the property qualification. That is not proper; it is unfair and unjust.

Men and women of high educational attainments, university professors, teachers of all classes, lawyers, scientists and other professional people may be included in the list of those to whom our present franchise denies the right of effective citizenship. Is it right that the many thousands of women who have brought up their families in this State and through whose efforts the family has been able to secure a home in its own right, should not be entitled to record a vote? In many other cases where the family has not been able to obtain a home of its own, arising mainly from the expense of rearing a family, should the wife and mother be denied a vote? Is not such a person as much entitled to a vote for this Chamber as a single man who merely possesses a block of vacant land worth £50?

Then again, what of the large number of families that, owing to various circumstances, find it impossible in these days to secure homes, such as families living in flats, in single rooms, in circumstances which have been forced upon them in many cases as a result of the war? Surely they are entitled to the same rights as other more happily situated people. It is not their fault that they are not renting houses today. There is not a member of this Chamber who does not know of more than

one family that finds it impossible to obtain a satisfactory house in the circumstances as they exist today. I suppose every member knows of instances where there are two and often more families occupying one or two rooms through no fault of their own, but who, under our present franchise, are not entitled to vote for the Legislative Council. Mr. Hamersley smiles! I venture to assert that he knows of quite a number of constituents from his province who have left that district for the metropolitan area and who today find it impossible to secure housing accommodation which would give them the right to vote for the Legislative Council.

In submitting this Bill, the Government aims to remove the anomalies to which I have just referred, and seeks to ensure that justice shall be done to the people of this State. No doubt some old bogeys will be raised, and some members will be thinking, "How long will it be possible to resist the proposals in this Bill?" I say to them that they should ask themselves whether right and justice should prevail. There can be no excuse for perpetuating the privileges of the few at the expense of the many. We are fighting today to uphold the democratic way of life, and it is a truism that there can be no real democracy while wealth and property can enforce their will against the desires of the people generally, as expressed by their representatives elected by the adult population of the country.

I say, in conclusion, that while previous efforts to liberalise the franchise of the Legislative Council have not been successful, there is every reason why members of this Chamber should give very serious consideration to the proposals contained in the Bill. There is hardly a member here who has not referred to the new order after the war. There is hardly a member in the Chamber who has not subscribed to the principles set forth in statements made from time to time by the various leaders of the Allied countries, including Britain. By this means I claim we shall be able to show our sincerity; we shall be able to show that we are prepared to get away from the old limited conservative outlook which in the years gone by meant that unless one was possessed of property of one kind or another, one was not entitled to take part in the government of the country.

As I previously pointed out, there used to be a property qualification, not only for the Legislative Council but for the Legislative Assembly. That has been altered, but there still remains the property qualification for electors for the Legislative Council. I do not think it is asking too much of members to agree that the time has now arrived when we should have adult franchise for both Houses of the Legislature of this State. If this House endorses that principle then it will be possible to get away from the circumstances that have been referred to by Mr. Baxter, and one or two other members, whereby large numbers of people are not enrolled for the Legislative Council. It will then be possible to make the qualifications for both Houses uniform, and, under the Bill now before members, to make enrolment and voting compulsory. I see no reason at all why we should not be prepared to say at this late stage in our history that the time has arrived when the same franchise should apply to both branches of the Legislature. I trust members will give favourable consideration to the Bill, and that on this occasion the Government will be more successful than it has been in the past. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, debate adjourned.

BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 20th September. Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Continuation of Act; amendment of Section 17 (partly considered):

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: When the clause was considered previously, I mentioned that it was time we rejected the Act because the National Security Regulations now provide for what the Act was designed to cover. In common with other members, I received a circular in which it was pointed out that under the National Security Regulations interest on contracts, agreements and mortgages for over £500 had been fixed at 4¾ per cent. The Financial Emergency Act was passed in 1931 to deal with matters arising out of the then financial stringency. It was extraordinary that the Chief

Secretary should tell members just now that this Chamber never did anything when non-Labour Governments were in power, but only when a Labour Government held office.

Let us prove that we can do something and throw out the Bill. A non-Labour Government introduced the legislation, and this Chamber passed it. While there was financial stringency in 1931, at present there is an abundance of money. We are asked to continue the reduction of interest rates which in 1931 ranged from 7 to 9 per cent. Generally speaking, mortgages that prior to August, 1931, carried 7 per cent. interest, later returned only £5 8s. 6d. per cent. and now the Commonwealth Sub-Treasury has fixed the rate of interest at $4\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. It may be said that the Commonwealth Sub-Treasury has not fixed the rate at $4\frac{3}{4}$ per cent.

The devious way in which these bureaucratic Government departments work is clearly shown by the fact that there is no regulation, proclamation, order or Act of Parliament that fixes the rate of interest on contracts at $4\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. But there is a regulation which provides that all contracts have to be approved by the Commonwealth Sub-Treasury and, therefore, if the contract interest is over $4\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. the Commonwealth Sub-Treasury will not approve of it. Thus indirectly the department fixes the interest rate for new contracts at $4\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. In the circumstances I suggest that if we reject the Bill no harm will follow. There must be an end to the legislation at some time.

If we reject the measure the interest on mortgages will revert to the old rates and that will cause mortgagors to seek new mortgages at $4\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. instead of continuing with the old ones, paying the interest and allowing the securities to go to rack and ruin. There is another point that I must mention. The object of the Industries Assistance Act Continuance Bill is similar to that of the Financial Emergency Act Amendment Bill in that both are merely continuance Bills. In the Industries Assistance Act Continuance Bill all that is necessary is dealt with in four lines, whereas in the Bill now under discussion six lines are necessary. Why the superfluous wording?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I hope the Committee will not be guided by Mr. Parker. Unless the life of the Act is continued chaos will confront a lot of people.

Hon. W. J. Mann: That applies to many now.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Quite a number of people have borrowed money on mortgages of over £500. He points out that to Mr. Parker's remarks when the clause was previously dealt with, I consulted the Crown Solicitor who has supplied me with a very lengthy explanation of the position regarding mortgages. Certainly he bears out what Mr. Parker has said regarding mortgages of over £500. He points out that there are two sets of Commonwealth regulations involved in the matter—the National Security (Economic) Regulations and the National Security (Capital Issue) Regulations. They operate in the manner indicated by Mr. Parker. The Commonwealth Sub-Treasury will not agree to certain transactions unless the interest rate is $4\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. or less.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: There is no regulation specifying an interest rate of $4\frac{3}{4}$ per cent.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Then what is there?

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: The Commonwealth Treasury will simply not approve of contracts above that rate.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This is what the Crown Solicitor says—

When giving his consent to a mortgage under the Capital Issues Regulations, the Treasurer insists on the same standards of interests as he applies to dealings under the Economic Organisations Regulations. In a circular dated the 5th September, 1944, he advised that as from that date the maximum rate of interest chargeable under new mortgages exceeding £500, overdue mortgages exceeding £500, which are now being taken over by purchasers, or payments owing under contracts of sale in respect of land must not exceed $4\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. In other words, if you go along to the Federal Treasurer requesting his consent to a contract of sale, he will grant it subject to the rate of interest under the contract being not more than $4\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. In the same way if the parties wish to enter into a new mortgage, or purchasers are taking over an old mortgage which is overdue and the amount of the mortgage debt in each instance is more than £500, the Treasurer's consent is subject to the rate of interest being $4\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. or less.

It will thus be seen that land transactions are surrounded by a labyrinth of regulations which are subject to frequent alterations; the regulations are subject to consents and to standards to be fixed by the Treasurer from time to time; the reasons for consent and the standards themselves vary very frequently; some matters have to be referred to Canberra

with resultant delay. These circumstances alone justify Parliament continuing to protect those whose mortgages still remain under the State emergency legislation. The Federal Treasurer has not attempted to interfere with such mortgages; as long as they continue to run they remain in their status quo. If the Financial Emergency Act is not continued the first thing to happen will be the automatic restoration of the original interest rate. In other words, instead of paying £5 8s. 6d. per cent. mortgagors will be obliged to pay 7 per cent. or 8 per cent. or higher, in accordance with the original terms of the mortgage.

If the mortgagors then attempt to pay off the original mortgage and obtain financial accommodation at the rates of interest at present prescribed by the Treasurer they are faced with trouble and expense which would hardly be worth the difference between 4¼ per cent. and £5 8s. 6d. per cent. There are all sorts of costs, procuration fees and other expenses associated with the obtaining of a new mortgage. If they go to a building society they may be obliged to pay £5 5s. per cent.

Where the amount of the mortgage is less than £500 and the mortgagor has not borrowed more than £500 in the particular years, no consent of the Treasurer is necessary and no limitation is placed on the interest rate. Such a mortgagor (obliged to pay off his mortgage by reason of non-continuance of the Financial Emergency Act) might have to pay a much higher rate of interest as he is not protected by the Federal regulations. Again, a mortgagee, knowing that he could get higher interest rates on investments under £500 would be more likely to let out money in sums less than £500, thereby handicapping the mortgagor who wanted £600 or more. For instance, if there were a mortgage for £600 it would pay the mortgagee to call it up and let it out in two sums of £300 to different mortgagors.

Looking at it from the point of view of the mortgagee, who is bound by the Financial Emergency Act, it is again quite a good proposition. If his mortgagor obtains fresh accommodation the mortgagee will then have to let his money out at 4¼ per cent., and until he gets a new mortgagor he will have to be content with savings bank interests. If it is true that financial concerns have ample funds to let out on mortgage, then the private investor would probably be cut right out of the mortgage market.

I am indebted to the Crown Solicitor for the extensive memo. that he has furnished me with on this particular subject; and I am convinced that unless the Chamber agrees to the continuance of the Act, large numbers of mortgagors will be put to considerable expense, and will probably have to pay higher rates of interest, if they can obtain accommodation elsewhere, than they are paying at the present time. I feel that in these circumstances we should be very, very careful before we decide that the time has come to

let the Act lapse. I do hope that this Committee will agree to my proposal that the Act be extended for a further year.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I would point out that the Crown Solicitor's memorandum does not mention that the interest rate of 4¼ per cent. is in accordance with the National Security (Economic) Regulations. The regulations to which the Crown Solicitor refers fix that rate of interest for banks, insurance companies, life assurance companies and building societies, but do not fix any rate at all for the private individual. Another point I would like to make is that mortgages are being paid off very frequently now—far too frequently from the investors' point of view; but those are mortgages which were entered into since 1931, and those people who have trust funds to lend have no option but to put them into war loans at 3¼ per cent. But those mortgagors, if they would only pay off their mortgages, would get the benefit of a much lower rate of interest than they are paying at present, and the investor would get a higher rate than 3¼ per cent.

Now is the time to take this Act off the statute-book, when that step cannot possibly do anyone any harm. It is quite true that if one is going to discharge a mortgage one has in all probability to get another mortgage to discharge the existing encumbrance, and there are fees payable of which the Government gets a good deal in stamp duties. Nearly all the money expended in such a transaction goes to the Government. If necessary in the circumstances, why not remit those fees? In normal conditions there is no hardship if a man borrowing £500 or £1,000 for three years is expected to pay it back, but many of these mortgages have been going for 40 years. That is why I ask that the Bill be rejected.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—TESTATOR'S FAMILY MAINTENANCE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY [9.7] in moving the second reading said: This Bill seeks to amend the Testator's Family Maintenance Act, 1939, which was introduced by

Mr. Parker. It is an Act to provide maintenance for widows, widowers and children of testators. The Act empowers a court to vary a will where the testator has failed to make adequate provision for the maintenance of his wife and children. It has been discovered that the Act in its operation is inadequate in one particular. At the present time the only express power given to the court is to make orders in favour of the widow, widower, or children of a deceased testator who has left them destitute and has disposed of his property in favour of less deserving beneficiaries. Cases have arisen where the court order does not meet all the circumstances. The testator may have not only left his property to an undeserving person but may have, at the same time, appointed that person to be executor of the will. It is not unexpected that such a person would be displeased by the order of the court varying the original will and directing that some portion of the testator's property should go to a near relative; and there have been instances where the executor has reacted to the detriment of the beneficiary. It is suggested, therefore, that provision be made enabling the substitution of a new executor for the old one, or the appointment of a joint executor to control and supervise the original executor. It is sought to do this by this Bill.

The amendment embodied in the measure sets out that, on application being made in accordance with the provisions of the Act by any person beneficially entitled to any part of the estate of the deceased testator, the court may, if it is proved to its satisfaction that the executor or executors or any of them has or have been guilty of abuse of the office, or other dereliction of duty, direct that one or more persons be appointed executor or joint executor of the will either in addition to, or in substitution for, the person appointed by the testator. In this event the court will make such order as may be necessary to carry out its direction. The decision will be left to a judge of the Supreme Court, who must take all circumstances into consideration and who is not likely to act capriciously. This amending Bill was introduced in another place at the request of a legal practitioner who has had two or three cases of this kind. The proposed amendment is supported by several legal practitioners who have been consulted

on the subject. I trust that no objection will be raised, and that Parliament will approve the measure. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—PLANT DISEASES (REGISTRATION FEES) ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

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

House adjourned at 9.15 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 4th October, 1944.

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

QUESTIONS (5).

HAY.

As to Crops, Stocks and Prices.

Mr. KELLY asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) What was the total recorded acreage cut for hay in Western Australia in the 1943-1944 season?