

**BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.**

- 1, Government Railways Act Amendment.
- 2, Western Australian Government Tramways and Ferries.

Received from the Assembly.

**BILL—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMENDMENT.***Assembly's Message.*

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to amendments Nos. 1, 2 and 3 made by the Council and had disagreed to No. 4.

*House adjourned at 5.53 p.m.*

**Legislative Assembly.**

Thursday, 27th November, 1947.

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

**QUESTIONS.****HOUSING.**

(a) *As to Permits for Eastern Goldfields.*

Mr. STYANTS (on notice) asked the Premier:

(1) How many building permits and the subsequent permits for release of materials were issued for Kalgoorlie, Boulder Municipal, and Kalgoorlie Road Board Districts for the six months from the 1st November, 1946, to the 30th April, 1947, and for the period from the 1st May to the 30th November, 1947, respectively?

(2) What was the value of the materials released?

(3) Is it correct that materials are not being made available promptly, so that contractors are able to complete workers' homes within a reasonable time of signing contracts?

(4) What quantity of corrugated galvanised iron has been made available to the above districts during the past six months?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) House permits issued 1/11/46 to 30/4/47—Kalgoorlie, 36; Boulder, 12; total, 48.

Value material and labour—Kalgoorlie, £10,514; Boulder, £3,421; total, £13,935.

House permits issued 1/5/47 to 24/11/47—Kalgoorlie, 55; Boulder, 13; total 68.

Value material and labour—Kalgoorlie, £18,199; Boulder, £3,978; total, £22,177.

Details have been grouped according to the post office addresses of applicants. It would be difficult to supply information under the headings of local authority districts.

(2) Information regarding value of materials is not available. Permits are issued on the basis of total cost of labour and materials.

(3) Authority to purchase materials is issued with the permit, but contractors in Goldfields areas are experiencing the same difficulties as metropolitan builders in obtaining certain materials, particularly flooring, roofing materials, water piping, porcelain enamelware, glass, etc. In the case of all items imported from the Eastern States, and particularly steel products, the position is difficult.

To assist in eliminating bottlenecks in supply of materials, the Commission has appointed a liaison officer, who visits the Goldfields at regular intervals to confer with merchants and contractors.

(4) Eighty-five tons. A further consignment totalling 60 tons and including a big proportion of roofing sheets will arrive at Esperance about the second week in December.

(b) *As to Recipients of Permits.*

Mr. GRAHAM (on notice) asked the Minister for Housing:

In view of the decision of the Government to proceed with the Bill to amend the Railways Act, and having allowed debate thereon without apparently having infringed any proprieties on account of a Royal Commission at the same time conducting an investigation into railway control and management, will he now make available the full names, addresses and occupations of all persons who have been issued permits for the erection of houses for the three-monthly periods ended the 31st December, 1946, and the 31st March, 1947, respectively?

The MINISTER replied:

The two cases are not analogous. It is considered the information should not be made available for the reason set out in my reply to his question of the 20th November.

(c) *As to Non-Revealing of Recipients' Identity.*

Mr. GRAHAM (without notice) asked the Premier:

Is it possible that the Premier fears that by answering my question, he might reveal the identity of a number of persons who could reasonably be expected to be supporters of his political party.

The PREMIER: The answer is "No."

(d) *As to Proceedings of Royal Commission.*

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN (without notice) asked the Premier: In view of the fact that Mr. Speaker has ruled that a Royal Commission is not a court of law and that matters before it are not sub judice, how can he make out that matters before the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into housing are sub judice at the present time.

The PREMIER replied: I was always under the impression that when a Royal Commission was making investigations the matters being considered were sub judice.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: So were we.

The PREMIER: I am still of that opinion and have acted accordingly.

(e) *As to Ruling by Mr. Speaker.*

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN (without notice) asked the Premier: Is the Premier aware that you, Mr. Speaker, have already ruled that such matters are not sub judice?

The PREMIER replied: I must say that I am not aware of your ruling, Mr. Speaker, but suggest that if any information is required in connection with the Commission, applications should be made to the Royal Commissioner dealing with housing.

(f) *As to Construction Delay at Collie.*

Mr. MAY (without notice) asked the Premier: Is the Premier aware that every house under construction in Collie has, for the last two months, been held up for the want of flooring boards?

The PREMIER replied: No, I am not aware of that.

(g) *As to Information re Goldfields Permits.*

Mr. GRAHAM (without notice) asked the Premier: In view of the refusal of the Premier to answer my question, of which notice was given for today and which was asked last week, under what pretext did he answer Question No. 1 on today's notice paper which has relation to the Housing Commission and its activities.

The PREMIER replied: I am unable to see that the question asked by the member for Kalgoorlie has anything to do with the investigation being made by the Royal Commission.

Mr. Graham: Both questions seek information.

The PREMIER: The question seeks information, but I do not think that information affects the Royal Commission.

Mr. Rodoreda: What have you to hide?

The PREMIER: Nothing.

**BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.**

- 1, Superannuation and Family Benefits Act Amendment.
  - 2, Superannuation Act Amendment.
- Introduced by the Attorney General.

**STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION.**

The PREMIER: I move—

That so much of Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the remaining stages of the Government Railways Act Amendment Bill and the Western Australian Government Tramways and Ferries Bill to be dealt with at this sitting.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I assure the Premier that I am anxious to assist him in facilitating the business of the House. I discussed yesterday the same matter with the Deputy Premier who took this course to facilitate the passage of Bills to the Legislative Council, and now today I find that the same course is considered necessary by the Premier. I have no objection, but I think it necessary at this stage that the Government should give the House some indication as to the proposed legislative programme. Which Bills do the Government desire to press and which are they not very interested in?

Having a knowledge of the responsibility of those who sit on the Treasury bench I know of at least six more Bills that must come before us, such as the continuance measures, that will have to be dealt with before the end of the session. If there are to be further accumulations on the notice paper, in addition to the Bills of which notice was given last week and again early this week—and they include such contentious measures as the water supply Bills—it is hardly fair to members of this House or to the Legislative Council to expect them to deal with such involved and debatable matters. We are four weeks away from Christmas, and I do not know whether the Premier intends to sit in January or in February.

The PREMIER (in reply): The Government is anxious to get all the Bills on the notice paper through Parliament this session. There are one or two that we may not persevere with and a few more yet to be introduced. I have myself to bring down a Bill dealing with materials control.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: And forests revocation.

The PREMIER: That is more or less a formal matter, which has yet to come up and does not usually call for much discussion. I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that very few more measures will be introduced, and I do not think they will be contentious. We should be able comfortably to clear the notice paper in reasonable time before the Christmas holidays.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have counted the House and as there is an absolute majority present, I declare the question carried.

Question thus passed.

**BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.***Further Report.*

The PREMIER: I move—

That the further report of the Committee be adopted.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I am not prepared to agree to the adoption of the Committee's report on this Bill in view of what has happened this afternoon. I raised a point yesterday and I accepted your ruling, Mr. Speaker, and I expect the Premier also to accept your ruling on this and other matters. There is no difference at all between the matter dealt with by this Bill and the position regarding the Royal Commission on housing. The Leader of the Government cannot have it both ways. It is surely right for the Premier of the State to abide by the rulings of Mr. Speaker. I am going to adopt the attitude that was previously indicated by the Government and will now repeat that the railway Bill is sub judice, despite the ruling from the Chair. As the Premier is not prepared to accept the ruling that has been given, I shall adopt that attitude. Fair is fair, and the Government cannot have it both ways.

Mr. MARSHALL: Before the Premier replies to the remarks of the member for Fremantle, I want to say something regarding the Bill and my contentions will apply to the tramway Bill as well. I want to enter an emphatic protest regarding the constitution of the directorate which, if the Bill becomes an Act, will control the railways. The constitution of both the railway

directorates and the tramway commission is merely pandering to all sections of the community, by virtue of the fact that all those to be appointed, with the exception of the two placed on them by the Governor, will be employed only part-time. In consequence two of the officers now in charge of the railway system will continue in that position.

**Mr. Nimmo:** How do you know?

**Mr. MARSHALL:** They will be immune from any interference on the part of Parliament. The only purpose that will be served by the others who are referred to as representatives, is that they will be called in occasionally to confer with the permanent appointees upon matters of policy, if we may call it that. If there is any good purpose to be served by the constitution of this directorate, then each and every one of its members should be permanently employed in the same way as the two Government representatives. I take strong exception to the workers' representative being called in at any time by the Government nominees, and the same objection applies to the tramway Bill. These two measures are merely to pander to all sections of the community, and the results will be nil.

**The PREMIER:** As hon. members know, I have been away for a few days and consequently I did not hear the ruling by Mr. Speaker which was given either yesterday or the day before. Furthermore, I had no idea that these questions were to be asked today without notice. I can only say that during the 17 years I sat on the opposite side of the House, it was regarded as a courtesy due to Ministers to advise them of any questions without notice.

**Hon. J. B. Sleeman:** You cannot always give notice, and it does not always pay to do so.

**The PREMIER:** I have no desire to take any unfair advantage in regard to the inquiry now before the Royal Commission on housing. In regard to the information that hon. members require, I will see if it can be obtained through the Royal Commission.

**Hon. E. NULSEN:** Before the report is adopted I want members of Parliament and the people of the State to know where I stand in regard to the railway Bill. I do not intend to keep the House very long but I would not like this measure to be passed without saying something on it. I do not

think there is any virtue in the Bill and I feel it is not going to be helpful to the administration of the railways of this State.

I have closely examined the measure and it does not appeal to me in any way as other than an uninspiring document without any redeeming feature. We are to have a directorate of five to control our railways and later a commission of three to control our tramways, which makes a total of eight to control those two forms of Government transport in this State. We have also a Transport Board consisting of three members, so altogether we will have an executive of eleven members in control of transport matters. It seems to me to be absolutely ridiculous and absurd. Take the Broken Hill Pty. Co. Ltd. of which Mr. Essington Lewis is in control! Members will realise that he is in charge of an undertaking the capitalisation of which is much more than will be controlled by the directorate and commission controlling the railways and tramways, respectively, in this State.

The capitalisation of the company which Mr. Essington Lewis controls is over £32,000,000, but the capitalisation of all the Government transport does not amount to that sum. The proposed method of control will be expensive and inefficient and must ultimately lead to one-man control. I have no doubt about that. The Bill seems to be a political expedient—an ingratiating Bill as far as the Government is concerned. I am getting tired of boards. The State seems to be made up of them and it will not be long before we shall have more boards than we have producers. I consider there should be a special department dealing with all modes of transport both in the metropolitan area and in the country. The control should be brought under one Ministerial head. The department should control all intra-State land and air transport and be responsible for the whole transport policy of the State. The functions of this department should be effectively to consider the activities of the various forms of transport by—

(a) having regard to the transport requirements of the State as a whole;

(b) determining the rightful sphere of action of each form of transport; and

(c) preventing overlapping and economic waste.

I shall not dwell upon the advantages of this method of control, as they are obvious.

There is another form of control that I consider is really better than departmental control, a transport co-ordination board, which would take over the control of all the transport of the State—rail, road and air—and also control over finance. In my opinion, three commissioners or directors—their title is immaterial—would be sufficient to control all the transport of the State. We could do away with the Railway Department altogether because, when manpower and materials are available, there is no reason why the railways should not be put on a proper business basis.

I listened very attentively today to the lecture that was given by the gentleman from South Africa. From what he said, there is no financial starvation in South Africa, which is one of the reasons why the railway system there is on a better basis than ours is. The board to which I refer should be self-contained financially and have complete administrative control, subject to a Minister of the Crown. A competent manager should be appointed to control the metropolitan transport. To me it seems ridiculous to have 11 men controlling the transport of the State, eight of whom will deal only with Government transport. The board should also have power to acquire assets if these will be of economic advantage to the State. Notwithstanding that the Broken Hill Pty. Co. has a board of directors, Mr. Essington Lewis really controls the operations of the company and no-one can say that he has not made a success of it. But he was not starved financially, nor was he controlled so far as the prices of the goods which the company produced were concerned. The Commissioner of Railways has been handicapped in that direction. I take this opportunity of protesting against this legislation. It is a disgrace to Australia that we should have so many boards. They are becoming so numerous that soon we shall need a board to control the boards.

Question put and passed; the report adopted.

### *Third Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS**  
(Hon. H. S. Seward—Pingelly). [4.55]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

**HON. J. B. SLEEMAN** (Fremantle) [4.55]: As a last kick, I think we should try to prevent this Bill from being passed. I consider it is an insult to prominent men who have been brought to this State to investigate our railways. Mr. Gibson is one of the most prominent railway engineers in the Eastern States. Then we went outside Australia and brought to the State another eminent engineer to report on the railways. As soon as these gentlemen started on their work the Government brought down a Bill dealing with the railways. That is most offensive to them. The least the Government could have done was to wait until they had submitted their report. The other day evidence was being given upon the desirability of whether there should be a directorate to control the railways, or whether the control should be placed in the hands of one man, or two or more men. But the Minister and the Government practically said to these Royal Commissioners, "We do not care what your decision will be; we intend to have a directorate of five men." We should throw the Bill out and give the Royal Commission time to arrive at a decision and make its recommendations. The Government could then bring down a Bill framed on such recommendations. I trust we shall not lose this last chance of throwing the Bill out. If the Bill passes this Chamber it will necessarily be sent to another place, the House of review. I hope it will not get as far as that, but if it does then I hope the House of review—although I have not much time for it—will do its job properly and throw out the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### **BILL—WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TRAMWAYS AND FERRIES.**

*Report, etc.*

Report of Committee adopted.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### **BILL—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of four amendments made by the Council now considered.

*In Committee.*

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

No. 1. Clause 1, page 1: Insert the figure "5" before the word and figures "of 1947" in line 12.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The amendment is to correct a technical error. Section 1 deals with the short Title and the Legislative Council introduced the number of a Bill which was passed this session and assented to. It is merely a machinery amendment. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Mr. NEEDHAM: Members will call to mind that when the Bill was originally before the Committee I drew attention to the exorbitant rents that are being paid by people living in caravans and pointed out that under the existing legislation they have no remedy through the court. I consider that an attempt should be made to alter the law to enable these people to appear before the fair rents court.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You are on the wrong amendment.

Mr. NEEDHAM: The amendments all deal with caravans. I was supported in my contentions by the Attorney General, who said he would draft an amendment and submit it to the Leader of the Opposition and myself with a view to having it included in the Bill in another place. He kept his word, and in the absence of the Leader of the Opposition I submitted the amendment to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition who agreed that it would meet the position. I am glad the Attorney General proposes to accept the Council's amendments.

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

No. 2. Clause 3, page 2—Insert after the word "by" in line 1 the following:—

(i.) inserting after the word "thereof" in line 2 of the definition of "Land" the words "and includes a caravan while used as a dwelling, and any land and conveniences occupied or enjoyed in any connection therewith."

(b) adding at the end of the definition of "Lease" the words "and includes an agreement for a license for a caravan to

occupy land for any period during which the caravan is to be used, or is being used as a dwelling."

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: As the member for Perth said, just now, in the course of the debate on this Bill he drew attention to the fact that people living in caravans were in some instances paying exorbitant rents. His remarks were supported by the Leader of the Opposition and subsequently amendments were inserted in the Council to bring caravans under this legislation. Those amendments are Nos. 2 and 3 submitted by the Council and they will bring caravans under the same terms as shared accommodation, that is the occupation of part houses. The result will be that the services of a rent inspector will be available as a summary procedure and the rent inspector will be able to go to a caravan and determine what is an equitable rent, his determination being binding unless either side appeals to the local court. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

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

No. 3. Clause 3, page 2: Add at the end of the definition of "Share accommodation" the words "Provided that 'Share accommodation' shall include a caravan while used as a dwelling and any land and conveniences occupied or enjoyed in connection therewith."

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: This amendment is part of the same provision to include caravans within the terms of the legislation. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

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

No. 4. Clause 6, page 3: In proposed new section 6B—Delete all words after the word "may" in line 22 and substitute the words "at any time charge the standard rent aforesaid without committing any breach of this Act. In the event of an existing lease the lessor shall, without terminating the tenancy, give two weeks' notice in writing of intention to return to the standard rent and at the expiration of such notice the rent for such premises shall be the standard rent and the lessee shall be liable to pay to the lessor, and the lessor shall

be entitled to recover from the lessee, such standard rent notwithstanding any provisions of the lease to the contrary."

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL:** In the original Bill, Clause 6 provided that with regard to rent which was the standard rent or rent which had been payable and paid on the 31st August, 1939, and had subsequently been reduced by the landlord, the landlord should be entitled at any time to raise it to the standard amount. That is something which he has difficulty in doing at present under decisions of the court. Clause 6 would have enabled him to do this merely on giving notice to the tenant. The Leader of the Opposition proposed an amendment to which I was agreeable and under which the landlord in those circumstances could not revert to the standard rent unless he had the consent of the relevant court. The Legislative Council has rejected that amendment, which was accepted by this Committee, and has reverted to the original provision. I suggest that we should adhere to the amendment and I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

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

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

A Committee consisting of the Attorney General, the Leader of the Opposition and Mr. Shearn drew up reasons for not agreeing to the Council's amendment No. 4.

Reasons adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

### **BILL—DRIED FRUITS.**

Received from the Council and read a first time.

### **BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.**

Returned from the Council with amendments.

### **BILL—PUBLIC WORKS STANDING COMMITTEE.**

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**HON. A. R. G. HAWKE** (Northam) [5.17]: The Minister appeared to be in bottom gear most of the time during his

effort to justify this Bill to the House. He said the Bill, as constituted, was in no way a Party measure. But for his having said that, I do not think anyone would have gained the impression that it was, or could have been a Party measure. However, his next statement seemed to indicate that it might be a Party measure.

**Mr. Marshall:** That is nothing foreign to those on the other side of the House!

**Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE:** The Minister claimed that, apart from the chairman, the membership of the committee would be equally divided between Government and Opposition members. How the Minister could conveniently push the chairman on one side and then claim that the committee was non-party, because the members, apart from the chairman, would be equally divided between the Parties in this House, I do not know. Obviously the chairman will be a member of the committee and, when it comes to voting, will be equal to two members, under the provisions of the Bill. He is to be given not only a deliberative vote, but a casting vote as well, when the voting on the part of the committee is equal.

**Hon. A. H. Panton:** That is the new democracy!

**Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE:** It seems quite clear, therefore, that if the Bill were studied to ascertain whether it is a Party measure, that study would quickly reveal that it is—

**The Minister for Works:** Why not simply call it a Government measure?

**Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE:**—because the Government will have upon the committee three members as against two from the Opposition side of the House, and one of the three Government members will have an additional vote, whenever the voting of the committee is equal.

**The Minister for Works:** How could you secure equality of voting with five members?

**Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE:** I do not think it would be humanly possible of achievement, but I am merely analysing the contention of the Minister, who claimed that equality of membership on the committee, as between the Government and the Opposition, was conclusive proof that the Bill was not in any way a Party measure. I am disproving completely that contention by pointing out that the committee will have

a chairman—in addition to the four other members—who will be appointed by the Government and will have a deliberative as well as a casting vote. The Minister also told the House that the Bill has been designed to prevent the hard-earned income of the State being overspent on public works that will cost more than £50,000. That claim cannot be proven to be correct in fact. It is not correct, as it will be at the absolute discretion of the Government whether any works are referred to the proposed committee for investigation and report. Even if the Bill becomes law the hard-earned income of the State may still be overspent on public works costing under £50,000, as well as those costing more than that sum.

The Minister for Works: That is naturally allowed.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: It will only be when the Government sees fit to refer a proposed work, estimated to cost £50,000 or more, to the committee, that it will have the benefit of the advice and recommendations of that body. There can certainly be no proof that any report or recommendations of the committee on any proposed work will prevent the Government from overspending its hard-earned income on that work. If there is any logic or strength in the contention of the Minister in this regard, why should we not make the submission of such works to the committee compulsory upon the Government? Why should we not apply that compulsion to works costing under as well as over £50,000?

The Minister for Works: How far would you go in that direction?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: If the contention of the Minister is correct—I do not admit that it is—I would go to as low as £10,000, because the committee—when and if appointed—is sure to operate in such a way as to prevent the hard-earned income of the State being overspent, it would be advisable for the Government and the State in that way to save every pound possible. The minimum limit as to proposed works should therefore be made ever so much lower than is laid down in the Bill. I do not think the happy results that are prophesied as being sure to flow from the work of this committee—in the event of its being set up—will flow, and therefore I believe the Bill should be defeated. The Minister said that

the setting up and operation of this committee would be a great help to Ministers and to the Government, but he did not show how that would come about, or put forward any proof of his contention.

If the Committee were appointed, I think its operation might be as much a disability as a help to the Minister or the Government, and might, on balance, prove unhelpful. It is not without significance that in a large State such as New South Wales—and also in Queensland—committees of the kind here proposed were set up, operated for several years, and then abandoned. Members know what committees can do, on paper, and how easy it is for a committee to examine a proposal and bring in a report that clearly shows—on paper—that the proposal has this, that, or the other weakness. In such circumstances some committees make recommendations as to how the proposal should be altered in various directions, and eventually claim, on paper, to have saved so many thousands or millions of pounds, through their investigations and recommendations. There is never any possibility of testing, on a practical basis, whether such conclusions are right or wrong, as the work in question can never be executed on both bases. The responsible authority—whether the Minister or the Government—has finally to choose between the original proposal and the proposal as amended by the investigating committee. Only one of the two can be put into effect and therefore no-one can say whether the alternative would have been better.

A remarkable assertion made by the Minister, when explaining the Bill, was that if it were enacted it would be acclaimed by the people of this State. That was the only time he really got into top gear, while dealing with the Bill. Equally so, will it have the hearty approval of the Grants Commission? That appeared to me to be a strange claim for the Minister to make in support of the Bill, and I was sufficiently out of order, or felt sufficiently out of order, to interject and ask the Minister why it would have the hearty approval of the Grants Commission.

The Minister for Works: You do not think it would?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The Minister's answer was that the less money we spent on public works, to that lesser degree it



would encroach on the amount necessarily sought by us from the Grants Commission. I have very grave doubts as to whether that is correct.

The Minister for Works: Is that a correct rendering of it? Did I use those words?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You used them all right.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The words I have used are an absolutely accurate report of the words used by the Minister in reply to my interjection.

The Minister for Works: I am not disputing it, but it is obviously not what I meant.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: From the Minister's interjection to me at this moment, it is clear that he did not say what he meant, and did not mean to say what he did say. I am quite at a loss to see how in any way the setting up of this committee and its subsequent operation could obtain the hearty approval of the Grants Commission.

The Minister for Works: I shall have to give an amended explanation.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The Minister, instead of giving an amended explanation, would be wise to say nothing more about that part of his speech.

The Minister for Works: I might even take your tip, too.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: As I said in this House on a previous occasion when dealing with a motion related to the proposal to set up a Parliamentary standing committee on public works, such a committee would undoubtedly weaken Ministerial and Governmental responsibility in relation to the public works programme of the future. I say this in spite of the fact that the Bill itself will leave it to the discretion of the Government whether any particular proposed public work is referred to that committee. I am not able to see any worth-while advantage that will accrue to the Minister or the Government from the operation of the proposed committee. It might possibly be that the Minister and the Government, if hard pressed by some district to put in hand a public work, which was not justified and which the Government and the Minister would not put in hand if the decision were left entirely to them, would take advantage of the opportunity to get an unfavourable report from the committee. They would

then be able to say to the people of that district, "We are very sorry but this request you have made has been referred to and investigated by the Public Works Committee and the report and recommendations are unfavourable. Consequently, in the face of that unfavourable report, we cannot carry out the work requested."

I admit quite frankly that, in such a situation, the setting up of a committee of this kind would establish a very soft place for the Minister and the Government to fall upon. Instead of the Government and the Minister having to take the whole responsibility for saying "yes" or "no" to a request from any district, they could make the committee say "no" if the request made to the Government could not be justified. There is no doubt that the operation of the proposed committee would occupy much of the time of the most valuable officers in the service of the Government.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That is the point.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Whenever a proposal is developed for public works such officers would have to give it a good deal of close personal attention in order that it might be carried to some stage at which the Minister or the Government could be in a position to decide whether the proposal should be referred to the committee or should be decided by the Government itself. Obviously no Minister and no Government would be in a position, unless a proposed public work had been developed to a substantial extent by the departmental officers, to refer the proposal to the committee. That body would have to call the officers before it, question them at great length and probably have to travel to various parts of the State in order to inspect the areas proposed to be served.

Undoubtedly there will be considerable duplication of the work of the officers and a considerable amount of their time will be wasted by the inquiries of the committee. The Minister in his speech admitted that this would be so, especially in the earlier stages of the committee's existence, but he thought that the position might improve after a time and that some way could be found of greatly minimising the time that officers would have to devote to attending to the requirements of the committee. I know of no system that could be devised that would cut down the time the

committee would take in its association with the officers as to the evidence and advice they would give the committee.

The Minister for Works: You have never been faced with the need for finding a way.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The committee would have to be very careful to obtain the fullest and best advice possible. It would have to examine the officers at very great length and in great detail. Any action less than that on the part of the committee would be a dereliction of duty and, in my opinion, a breach of the declaration that each member would have to sign before he could act as a member of the committee. There should be no doubt at all in the mind of any member as to the great amount of time of valuable officers that the inquiries of the committee would occupy. The Minister sought to minimise the possibility of the operation of such a committee having the effect of delaying substantially the carrying out of public works projects. I admit that, at this stage, no-one can measure with any degree of accuracy the amount of delay that would occur as a result of the investigations of the committee.

The Minister for Works: Vastly more delay if we adopt your idea of lowering the limit to £10,000. You realise that?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: He does not like the idea at all.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Undoubtedly every proposal referred to the committee would be delayed to the extent of the time taken by the committee to investigate and report to the Government. How the committee could obtain any more information than has been obtained in the past about proposed public works the Minister did not explain, and I think it would be very difficult for him satisfactorily to explain that point.

The Minister for Education: The right people will get the explanation, to wit, members of Parliament.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I submit that the sources of information available to any Minister in the past have been quite as adequate as the sources of information that would be available to a committee in the future. The strongest argument against the Bill is that it is not necessary. I think the only sensible basis upon which to judge

whether the committee is necessary is to consider the record of the Public Works Department over past years. If that record be good and satisfactory, it would be reasonable and safe to leave well alone and hold fast to the existing system. The Minister himself must have some grave doubts upon this point, because a considerable portion of his speech was devoted to justifying in a complete way the record and achievements of the Public Works Department. The Minister's justification of the past and existing policy is so good as to be worth putting into "Hansard" a second time.

Mr. Yates: What about the waste of public money in the building of the Canning-highway some years ago?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: If the member for Canning had been born when that highway was built, he would know that no money was wasted. From my experience, I would say there is not a road in Western Australia that has given better value for the money involved than Canning-highway.

Mr. Yates: It is a good job, but money was wasted on it, just the same.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Yes, if you call it wasted as the result of crook contractors.

Mr. Yates: The road is good.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Not even the member for Beverley could have stopped that.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: If the facts in connection with Canning-highway were checked I think it would be found that from the time the road was constructed till now the cost of maintenance has been practically nil. Consequently, although the original cost of construction per mile was high, the road has been a wonderful investment. I am disappointed indeed to find the member for Canning seeking to circulate abroad the idea that Canning-highway was constructed in such a way as to have placed a great burden upon the taxpayers.

Mr. Yates: I did not say anything about the construction of the job. It is admitted that the road is good. I say that money was wasted on it.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I doubt if we will ever reach the stage, as long as we remain human beings, when a job of any magnitude will be carried out without some

money being wasted on it. As a matter of fact, if any member cares to travel slowly along Canning-highway and carefully observe the amount of work that had to be done in constructing it to its present standard, he will quickly realise that we could not have a modern highway of that description except at great cost.

Another point is that when the highway was constructed, this State, from the technical point of view in connection with the construction of roads, was in its infancy. I have often marvelled at the technical efficiency with which the road was built so many years ago. I have never felt the faintest surprise, in view of the difficulties of construction, that it cost as much as it did. It may very well be that some contractors employed on the road did exploit the Government. I am not well enough informed to say whether that is so or not. But I do suggest that any public work carried out in this State in the future by private contract, or partly by private contract, will cost more than it should, even if ten public works committees previously investigate the proposal. I want to go back now, for the purpose of putting into "Hansard" for the second time the marvellous tribute paid by the Minister for Works to the public works system that has operated in this State for some years, and what that hon. gentleman had to say when introducing the Bill. The statement was—

I do not accept the idea, as do some in this Chamber, that the public works carried out in Western Australia, irrespective of which Government may be in power, have been, speaking generally, injudiciously conceived or treated in comparison with other States. I say quite to the contrary. Admittedly errors have been made but only, I think, because circumstances have forced us to take unusual risks. Not too many countries make their revenues cover so much ground—structurally speaking, of course—as ours. Also, remembering that we are a country of about half a million people, can others boast of the splendid range of public works that we possess in this State? Particularly does that apply to roads and especially to our wonderful water supplies from the epoch making Goldfields Water Scheme pipe-line down to the magnificent series of big reservoirs that have been already constructed or are being constructed.

I think our public works organisation through the years, irrespective of what Government has been in office, has justified itself in a magnificent manner. We would

be foolish if we were, at this stage of our history, to superimpose upon such an organisation, an investigatory committee of the type proposed here. There can be no doubt at all that the setting up of this proposed public works standing committee would slow down the public works organisation of the State, and interfere seriously with its efficiency. I see no sense or justification in putting on top of our public works organisation, an investigatory committee of this type, or for that matter, of any kind.

I want now to make a fairly brief reference to some of the important clauses in the Bill because the Minister told us very little about the measure. First of all, I am keen to know why all road work is to be excluded from the attention of the committee. If it is advisable, as the Minister has told us, to have a committee of this kind operating, and if it will save the hard-earned income of the State, why not apply its activities to road as well as to other public works?

The Minister for Works: Do you think that aspect requires this type of oversight?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I am asking the Minister to tell us why all road work has been excluded, and why the committee will have no right to investigate anything in connection with roads?

The Minister for Works: You think it should, do you?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: What do you think?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Evidently the Minister is unable to justify the exclusion of roads. But there must have been a reason why he and the other members of the Government decided to exclude them.

The Minister for Education: There were about six reasons, and you know them all.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I would be satisfied with one reason, so long as it was a good one. In view of the silence of the four Ministers now occupying the Treasury bench, I must conclude there is no reason.

The Minister for Education: It is your province to be patient. I should not be interjecting.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: It seems clear, therefore, that the Government has either not much faith in this proposed committee,

or it wants to save the hard-earned money of the State only on public works other than roads, despite the fact that in Western Australia large and increasingly large sums of money are being spent on roads.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Or do you think it is something in connection with which the Government would like to retain the right to make decisions?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I know the importance of roads in the various districts of the State, and how much influence the building of roads has on the people, and especially on local governing authorities. It might well be that the Government wishes to retain absolute authority as to when and where roads are put down, irrespective of cost. I will wait patiently for the explanation—if any—of the Minister on this point at a later stage. I am intrigued to find that every member who will serve on the proposed committee must first sign a solemn declaration. Reading the declaration, which is in the Schedule to the Bill, I interpret it as being neither more nor less than a reflection upon members of Parliament that they are to be called upon, before becoming members of the committee, to sign such a document.

In the event of the committee being set up, I would have expected the Government to have sufficient faith in any member of Parliament appointed to the committee to believe that he would, to the best of his skill and ability, faithfully, impartially and truly perform the functions of his office as a member of the committee. Evidently the Government is doubtful and will therefore call upon members, before being so appointed, to sign this solemn declaration. I have referred to the provision that lays down that the chairman of the committee shall have a casting as well as a deliberative vote. There already appears on the notice paper an amendment, in the name of the member for Perth, to strike out that obnoxious provision.

The Minister for Works: Have you never put it in a Bill of your own?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: There is one part of the Bill that I am sure will appal every member of the House—when read—except the Ministers. It reads—

(.) If any person—

(a) wilfully insults the committee, or any member thereof; or

(b) misbehaves himself before the committee; or

(c) interrupts the proceedings of the committee, the chairman or temporary chairman, may order him to pay a pecuniary penalty of not more than ten pounds and direct that the same shall be recoverable in default of payment by execution against his goods and chattels—

Hon. A. H. Panton: They should be shot at daylight.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE:

—and that in default of payment and of sufficient goods and chattels he shall be imprisoned for a period determined in accordance with and subject to the provisions of section one hundred and sixty seven of the Justices Act, 1902-1942—

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I remember hearing about chattels in relation to Section 51 of the Agricultural Bank Act.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: —

—or may instead of directing that the penalty shall be recoverable by execution, direct that in default of payment the person in default shall be imprisoned, and shall transmit a copy of the order to the Clerk of Petty Sessions of the Court of Petty Sessions nearest to the place where the order is made, and thereupon the provisions of the Act shall apply in respect of the order as if it were made by justices.

The Minister for Works: It has been the law in Australia for a long while.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I hope that part of the Bill will be defeated thunderously and that, if taken to a division, it will be defeated by all members of the House, except the Ministers, voting for its deletion from the Bill.

Mr. Marshall: What if there is a fine looking female on the committee? Is she not to be protected?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I need give my imagination no play while considering this provision. The wording is so gruesome, in the light of the offences for which the penalties are prescribed, that one has to keep a tight hold upon one's indignation to prevent it from running riot.

The Minister for Education: The indignation is most synthetic.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: If I were to allow my imagination some play—not full play—I could visualise the member for Beverley as chairman of this committee.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Never let it be said.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I can see a witness of Irish or Scottish extraction appearing before the committee.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Or perhaps a communist.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Some justifiable difference of opinion would quickly develop between the witness and the chairman, and the chairman—being the member for Beverley—would lose control of himself and begin to say nasty things to the witness. The witness would then insult the chairman by saying something equally nasty in return, whereupon the chairman, loaded with the great responsibility of being chairman of this committee, would set in motion machinery to give effect to all the awful provisions laid down in this part of the Bill. Within a very short space of time the unfortunate witness would find himself in Fremantle gaol. He would probably have lost all his goods and chattels in the process, and so not only would he be ruined financially, but his reputation would be sullied for all time through his doing a term in Fremantle prison.

Mr. Yates: The member for Northam might be the witness.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: There are other provisions in the Bill that require drastic alteration in the event of its passing the second reading stage—which I hope it will not. I am largely in agreement with the impassioned outburst with which the member for Kanowna favoured the House this afternoon, during the third reading of the Government Railways Act Amendment Bill. He condemned utterly the mania that has developed in Australia generally—and in Western Australia in particular in recent months—for passing most of the responsibility of Government over to commissions, commissioners, boards and so on. There is on the notice paper a Bill to increase the number of Ministers. At the rate at which this Government appoints commissions, commissioners, investigators and so on, within a few months there will be no work left for any Minister to do.

Hon. A. H. Panton: They will soon need a Minister for Commissions.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: At the rate at which Ministers of this Government are shedding their responsibilities and shunting

them on to commissions and the like, within 12 months the people of this State will be governed not by the Government, or by Ministers elected to govern, but by these superior organisations that are being set up by the Government at the rate of about one a day.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The Honorary Minister must be having bad dreams now.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I recall the speeches which the Honorary Minister used to make when she was on this side of the House in condemnation of boards, commissions, and committees.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: She would still, if she could say so.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I think everyone will admit that during the war there might have been justification for a good many of these commissions and boards, but as we are now moving further and further away from the war period, there is no justification in adding to the number of these organisations, but every justification in reducing the number as far as is reasonably possible and safe. I therefore appeal to members of the House to vote this Bill out on the second reading, and make the Ministers and the Government—not only the present Ministers and the present Government but the Ministers of any Government in future—carry this responsibility themselves.

There are exceptionally capable officers in the Public Works Department to handle the matters which this committee will deal with in a secondary kind of way, and there will be, I am sure, equally capable officers in that department in future years. Therefore, I say that we in this House should stick fast to the system which has proven itself over the years, the system which has produced magnificent results of which all of us are justifiably proud, rather than superimpose upon the Public Works Department a standing committee that will not, in my opinion, assist or help in plans but will do rather the reverse. I am sure that the Public Works Department today is functioning efficiently in regard to the officers at least, and therefore it would be an interference with that efficient functioning; it would be a duplication to a large extent of the work of the officers of that department should

tasks of this or any other kind be superimposed upon them by this committee.

**MR. NEEDHAM** (Perth) [6.8]: Despite the very declamatory speech just delivered by the member for Northam and his peroration in appealing to this House to defeat the Bill on the second reading, I am going to make an appeal to members to vote in favour of the Bill. I find myself in a unique position, in that I am supporting the Government of the day—

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Neither beautiful nor appropriate.

**Mr. NEEDHAM**:—and a coalition Government at that. But even from a coalition Government something good emanates, and I believe this Bill contains that good. I am supporting it in principle because it purports to appoint a standing committee on public works. However, like my colleague who so strongly condemned the measure, I will, in Committee, point out many of its defects, because I venture to say it is about the worst drafted Bill that I have seen before this House. There are many defects which I hope will be remedied in Committee.

I hope no-one will think that I am in any way reflecting on the officers of the Public Works Department. I say it now, and I said it on another occasion when dealing with a motion introduced by the member for Beverley, that the officers of our Public Works Department will compare more than favourably with officers of other Public Works Departments in the Eastern States. It was stressed by the Minister himself when introducing this measure, and confirmed by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, that the list of public works carried out in Western Australia in the past is an outstanding proof of their ability.

Reference was made by the member for Canning to the Canning-highway. The member for Northam replied to that interjection. I refer to the Canning Dam, one of the finest pieces of engineering work carried out in the Southern Hemisphere. There are other public works, all of which are a credit to the officers of the Public Works Department. In saying that, I do not think that is a reason why a Bill of this nature should not come before us—nor do I think—in fact I am sure—that the operation of

a standing committee on public works will in any way detract from the prestige of those officers nor in any way injure their reputation. I will go further and say that the officers of the Public Works Department in this State are not so vain as to think that their opinions represent the alpha and omega in respect of various matters. There are other people to be consulted and who, by their experience in other walks of life, will be helpful when large public works are undertaken.

I have come in contact with the officers of the Public Works Department in nearly all of the States of the Commonwealth and whilst a member of a Standing Committee on Public Works for three years, and for a further three years a member of a Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I could not see that they were in any way put out because of the operations of those committees. In fact, in many instances, they welcomed the advice of such committees. Particularly has that been the case with the officers of the Commonwealth Public Works Department. They were eager to find out whether or not their estimates of various works could bear investigation as a result of information obtained from other sources.

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

**Mr. NEEDHAM**: I was referring to the fact that the officers of the Public Works Department of this State compare more than favourably with those of similar departments in other States. I also express the hope that, despite the very strong opposition of the Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, members will support the second reading of the Bill. In doing so, I am being consistent with the attitude I have adopted on this question when motions have been tabled in this House for the appointment of a public works committee. On each occasion when the member for Beverley introduced a motion, I supported it by voice and vote. I contend that, had there been a public works committee in existence in the years gone by, a considerable amount of money would have been saved as a result of the inquiries of the committee.

I propose to produce proof as to where vast sums of money have been saved to the people of Australia as a result of the

activities of the Commonwealth Public Works Committee. In that regard the member for Northam spoke very strongly about the record of savings on paper in the construction of public works as a result of a committee's inquiries, but considered that it had not gone further than the paper record. That has not been my experience in the Commonwealth arena, as I shall produce figures to show. Though we have not had the assistance of such a committee in the past, I will demonstrate that, in view of the vast schedule of public works forecast for this State, it will be a profitable venture for the people if such a committee is inaugurated now. No matter how capable the departmental officers may be they are not infallible, nor do they claim infallibility. There is a danger of their calculations and estimates of costs going astray or being based on wrong information or wrong premises.

I have a copy of the report of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Standing Committee for 1945 in which I note a striking example of the danger that exists in basing calculations and estimates of costs on wrong information. The report deals with the extensions to the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in Sydney, and this is an extract —

#### Revised Estimate of Cost.

The Committee was very concerned at the difference which exists between the amount of the original estimate of £111,130 and that submitted by the Works Director at the commencement of the inquiry, viz., £73,570 and investigation was made into the cause of the disparity.

It was represented to the Committee that the original estimate was an approximation, made for the purpose of the post-war reconstruction programme, based on the cubic foot measurement; that allowance had been made for the work to be carried out under Civil Constructional Corps conditions which necessitate higher payments under awards than are required under the tender system; and that all "A" class men were liable to be sent North so that the work would have to be done by "B" class men, resulting in a higher cost for labour.

As the difference in the estimates was more than the total amount estimated for labour, it appeared evident to the State that a considerable portion of the surplus estimate was attributable to the approximate nature of the method of calculation used in the first instance.

The Committee is assured that the amended estimate is a reliable one, based upon plans carried to a more advanced stage than the

original ones, and the Committee's investigation of the proposal has been carried out on the basis of the revised estimate.

It is realised that in the rush to prepare large numbers of extensive schemes at short notice for postwar reconstruction plans, at a time when shortages of staff present grave difficulties, some form of approximation would be necessary, but considerable misgiving is felt that the estimate for a large work should have been prepared, even for approximate postwar reconstruction purposes, on a basis which allows room for a discrepancy so great as to represent 50 per cent. of the final figure. Emphasis is laid on the fact that if similar projects included in the postwar plans are subject to the same variation in estimates, a grave danger exists that at least some of them may be passed to completion without adequate revision of the estimated costs.

This is evidence of the danger that can occur as a result of careless calculation or of basing calculations upon wrong premises. I have already pointed out that the appointment of a public works standing committee would in no way be a reflection on the officers of our Public Works Department. It is not considered to be so by the officers of the Public Works Department in New South Wales, South Australia, and of the Commonwealth. As I have already indicated, the greatest good feeling exists between those officers and the members of the committee when visiting the various parts of the State to investigate works.

The member for Northam has again stressed this afternoon what he said when he was Minister for Works in opposing the motion of the member for Beverley, that the appointment of a committee of this nature would divert responsibility from Ministers of the Crown. That has not been borne out by the experience in other places. As a matter of fact, men who have held the position of Minister for Works in the Commonwealth arena and in the States of New South Wales and South Australia have felt their responsibility to be even greater than it was before, in seeing that the committee was working along the proper lines of investigation. There is another advantage in the establishment of a standing committee on public works. It will give members of Parliament a more detailed knowledge of the projected work than is the case where such a committee is not in existence, because the reports of the committee can be presented to Parliament and the evidence given at the various inquiries will help members considerably in understanding the nature of

the work, what its prospects will be and what it will cost; whereas, under the present system here, all that a member would know about the proposed work would be an estimate that it would cost so much. There is no explanation of the detailed nature of the work, whether it should proceed or should not proceed, or whether it should be carried out to the full extent or whether it should be partly completed.

I venture to say there is an additional advantage to be derived from the appointment of the proposed committee. It would be the means of making our officers even more alert than they now are. It would involve the necessity for greater care in the preparation of plans for any particular work: that is to say, the officers of the department would exercise even greater care in the future than they have in the past in submitting plans and estimates to the committee. I contend, as I have on other occasions in this House, that a committee of this nature has already saved money for the people of the Commonwealth; and if instituted in this State it will do the same here. But there is something more than even the saving of money in the cost of public works. Savings effected by the Commonwealth works committee were not in money alone.

There was an occasion when the activities of that committee prevented the erection of buildings to a plan which was contrary to local bylaws and could have been responsible for litigation in years to come. The case I refer to was an inquiry in 1946 into the construction of the Batman automatic telephone exchange in Flinders-lane, Melbourne. In the report of the Public Works Committee on that occasion, I find the following, which will serve to show that, apart altogether from the saving of money, there is the question of compliance with the by-laws of local authorities to be considered. This section of the report deals with street alignment—

#### Street Alignment and Cantilevering Upper Floors.

When the project was in its initial stages the Melbourne City Council indicated that it would be appreciated if the ground floor could be set back 4ft. 6in. to permit of a 9ft. wide footpath being constructed. The plans show that this has been provided for but that the mezzanine, first, second, third and fourth floors are to be cantilevered to extend to the present building alignment, the fifth and sixth

floors being set back 4ft. 6in. to the new alignment.

The question of street alignment was examined, and the Committee sought evidence regarding the effect of local regulations on the proposal to cantilever some of the floors over the footpath.

Inquiries revealed that the original drawings of the plans now before the Committee were completed in 1944, and prior to this period, certain other buildings were erected in Melbourne with the upper floors cantilevered over the footpath, the Civic Authorities having agreed to the adoption of that method of construction. However, the Victorian Widening of Streets Act, 1940, provides that, on new buildings in certain streets, cantilevering of upper floors over the footpath shall not be permitted, unless a bylaw, specifically sanctioning it, be passed. In 1944, the council adopted a recommendation of the Buildings Regulations Committee to the effect that this type of building definitely should not be permitted.

Since the matter was raised by the Committee, discussion has taken place between the City Council Authorities and officials of the Department of Works and Housing and the Postmaster-General's Department. The result is that it will now be possible to amend the plans for the Batman building so that the whole of the Flinders-lane elevation will conform to the new street alignment.

There is another advantage in establishing a standing committee on public works. We have in this State in years gone by spent large sums of money on the construction of public works without proper inquiry and without having that information to which Parliament is entitled. If we implement the legislation now before the House we will avoid that mistake in future.

No public work of any great magnitude should be undertaken without Parliament being well informed in every particular concerning its nature and what it will cost, etc.; and there is no better way of advising Parliament in that direction than by establishing a committee such as is proposed in this measure. I have already said I would produce proof concerning the money that has been saved by committees of this nature. I never like to occupy the time of the House by quotations from documents, but as so much has been said about savings made by similar committees being merely savings on paper I will quote from reports to show that actual savings have been made. I have here the fourteenth general report of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Standing Committee on public works and it indicates the amount saved on various works as a result of the commit-



tee's inquiries. Here are some of the items.

Proposed Work.	Amount in reduction of that Proposed. £
Storage and regulating reservoir, upper Queanbeyan River .. .. .	100,000
Sewerage scheme for Flinders Naval Base .. .. .	2,000
Alterations and additions to the Customs House, Sydney .. .. .	10,481
Water Supply Scheme for Flinders Naval Base .. .. .	61,000
City Railway Canberra .. .. .	98,972
Dams for ornamental waters, Canberra .. .. .	440,000
Power House, Flinders Naval Base .. .. .	5,500
Flinders Naval Base—erection of workshops, hospital, detention barracks, etc. .. .. .	26,204
Ordnance store, Leichardt, N.S.W. .. .. .	6,300
Kidman and Mayoh's Wooden ship-building contract .. .. .	135,200
Extension of the Port Augusta-Oodnadatta Railway .. .. .	2,550,000
Northern Territory Railway—extension from Mataranka to Daly Waters .. .. .	233,912
Construction of Hostel at Canberra .. .. .	36,750
Office accommodation for the Taxation Department in Melbourne .. .. .	84,650

In that year several other big amounts were saved as a result of inquiries by this committee. In the 1931 report I find such items as these—

Proposed Work	Amount in reduction of that Proposed. £
Development of site for civil aerodrome near Launceston, Tasmania .. .. .	7,400
Development of civil aerodrome at Mascot, New South Wales .. .. .	5,355
Construction of public baths Canberra .. .. .	20,300
Construction of concrete roads within the city area, Canberra .. .. .	100,000
Establishment of automatic telephone exchange at Maylands, W.A. .. .. .	41,440

In the 1939 report appear the following:—

Erection of a terminal building at the Kingsford Smith Aerodrome, Mascot, N.S.W. .. .. .	3,000
Erection of a community hospital at Canberra .. .. .	60,000
Erection of a hospital at Darwin .. .. .	34,760
Erection of a gaol at Darwin .. .. .	5,000

In the twentieth general report (1944-46) appear the following:—

Erection of Administrative Offices, Darwin, Northern Territory .. .. .	27,500
Erection of Abattoirs, Canberra .. .. .	20,000
Erection of Temporary Office Buildings, Canberra .. .. .	80,000

I remind the House and the member for Northam that these were not just savings on paper but actual savings as a result of the inquiries by the committee, the sums I have quoted being the difference between the estimated cost and the actual cost. I said earlier that I would support the Bill in principle but that there were phases I did not like and I would endeavour to have them amended in Committee. One weakness in the Bill is that which was stressed by the member for Northam, namely, that reference of a proposed work to the committee is not mandatory but optional. That is a very great weakness.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It nearly makes the measure innocuous.

Mr. NEEDHAM: It depends entirely on the Government of the day whether or not a work shall be referred to the committee—that is, any public work the estimated cost of which will exceed £50,000. If the Bill becomes an Act in that shape the position will not be improved. I would rather see the Bill rejected if it is to retain that weakness, because reference of such works to the committee should be mandatory and not at the whim of the Government of the day. Parliament should say that the Government shall refer such works.

Another weakness, which was also stressed by the member for Northam, is that roads are excluded from the definition of a public work either from the point of view of construction or maintenance. In this motor age, this age of speed, we know what happens to our roads. We know what it has cost this State to construct the excellent roads in existence. A road, and particularly a main road, should be looked upon as a public work of great magnitude and of first importance, and I cannot imagine what has actuated the Government in excluding from the provisions of the Bill a work of such an important nature, of such a costly nature as a main road. I hope that weakness will be overcome when we are in Committee.

The Bill provides for the appointment of a committee of five, but I do not like the suggested method of appointing the chairman. Two members are to be appointed by Executive Council, two by the Leader of the Opposition, and the chairman by the Governor. If we allowed the committee to elect its own chairman, we might possibly get the same result. I admit that in the case of the Commonwealth Committee the chairman is invariably a member of Parliament who is in accord with the political thought of the Government of the day. Notwithstanding that, I think it would be preferable for the committee to elect its own chairman because the members would have a better knowledge of each other's ability and would know the best man to occupy the chair. Another weakness in the measure is the fact that the fees to be paid to the members of the committee are not mentioned. What is the Government afraid of? We know that these people will get a fee for each sitting. It should be provided in the Bill. It is in the Commonwealth measure. Each member of the Federal committee gets so much per sitting, and the chairman so much, and provision is also made for travelling. This Bill would be considerably improved if it contained similar information.

Another strange clause is that which provides that each member of the committee shall hold office for five years. The Government must be very optimistic. I have had as much experience of Parliaments as has any member of this House, but never at any time have I had the temerity to say that I would remain in Parliament for five years, except, of course, when I was a member of the Senate, and then I was elected for six years. But even at that time I did not go so far as to say I would remain there for another six years. To suggest that the members of this committee will remain members of Parliament for five years is to be more optimistic than I have ever been. A feature which worried the member for Northam is that which seeks to give the chairman a second vote. I would never agree to that. I realise that if this committee is established it will be an important one, but the responsibilities of its members will not be as great as yours, Mr. Speaker, in presiding over this Chamber, or even those of the member for York as

Chairman of Committees. Neither you, Sir, nor that hon. member has authority to exercise a second vote.

Another weakness of the measure is contained in the ridiculous clause which provides that a member of the committee who misses six consecutive meetings shall lose his seat. What kind of a member would he be? If he were in good health and missed six consecutive meetings it would show he had no interest in the work of the committee. If he were in good health, there would be no need for him to be absent; sickness would be his only excuse. I hope, when the Bill is in Committee, that these phases of the measure will be altered. The member for Northam wanted to know from what sources the committee would get information, when inquiring into the construction of public works, that were not available to officers of the department today. It is easy to answer that. Committees of this nature do not stop at inquiring from officers of the department; they go further afield and get independent evidence from experienced people outside. I have often seen departmental officers sitting in a committee room listening to evidence given by someone from outside the department. Therein lies the difference between the scope of the information availed of by the department and what should be availed of by the committee.

I again want to emphasise the point that officers of the department may get evidence from outside, but to my knowledge they have not called such evidence when making calculations or estimates. In that regard, the member for Northam can rest assured that if this committee is appointed it will be able to find people willing and competent to give information which will assist it considerably. The Bill, if it becomes law, will fill a long felt want and enable members of this Parliament to gain not merely a scant knowledge, but a full knowledge of every important public work that comes along. That will help them properly to discharge their duties to the electors whom they represent. With all due deference to Governments and officers of departments in the past, I contend there has existed a want that this measure will fill. Despite any opposition to the measure I say, from personal experience, that the House will do well to pass the measure so

that the committee may be set to work as quickly as possible.

**MR. HEGNEY** (Pilbara) [8.12]: Having studied closely the wording of the Bill I will support the second reading, but, like the previous speaker, I think the measure contains a number of provisions that require radical alteration. To begin with, if the committee is to be of any real benefit it should be obligatory on the Government to refer projected works to the committee, which will have responsible duties to perform. Although strong arguments can be put forward for the rejection of the Bill, equally strong reasons can be put forward for its adoption. As no public works standing committee has been instituted by Parliament in this State in the past—as far as I know—I believe members should be prepared to give the proposal reasonable trial. If the Bill is passed and it is found, after a period of years, that the benefit derived by Parliament from the appointment of the committee is not sufficient, the Act can be repealed and the committee abolished.

On comparing Western Australia with other States of the Commonwealth, and taking into consideration the area over which this Parliament has jurisdiction, and the sparsity of our population, I feel that the minimum limit of £50,000 should be reduced to perhaps £20,000. Those members of Parliament who are appointed members of the committee will be able to submit to Parliament as a whole—and not only to Cabinet—more detailed information about projected public works than has been available at any time in the past. There is work that private members would be pleased to do—provided certain amendments are made to the Bill—that would prove of great benefit to Parliament. I regret that the construction of roads has been excluded from the jurisdiction of the committee under the provisions of the Bill. Perhaps the Minister—or the Government—has cogent reasons for that exclusion, and I would like the Minister, when replying, to indicate them.

The chairman of the committee should not have two votes. On a measure recently before the House the Attorney General indicated that it was proposed to abolish plural voting. The member of Parliament who is appointed chairman of the commit-

tee should not have a plurality of votes. The House recently passed an amendment to a measure, providing that where there was equality of voting on any question, the question should be resolved in the negative. That is an amendment that should be made to this Bill when it is in the Committee stage. The Bill provides for payment of allowances to members of the committee, and that may contravene a provision of the Constitution Act, as it might be construed to mean that members of Parliament were accepting offices of profit under the Crown. I suggest that that aspect be considered and that, if there is any doubt about the position, the necessary alteration be effected. In the past the first indication private members have had of certain public works has been when they appeared on the Estimates.

I cannot see that, in the institution of the proposed committee, there would be any insult offered or intended to be offered to any permanent officer of the Public Works Department. The committee, with wide powers for the collecting and collating of information, will be able to give the House far more detailed information than has been available in the past. With those few remarks I propose to support the second reading, but when the Committee stage is reached I hope my suggested amendments will be accepted.

**MR. MANN** (Beverley) [8.20]: In view of my efforts in previous years to secure the appointment of a public works standing committee, I feel that I must say a few words on this Bill. I regret that the member for Northam is not in his seat at present.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: He is here more often than you are.

Mr. MANN: He is usually in his seat and I know why he is not here at present. I have no intention of casting any reflection on the hon. member.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is all right. Otherwise, I would have something to say.

Mr. MANN: I hope that the speech the member for Northam makes tonight will be a better one than the one he made on this Bill this afternoon. I cannot help saying, with all due respect to him, that I considered he set out to draw a red herring across the trail. I appreciate the comments that have been made on the Bill and especially the

remarks of the member for Perth. This measure has been introduced in order to try to save the State many thousands of pounds, which has been the experience in the Commonwealth sphere as was evidenced by the member for Perth. With some members opposite, however, I must say that I do not altogether like the Bill. I was under the impression that the Government intended to bring down a measure similar to the South Australian Act. That statute has been in operation and the Public Works Committee there has been functioning for many years and its work has proved to be very successful in the interests of that State. I must say, however, that there is not much in this Bill.

The Minister for Works: This measure is very much the same as the South Australian Act.

Mr. MANN: I cannot understand the Minister's making that remark because in my opinion there is no comparison between the two measures.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: There cannot be if there is nothing in the Bill.

Mr. MANN: However, we can endeavour to amend it in Committee. The South Australian Act provides that a Bill may not be introduced by any member unless it has first been submitted to the Public Works Committee. The fact of there being a Public Works Committee to investigate the question of constructing public works will not prevent the Government from introducing legislation to deal with them. The committee makes its investigation and the report is laid on the Table of the House, and the Government has a right to introduce legislation to authorise the construction of the work or not. When the committee has reported upon a particular work, the onus then rests upon the Government. The experience in Western Australia has been that many Bills have been introduced to authorise the construction of public works, and no member has been really aware of the proposals until the measures have been submitted to the House.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Does not your Government tell the Party?

Mr. MANN: I do not wish to cast any reflections upon departmental officers, but we cannot close our eyes to the fact that the Minister is guided by his technical officers. The information given by the member for

Perth has shown that, by having a standing committee to make investigations, the people of Australia have been saved hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Hon. A. H. Panton: What about the chairmanship of the committee?

Mr. MANN: I am not concerned about the chairmanship.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You will be very sorry if you are not made chairman.

Mr. MANN: Not at all.

Hon. A. H. Panton: In fact you will be shockingly disappointed if you do not get the chairmanship.

Mr. MANN: I hope the hon. member will not try to embarrass me by making such interjections. I am a rather sensitive sort of person, generally very mild and good tempered, but the hon. member seems intent upon drawing me out. I should say I am about the most peaceful and placid member in the House.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Since you have occupied that back seat, you have not been bad.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Is all this in the South Australian Act?

Mr. MANN: I am satisfied that the Minister is quite honest and sincere in placing this Bill before us.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I think you will get the job now.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: But you had better not accept it unless the Constitution Act is amended.

Mr. MANN: The member for Northam indicated that the officials of the Public Works Department would not welcome the Bill. From his remarks, I assume that the Director of Public Works does not like the Bill.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You yourself do not like it.

Mr. MANN: The main point is that this measure has been introduced in order to try to save enormous losses to the State. If such a measure had been in operation, the new Royal Perth Hospital would not have been built on the present site, and many undertakings in past years would not have been put in hand. This is not a Party matter.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is a personal matter.

Mr. MANN: If the appointment of a committee leads to the saving of many thousands of pounds on public works, our action in approving of the appointment will have been justified.

Hon. A. H. Panton: We would not have had the Goldfields Water Scheme if there had been a Public Works Committee.

Mr. Leslie: Now the hon. member is using the imagination of the member for Northam.

Mr. MANN: When the rain of interjections ceases, I will proceed.

The Minister for Lands: Stick to the Bill.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: But he said there is nothing in it.

Mr. MANN: There is much in the Bill and much that ought to be in it. The Minister is quite aware that, though the draftsman frames a Bill, it is Parliament that makes it. How often when the member for Gascoyne was in office did the other side make his Bills for him? During the last 14 years, I suppose his Bills not only received our blessing but were actually made for him.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I have never had one of mine so amended.

Mr. MANN: I feel sure that the Opposition will assist to make a perfect measure of this one.

Hon. A. H. Panton: We will.

Mr. MANN: And any small assistance that I in my humble way can give the Minister will be given. When I first raised the question of appointing a public works committee a few years ago, I had met members of the South Australian committee in Adelaide. They had just returned from making some important investigations, and I concluded from the information I received that they had done marvellous work. Later they came to Western Australia to investigate our system of bulk-handling of wheat.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Do you think you would make a good chairman?

Mr. MANN: I am afraid that members of such a committee would not undertake to travel in pursuance of their investigations unless travelling expenses were provided. I hope the Minister will not expect the members of this committee, when travelling, to pay their own expenses.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Why not?

Mr. MANN: Because I believe that every man is worthy of his hire.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: What does the South Australian Act provide?

Mr. MANN: The South Australian Act provides for a committee of seven members—five from the House of Assembly and two from the Legislative Council.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Are they remunerated?

Mr. MANN: Yes: the chairman receives £400 and each member receives £250 a year.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Is that provided in the Act?

Mr. MANN: I do not know whether the Minister has perused the South Australian Act, but I commend it to his attention.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Will you move to provide for similar remuneration in this Bill?

Mr. MANN: There is an amendment on the notice paper along those lines. The Minister has missed some points in framing his Bill and I appeal to his generosity to include them.

Several members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Hon. members must refrain from interjecting.

Mr. MANN: I tabled a motion on this subject two years ago and it was defeated, but I notice that there is a vast difference of opinion on the other side of the House tonight.

HON. E. NULSEN (Kanowna) [8.30]: I shall not have very much to say on the Bill, because the member for Northam has expressed my sentiments upon it. I feel that the proposed public works standing committee will not be of any help at all to the State; in fact, it would be more appropriate to call it, "The Retarded Progress Public Works Standing Committee," because I think its effect will be to destroy initiative on the part of those who should take risks in doing what they think should be done. I am of the opinion that if we had had such a committee at the time when some of our big undertakings were projected they would never have been completed. I refer to the Goldfields Water Scheme.

The Minister for Works: That is not mentioned in the Bill.

Hon. E. NULSEN: No, but I cite it as an example. Had that project been brought before a committee of this description, the committee would probably have turned it down because there was no security offering. I also feel that such a committee as is suggested by the Bill would not have taken the risk which the member for Boulder took in constructing the Wiluna railway. The same remark applies to Gwalia, which is still a flourishing mining town, but there was a time when the town was down and out, as it were. The member for Boulder again came to the rescue and saved its life. I could quote an instance in my own electorate. Had it not been for the member for Boulder, Norseman would not be holding the position it does today. There would have been no town of Norseman.

Mr. Hegney: And no Esperance railway, either.

Hon. E. NULSEN: That railway was constructed by a Labour Government. I introduced a deputation to the Minister for Works at the time. However, he turned the scheme down after having been advised by his own department, but the member for Boulder took the risk and found a way out of the difficulty, so today Norseman is the second best mining town in the State. Unless we have a committee which is prepared to take some risk and not require too much security, then it cannot be other than a detriment to the State. I would mention the settlement of the South-West. Had it not been for the initiative of Sir James Mitchell the South-West would not have been settled. Financially, of course, he had no security, but the scheme turned out trumps.

Mr. Mann: The good old Liberal Party!

Hon. E. NULSEN: I do not care whether it was Liberal, Labour or Country Party. My desire is to be fair. What I fear is that if the proposed committee is appointed then, if the Government is not prepared to take risks it will hide behind the committee.

The Minister for Works: That has been said already.

Hon. E. NULSEN: The Government should take the initiative. Unless we have a virile Government which is prepared to take risks and do what it considers to be

right, we shall not have any progress. A Government does not want to be hampered by any committee such as this.

The Chief Secretary: Or by members of Parliament.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Hear, hear! That is what a standing committee is comprised of. We agree with you.

Hon. E. NULSEN: The Government should not be hampered by individual members of Parliament, but collectively it should abide by the majority. The only redeeming feature about this proposed committee is that it will not be mandatory. If it were, it would supersede Cabinet and so the Government would be unable to undertake any works while Parliament was in recess. At such times it may be necessary to proceed immediately with public works costing not £50,000, but £100,000 or £200,000. I am of opinion that the committee would be a hindrance to the development of the State. I have heard it said that public works standing committees have been successful elsewhere, but is it possible to say that such committees in the Eastern States have been successful? I cannot for the life of me, see how that can be proved.

The Minister for Works: You have the word of the member for Perth.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I referred to the development of the South-West and said that Sir James Mitchell was willing to take risks in that connection. Today we have a fine asset in that district, but would a public works standing committee have been willing to run the risk that Sir James Mitchell did? The committee will not relieve the Public Works Department of any work. It will have to get its information from that department and it would be more or less directed by that department.

The Minister for Works: You have no grounds for saying that.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I think I have.

The Minister for Works: Have you any idea what they are?

Hon. E. NULSEN: The Public Works Department would have to give the committee all the necessary information.

The Minister for Works: No, it would not.

Hon. E. NULSEN: Yes. That would be necessary.

The Minister for Works: The committee would travel much wider afield than that.

Hon. E. NULSEN: Where otherwise would the committee get the information? I do not favour the Bill and shall vote against it, as I am convinced it will retard progress and prove unhelpful to the State. I am tired of boards, and I am tired of committees, and I am tired of commissions. I consider Parliament should take upon itself more responsibility. There is another matter of which we must take heed. This being a young State, and requiring development for the purpose of increasing our population and giving it greater opportunities of competing in the world, we must take greater risks than would be the case if we were developed to the same extent as Victoria or New South Wales. After giving the matter reasonable consideration, I feel that, instead of this committee being of help, it will merely be another organisation to retard the progress of the State and remove responsibility from those who should carry it.

MR. READ (Victoria Park) [8.41]: I feel that this committee would be quite unnecessary. With our small population, such a committee could not handle matters any better than the Minister concerned or the Premier and Cabinet who have been elected for the very purpose of managing the affairs of the people.

Mr. Mann: Has the Perth City Council a works committee?

Mr. READ: Yes, and our works committee sits opposite in this Parliament and should take responsibility and get on with the job.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is the point.

Mr. READ: We have before us the estimates of work that requires to be done. They are made up of various items of smaller or greater amounts. Take, for instance, the Vote for education which is a large one and which entails the building of many school-houses and works connected with education. If we analyse them, however, I doubt whether there is one of a magnitude of £50,000; and possibly only two or three times in any year would Parliament, with the money at its disposal, spend £50,000 on a project. As other speakers have pointed out, such committees exist in the Eastern States, but I think in their case that is quite necessary. I suppose that

£50,000 would be overspent in buildings or works almost every week there, so that such a committee might be necessary; but I cannot imagine that a public works committee could render any more valuable service here than could the Minister and his Cabinet. Officers of the department undertaking any work for the Government are the people who draw up the designs and put the estimates before those contemplating such work.

I do not think that five members of Parliament would have any more knowledge or provide any greater safeguard in connection with the spending of money than would the Minister and Cabinet. It was mentioned that the question should be investigated whether it would be legal for payment to be made to the members of such a committee. Whether it would be legal or illegal does not enter into the question. It is a matter of principle, I take it, which has been thrashed out here before; and many members of Parliament who have done valuable work on various boards for fee or remuneration of some sort have had to resign from those positions on entering Parliament. I myself represented a certain body on the Fire Brigades Board; but, under the Act, I had to resign when the people elected me to represent Victoria Park in Parliament. I feel that if I were offered a position on a committee of this kind, I would have to refuse, because I would have no right to take remuneration beyond that which I am paid for my work on behalf of the people.

Mr. Graham: A pittance!

Mr. READ: We draw a salary or "screw" or, as the Minister responsible for this Bill would say, a stipend, and that should suffice for the work we have to do. I admit it is not considered sufficient and that Parliament has had a special tribunal inquiring into what would be a fair and reasonable salary for members of Parliament. Whatever sum is decided upon should suffice for the work members do after having been elected to this Chamber. Again, there is no obligation under this Bill for the Minister, or those in power, to act on the recommendations of the proposed committee, and therefore we are back where we were when we started. It will be for Cabinet to decide whether or not to put a certain work in hand. Whether the committee is formed or not, it will remain for the Government to make the ultimate decision, and for that reason the Bill is unnecessary.

**MR. HILL** (Albany) [8.46]: It is not my intention to take up the time of the House by covering the ground already traversed. I want to mention, however, that my experience with the member for Northam when he was Minister for Works 12 months ago has convinced me that a committee such as this is an absolute necessity.

**Hon. J. B. Sleeman**: Albany would get less from the committee.

**MR. HILL**: We ask for only one thing—a fair deal. A little over 12 months ago the Labour Party started its campaign by the Minister for Works going to Albany and trying to make the people believe it intended to carry out a £2,500,000 harbour scheme. I was present at a meeting at Albany that discussed the matter, and the people were frightened to criticise it because the Minister might do as a Minister of the Labour Party did in 1914, and say, "There is the scheme. If it does not suit you, you will get nothing." If this committee were appointed, it would find out that this plan I have in my hand and the figures on the plan and the scheme outlined by the Minister do not correspond, and that the £2,500,000 scheme is like Mark Twain's egg—good in patches.

**Mr. Triat**: It was not Mark Twain.

**MR. HILL**: It is necessary to have more than accommodation for ships. There must be a proper road approach. The Commissioner for Main Roads was never consulted by the Minister for Works. Then it is necessary to have proper railway yards, but the Chief Civil Engineer was not consulted by the Minister for Works. I was talking to one of the senior railway officers, and asked him what he thought of the scheme. I said, "There is no addition to the railway yards." The man looked at me and, in forceful language, described the scheme as ridiculous. We also need proper provision for industry and commerce. The member for Mt. Magnet was on a committee that recommended reclamation at Albany, but, in the scheme proposed by the Government a little over 12 months ago, in the first instalment there was only 18 acres of reclamation provided for.

**Mr. Triat**: It is a start, you know.

**MR. HILL**: The hon. member referred to the Henderson Naval Base. I think I can

safely say that on that occasion the standing committee saved the Commonwealth Government a few million pounds.

**Hon. A. H. Panton**: Who started it?

**MR. HILL**: A Labour Government. I could give other instances. Very often it is necessary to make a proper investigation before proceeding with extensive engineering works. I do not wish to reflect on our engineers, who are capable men, but engineers like to spend money and very often it is desirable to put a brake on their desires. I support the proposal to have a standing committee.

**MR. TRIAT** (Mt. Magnet) [8.51]: I support the second reading, but I am not too keen on passing the Bill. It does not seem to me to give a true idea of what a standing works committee should be. The member for Kanowna seemed to be of opinion that an ordinary member of Parliament would not have as much intestinal fortitude in these matters as a Minister. He seemed to think that a private member would put a sprag in the wheel of progress.

**Hon. E. Nulsen**: No.

**MR. TRIAT**: He said that a lot of delay would take place; that men like Sir John Forrest, Sir James Mitchell and Philip Collier would do the work, but a private member would not. I think that is wrong. Ordinary members are just as anxious to further the progress of the State as are those occupying the Treasury bench. Unfortunately, we do not have an opportunity to know the plans and ideas of the Ministers, even when sitting behind them. Certainly those sitting in Opposition do not. Under the proposals here, the ideas of Ministers would be revealed and private members would have the opportunity to make investigations and satisfy themselves about certain things. Great works have been carried out in Western Australia in the past, but I think they will be overshadowed by what will be done in the future.

Within the next 25 years, enormous works will be undertaken, although I do not say that much will be done in the immediate future. The back country of the Kimberleys will be opened up, and in the course of that enormous sums of money will need to be spent there on providing water and so on. That is where I believe private members will



be able to exercise a lot of influence. Many of us are anxious to see that work commenced. These jobs would be properly considered by a committee of private members who would be prepared to support any Government in the development of large areas of the Kimberleys and other parts of the State. We know there are proposals afoot for large water schemes. No members here would attempt for a moment to stop the progress of adequate water supplies in any part of this State.

I do not know the chief officer of the Public Works Department; the only people in that department I have had anything to do with are those in the lower ranks. For inactivity, there are few departments that can go slower than the Public Works Department. I say that, because some four years ago the court house and the mining registrar's office at Mt. Magnet were burnt out with the result that the Government officers had no place in which to carry on their work, with the exception of the police station. An officer of the Mines Department travelled to Mt. Magnet and was successful in finding a building which would be satisfactory to his department, and also as a court house. It was a good building, with a dwelling attached. This officer immediately recommended to the department that it be purchased, and a satisfactory price was arrived at.

Of course, the Public Works Department must make an examination of all such buildings before the purchase can be finally agreed on. Because of that, an inspector was told to make an urgent inspection of this building. After a period, the owner of the building wanted to know what was being done. He said he had received several other offers higher than what the Government had made. By the time the report came in from the Public Works Department, some five months had elapsed from the day the examination was requested. The result was that the building had by then been sold. If that is the speed at which the Public Works Department operates right through, something should be done.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It had no officers.

Mr. TRIAT: Plenty of excuses are made. There was an officer within 250 miles of the place at the time.

Hon. A. H. Panton: This committee would not examine a proposition like that, surely.

Mr. TRIAT: No, but people talk of the wonderful work done by the Public Works Department. My experience is that the officers of that department are not active. There may be some good men, but there are some slow ones, too. Can members tell me that a works committee would have agreed to the erection of the Royal Perth Hospital on the present site? I do not think any five members of this Parliament would be so foolish as to say that is a suitable place to erect a public hospital at a cost of £1,000,000.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Do you think a works committee would be superior to Cabinet?

Mr. TRIAT: It would have recommended strongly that the money be spent on a suitable site.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It would know more about it than Cabinet.

Mr. TRIAT: I do not think Cabinet knew much about it at the time. I think a recommendation was made by some departmental officer and it was accepted without further investigation.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You have a poor opinion of Cabinet.

Mr. TRIAT: On the question of examining estimates, the member for Northam said further investigations would have to be made. I presume that a Minister controlling a department does not draft the plans and become a quantity surveyor for each job.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Neither will this committee.

Mr. TRIAT: That is so. The Minister gets his information from his technical officers, and while he is doing that I presume there would be no harm in this committee listening in. That is the first place where everyone gets his first ideas. The committee would then have the right to make further inquiries if it so desired. I do not anticipate it would hold up any Bill for any great length of time. If a committee is to be appointed, all work to cost more than a certain figure should be allocated to it for investigation. If Cabinet is to have the right to say, "You can have a look at this job but not at the next," I shall vote against the Bill. I presume the Minister will explain that point. Another matter is that concerning main roads. I do not know why they should not come within the jurisdiction of the committee.

Hon. A. H. Panton: They cost a lot of money.

Mr. TRIAT: Yes. The period of office of members should be three years, the same as for a member of Parliament. If a member of this committee is successful in being re-elected to Parliament at the end of his term, there would be nothing wrong in electing him to the committee for a further period. It is foolish to say that he should be on this committee for five years when his Parliamentary life is three years.

Mr. Marshall: What would be the position if he were elected to the committee in the last session of Parliament?

Mr. TRIAT: In my opinion, he would go out.

Mr. Marshall: No.

Mr. TRIAT: I strongly object to the chairman having a dual vote. At all events the first vote should be a silent one. He should not be permitted to vote on the first question—either that or he should vote on the second question where a casting vote is required. He should not have both a deliberative and a casting vote.

I cannot understand the attitude of the member for Victoria Park, who seems to have set his mind against members of Parliament receiving any remuneration for extra work they may do. He said that he thought—although he had heard that Parliamentary salaries might be increased—the present salaries were sufficient. Probably he has some means apart from his Parliamentary salary, of earning a livelihood. If that were not so, I am sure he would say that members are at present well and truly underpaid, and should receive an allowance to cover any out-of-pocket expenses they may incur while engaged on public duties. If the Governments of other States and of the Commonwealth have seen fit to pay such allowances to members, why should they not be paid by the Government of this State? I will support the second reading of the Bill, provided the Minister gives an assurance that all public works costing more than a certain sum will first be referred to the proposed committee for investigation and report.

MR. HOAR (Nelson) [9.2]: Together with many other members, I am not enamoured of the Bill. My objection to it is

that which I always raise when a Government seeks to delegate its responsibilities to other people—whether to boards or commissions. The fact that the Government considers such a committee necessary indicates that it is not confident of its own ability to handle the situation, and would willingly seek to thrust its proper responsibilities on to other shoulders. For any public work or matter of national importance the Government of the day should be prepared to accept full responsibility and—as I said the other evening—take whatever is coming to it from the people. The proposed committee could act only as a brake on progress and duplicate a great deal of investigation carried out by departmental officers. That would simply delay the project and, in effect, would mean a waste of time. The people elect members to this House to govern the country, and I see no need for the proposed committee. It is a sign of weakness when any Government seeks to evade its responsibilities by placing them on someone else.

If the Bill is to become law, I will raise serious objections to the fact that roads have not been included in the definition of a public work. The fact that the Minister has excluded roads from that definition would indicate that he has not allowed his mind to keep pace with modern transport developments. Members familiar with modern transport matters will agree that road transport must in the near future be multiplied many times, as regards both heavier vehicles and the number of vehicles. Road boards throughout the State are complaining that they cannot obtain from their ratepayers funds sufficient even to keep their roads in good repair. Local governing authorities are urging the Government to grant assistance in the building of roads, as they have not the necessary funds to construct bituminous roads. Actually the building of such roads is beyond the capacity of any road board in the State and sooner or later—whether it likes it or not—the Government will be faced with a huge loan programme, in order to undertake that work. I am convinced that a project of such magnitude is of sufficient importance to be included in the definition of a public work.

I would like the Minister, when replying, to inform the House what will be the position when an extension of some railway is

deemed to be desirable. What will take place when that occurs, seeing that we have recently passed a measure that will eventually lead to the appointment of a directorate to control the railways? According to the member for Mt. Magnet, it will be possible for the proposed committee to sit in conjunction with the railway's directorate.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: There is already a statutory committee appointed.

Mr. HOAR: The only way in which it could be done would be for the railway directorate to make a determination and pass it to the Minister who—if he agrees to the striking out of the word "may" and the insertion of the word "shall" in the Bill—would pass it on to the committee to be appointed. The fact that it will have to be done in that way indicates that there will be a great waste of time. In the near future we will be faced with a problem in this delegation of authority that properly should rest with the Minister.

Under the provisions of the Bill, when a public work is referred to the committee it shall, during its consideration of the project, have due regard to the stated purpose thereof, the necessity or advisability of constructing it, the amount of revenue which the work may reasonably be expected to produce where it purports to be of a reproductive or revenue-producing character, the present and prospective public value of the work, and the employment which it may reasonably be expected to provide. These are all matters that would normally be investigated by existing departmental officers before a decision was made by the Minister—and ultimately by Cabinet—to carry out such works. The set-up suggested in the Bill means delay in Cabinet arriving at decisions on any public work in the future. In all fairness and kindness I suggest to the Minister, having regard to the talk of cobwebs, of which we have heard so much in the last few months, that this committee will be a cobweb that it will take another Government to sweep away. I feel that the Bill is of no value and I will vote against it.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [9.10]: I quite agree with the remarks of the member for Nelson. As he has pointed out, it seems that a committee of this

kind has got nothing to do with public works, as that is the task of the Minister and his department. It seems to me that we are just shelving our responsibilities from one officer to another and from one department to another. We are handing our railways over to the control of a directorate and the Minister will have no say. We are handing our tramways over to a commission and the Minister will have no say there. Now we are asked to delegate our public works to a committee. I say that a Government that is prepared to do this is a spineless Government. Governments are put in office to govern the country and do their work. If a Minister thinks that he cannot do his job, he should get out and allow someone else to be put in. If the Minister for Works thinks his job is too big for him and that he needs a public works committee to help him, why not put the member for Beverley in as Minister for Works? He would show what could be done. He would be a man with a bit of go in him.

Hon. A. H. Panton: What does he know?

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I remember when the East Perth Power Station was built, by the then Labour Premier, the Hon. John Seadman, and I recall the hue and cry that was raised. Had there been a public works committee at that time, there would have been no power station. The cry was, "It is too big for Perth and will never warrant the expenditure." The capacity of the Power House has been doubled since then and it is too small now. The Government has been put in office to govern and let it do its job. Previous Governments did the job for themselves. The member for Beverley some years ago brought down a Bill for the appointment of such a committee, but the Government of the day said that it did not want anyone to tell it what to do. It was prepared to make the decisions.

The Chief Secretary: You should not have introduced the subject of the power house because that was a colossal mistake.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: Then I should like to see more mistakes of the kind made only on a larger scale.

The Chief Secretary: It is necessary to change the frequency of the plant now.

Hon. A. H. Panton: What would a committee have done about that?

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: The Chief Secretary must remember the hue and cry that was raised in 1914. We were told, "The place is too big. It will be money wasted. The expenditure is not warranted and such a big place will not be warranted." But Mr. Scaddan was strong enough to withstand the opposition and go right ahead. That is what we should do now. What is the use of delegating such powers to five members? If there are five members so capable of being able to recommend the Minister for Works what to do, let them give the House the benefit of their knowledge. This is the place for them to state what they know. We should not make a soft place for the Minister to fall on by enabling him to say, "I cannot carry out this work because the public works committee has reported against it." I hope the Bill will be defeated.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS** (Hon. V. Doney—Williams-Narrogin—in reply) [9.12]: The Bill has not been brought down for my benefit. It is certain that I shall get more work as a result of it than I have now. Therefore it has not been introduced for the reason suggested by the member for Fremantle. Nor has it been introduced to assist the department. The object is to oblige a large number of members, who seem to have an urge to participate in the government of the State, which is quite a proper feeling for them to have and, if we can meet their wishes, I think we should do so.

For such very few crumbs of comfort as have fallen during the debate, I express my thanks. Summing up the debate, I cannot help feeling that if I were truthful about the darrer thing, it has shown plainly that members want the Bill though they do not like it. This may be somewhat unusual, but it seems to be the idea. Generally, when members do advance reasons for disliking a Bill, the nature of the reasons shows that they have not thoroughly read the Bill. There is my well-informed friend, the member for Perth, who insists that the Bill provides that every member who is appointed shall hold the appointment for five years and no less. The hon. member, in the few minutes now at his disposal, might refer to the Bill and he will find that preceding the

term mentioned are the words, "Subject to Subsection (6)." The provision also indicates the various reasons for a Parliamentarian ceasing to be a member of the committee, irrespective of whether he has served for five years, one of which might be failure to be re-elected.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Then he would be twice unlucky—defeated and off the committee.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I should not like to put it that way.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is the position.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I wish to refer to the remarks of the member for Northam. He spoke at quite considerable length and, in very entertaining and vigorous fashion, he rang the changes on pathos, denunciation, with a little ridicule, some stark amazement and whatnot, concluding with just an occasional touch of kindness. I hope I may be able to claim that the hon. member did the Bill no great amount of harm. Rather, I believe, he set members wondering just why, if these standing committees are so utterly futile, year after year—in some cases for over 30 years—they should continue in existence. They have continued for years in Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and the Commonwealth, and they have continued with periodical applause for their virtues. I cannot help thinking that the member for Northam overstated his case, except maybe with regard to his attitude to the indignity piled upon certain unfortunate folk who might happen by some strange chance to insult the chairman or a member of the committee. I do not mind admitting that it did not sound too prettily.

We must recall, however, that the committee would have the powers of a Royal Commission, and it could hardly escape from having powers of this kind vested in it. This Bill is very firmly based upon the South Australian Act, despite the assertions of the member for Beverley and, without being too sure, I believe the provision is contained in the Act of one or two other States. I consider that the member for Northam took a somewhat strange line when he claimed that a committee would do a great deal of harm to the Public Works Department, but then, curiously enough, he sternly demanded that the £50,000 limit provided in the Bill should be

reduced to £10,000. Surely, if his argument was worth anything at all, he must have realised that there would be a great deal more harm done under his proposal, because it is certain that the huge number of jobs of over £10,000 would pile upon the committee such an amount of work as to be altogether beyond its scope. I do not know how many works might be involved, perhaps 40 or 50, or more.

I noted from one of the reports of the activities of the South Australian standing committee regarding metropolitan flood waters, that the House had ordered the printing of the report on the 5th February, 1935, and that the work had been referred to the committee for inquiry on the 8th February, 1934, roughly one year before. To my amazement, this is only a progress report. I am not asserting that nothing else was done by this committee during that 12 months, but if something else was done it was not referred to in the report. There is but this one report of 100 pages, indicating, of course, a very big work that had been tackled during that time. South Australia has only one standing committee and it could not tackle too many jobs of that character. It could only manage to tackle one job at a time, although I am not attempting to say that the committee might not have done some smaller jobs.

To those members who think there is some virtue in reducing the amount of £50,000 mentioned in the Bill to some lower figure, I would say they are making a mistake. Should any of them happen to be appointed a member of the committee, I consider that in course of time they would find themselves very sorry indeed for having interfered with what the Bill now provides. The member for Northam claimed that we were setting up too many boards. Honestly, I know of no board, either actually appointed or foreshadowed by recent legislation in this House, other than the board envisaged in the railway Bill submitted to this Chamber recently by the Minister for Railways.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Perhaps you call them committees of inquiry. The place is full of them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am referring to what are usually known as boards. I point out that before we took office very many boards were appointed. I

wonder really whether there is room for more. I certainly am not likely to be a party to the appointment of more. In any case, members opposite have lost their right to joke about the appointments of boards, because they themselves were responsible for having appointed far too many. It has been said that the Government for some reason, which I will admit is not disclosed in the Bill—members surely would not expect it to be disclosed there—excluded main roads from the list of public works to come under the purview of the committee, should it be established.

I thought senior members of the House would have realised that there is no deep, dark plot behind all that, as one or two members seem to think. Main roads, after all, are built not by State money, not by money under the control of the Public Works Department at all, but by Commonwealth grants and so they are entirely outside the responsibility of the Public Works Department. As indicating that there is no need whatever for interference by the proposed committee, I point out that main roads are built to specifications approved by the Commonwealth Government. It would be futile indeed, even if the other bar did not exist, for such a committee to waste its time in endeavouring to improve methods followed now by the Main Roads Department. I question whether a single member of this Chamber would consider, although some members make such a noise about it, that a standing committee such as this should undertake that work.

I would not wish to vary the specifications of the Main Roads Department. I have had occasion during the past few months to see a great deal of them. I am not a road expert by any means, but I probably know ten times as much about these roads as I knew some few months ago. There is also this phase to be considered. A road is usually built small length by small length. There is no such thing as a complete job when it comes to building a road. A portion is built now, another portion later; then the Government takes the gang away to do some more urgent job, and by and by the gang comes back again to the first road.

There is no clear-cut public work about that sort of thing, and for that reason alone we are justified in keeping main

roads out of the definition to which I have been referring. In any case, members must know all this without my telling them. Certainly, the member for Northam does. The member for Perth was good enough to give the measure quite solid support, for which I am grateful to him. I have also to thank the member for Mt. Magnet and one or two other members who partly criticised and partly agreed with the general purport of the measure. I noticed that the member for Perth, who applauded the Bill and hoped that it would succeed, seemed to be very anxious to hack it about a good deal.

To those members who have but a poor opinion of the work done by committees of the type we are discussing, I would call attention to what happened in the Great Southern part of the State, and the North Eastern Wheatbelt, last year. A scheme was brought down which would have cost, by the time it was completed, some £11,000,000. There were some sorry disagreements over the whole business and the scheme was found not to be acceptable at all to certain large sections involved. The scheme was not just thrown on one side as something which, being unacceptable, ought not to be forced on the people but was submitted to inspection by a Commonwealth committee. The committee in question was not a standing committee, because among its members were accountants and others who were no strangers to quite a number of departments in the Eastern States. They came to Western Australia and, as the member for Northam knows full well because it was he who initiated the discussion into the position—and I shall always remember with a great deal of gratitude the hard work which he put into the scheme and I regret, too, some of the ill-results he had to put up with—this committee came to Western Australia under the leadership of Mr. George Loder and as a result the cost of the scheme was cut down from £11,000,000 to £4,300,000.

That scheme will form the subject-matter of legislation which I am required to submit to the House. Someone mentioned the possibility of members who served on the committee accepting an office of profit under the Crown. They need have no such fear, as shortly there will be brought down a Bill to exempt members

from disqualification on account of acceptance of office on this committee. Members need have no fear that they will be disqualified or that there will be any question about their seats becoming vacant. I think it was the member for Pilbara who made the suggestion, which I consider a good one, that we should be prepared to try the committee out for a year and if it did not function up to our expectations he suggested we should kick it out, and I would be one of those to assist in kicking it out. I only want this committee if it is going to be of some use to the State at large. I am not pushing it on members now, unless they happen to feel a little of the enthusiasm which all along the line I think I have shown towards it.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### *In Committee.*

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Interpretation:

HON. F. J. S. WISE: On several occasions during the debate the question of referring to the committee works such as the alteration of railway lines was mentioned. Substantially, the matter of railways comes within the scope of the Railway Advisory Committee and would be referred to that body, as was the unification of the gauge applying to the line between Kalgoorlie and Perth. The Minister omitted to make reference to that point during the course of his reply to the second reading debate.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is generally understood that the construction of railways will remain the responsibility of the Railway Department. There is a somewhat thin line between what is regarded as construction on the one hand and repair work on the other. If the hon. member cares to provide a more appropriate term than "alteration" to deal with the restriction he has in mind, I shall be prepared to consider his suggestion.

HON. F. J. S. WISE: It is your Bill.

MR. NEEDHAM: I move an amendment—

That in lines 9 and 10 of the definition of "public works" the words "The term excludes the construction and the repair or maintenance of any road" be struck out.

The construction of main roads in Western Australia is a work of magnitude and importance and roads should be included in the definition. The amendment would leave the Government free to do so.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I went to considerable trouble to explain that it is most undesirable that the committee should have any right to touch road works. The technique and methods that have been adopted by the Main Roads Board in the construction and repair of roads have been approved by the Commonwealth Government. That work is not regarded as a public undertaking as we usually construe the term and does not devolve upon the Public Works Department. The roads are not built with State money but from funds provided by the Commonwealth. I can see no justification for the committee taking a hand in such works. Furthermore, it would be very difficult to define just what is a complete job with regard to the construction of a main road.

Mr. HOAR: I cannot follow the Minister's reasoning when he places the whole of the responsibility on the Commonwealth Government.

The Minister for Works: Not the responsibility.

The Minister for Education: Only financially.

Mr. HOAR: Part of the responsibilities of the proposed committee will be to decide the necessity or advisability of constructing particular types of public works. As to main roads, I assume we have that responsibility and not the Commonwealth Government.

The Minister for Education: We have to submit a schedule every year.

Mr. HOAR: To open up the country by means of the construction of roads is a duty devolving upon the State Parliament.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Of course it is.

The Minister for Education: No, we have to submit a schedule every year.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: For approval, which is purely formal.

The Minister for Education: That may be so.

Mr. HOAR: With regard to the Minister's argument, the bituminising of roads will in most cases go far towards the ex-

penditure of £50,000. Take the Bridgetown Manjimup road, which is a stretch of about 22 miles! The work there will cost nearly that amount.

The Minister for Works: You may be right, but you are not completely right in your argument.

Mr. HOAR: If the Leader of the Opposition is right, it is the State's responsibility to decide, and I think the Minister is wrong in not agreeing to the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not mind how definitely the hon. member says it; it still would not be right. The final responsibility with regard to what main road work is done in this State does not rest with us at all. We are responsible for putting up the schedule of works, but those works have to conform to certain Commonwealth requirements, and, when the schedule is complete, it is forwarded to the appropriate Federal department, and it says yes or no to it. If that department considers it should be amended, it has to be amended.

Mr. Hoar: Whose decision is it to say where a road shall go?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We are permitted to say that. But there is another action after the actual nomination and that is approval. I admit that ninety-nine times out of a hundred they would probably agree with our submissions, but nevertheless the responsibility is theirs.

Mr. SHEARN: As I shared the opinion of my colleague, I did not bother to detain the House on the second reading. Now that the Bill has passed the second reading, I suggest that the Committee should be given something tangible to do. I agree with the Minister, as a member of a local authority, that much in connection with this proposal for main road construction is outside the purview of the Government or the committee it is proposed to set up; but, if the committee is to do a job for this State, I can imagine no more important one than for it to investigate and tender advice in connection with main roads. I urge the Minister to accept the amendment.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: What the Minister said might in theory be largely correct about schedules of proposed road

works having to be referred to the Commonwealth Government from time to time. In practice, however, the Main Roads Department over which the Minister for Works presides is the authority which decides where roads shall be built and all about them.

The Minister for Works: I have admitted that.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Well, surely the members of the committee will be influenced by the practical aspect and not by the theoretical side. Surely, if this committee is going to be one-tenth as good as the Minister thinks it will be, it should have the right to have road proposals referred to it by the Government, and Parliament should also have the right to make it compulsory for the committee to investigate road proposals whenever Parliament thinks such a course is justified.

Mr. SMITH: I do not like the Bill generally, because I regard the proposed committee as tantamount to a Royal Commission or a Select Committee, which almost invariably ultimately amounts to a medium of evasion of Government or Cabinet responsibility. As I do not like the set-up generally, I am rather pleased that roads are excluded, and to that extent I am going to support the Bill.

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

Ayes	....	....	....	17
Noes	....	....	....	23

Majority against .... 6

#### AYES.

Mr. Ackland	Mr. Read
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Reynolds
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Trijat
Mr. May	Mr. Wise
Mr. Needham	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Pantou	

(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. Murray
Mr. Borell	Mr. Nalder
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Doney	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Fox	Mr. Seward
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Smith
Mr. Hill	Mr. Styants
Mr. Leslie	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Mann	Mr. Watts
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Wild
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Brand
Mr. McLarty	

(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

#### Point of Order.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: On a point of order: I notice in the taking of divisions—not only the last one, but others—that many members remain standing. I submit that such members cannot be counted. I raise this point because several people remain standing, the sergeant-at-arms and the clerks, and they are not counted. Members walk from one side of the Chamber to the other and stand behind the seats. The Standing Orders dealing with divisions are Nos. 199, 200 and 201. Standing Order No. 201 provides—

When the doors have been locked, and all members are in their places, the Speaker shall put the question before the House, and then direct the "ayes" to take seats to the right of the Chair and the "noes" to the left, and shall appoint one teller for each party.

I draw your attention, Sir, and that of the Committee, to that Standing Order because the prevailing practice seems to me to be wholly improper.

The Premier: It has been carried on for a long while.

The Chairman: No ruling is necessary. No objection was taken at the time of the division.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I am not questioning the division; I draw attention to the Standing Order.

The Chairman: The Leader of the Opposition is quite in order in what he has done, and members should bear it in mind on future divisions.

#### Committee Resumed.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 3 and 4—agreed to.

Clause 5—Declaration of members:

Mr. SHEARN: I was on my feet when you, Sir, were calling for a vote on Clauses 3 and 4.

The CHAIRMAN: They have gone now; they have been put to the vote. The only opportunity the hon. member has to deal with them is to get the Minister to commit.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I ask the Minister whether he insists on this clause. It is a gross reflection on any member of Parliament chosen to go on the committee. Three members of the committee will be selected by the Government and two by



the Leader of the Opposition. The Minister might well agree to this clause being voted out.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I do not know that a member's conscience would be much upset by having to sign this declaration. There is not sufficient in the matter over which to have a difference of opinion. The provision is contained in the Commonwealth, the Victorian and the South Australian Acts. I shall vote to retain the clause.

Clause put and negatived.

Clause 6—Extraordinary vacancies:

**Mr. NEEDHAM:** I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of paragraph (d) of Subclause (1) the word "six" be struck out and the word "three" inserted in lieu.

I have already pointed out how ridiculous this is.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I do not know that there is much in this. There may be occasions when three days would not be suitable. The committee might sit on three consecutive days and the notice to a member might have miscarried so that he would not attend on any of those days. But what makes the matter of little consequence is that the clause provides for the consent or ratification of the chairman to his so absenting himself.

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

Clause 7—Chairman and temporary chairman:

**Mr. NEEDHAM:** I move an amendment—

That in lines 4 to 7 of Subclause (3) the words "Provided that when the votes are equal the chairman, subject to Subsection (2) of this section, shall have a second or casting vote, and that vote shall decide the question," be struck out.

I need not elaborate on what I said when speaking on the second reading debate.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I oppose the amendment. If the chairman is not given the second vote and the attendance is reduced to four, an impossible situation will arise. I hope the committee will not agree to the amendment.

**Hon. A. H. PANTON:** I have always believed in the principle of one-man-one-vote, and in all my life have never had a

deliberative vote, in any capacity. I cannot understand the inconsistency of the Minister. Subclause (2) provides that when only four members are present the acting chairman shall have a casting vote. Let us be consistent, if nothing else.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** The Bill is consistent, but the amendment is not. What objection can there be to a practice that is common the world over?

**Mr. STYANTS:** In a small committee it is entirely wrong to give one man 50 per cent. of the voting power, which is the position that will arise in this instance, when there are only four members of the committee present. In those circumstances, where the chairman is given a deliberative as well as a casting vote, he will have 50 per cent. of the voting power. I would not object to the chairman of a large committee having a casting vote, but that is not the position here.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** If the fifth member is away sick, with only four present there might be two pig-headed men on each side, and obviously the casting vote would be necessary, or the work of the committee would be clogged.

**Hon. F. J. S. WISE:** What the Minister has said suggests that there is something sinister in the proposal. He says that when one member is absent through sickness the progress of the committee must not be clogged, and that therefore the chairman must be given two votes. I draw attention to the provision that if the chairman is absent the committee shall elect an acting chairman. In those circumstances the Minister desires that the acting chairman shall not have a casting vote. Therefore the work of the committee would be clogged if there were two pig-headed men on each side. I refer the Minister to Subclauses (1) and (2) of the clause which provides that, when the chairman is absent, a temporary chairman shall be appointed, but shall not have a casting vote.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** What the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out would happen only once in four times—in the case of the absence of the chairman. Consequently, the odds are still in favour of adopting the procedure laid down in the clause.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I move an amendment—

That Subclause (4) be struck out.

The subclause provides that in all cases of divisions the names of the members voting shall be recorded in the minutes and in the committee's report.

The Minister for Education: That is what is done in the House.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: What would happen if that procedure were adopted by Cabinet? At a Cabinet meeting, every Minister is free to express his views without publicity being given to them. If a record is kept of the committee's proceedings as provided in the subclause, it might be detrimental to a member in opposition to the proposal.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It could kill a member.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Either that member will not speak or he will do himself considerable harm. The method of obtaining the best results is to permit the committee to keep its business to itself.

The Minister for Works: I agree with you.

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

Clause 8—Quorum:

Mr. NEEDHAM: I move an amendment—

That Subclause (2) be struck out.

The two subclauses appear to be contradictory. Subclause (1) provides that three members shall form a quorum competent to exercise all powers and authorities and incur all obligations imposed upon the committee. Subclause (2) provides that, when the committee meets for the consideration of its report, the quorum shall be four. Will the Minister explain how it is that the consideration of the report does not form part of the committee's obligations?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: In the discussion of minor points, a quorum of three would be satisfactory, but when it comes to determining the report, the most important part of the committee's duties, four members should be present. Further, that number would be a protection for the minority. If we provided for a quorum of three in that case, it could happen, by

the exercise of a little sharp practice, that the chairman and the two members nominated from the Government side could constitute the meeting and the opposition would have no say.

Mr. STYANTS: I agree with the Minister. The point raised by the member for Perth is sound, as the subclauses do appear to be contradictory, but the difficulty could be overcome by making Subclause (2) a proviso to Subclause (1).

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 9—agreed to.

Clause 10—Remuneration and expenses of committee:

Mr. LESLIE: Would the Minister explain why the remuneration to be paid to the members of the committee is not stated, as is the case in the South Australian Act? The Commonwealth Act also fixes the remuneration.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Government has no intention of being niggardly in fixing the remuneration. The clause is in keeping with similar provisions in other Acts.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The member for Beverley appears to be intensely interested.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not think he is particularly interested in the clause.

Hon. A. H. Panton: He said that the Minister would be generous.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 11 to 17—agreed to.

Clause 18—Power of committee in respect of contempt:

Mr. FOX: I would like to know where the Minister got this provision.

The Minister for Education: See the marginal note.

Mr. FOX: The chairman should not be placed in the position of charging some person who insults the committee and then fining him £10. In any event, the penalty in my opinion is too severe.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Certainly there is nothing attractive about the clause, which was taken from the South Australian Act. It is quite on the cards that my friend on my left may know a great deal

more than I do about the matter, and I think I will pass the onus on to him if he does not mind acting on my behalf.

Mr. STYANTS: A person who misbehaves himself or insults the committee should be punished, but I agree that the objectionable point is that the chairman is both the prosecutor and the judge. The clause will have to be substantially amended before I will give it my support.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is necessary that the committee should be protected against recalcitrant witnesses. This board will have the powers of a Royal Commission and should therefore be given the same protection as is appropriate to a Royal Commission. It would be unwise to rule out the clause in its entirety. It is not for me to amend the provision but if an alteration is proposed, I shall be prepared to consider it.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: This is a murderous provision!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: This is a shocking clause and should have no place in the Bill.

The Minister for Works: You are at variance with the member for Kalgoorlie.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: On all occasions the chairman will command respect by his attitude and actions. Having been chairman of some very important bodies and authorities and having examined hundreds of witnesses, I can only say that I have never found such a provision necessary.

The Minister for Works: I wonder why they adopted it in South Australia?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: They do some queer things there.

The Minister for Education: What about Victoria, where they have it?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: They do some queer things in that State, too, even to the extent of changing the Government. As the Minister is adamant, he is insisting upon the clause. Compared with it Section 51 of the Agricultural Bank Act fades into insignificance. The chairman, who will also be the judge, may fine a man £10 and, in addition, if the amount is not recoverable, action may be taken by execution against the individual's goods and chattels and, failing satisfaction under that head, he may be imprisoned. This suggests Belsen! It is a dreadful provision. To test the feeling of the Committee, seeing

that the Minister will not be plastic in his attitude—

The Minister for Works: That is not fair. I said I would be prepared to accept an amendment—

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: You should be expelled from Parliament for bringing such a provision before the Committee.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I move an amendment—

That all the words after the word "pounds" in line 3 of paragraph (c) to the end of the paragraph be struck out.

Mr. STYANTS: That is not satisfactory because it does not remove the objection I have to the chairman being both prosecutor and judge. It will still enable the chairman to impose a penalty up to £10, which certainly does not meet with my approval.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I do not like it, but I am trying in some way to get out of the difficulty, seeing that the Minister is adamant.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I hope the Committee will strike the whole subclause out of the Bill. If the Government subsequently can draft a reasonable provision in order to protect the chairman and other members of the committee, the Bill could be recommitted at the third reading stage so that it could be considered. It would be interesting to see what the newspapers would say if a Labour Government introduced a Bill with a provision like this embodied in it.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Let members remember Section 66 of the Police Act.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The time of members should not be wasted further on the subclause, and it should be solidly voted against as a direction to the Government further to consider the matter.

Mr. LESLIE: I agree with the amendment. As to the point raised by the member for Kalgoorlie about the chairman being both prosecutor and judge, there is nothing unusual in that seeing that a similar state of affairs applies in every court of law. A magistrate has power to impose a penalty upon anyone he considers is guilty of contempt, and that is what the provision in the Bill amounts to.

Mr. Triat: But not to impose a fine of £10.

Mr. LESLIE: That is the maximum; the fine could be 10s. I consider the provision necessary to protect the chairman of the com-

mittee, and the power provided is merely similar to that held by a magistrate.

Mr. Styants: But a magistrate is a trained legal man.

Mr. LESLIE: I would not go so far as the member for Kalgoolie, for I have a better opinion of members of Parliament than to think any one of us would provoke a witness to be insulting.

Mr. Styants: I did not make that suggestion at all!

Mr. LESLIE: No, but the hon. member suggested that, because the chairman might not be trained in legal matters, he might not be able to assess an offence as a magistrate would, and that might provoke a witness to be offensive. Members of the committee will be reasonable, but a witness, because of his fixed opinions or because of a question put to him, might go to extremes and the chairman might regard his action as constituting an offence. He might deal with him summarily, as would be the position in a court of law. I am prepared to support the deletion of the words, but I think it is necessary to have some protection for the chairman.

Mr. FOX: There is no analogy between a magistrate on the bench and a committee sitting as a Royal Commission. The magistrate is there to have evidence presented to him and to give a decision on that evidence. He has no personal interest in the case at all, but acts as an adjudicator. It is quite different with a Royal Commission, which is appointed to ask questions and inquire into all aspects surrounding a certain matter. The clause should be deleted altogether. If anyone is guilty of unseemly conduct, the law of the land is sufficient to bring him to justice. I do not know why we should anticipate incivility.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Unless the chairman provokes it.

Mr. FOX: Yes. We have known some chairmen that have provoked quite a lot of criticism. If that were so, he would be a poor old thing who did not have his say in return. If that is done, the chairman is to be given permission to fine him £10.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member may not see any analogy, but it exists. The one man has powers comparable with those of the other. The chairman and the magistrate are on the same level in re-

gard to the powers they have to fine a man £10. The Leader of the Opposition suggested that there would be no dispute arising unless the chairman provoked it, and the hon. member caught on there and said the same thing.

Mr. Fox: It might arise in that way.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If trouble does arise, conceivably it might arise through the chairman, but it is more likely, I would say, to arise from the witness. Some protection should be afforded by the law to the chairman and the other members of the committee. If that is not permitted, anyone may wilfully insult the committee and misbehave before it, and in a number of other ways upset the working of the committee.

Mr. BOVELL: I do not like the clause, which savours too much of dictatorship. I would prefer that, instead of the chairman or the deputy chairman deciding, the committee should decide. The chairman, or the temporary chairman, might be suffering from a hangover and not feel too happy with himself or the world in general, and perhaps the committee could act as a tribunal to inflict the penalty.

Amendment put and passed.

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

Ayes .. .. .	19
Noes .. .. .	17
Majority for .. ..	2

AYES.	
Mr. Abbott	Mr. McLarty
Mr. Ackland	Mr. Murray
Mr. Bovell	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Brand	Mr. Nimmo
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Seward
Mr. Doney	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Hill	Mr. Watts
Mr. Leslie	Mr. Wild
Mr. Mann	Mr. Graydon
Mr. McDonald	(Teller.)
NOES.	
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Pantan
Mr. Fox	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Styants
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Triant
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Wise
Mr. May	Mr. Redoreda
Mr. Needham	(Teller.)

Clause, as amended, thus passed.

Clauses 19 and 20—agreed to.

Clause 21—Power to refer any matter involving expenditure of public moneys:

Mr. LESLIE: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of Subclause (1) the words "estimated to cost more than fifty thousand pounds" be struck out.

In dealing with this amendment, it is necessary for me to make reference to subsequent amendments I propose to move. The Minister has advised us that the Bill is based largely on the South Australian Act. The statutes of South Australia, the Commonwealth and Victoria provide for works costing more than a stated amount of money to be referred automatically to the Public Works Standing Committee. Those Acts also contain another provision which permits either House of Parliament or the Government to refer any other work to the committee regardless of its estimated cost. My amendment will mean that any public work, regardless of cost, may, by resolution of either House or by the Minister, be referred to the committee. I subsequently propose to move for the addition of a subclause to provide for the proper machinery to enable this to be done.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If we accept this amendment we run the risk of there being no minimum limit. It will be even less than the £10,000. A ridiculous situation would arise if the hon. member's ideas were accepted. I have already shown that the £50,000 limit will mean that there will be a great deal more work than the committee can handle. We have a works programme greater than this State has ever faced before. Many of these works will cost more than £1,000,000—one will cost over £4,000,000. I do not know how many there will be ranging between £4,000,000 and £50,000. I strongly oppose the amendment.

Mr. LESLIE: As has already been mentioned, the Bill, as printed, is negative. Under the Bill there is no occasion for the committee to be appointed.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of Subclause (1) the word "may" be struck out with a view to inserting the word "shall" in lieu.

If the clause, as printed, is passed, the Bill will, as the Leader of the Opposition has said, be innocuous, because the Government would have the option of referring work to the committee.

Mr. MANN: This is the most important part of the Bill. If the word "may" re-

mains, the Government will be able to choose which works are to be referred to the committee for investigation. I hope the Minister will accept the amendment.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I hope the Committee will not agree to the amendment. The Government should have the option of deciding what works shall be referred to the committee. If the amendment is agreed to it will mean only that the progress of the Government will be retarded, because, if a matter of urgency comes up when Parliament is not sitting, there will be considerable delay.

Mr. FOX: I do not believe in the usefulness of the Bill at all, as it simply means that the Government is endeavouring to pass the buck to somebody else. In the case of a large public work to be carried out in the metropolitan area—for instance, a large Government building—a vast proportion of the information required would be of a technical nature, and in that case a committee of inquiry appointed by this House would be useless. The Government should do its job instead of referring such matters to a committee.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for Perth is unduly alarmist, and seems to foresee the Government desiring to refer nothing whatever to the committee. If that were so, the Government would not have troubled to bring down the Bill. The choice of matters to be referred to the committee should remain with the Government. In view of inevitably rising costs there will be more than sufficient work to keep the committee busy. I ask the Committee not to agree to the amendment.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Unless the amendment is agreed to the Bill will be nothing but a sham, as the Government need not refer any matter to the committee. If the Minister's second reading speech meant anything, it meant that the word "shall" should be inserted in this provision in lieu of the word "may." If that is not done the committee will simply become a scapegoat to handle questions that the Government does not wish to take the responsibility of deciding.

Mr. RODOREDA: This is the most extraordinary measure debated in the Chamber since I have been a member. As it stands, it imposes no obligation on the Government except merely to appoint the committee. Even if the amendment is agreed to there is still

no compulsion on the Government to take notice of the findings of the committee. The clause will not make it obligatory on the Government to take notice of the committee's report. The amendment is vital. The clause is just kite-flying, a sham, and an attempt to appease someone.

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** I would not have intervened in this debate had it not been for the references of the Leader of the Opposition to the lack of bona fides on the part of the Government. From the Opposition side I, for a number of years, advocated some procedure of this nature, but was opposed by members of the present Opposition. I frequently expressed the view, which I also expressed on the hustings in 1943 and 1947 as follows:—

In my view there was need for greater opportunity to be given to some members of Parliament to take part in and form a knowledge of the affairs of the State in a manner that hitherto had not been readily available to them.

One of my suggestions was that there should be a public works standing committee. Through my colleague, the member for Beverley, two motions were moved in reference to this matter. Both were defeated, but the idea still persisted in my mind that steps should be taken to enable a committee of this kind to be set up. Speaking for myself, if a committee be appointed, every work of magnitude offering any scope for inquiry in the interests of the State would be referred to it. But to demand that every public work which is going to cost in these days £50,000 or more, should be referred to the committee is nothing more nor less than ridiculous.

**Mr. Rodoreda:** Why not make it £100,000?

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** The basis of the clause is £50,000, and the amendment of the member for Mt. Marshall, having been defeated, the amount cannot be altered. If we are going to refer to the committee every public work costing in excess of £50,000, then before next year every work that a year or two ago cost no more than £20,000 will have to be so referred. The time will rapidly arrive when public works of a comparatively minor nature, such as the erection of country schools, will have to be referred to the committee, and it is not to be expected that the Government will accept an amendment likely to give rise to such a state of affairs. I hope I am reasonable and rea-

sonably consistent, and I would be prepared to view favourably any sensible proposal, but I cannot be expected to accept this amendment. The amendment of the member for Mt. Marshall is capable of being altered in a manner that will overcome the greater part of the difficulty, but I ask members not to accept the amendment in its present form if they want the measure to be of any use whatever. It would mean the reference of so many minor public works to the committee that its work would become intolerably heavy and it would be impracticable to carry on minor functions of Government in these days of increasing costs.

**Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE:** I still hope that the Bill will never find a place on the statute-book, but if a committee is to be appointed we should protect it as much as possible. If the committee is to have referred to it only such works as the Government determines from time to time, inevitably the committee will get most of the rough stuff, and will be forced, on the great majority of occasions, to turn down proposed public works. If the argument put forward by the Minister to justify the measure is sound, there is every reason why all proposed works costing over £50,000, should be dealt with by the committee. The main, if not the only justification, for the Bill put forward by the Minister is that it would save the hard-earned income of our people. If the committee will save the hard-earned income of the people, the more proposals referred to it, the greater will be the saving. My main ground of support for the amendment is that the committee ought to be given a reasonable chance to justify its existence by having all proposals referred to it instead of only the rough ones.

**Mr. LESLIE:** I think it is the desire of the Committee that something should be done along the lines suggested by the member for Northam and the member for Perth. The question is what is the best method to adopt to ensure that being done. I do not think the amendment will achieve the object the mover has in mind. The clause provides that any question relating to any public work estimated to cost more than £50,000 may be referred to the committee. Therefore, if a question does not arise, it cannot be so referred. I draw the attention of this Committee to the amendment which I propose to move to the clause. I provide that it shall not be lawful for any person to introduce into either House of Parliament a Bill authorising the

construction of any public work estimated to cost more than £50,000, or appropriating money for expenditure on any public work estimated to cost more than that amount, unless such public work has first been inquired into by the committee. I appeal to members to be careful how they vote on the amendment.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Are you supporting it?

Mr. LESLIE: No. I do not believe the mover can achieve his object by the amendment.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: You did not say that when you first stood up.

Mr. LESLIE: I said I supported the principle, but that I thought the amendment did not go far enough.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I welcomed the frank statement of the Minister for Education that it should not be left to the whim of the Government to say what works shall be referred to the committee. His language was unequivocal. He pointed out that works which a few years ago cost £20,000 today cost £50,000. The statement of the member for Mt. Marshall is entirely inconsistent with his attitude a few moments ago.

Opposition Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Leslie: I said I supported the idea.

Mr. NEEDHAM: The last statement by the hon. member is in direct opposition to what he said a few moments ago. Why does he not favour the amendment?

Mr. Leslie: Because it does not go far enough.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I do not know of any word more mandatory than "shall." If the hon. member can tell me of one I shall not persist in my attitude. My amendment is just as mandatory as that suggested by the member for Mt. Marshall, and if mine is defeated I am prepared to support his.

Mr. LESLIE: I do not propose to let the member for Perth get away with his statements. What I have said has not been inconsistent. I am heartily in accord with the objective, but his amendment will not secure the desired result. I certainly do not want it suggested that I am inconsistent because I am serious in my desire that the information shall be placed before Parliament. My amendment, which I have placed on the

notice paper, will ensure that. I shall oppose the amendment before the Chair with a view to submitting my own.

Mr. RODOREDA: The Minister for Education seems most concerned because the Government has been twitted with lack of sincerity and its bona fides questioned regarding the intentions underlying the introduction of the legislation. His sole objection to the amendment seemed to be that the committee would be inundated with matters referred to it concerning works costing over £50,000. That objection could easily be overcome by the amendment being accepted and at the third reading stage by the Bill being re-committed so that only works costing £100,000 or £150,000 should be referred to the committee.

Amendment (to strike out word) put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes .. .. .	18
Noes .. .. .	17
Majority for .. .	1

## AYES.

Mr. Brand	Mr. Murray
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Needham
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Pantou
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Triat
Mr. Mann	Mr. Wild
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Wise
Mr. May	Mr. Rodoreda

(Teller.)

## NOES.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Ackland	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Bovell	Mr. North
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Read
Mr. Doney	Mr. Seward
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Hill	Mr. Watts
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Leslie
Mr. McLarty	

(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed.

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 11.40 p.m.*