

Many boys are doing worse jobs than selling newspapers. Mr. Bolton mentioned the difficulty of obtaining boys for the trades. Perhaps the terms that are being offered are not attractive, or perhaps certain boys do not like a particular line of business. In view of the number of boys leaving school each year, I consider there are insufficient trades to employ them all. On the Goldfields there are not enough trades for the apprenticeship of boys and many of them find employment in delivering groceries or carting vegetables.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: That is not a trade.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The newsboy has a better job than those boys have. Apart from the goldmining industry, there are few openings on the Goldfields, as we have no factories there. I shall support the amendment that the age be 12 because, according to the remarks that have been made, these boys are controlled and supervised.

On motion by Hon. A. L. Loton, debate adjourned.

BILL—LAND ALIENATION RESTRICTION ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE).

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. G. B. Wood—East) [8.28] in moving the second reading said: This is quite a small Bill, a continuance Bill, and merely proposes to alter the year 1947 to 1948. The Act provides for the non-alienation of land held by the Rural and Industries Bank that may be required for Servicemen being settled by the Land Settlement Board. The original legislation was introduced by a private member in 1944, and we wish to continue it because there are many properties now held by the bank which it is desirable should be passed over to the Land Settlement Board. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. C. G. Latham, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.30 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 4th November, 1947.

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

QUESTION.

PASTORAL LEASES.

As to Re-appraisal of Rents.

Mr. RODOREDA (on notice) asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) When does he anticipate that the report of the Board of Appraisers on the re-assessment of pastoral leases will be presented to Parliament?

(2) Does the Government intend to make the new scale of rents retrospective to 1942, when, under the Act, rents should have been re-appraised?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) It is anticipated that the report will be made available early in the coming year, and accordingly it will be presented at the first opportunity after the opening of the next session of Parliament.

(2) Yes.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Messages from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Dentists Act Amendment.
- 2, Stipendiary Magistrates Act Amendment.
- 3, Coal Mine Workers (Pensions) Act Amendment.
- 4, Public Service Act Amendment.
- 5, Crown Suits.
- 6, Public Trustee Act Amendment.

BILLS (4)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act Amendment (Continuance).
 - 2, Municipal Corporations Act Amendment (No. 2).
 - 3, Road Districts Act Amendment (No. 2).
- Transmitted to the Council.
- 4, Optometrists Act Amendment.
- Passed.

BILL—INDUSTRY (ADVANCES).*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 30th October.

HON. A. H. PANTON (Leederville) [4.37]: This is a Bill on which disagreement has taken place between the legal fraternity on the question of whether the Treasurer has certain powers. Prior to the last election this matter was being dealt with by my leader, who was then Treasurer. I think he was of the same opinion as the present Treasurer—that if there was any doubt we should introduce a Bill, but he did not get that opportunity. The then Solicitor-General, Mr. Walker, was positive that the Treasurer had sufficient power, but I understand that the present Solicitor General is not quite so certain, and in my opinion the Treasurer has done the right thing in bringing down legislation to make sure that the power is certain, and to validate anything that may have been done in the meantime. That is all that the Bill contains, and we have no objection to it.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [4.38]: I do not know that I am against the Bill, but I want certain information on it. First of all, I was going to ask for your ruling, Mr. Speaker, but I thought that would be unfair as it is rather a legal matter. I would like to know from the legal gentlemen opposite how they reconcile this measure with the Commonwealth Constitution. Perhaps the Minister for Education or the Chief Secretary can tell me. Section 91 of the Commonwealth Constitution states—

Nothing in this Constitution prohibits a State from granting any aid to or bounty on mining for gold, silver, or other metals, nor from granting, with the consent of both Houses

of the Parliament of the Commonwealth expressed by resolution, any aid to or bounty on the production or export of goods.

Although we have had Industries Assistance Bills and so on in the past, I wish to know from the legal gentlemen opposite how this measure fits in with Section 91 of the Commonwealth Constitution. I want to see the Bill go through but do not desire anything to be done that might act against it later on.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Power to Treasurer to grant financial assistance in certain circumstances:

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: It is only reasonable that members should have the information I asked for on the second reading if the legal gentlemen opposite have the knowledge. Apparently there is a conflict between Section 91 of the Commonwealth Constitution and the Bill. The proposal in the measure is certainly to grant aid to an industry, and if that will clash with the provision in the Commonwealth Constitution, what is the use of passing the Bill?

The **PREMIER**: Had there been any conflict I should have expected to be advised of it by the Crown Law authorities when the Bill was being drafted. If the measure be passed, I will promise to obtain the information before the measure goes to the Council and, if there is any difficulty, we shall see what action can be taken to overcome it.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: We should not pass the Bill unless we are sure of our ground. Why not report progress and then the Premier could ascertain the position? I want the information and it is of no use the Premier's saying it will be given to the Council.

The **MINISTER FOR EDUCATION**: As the member for Fremantle seems to regard me on this occasion, almost for the first time, as an authority, I shall endeavour to oblige him. I should say without the slightest reservation that the section of the Commonwealth Constitution quoted by him has nothing whatever to do with the Bill. The measure does not provide for a bounty. The

word "bounty" is fairly well defined as being something in the nature of a gift.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: The section also refers to "aid to an industry."

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I consider that those words refer to a bounty and to nothing else. The general principle is that, until the Commonwealth legislates in a matter, the State may do so ad lib. Obviously the Crown Law authorities saw no justification for such a point as that raised by the hon. member.

Mr. May: Will this amendment also cover coalmining and particularly tinmining?

The PREMIER: The Bill will cover all forms of mining. It was only through an oversight that this provision was not included in the original legislation. No particular class of mining is mentioned.

Mr. May: That is why I asked the question.

The PREMIER: It will apply to any class of mining.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I question whether the Premier is right because the section of the Constitution refers to granting any aid to or bounty on mining for gold, silver or other metals. Coal might be a metal, but, if so, this is the first time I have heard it so described. Unless specific provision were included, I do not think that the Bill would apply to coalmining. I cannot agree with the explanation given by the Minister for Education.

The Minister for Education: I knew that beforehand.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: Recently we had before us the Dried Fruits Act, 1926, Re-enactment Bill and the Crown Law authorities told us that we would be in order in passing it. That opinion was proved to be wrong. The Crown Law Department includes a few legal gentlemen who are human and who make mistakes just as much as does any Minister. I am not prepared to accept the views of the Minister for Education. The Premier should hold up the Bill for one day so that the point I have raised might be further considered.

The PREMIER: There is no need to hold up the Bill. We are anxious to get it passed. Under Clause 3 the Government, through its agency, may make advances to

any persons engaged in mining or any other industry. The member for Collie referred to coalmining. I would regard that as an industry to which aid could be given under the provisions of this measure.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: There is no doubt that coalmining is an industry. But my first argument was that we could not assist an industry under the Commonwealth Constitution. I do not want to hold up the Bill. I am in favour of it. I think we should help industries and get as many of them as we can; but I do not want Parliament to do something that we may find out is wrong afterwards. If we cannot assist an industry, then coal does not come under this because it refers to mining for gold, silver or other metals and I claim that coal is not a metal.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 4 to 8, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—RURAL AND INDUSTRIES BANK ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 30th October.

HON. A. H. PANTON (Leederville) [4.53]: This is a proposed amendment to the Rural and Industries Bank Act designed to widen the powers of the Commissioners in regard to the lending of money. Under Section 68 of Part II of the Act, the amount that can be lent is up to £10,000. It is obvious that now the Commissioners find themselves in the position of having to extend the business of the bank the limit is a hindrance. This provision was adopted from the Rural Bank Act of New South Wales, but that bank has not as wide a charter as our own. No doubt it was thought that the provision would be a saving clause when the bank was in its babyhood. I do not agree with the Minister for Lands that the necessity for the amendment arises from the proposed nationalisation of banking. I believe—in fact I know—from the reports I was receiving prior to leaving the office of Minister for Lands, that the business of the bank was growing so fast that it was obvious this position would have to be altered as soon as possible.

The growth of the bank is remarkable, considering it did not start operations until the 1st or 2nd October, 1945, and this is only 1947. I think credit is due to the Commissioners and their staff for the progress made. I should say that my colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, would be particularly pleased that this amending Bill has been introduced, because if he had still been Treasurer he would have had to bring down such a measure—or I would have had to do so. He was responsible for the introduction of the parent Bill and for piloting it through the House and he then prognosticated the growth the bank would make. His prophecy has been fulfilled and I only hope that the institution will continue to grow irrespective of whether nationalisation of banking takes place or not. That will not affect this bank.

I also hope the bank will meet a better fate than our former State Bank experienced. The member for Fremantle usually asks, "Who gave the bank away?" I am not going to ask that question, but I hope that now we have another bank we shall continue to keep it. I would ask the Minister for Lands to do his utmost—and I am sure he will—to make every effort to provide for the extension of the bank's quarters. When the bank was started I do not think many had an idea that it would grow so quickly. That having occurred, however, provision will have to be made for expansion so that the staff can work under better conditions.

The Premier: Consideration is being given to that.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I want more than consideration. I want action.

The Premier: You will get action.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Thanks. When I travelled with Mr. Bosisto, we were continually looking for land in various towns in the country on which to build branch premises. I was reading in the Press lately that the bank is expanding quickly.

The Minister for Lands: We are getting hold of some good places in the country, too.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I believe that, and I hope the bank will continue to build. It is an institution which will do tremendous good both in the country and in the city. I have pleasure in supporting the second

reading because this is one of our babies and we are very proud to see the way it is growing.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TRAMWAYS AND FERRIES.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. H. S. Seward—Pingelly) [4.59] in moving the second reading said: When introducing the Bill to provide for a change in the management of the railways, I said it was the Government's intention to bring down another measure to provide for the future management of the tramways and ferries. Hitherto, the activities of these two departments have been under the management of the Commissioner of Railways. As I have brought down a Bill to confine the affairs of the Railway Department to the people in control of that department alone, it is necessary for me to make provision for the management of the tramways. At the moment they come under the control of the General Manager of the tramways subject, of course, to control by the Commissioner of Railways.

As in the case of the railways, the Government considers that the tramways would be better managed by a single authority consisting of more than one man. Consequently, it is proposed to put the tramways and ferries under the control of three commissioners. Before dealing with that point, I will give particulars as to why we consider the tramways demand the sole attention of the management. When speaking to the railway Bill a few nights ago I gave some figures to indicate the expansion of the tramways since they came under Government control. There is no necessity to repeat them; suffice to say, they have increased to a large extent. The capital has more than doubled and so have the track miles. If we include the trolley-buses and the petrol or oil-driven buses, then the track miles have trebled since 1913. The number of passengers has increased more than five

times. If we were to add to the number of passengers carried by the Government transport services, those that are carried by private services we would find that we are carrying 78,000,000 as against 10,750,000 in 1913.

The tramway system, including the trolley-buses, omnibuses and ferries, can best be judged, as in the case of the railways, by the service it renders to the public. During the last few years we have heard complaints in this House, particularly from metropolitan members, when the Estimates of the Railway Department have been under consideration, about the poor service that has been provided by the Tramway Department. To give an example, it is not uncommon to see trams go along Hay-street—and I am more closely in contact with the Hay-street route than any other—packed to capacity so that the rear platform or undergear is almost trailing on the ground and in imminent danger of being damaged through the number of people being carried. The next tram will possibly be three-quarters full, and the third one perhaps half full.

It would be better to space those trams so that the first one, going to a far-out suburb, would run through the close-in sections—say to Thomas-street—without a stop and so cater for the people wanting to go beyond that point. The subsequent trams would look after the intermediate traffic. As a result, we would not have three of them blocking up the traffic by stopping at each street. Much the same thing occurs on other lines. I raised this matter with the management shortly after coming into office. The reply I got was that it was considered that the big majority of people were quite satisfied with the service provided, although there might be a few discontented ones who held a different opinion. That shows, in my opinion, that the tramway management is not in close touch with the demands of the public.

I am not blaming the management. The general manager is probably a busy man in his office and has not time to give attention to this matter. He obviously has not, from that reply. So, the time has come when we should have someone on the board of management who will consider the point of view of the users. If we take a run round the suburbs, particularly on a wet morning, we notice people waiting all along these

routes to get on trams or buses, and when the vehicles come along they go straight on because they are taxed to capacity. That shows that the services provided are hopelessly insufficient. It is necessary for someone to keep in close touch with the position. Another matter demanding immediate attention is that of providing transport for the suburbs where building is going on to such an increased extent.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Do not forget the parts in between.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am talking of the older suburbs. They are being built up and demand greater transport facilities. It should almost be an officer's job to get out and watch the progress of the metropolitan area to see that transport precedes settlement. It is of no use asking people—particularly those employed close to the city—to go to the outer suburbs unless we provide transport facilities. That has not been done in the past. I have ample evidence of that in the office by reason of the fact that certain requests have been made for services for particular suburbs, and when I have looked at the file I have seen that those requests have been there for 10 or 15 years, but have not been granted. That shows that the tramway system is not giving the recognition it should to the expansion of the city and the needs of many suburbs for faster and better transport. Then there is the mode of our transport—trams, trolley-buses and buses.

We get frequent complaints about the small trams in use on our lines. It is essential that those trams should be cast into oblivion and better vehicles provided. I have noticed on two or three lines that these small trams are packed to capacity, yet we are told that there is not a sufficient number of large trams. Take the position of the more up-to-date vehicles like trolley-buses! One cannot be impressed with the rate of expansion in providing these newer vehicles.

I am not going to enter into an argument as to whether the trolley-bus is the ideal vehicle. I know that trolley-buses are being discarded in certain States in favour of the other buses but, at the same time they are very comfortable, and would be of great assistance to us if we could put more of them in operation. We find that in 1939 we had 22 trolley-buses in use here. They

proved satisfactory and six new ones were ordered. We still had 22 of them in 1942. In 1943 we had 34; in 1944 we had 39 and in 1945 we had 40. There was, therefore, an increase of 18 in those years. The position with regard to motor-buses is that we had six in 1941, and 19 in 1945. Those are not very impressive figures as to rate of increase.

I could not help noticing, when reading a transport report a few days ago, the rapid increase that has been made with these vehicles in South Africa. The position there is that in 1930 there were no trolley-buses; in 1935 there were 36 and in 1945 there were 257. At the same time, their motor-buses increased from 197 in 1930 to 718 in 1945. That shows that the South African authorities, at all events, are keeping level with progress. At the present time we are carrying 52, 000,000 passengers a year and the private omnibuses are carrying 25,000,000. They have increased by 11,000,000 since 1939. I do not want to raise the argument of private v. Government enterprise. We have a Government service in operation and, as I indicated earlier, it is much the same as the railways.

It is the bounden duty of the Tramway Department to extend its services to the far-distant suburbs in order that people may have the facilities they require. As a consequence of that, some lines might be run at a loss. But that would be rendered possible through the profit made on the more popular lines. Even with the private omnibuses, the fares on some of the more popular lines have been cut down, while on the others they are raised to meet the higher costs. If we did that, we could offset one against the other and so give transport to the outer suburbs. If we judge our tramway system by the financial results, it is immediately apparent that very serious consideration must be given to the matter. In the years 1935 to 1938 the profit fell from £5,725 to £574. In the two succeeding years, the operations of the tramways resulted in deficits, the amounts being £21,816 in 1939 and £15,077 in 1940.

In 1941 a profit of £7,310 was made, and profits have resulted in each year since, until the one that ended on the 30th June last, when a loss of £43,730 was made. With only three months of the current year gone, a loss of £27,060 has been made,

which of course, is at the rate of £108,000 a year. It can be seen that some drastic action must be taken to stop the alarming financial drift, as well as to give the people a better transport service. The tramways have failed to give the service that the people require, with the result that we are rapidly losing our patronage to the privately-owned buses.

I now wish to devote my attention to the Bill. It contains 53 clauses, but I point out that they are not all new. Very few, in fact, are fresh ones; 33 have been taken from the existing Tramways Act and the Government Ferries Act. Of the remaining 20, some 16 are taken from such legislation as the State Electricity Commission Act, the Rural and Industries Bank Act, and the Marketing of Barley Act. Those measures contain provisions dealing with duties of the commissioners and the tabling of accounts. We have, therefore, merely adopted their phraseology because it is more up-to-date and is considered by the draftsman to be more applicable to this measure than that contained in the existing legislation which governs this concern. To go through these clauses would unnecessarily take up the time of the House. If any point in connection with them is raised, it can better be dealt with in Committee than at this stage. A new feature is the creation of three commissioners to control the tramways and ferries, instead of there being one man in charge.

One of the commissioners is to be an engineer, intimately associated with the control, construction and maintenance of tramways. He will be the chairman of the commissioners. There will be two other commissioners on a part-time basis, one of whom will represent the passengers and the other the employees. The representative of the passengers must be a person in no way interested in any transport organisation competing with the Government services. This position is regarded as essential in order that our management may keep in touch with the requirements of the people, so that fast and satisfactory services will be available and transport facilities will be provided where necessary to the new suburbs. I have not visited many suburbs, but I have been taken round four different localities where extra transport services are badly needed. Had this matter been taken in hand with a view to providing

the necessary services, it would have been attended to many years ago. Had there been a passengers' representative on the controlling authority, it would have received attention.

Then there is the position with regard to the representative of the employees. I think that if the interests of that section have been neglected in connection with any State instrumentality, it has been in connection with the tramways. The conditions under which the employees are working at the car barn are probably the worst that one could imagine. The barn is open at both ends. Throughout the winter months, the men when effecting repairs under a tram, have to work in a pit in the cold. I think it is a particularly unsuitable place for such operations. They should be provided with some kind of protection. Then, with regard to the offices and the building where the canteen is located, I think the conditions are disgraceful. They are certainly not fit for the men working there. In fact, the employees have been badly let down in that respect. I do not think such a state of affairs would be permitted if they had on the board of management a representative who could forcefully bring such matters before his colleagues and have the necessary improvements effected.

If either of the representatives' commissioners is not appointed or nominated—they have to be nominated by those concerned who will submit a panel of three names from which the Minister will select the commissioner to be appointed—power is given to the Minister to appoint a commissioner either temporarily or for the term of the appointment, which is five years. The professional man, who is to be chairman of the commissioners, will hold office at the pleasure of the Governor. The remuneration of these three officers will be fixed by the Governor. The Minister will also have power to appoint deputy commissioners for a period, if necessary. Commissioners will be debarred from participating in the profit of or in any commission, benefit or emolument arising from any contract or agreement that may be entered into. As for the powers and obligations of the commissioners, they are simply those that are exercised under the existing Act by the Commissioner of Railways.

All such powers as are vested in the Commissioner at present are transferred to the board of commissioners as they appear in the existing Act. Part IV of the Bill relates to accounts and the provisions included have been brought forward from the existing Acts governing the operations of the tramways and the ferries. The exceptions in that respect are, of course, the provisions stipulating that the finances of the tramways and ferries shall be brought under the supervision of the Auditor General, who will have the right to specify the forms for the yearly balance sheet and financial statements and the reports, which will have to be certified by him before being presented to Parliament. The Bill also includes a clause in conformity with the promise made by the Deputy Premier with regard to the punishment that any tramway or ferry employee might suffer because of a breach of the Traffic Act. Should a man incur a penalty under that Act, provision is made in the Bill to exempt him from further punishment under this legislation.

These are the only matters to which I think it necessary to draw the attention of members, most of the other provisions having been taken from existing Acts. There is one omission, however, to which I must draw attention. In the existing Act there is a provision setting out that bylaws, when confirmed by the Governor and published in the "Government Gazette," shall have the force of law, but have to be laid on the Table of the House within the stipulated period. That provision has not been included in the Bill because, as the draftsman explained, there is no necessity seeing that the Interpretation Act applies in this respect and will have automatic effect. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Marshall, debate adjourned.

BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 29th October.

MR. NEEDHAM (Perth) [5.21]: The Bill is of far-reaching importance. In fact, it is the only important Bill that has been brought down by the Government this

session. So far as the debate has proceeded, in addition to the speech by the Minister who introduced it, there have been three very fine contributions. The Leader of the Opposition presented a very clear analysis of the Bill, and that was followed by a most forceful speech by the former Minister for Railways, the member for Murchison, and another thoughtful and equally eloquent address on the subject by the member for Kalgoorlie. The Bill envisages a drastic alteration in the management and control of the most important of our State instrumentalities. As I read the Bill, if it becomes an Act it will revolutionise the administration of this most important State undertaking. I emphasise that it is the most important of the State instrumentalities because, as pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition, it involves an expenditure of £27,000,000, which is a lot of money. The measure has been introduced at a very awkward time, to which phase I shall refer later. Under its provisions, a directorate of five is to be set up.

When we look at the qualifications and class of the persons to be appointed to the directorate, we find we shall have a very mixed grill—a qualified engineer, an administrator, a member of the Chamber of Commerce, a representative of the primary producers and a representative of the industrial unions associated with the work of the railways. I mentioned just now that the Bill was introduced at a very awkward time. I meant by that that it has been placed before members when railway administration itself is under review. Shortly after a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the railway system, the Minister for Railways made a statement at Bunbury with regard to railway administration. He criticised it very drastically and promised the public of Western Australia that very startling revelations would be made as a result of the inquiry that had been inaugurated.

I had occasion to submit to the Minister a number of questions in this House as to the propriety of his criticisms in view of the fact that a Royal Commission was inquiring into railway administration. I thought that in the circumstances the subject was sub judice. The Minister, in reply, said that the Royal Commission was inquiring into matters affecting the railway workshops at Midland Junction and not into

railway administration generally, in which circumstances he considered he was free to make the references he did at Bunbury. To my mind, his answer evaded the issue. I cannot understand why he considered the Midland Junction Railway Workshops to be outside matters concerning railway administration. The workshops constitute an integral part of the system. Naturally, one could not have a railway system unless there were railway workshops. As I said then, and still consider, the Minister should not have indulged in those comments, in view of the fact that the Royal Commissioner had started his investigation. Now we find that the Royal Commission is inquiring fully into all aspects of the railway system.

I repeat that I think this is a very awkward time to bring down a measure of this description. If any good is to come out of the Royal Commission's inquiry, then the Bill, if it becomes an Act, will require considerable alteration, or else the Commission should never have been appointed. In any event, it would appear that its labours will have been in vain. I am given to understand that the Royal Commission is making a very exhaustive inquiry into all matters affecting the railway system, and that the investigation will go back as far as the beginning of this century, covering a period of nearly 47 years. It will be comprehensive in every way. If that is so—I believe it is—then that furnishes another reason why the Bill should have been withheld. I quite agree that an inquiry into the railway system was long overdue.

I realised that sooner or later either a Royal Commission would have to be appointed to investigate the situation or else legislation would have to be introduced with a view to bringing the system up to date. I realised that because I think it will be admitted by all parties that the system is far from being satisfactory when viewed in comparison with those operating in other States. In making that statement, I do not blame any officer or employee of the Railway Department, nor do I blame any particular Government. I suggest that all Governments for years past were equally to blame for not having tackled the problem and reviewed railway administration long before today. I contend that a Bill such as this, with its far-reaching effects, should

have been withheld until the Royal Commission had presented its report and recommendations, and even now I suggest it should be withdrawn or else withheld until such time as we hear from the Royal Commission. I admit that there is room for difference of opinion as to whether our railways should be controlled by a single commissioner or by a board.

Personally I favour a board but not such a board as is proposed by the Bill. However, whether the railways are run by a board or a single commissioner, the Government should retain complete control. This Bill proposes to remove the last vestige of ministerial control that exists today, and there is not very much of it now, as has been pointed out by other members, especially the member for Murchison. In my opinion an undertaking so important as this is and so necessary for the development of this vast State should be under direct ministerial control, the board or the commissioner simply dealing with the business side. The important part of the control should be in the hands of the Government of the day.

There is another feature of the Bill not altogether favourable or welcome. It is that the board will consist of sectional interests. To my mind, that is a big mistake, because sooner or later a clash will arise between those interests. I cannot see the representative of the Chamber of Commerce working hand in hand with the representative of the farming interest. We should get away from sectional representation in an undertaking of this nature. Any board to be appointed should, in my opinion, have as its chairman a man of keen business acumen who should be entirely independent of any particular section. He should be a man of known business ability.

Another feature of the measure which has been stressed by other members is that no provision is made for an age limit of the two principal members of the board. To my mind that is a kind of Kathleen Mavourneen proposition. As for the other three members, a specific period is mentioned. We should not introduce into legislation of this kind a Kathleen Mavourneen provision; we should specify the period for which these men should be appointed, as has been done in similar legislation. We do not even accord the privilege to which I have re-

ferred to a judge of the Supreme Court. Two of our judges must retire at a certain age; in addition, they may be removed from their position by action of this Parliament. This provision of the Bill is not a pleasing one.

The only other point I intend to touch on is the question of salary. Where Parliament proposes to appoint a number of men to control such an important system as the State railways, we should determine not only the qualifications of the men, but also what salary they should receive. It is all very well to provide for their appointment for a certain time, or for all time, but provision should be made in the Bill for the salary which they are to be paid. I am not suggesting that Parliament is the proper tribunal for wage-fixing or salary-fixing generally. We have other tribunals doing that work and doing it well. In a measure of this kind, however, dealing with so important an undertaking, we should indicate the salary to be paid. I hope that even now, at what one might term the eleventh hour, the Government will reconsider this matter and withhold the Bill until the Royal Commission has presented its report.

MR. PERKINS (York) [5.38]: I listened with considerable interest to what the Leader of the Opposition and other members on the Opposition side had to say on this measure. My mind went back to September, 1944, when the re-appointment of the present Commissioner of Railways for a further term was under discussion in this Chamber. Some of the statements then made by the Premier of that day and by other members of the Labour Party make very strange reading indeed when one compares them with the statements made by Opposition members on this debate. I well remember—I checked it in “Hansard”—speeches made by the then Premier (Hon. J. C. Willcock) and the member for Kanowna, in which both lauded the administrative capabilities of the present Commissioner of Railways.

Mr. Kelly: Did you look up what the present Minister had to say?

Mr. PERKINS: The present Minister did not make any laudatory remarks about the railways at that time. As I said, the present Opposition members at that time could see nothing very much wrong with the administrative set-up of the railways; but

apparently some change of heart has taken place. For any lack of action in connection with railway administration in the meantime, the then Government must accept a large degree of responsibility, because the Parties now sitting on the Government side of the House, then in Opposition, made it very plain indeed to the Government of that day that, unless some radical change was made in the administrative set-up of the railways, they feared that matters would drift from bad to worse. It is evident that that has happened. If one looks back over the reports of the Commissioner of Railways and studies the haulage figures, one must come to the conclusion that the department has been progressively declining in its capacity to haul goods and passengers.

Mr. Smith: There was a war on!

Mr. PERKINS: Maybe there was! Some of us had good reason to question the advisability at that time of taking up a large portion of the time of the Midland Junction Workshops in work which, it transpired later, was of doubtful benefit to the overall war effort and which must have resulted to a large degree in the neglect of the proper maintenance of the railway system. We heard all sorts of tales of partly-processed goods being brought to Western Australia, having certain work done to them here and then being returned to the other States for final processing, and this was done apparently to satisfy Western Australia's demand that some portion of the war work should be done in this State.

Looked at from the point of view of the overall war effort and in the light of later information, it appears to me we would have been much better advised to keep our railway system in proper condition to meet the needs which we knew would have to be met. Again, we have had statements from the leaders of previous Labour Governments in which they pointed to the surpluses which they had managed to achieve. If those surpluses were achieved at the expense of the proper maintenance of so essential a service as the railways, then the cost we paid for them was very high indeed. In my opinion that was an error of judgment on the part of those Labour Governments. It may have been difficult to do all that was required to keep our railways up to date, but it would have been possible to do much to prevent the system from deteriorating to the sorry state into which it has now drifted.

Mr. Marshall: Is this the only system which you know of that has deteriorated?

Mr. PERKINS: One can speak with more personal knowledge of this system because one is in contact with it all the time.

Mr. Marshall: Speak to the gentleman from South Africa and he will tell you that their experience is exactly the same as ours.

Mr. PERKINS: It appears that our system is facing greater difficulties than are the systems in the Eastern States, that our rollingstock is very old and that the amenities provided for our employees compare unfavourably with those of the systems in the Eastern States. However, if other members wish to touch on this point I should be interested to hear them.

Mr. Marshall: The railway systems are all the same, the lot of them! Obsolete!

Mr. PERKINS: At the time to which I refer, the Labour Party thought the single commissioner was the ideal form of control. The ideas of the then Opposition for a board of commissioners were poo-pooed at that time and resisted to the point of a division in the House. Now we find the consensus of opinion in this Chamber is that a board of commissioners would be more satisfactory than a single commissioner. I am glad to see that we are making some progress.

Mr. Marshall: Every other State has only one Commissioner except Victoria, which has three.

Mr. PERKINS: So far as our present Commissioner is concerned, no doubt he is an excellent engineer. Obviously his services would not have been required by the Commonwealth Government had he not possessed extremely good qualifications for the particular job to which he was allotted. Because a man is an excellent engineer it does not follow that he is likely to make a suitable administrator for such a vast network as is the Western Australian railway system, where a man inevitably comes into contact with many problems other than engineering. One would rather think that the qualities which were required in the head of such a vast department would be qualities that would bring about the co-ordination of the abilities of the many technical men in the service, men who could be more or less free in their own particular spheres, but by suitable administration could have their services made to dovetail

in with one another, and thus do away with much of the overlapping and frustration that one sees in the railway system to-day.

The more we investigate the railway position the more we must be impressed by the fact that over the years there has been no really long-range policy in the department. It is very evident that the department has been run to a greater or lesser degree by rule of thumb methods. So far as I have been able to gather, there is no proper costing system. Apparently the officers have very little idea of the cost of transport of particular classes of goods. Looking back over the years I recall that requests have been made, particularly by country members, for the transport of livestock by rail. I also remember the ex-Premier, Hon. J. C. Willcock, saying that the livestock transport was one of the most profitable forms of railway traffic, and that if it were taken away from the department we could expect an increase in wheat freights.

In recent weeks I have made a careful investigation into what the actual revenue is from the different classes of traffic. I have obtained certain figures from the Accounts Branch of the railways and these are very clear. Far from stock traffic being more profitable than wheat traffic, I contend that wheat is more profitable to the department than is stock traffic. Let me take comparative figures over a haul of 80 miles. The bulkwheat rate is 10s. 10d. per ton. A GC has a load of 10 tons and a tare of 5 tons, so that on the haulage of 15 tons over 80 miles the earnings are 108s.

Mr. Styants: That is a short haul.

Mr. PERKINS: I will give a longer haul directly. If nothing were allowed for earnings by the GC truck on its way back to the country, it would be necessary to allow five tons dead weight on its return, so that 20 tons would be hauled at a cost of 108s. and that would work out at 5.4s. per ton. That is, of course, not a fair comparison. The type of trucks used for wheat cartage will earn at least as much going back to the country as they will in carrying wheat and other freight to the seaboard. Some of them take back oil and general merchandise which carries a freight of many pounds per ton and some will carry super, which is at a low rate, while others will go back

empty. It can be seen that 100 GC trucks on an average will earn as much carting freight back to the country as they will earn in carting freight to the seaboard. That can only be an assumption because there are no figures in the Railway Department to enable one to arrive at the exact position. If 15 tons are hauled 80 miles and earn 108s., that is equal to 7.2s. per ton.

Let me take the illustration of sheep being carried 80 miles. I would instance a CXA truck, the new type of four-wheeler in most common use today. Fully loaded with 105 lambs it weighs approximately ten tons and on an 80 mile run earns 69s. compared with the 108s. for the same weight of wheat. The tare of the CXA is 6½ tons. It earns practically no revenue in its return to the country. Not five per cent. of stock trucks are loaded when going back to the country. One can see, therefore, that 6½ tons of dead freight going to the country has to be allowed against the revenue obtained on the forward journey. The 16½ tons on being hauled 80 miles earns 69s. and that works out at 4.1s. per ton, as against the 7.2s. per ton in the case of wheat.

I will now give figures for a haul of 160 miles. In the case of bulkwheat, the freight is 13s. 7d. per ton. A GC truck of 10 tons load and five tons tare earns 136s., which is equal to 9s. per ton. Let me compare that with a CXA sheep truck with a tare of 6½ tons carrying 105 lambs making a total weight of 10 tons. The earnings of that truck over 160 miles would be 118s. compared with 136s. in the case of wheat. Nearly all sheep trucks have to be returned empty. If we divide the total weight of 16½ tons into 118s. we get a figure of 7.1s. per ton as against 9s. per ton in the case of wheat hauled. I am allowing nothing for the fact that livestock is a priority traffic, whereas wheat is traffic which can be carried entirely at the department's leisure.

If for any reason the department is in difficulties it can throw off the wheat trucks, where there is room for them, and pick them up at its convenience. In the case of stock, irrespective of the inconvenience to the department and consequent delay to other classes of traffic, such perishable traffic must go through. When he carefully analyses the profitability of stock

traffic compared with wheat traffic on the Government railway system, any impartial observer must see that wheat traffic has been much more profitable to the department than has stock traffic, notwithstanding that we have these replies stating that if we take away the stock traffic from the department wheat freights will have to be raised in order to recompense it for the loss of the profitable side of its business. We know that primary producers desire to have their stock traffic put on the road in order to provide for greater convenience and a better service.

Tonight I cited an instance of the lack of any inquiry, so far as I could learn, on the part of the Railway Department to arrive at which side of its activities was profitable and which was unprofitable, which traffic should be encouraged to use the rails and which should be diverted to roads. I have spoken on many previous occasions as to the desirability of diverting a big percentage of country passenger traffic, when that is away from the heavy gauge lines, to road transport. The former Minister for Railways, the member for Murchison, also saw possibilities in that direction. I believe in giving credit where credit is due, and would say that the hon. member was doing his best to get some kind of country bus service into operation. So far as I can see he, as well as other members, met with nothing but obstruction from the management of the railways and that management still contended that the most profitable way for it to carry passengers was by rail, on a Diesel coach or by steam train or in some other way. I would not be at all surprised if it still held that point of view.

It must be evident to members that country people in particular are not going to put up with antiquated ways of travel for an indefinite period. If the Railway Department does not provide means of travel to the liking of country people they will be forced to use private passenger vehicles even if these prove to be more expensive. That attitude is in marked contrast with the attitude of the Midland Railway Company. I understand from the member for Greenough that that company has been showing the State railways points all along the line, so far as road passenger service is concerned, as well as some goods services. Apparently that company has a much better

grip of the over-all position than has the management of the State railways. I believe that lack of vision on the part of the administration of the Railway Department in the progressive development of the system has been the trouble all down the years. I doubt whether it is possible to use the word "progressive."

Obviously no organisation can remain static, but the outlook of our railways does not seem to have altered very much over the last 30 years. One still sees the same prehistoric method of dealing with the permanent way. I wonder how long the management is going to be able to obtain workmen to carry on with the kind of back-breaking work that in almost every other line of industry is being abolished. We have seen the spectacle in Hay-street of men re-laying the tram lines and pitching stone out of trucks into the tram trucks. Surely some better system could be devised than to have re-laying work done by means of hand tools. Even local authorities have a much more progressive means of dealing with their road works and similar types of undertakings such as the Railway Department is called upon to deal with, but the department goes on in the same old way.

Mr. Smith: They took up the road at Nedlands with picks.

Mr. PERKINS: I did not see that. I hold no brief for any organisation being inefficient. In an age when mechanised devices are being developed to do away with back-breaking and uninteresting labour, the time must be rapidly approaching when organisations such as the Railway Department will find it difficult to obtain men willing to work under the old system as they have been content to do in the past. If some advance in that direction is not developed when we come to the re-laying of the lines, it appears inevitable that the capital cost will be so high—unless heavily subsidised from State revenue—as to make the financial position of the railways absolutely impossible.

Mr. Styants: It is nearly that, now.

Mr. PERKINS: Our railway capitalisation is not out of reason at the moment. Twenty six million pounds, for the amount of stuff belonging to the Railway Department at present, is not out of the way, although some of the equipment is old and

dilapidated. There is a lot of useful equipment there and, by means of proper modernisation, much of it could be rejuvenated. Unless better methods can be devised to meet the track-laying problem, in particular, I fear what the future is likely to hold.

Mr. Marshall: The case you quoted was surrounded with difficulty as the work had to be done under traffic, with trams passing every two or three minutes.

Mr. PERKINS: I do not want to deal with technical problems, but there must be some way of overcoming such difficulties. I believe the same methods might be adopted as I understand have been adopted in other States, where fleets of buses were obtained to carry the passenger traffic while the lines were out of action, in order that the work might be done economically. My point tonight is that some re-organisation of the control of our railway system is absolutely necessary. One statement of the Royal Commissioner who inquired into the railway workshops was very important. He stated that, as far as he could see, the railway workshops in particular—I think he gave it a wider bearing than that—suffered badly from inbreeding. I believe that applies to other departments also in Western Australia. I have previously suggested in this House that opportunity should be afforded for younger officers of the service, perhaps when becoming due for long-service leave—I would not limit it to that—to go to other parts of the world in order to obtain outside experience.

There are only two ways in which such experience can be gained. We can import men with the necessary experience in other parts of the world and place them in our departments, or we can take individual officers from the departments—or have a regular number of them away—and send them to other parts of the world for experience. Personally I think the latter course is the best and I believe it would be more popular with the men in the service, as when men are brought in from outside there is always the possibility of causing some heartburning. Nothing has been done in this regard. One could quote instances of commercial firms that have adopted a longer-sighted policy. I understand that the Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd. always

has a number of its technicians in other parts of the world gaining the kind of experience to which I have referred. The result is that such a concern is always au fait with the latest developments in its particular lines of business throughout the world.

We give no encouragement at all to our officers—in the railways or in any other department—to gain the necessary experience. Whenever any gear has to be purchased the officer sent overseas is nearly always one of the most senior officers of the department, with only a limited life of service ahead of him. Usually he is not far from the retiring age and his further useful life in the department must necessarily be short. The proper course would be to send away younger officers so that we would always have within our departments a body of well-informed opinion in order to avoid what I was going to call maladministration, though I do not know whether that is the right term. Perhaps I should say we should follow this course in order to have in our departments the up-to-date administration and organisation that firms such as the B.H.P. achieve through having expert advice always available.

The Government is to be highly commended on appointing the present Royal Commission to make its inquiry. Obviously, before we spend a great deal more money on our railway system, we should make sure that the money to be spent will return us full value. From the information we have already had from the Royal Commissioner it is plain that some of the recent developments in our Railway Department have been just sufficient to get us into further trouble. I am entirely in agreement with the action of the Government in appointing the Royal Commission in order to have available in any future planning an unbiased and independent expert opinion. Regarding the Royal Commission and this Bill, I understand from the Minister for Railways that he has already indicated to the Royal Commissioners that they need take no notice whatever of the fact that this Bill has been introduced, that they are entirely free to proceed as though no Bill had been introduced to alter the set-up.

Mr. Hoar: It is putting a suggestion into their minds.

Mr. PERKINS: If it is a worthwhile Royal Commission it is not likely to be influenced by such suggestions.

Mr. Hoar: I think it is being done the wrong way round.

Mr. PERKINS: The point is that the Commission may recommend further alterations, which may require some recasting of the Bill. For instance, the Commission may not entirely agree with the board, as proposed in the Bill, but this has been Government policy and the Government had a duty to the electors to bring down a Bill in order to put its policy before the House. If the Commission makes some recommendation that requires a variation of the Bill I take it that it will not be impossible to bring down an amending Bill to effect whatever alterations are necessary. It is evident that even members on the opposite side of the House do not expect that many clauses of the Bill are likely to be affected.

Mr. Marshall: Even as a matter of policy this Government has plenty of time to introduce a Bill of this kind. This is the first session of the Parliament.

Mr. PERKINS: I can remember criticising previous Governments for having been slothful in bringing down legislation that they had promised. I would not like to see a Government with which I am associated laid open to the same charge. In any case, all the talk of the Opposition is not vital so far as the Bill is concerned.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You are following a bad example in saying that.

Mr. PERKINS: The essential point is that the Minister has indicated to the Commission that it has absolute freedom to bring in whatever recommendations it thinks fit. If any of those recommendations necessitates alteration of the Bill, I for one have confidence in the Commission that has been appointed and would favour serious consideration being given to such alterations being made, even in the present Bill, in order to get the kind of organisation that the Royal Commission thinks is necessary to put our railways on a better footing.

MR. SMITH (Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [6.12]: I agree with those members who have said that this Bill should not have been brought down at the present stage,

seeing that a Royal Commission has been appointed to inquire into railway matters. The previous speaker has indicated the possibilities of the present set-up—that the Royal Commission is free to make whatever recommendations it thinks fit, and that the Minister has indicated to the Commissioners that they need not take any notice of the provisions of this Bill. That seems to me to be an extraordinary attitude for a Government to adopt. It could rightly stand accused of giving a lead to the Commissioners as to what it thought in connection with our railways and the recommendations that the Commission should bring down. I think the appointment of the Royal Commission and the bringing down of the Bill embarrass members of this House just as much as members of the Commission. What members of this House say in connection with the Bill will not receive much publicity, but I assume that the Royal Commissioners will be sufficiently interested in what members of this House have to say in connection with the Bill to get copies of "Hansard" and see what is said both by those supporting the measure and those who oppose it.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. SMITH: The member for York spoke of what appeared to be a lack of vision in the administration of the railways. When we talk about that we ought to define what is meant. If the hon. member was talking about Government and ministerial administration, there might be some justification for alleging that there had been a lack of vision in administration, because it has been Government and ministerial administration that has been responsible for building many miles of developmental railways, which the Government itself knew would be non-paying lines for many years, and would be something in the form of public utilities, the objective of which was to increase the population capacity of the State. Notwithstanding the fact that the Government knew that such lines would not pay, the cost was charged up to the capital of railways and the department was expected to make them pay and provide interest on the money invested in them. If it is that sort of lack of vision in the administration of the railways that the hon. member was referring to, I agree with him.

It might not have been lack of vision in actually building the railways because I am not one of those who think that, because there is room for people, that is all people want, or that because a country like this has vast natural resources, they can be exploited without the use of public utilities. There is a vast difference between the potential population of a country and its actual population capacity. If a Government's policy is to build public utilities with a view to increasing the actual population capacity of the State, it should find the means of paying the interest on the capital invested in such development in some way other than charging it to the Railway Department.

When moving the second reading of the Bill, the Minister said the railways had been neglected since 1916. To some extent he was right. When the Labour Government went out of office in 1915 the railways were in good condition both in respect of engine power and rollingstock, but in the next eight years with a National-Country Party Government on the Treasury bench, the railways were starved, as the Collier Labour Government found when it took office in 1924. The Labour Government on that occasion was faced with a situation that has often confronted Labour Governments in respect of Government instrumentalities. They have found huge expenditure necessary in order to make up the lag through the lack of interest of the previous administration, as occurred during the eight years from 1915 to 1923.

So, to the best of its ability, the Labour Government built new locomotive stock and rollingstock and, in its first two years of office, spent more on railways than the previous administration had spent in the four preceding years. The Collier Government immediately let a tender for 10 locomotives to be supplied from England and landed them here at a cost of £10,053 each. Then it decided to see whether engines could be built at Midland Junction. They were built there at a lower cost than the cost of those imported from England, after duty had been paid. During those years the Collier Labour Government built many other classes of engines—30 or 40 so far as I can recollect. I had particulars of them, but have mislaid my notes. Perhaps members will be thankful that I have, but I invite anyone to turn up the records of the Collier Labour Govern-

ment and see whether it did not make efforts comparable with the financial capacity of the State to rehabilitate the railways that had been so sadly neglected by previous administrations. The Collier Government was followed by another National-Country Party Government from 1930 to 1933, and during those years the railways were again neglected.

Mr. Mann: Do you know the reason why?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: No, and you do not know, either.

Mr. Mann: There was a depression.

Mr. SMITH: During those three years repairs were sidetracked; locomotives and rollingstock were stuck in sidings. I recollect that Mr. Kenneally, the member for East Perth, who had been secretary of the Locomotive Engine-drivers' Union and knew a great deal about railway administration and railway work, said in a speech in this House in 1932 that he wanted it placed on record—it will be found in "Hansard"—that the National-Country Party Government was building up a heap of trouble for itself in future in connection with the railways in this State. The member for Beverley referred to the fact that that was the depression period—one of the worst sections probably of that depression—but when that Government left office the depression was by no means over.

The Labour Governments that followed had to try to make up the lag caused by the National-Party Government of 1930-1933. The Labour Government placed on the Estimates a sum of £500,000 to be spent at the rate of £100,000 each year to make good belated repairs. This in itself is significant of the neglect that had occurred. Not only was there neglect during the 1930-1933 period in respect to repairs and maintenance of railways, a neglect that bordered upon, if it did not actually effect a reduction in the value of the asset represented by the loan money invested in it—

Mr. Perkins: You would have to go back a deuced long way to account for the condition of the railways today.

Mr. SMITH: How far back did the Minister go? He went back to 1916. With a little more preparation I could have given additional information of the neglect of

the railways by National-Country Party Governments. The Labour Government in 1933 was faced with similar difficulties as its predecessors had experienced in connection with the depression and its effects in this State. They had a huge army of workers out of employment in this State who had to be maintained as far as possible on part-time Government relief work. I think members of both Parties subscribed to the policy during that period of finding work in which there was as much labour as possible and as little material consumed as was possible.

But I have seen the situation in which we have had a loan programme, amounting to £5,000,000, of approved works and undertakings, if we had so much money, and we had £1,600,000 at our disposal in order to meet not only what the railways were demanding in connection with belated repairs and new rollingstock but all the other hundred and one things that Governments have to attend to, social services, education, etc., all making demands on the Government at that period when we had 10,000 men on part-time Government relief works. Some people might say, "How long did you have them?" I can remember the then Minister for Labour, the member for Northam, drawing attention to the fact that in 1939 the numbers on Government relief work had increased over those on relief work in 1938.

Mr. SPEAKER: Will the hon. member lead back gradually to the Bill? He is getting away from it a bit, although his argument is logical.

Mr. SMITH: In 1940, after the war had started, the ratio of unemployment throughout Australia was 10.6. So do not talk about the depression having lifted by the time war broke out, and do not ignore the fact that the war made demands upon the finances and resources of Australia—upon the manpower and the materials! It is said that what is physically possible is financially possible. But what is financially possible is not always physically possible, not when there is an enemy hammering at one's gates! So the history of the Railway Department in this State is a history of starvation.

It is very easy to criticise a poor family for not feeding and clothing the children properly and it is very easy to criticise a

Government Railway Department or any other instrumentality that has been starved of funds. I would like the Royal Commission to go into that aspect of the question. Let it report to this Parliament where the Government could find the funds for the rehabilitation of the railways from the condition in which they were left during the depression by the National-Country Party Government. For a bit of extra weight the Commission can put those years in, too, and report to this Parliament where that Government could have found the funds to prevent the lag. If there are some very serious defects in connection with our railways to which the attention of this House should be drawn, why is it that the Minister is always referring to tiddly-winking little things that do not matter?

Mr. Marshall: That is the point!

Mr. SMITH: In connection with this very Bill we are discussing, he told us how he rang up the railway station and they said the train would be there at 10 minutes to eight; and then he rang up again and they said it would not be in till 10 minutes past 8.

Mr. Yates: Then they lost it!

Mr. SMITH: Then it was not in till 20 minutes to 10. And he thinks that is something he should bring to this House; something he should parade through this Chamber in support of this measure for the purpose of trying to show that the railways are inefficient. A little while ago a train left Brunswick Junction, and when it got to Pictou it was held up by the Busselton train. It was making good time up till then. A little while later something went wrong with the interlocking gear—a slight defect that could be remedied, and had to be remedied before the train was able to proceed. A little while later on the same journey a man in a drunken condition got out on to the footboard of the carriage and walked along it and the train had to be stopped while they hauled him in.

Mr. Leslie: Was he going too fast?

Mr. SMITH: A little later he was out there again and there were two young women in a carriage whom he was apparently after. But they were too good for him.

Mr. Leslie: He must have been going too fast!

Mr. SMITH: When they got hold of him they locked him in a wash-place or a lavatory on the train. In the meantime the inspector was looking for him. They thought he had fallen off the train. All that caused delay to that particular train. Then, when it got to Rivervale it was hung up by a cement train going into the cement works! That is an indication of how much can happen on one trip. On another occasion, not very long ago, an inspector on a train was walking along the footboard and going from one carriage to another collecting tickets, when he slipped off the train on to the roadside. There were only two passengers on the train who saw him slip and they were not able to attract the attention of the railway staff until they got to Bengel. Then the train had to stop at Bengel while they rang up Brunswick Junction and told them about the mishap to the ticket inspector. All that took time. Eventually the ticket inspector was picked up at Wokalup, because he had not been injured as luck would have it, and had secured a ride in a motorcar, and beat the train to Wokalup!

Mr. Leslie: He would have beaten it if he had walked.

Mr. SMITH: I am just drawing attention to those tiddly-winking little things about how trains run late. I have never worked on the railways, but I have worked on trams and I have seen a tram leave Boulder at 7.30 which was supposed to get into Kalgoorlie at a quarter to eight but did not reach it until 8 o'clock on account of misadventures on the way. But that sort of thing has nothing to do with this Bill. It reminds me, however, of what the late Mr. Scaddan said in this House, when he was Minister for Railways, and members can see it in "Hansard." He said that if a person has a complaint against a private undertaking or a private instrumentality he bottles it up, but if he has a complaint against the Government he not only writes in to the Railway Department about it but he also writes a letter to the Press.

Mr. Leslie: And to his member!

Mr. SMITH: That is what I often think about private undertakings in this State. People get on to buses in the metropolitan area and hang on to the step for dear life

for fear of being thrown out on to the roadway. Buses licensed to carry 35 passengers actually carry from 80 to 90 but nobody ever complains about that. Oh, no! It is not right to complain about a private undertaking. Private transport does everything that is right, but a Government undertaking never seems to please anybody and the railways particularly, for some reason or other. They do not even seem to please those working in the department. I am not surprised at that either. I think that right throughout the Railway Department has gone a kind of malaise arising out of the conditions under which the men have to work. Men like to have some ambition, some respect for their job, some possibility of making the undertaking of which they are a part pay and render a service to the community; but the railways have never been given a chance to do that. So that spirit permeates the railways from the top to the bottom.

There is a lack of interest in the undertaking because the objective of making a success of it is too great for any man or any body of men. I often hear people say that the railways should be run on business lines. Is it running the railways on business lines to say to the department, "Take over these railways. They will not pay for 30 or 40 years, but take them over"? During the last term of the National-Country Party Government, road transport was allowed to eat into railway fares and freights in this State. The Labour Government had to bring in the Transport Co-ordination Bill for the purpose of protecting the interests of the people who have their money invested in the railways in this State. In order to get it passed by both Houses the Government had to make concessions in railway freights to the extent of £105,000 per annum in 1933, with the railways starving and in need of money for rehabilitation and belated repairs.

Talk about running the railways on business lines! I often wonder that the railway employees have stood the policies of past Governments, both Labour and National-Country Party in respect to fares and freights on railways. Is there any business undertaking in this State that runs its affairs as the Railway Department has been compelled to run its business in connection with fares and freights? If the basic wage goes up for the employees at Boans Ltd.

do the prices of articles the firm has to sell remain at the same level? Of course they do not! That would not be running the establishment on business lines. So the Railway Department should have had the right to increase fares and freights commensurate with every increase in costs since the railways have been functioning. They should have had the right to increase the freight on commodities, the prices of which had increased.

Is it running railways on business lines to charge the same freight on wheat at 1s. a bushel as when it is £1 a bushel, or the same freight on wool at 1s. or 9d. a pound as when it is 4s. or 5s. a pound? Of course it is not! Through not running the railways on business lines, and not allowing the Commissioner to recover, through freights and fares, the added costs he had incurred by way of increases in wages and costs of materials, all the employees of the Railway Department have suffered. If any one of the railway unions goes to the court for an increase in wages, the Arbitration Court considers the capacity of the department to pay what is claimed. It investigates the financial position of the railways, as it did the mining industry on one occasion, and says, "This industry cannot afford to pay any more." The railways should have been able to afford to pay more, and would have been had the Commissioner had the right to increase freights and fares as his costs increased.

It might be said that it was Government policy not to increase fares and freights, and that Governments were of opinion that we should reduce them when costs rose both in respect of wages and materials. It might be said that it was Government policy not to allow the Commissioner to increase fares and freights as costs rose but, if we are going to ask that the railways be run on business lines, the Commissioner and all those working in the railways should have expected to receive from the Government an estimate of the revenue which the railways would receive by increased freights and fares as a result of increasing costs, and to be allowed to reduce the capitalisation of the railways to the extent that that amount of money would pay interest. That should be the policy of Governments in connection with the railways when costs are increasing and wages are rising. But if they

want to spread the cost over the whole community, then let them do so but do not place the railway employees at a disadvantage because the railways are not being run on business lines.

Personally, I believe in the idea of as much management as possible resting with the Commissioner. That is why we appoint a Commissioner. We call for applications and offer £2,000 a year. We go through all the applications and see the qualifications, and ultimately select someone to whom we pay £2,000 a year because of his qualifications to manage railways. I am not in favour of some Minister, who has been elected to his position and whose previous experience has been in running a pastoral undertaking, dictating to the Commissioner in the matter of management. The questions of whether fares and freights are to be increased, or whether we shall build a railway here or there are matters of Government administration. So also should be the decision as to whether the capital amount should be reduced. I remember when Webb was the Commissioner in South Australia. He had a big undertaking, but he seemed to manage it all right. He managed it well. On one occasion when the Government reduced the Railway Estimates to the extent of £1,000,000, he sacked 750 workers at the Islington Workshops. The Government soon restored Mr. Webb's Estimates, and the employees were reinstated in their jobs. It was Clapp who put the Victorian railways on a proper footing. He did not want a board such as is proposed in this Bill. It seems to me that this board has the right to make appointments.

If I remember rightly, the Premier, when making his Policy Speech, spoke about appointing a board and a manager under the board. If we are going to appoint a manager under the board, then we should have more information as to what the board is going to do. The board of directors of Boans Ltd. does not interfere with the management, although it would interfere with the financial policy of the undertaking, and be responsible for appointing the manager. Having looked at the Bill and at the Premier's Policy Speech, it seems to me that the proposal of the Government is to appoint a directorate. I do not know what its functions are to be. Apparently they are not to be those of management. The

Premier said it was his policy to have a board and for the board to appoint a manager. We should clear up that point before the Bill is passed.

I hope the Minister will have something to say on that aspect, and I trust that, so long as he is Minister, he will defend the Railway Department and tell the truth about it, and let the members of the public know that if they want better railways and better services, they will have to put their hands in their pockets to pay for them. After all, this is not a rich State; we have not vast sums of money. The Premier has budgeted for a deficit of about £680,000, and he complains about the limited funds at his disposal. We cannot get good services unless we pay for them. I am not in favour of increased fares and freights, but I am in favour of the railways demanding an increase each time its interest charges and wages and materials costs rise. When that demand is made, the capitalisation of the railways should be reduced, and the amount by which the interest is reduced should be spread over the people of the State to give some incentive to those working in the railways to make ends meet and give a decent service.

MR. MANN (Beverley) [8.11]: I would not have spoken but for the condemnation by the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe of the Government round about 1930. Take the history of our railways, even prior to that date! I am astounded that the hon. member, for whom I have had great respect, made a party political issue of the matter. If we look back over the years, we find that Labour Governments have controlled the destinies of this State for 17 out of about the last 20 years. He knows what the position of this State was in 1930. The Scullin Government introduced emergency legislation to control the States and it denied the right of any man to work; he could starve. What had the Government done, three years prior to that time, for the railways? Was any attempt made to remodel or modernise them?

I am surprised at the members of the Treasury bench taking this matter as they are, because there are some men there who sat behind the Government of that day, as I did. I have no intention of taking this in silence. To see our Government take it

in silence is pitiful indeed! Many of our railways were built for political purposes; some of them long before I came into the House. They were designed to be fed by road transport. The idea was that agricultural railways should be 30 miles apart so that they could be fed from a distance of 15 miles. Motor transport is playing its part today. We would help to solve the problem by agreeing to a standard gauge throughout Australia and taking up at least 2,000 miles of our railways, which are practically useless. We would be able to interchange our rollingstock when necessary, and that would serve a useful purpose. Of the 4,000 miles of railway in this State, 1,500 miles are entirely useless.

Mr. Kelly: Mostly in the agricultural areas.

Mr. MANN: Yes, and on the Goldfields. The line from Corrigin to Brookton is constructed of 40-lb. rails and is neither useful nor ornamental. It should be removed and the bed used for road transport. The same remarks apply to the Goldfields. While we have to maintain the capital cost of 4,000 miles of railway, it is not possible to balance the budget. In addition, we will shortly have to face the 40-hour week, together with the additional costs of a new award. Instead of our deficit being £1,000,000 it will, in a year's time, be nearer £1,500,000 or £1,750,000.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: A prospective Treasurer!

Mr. MANN: That is how I view the position of the railway system. Every man knows there is necessity for drastic alteration in the system, and I appreciate that that is most essential. I believe in my own mind that the Commissioner of Railways is not competent to undertake the task that is involved. Let us bear in mind that members sitting on the Government side of the House today, when in Opposition strenuously objected to the then Government's proposal to extend the term of the present Commissioner for another five years.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You spoke too long that night.

Mr. MANN: I did not speak at all!

Hon. A. H. Panton: Then I must be mistaken.

Mr. MANN: The debate lasted for eight hours and we who sat in Opposition strenu-

ously resisted the extension of the term of office of the present Commissioner of Railways. What is the position today? I will be candid in the House tonight—very candid indeed. This is a most serious matter. It involves the welfare of the State and I say that, Government or no Government. Here is the position: We opposed the extension of the present Commissioner's term of office and if the Commissioner is at fault regarding the position of the railways, then he should go. I believe the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe was correct in his comments, particularly when he pointed out that in the Eastern States Governments had imported competent men from overseas to effect improvements in their railway systems. In my opinion, the solution of the difficulty in Western Australia is to secure the man of the highest ability wherever he may be found throughout the world, and let him put the railway system on a proper basis.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You do not believe in a board of three commissioners?

Mr. MANN: I do not believe the State could produce such a man, and I am doubtful whether there is to be found in any part of Australia the individual who could tackle the job adequately.

Mr. Leslie: The Government has not offered me the job yet!

Mr. MANN: We are fast approaching a new cycle in transportation. Air travel is coming fast—

Hon. A. H. Panton: You are right about the air part.

Mr. MANN: —and motor transport is increasing in importance. What is the position of our railways? Unless we engage the most capable man in the world and pay him for his labour, I say that the Government at the end of its term of three years will be in the same position with regard to the railways as it is in today. It will still have the most decrepit, miserable and hopeless system that we have today.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You are rather pessimistic tonight.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: And you have not much faith in your own Minister.

Mr. Needham: And you are casting reflections.

Mr. MANN: I am telling the truth tonight. For the month of October 5,000 tons

of super were sold on a discount basis. I understand that last week, according to what a representative of one of the large super-firms told me, the Government railways could not transport more than 4,000 tons for the month—and that was during what is the dead month of the year. I say that unless we are to have an entire alteration in the system, there must be a total collapse of the whole thing. While the Government has agreed to bring down this Bill with provision for a board to control the railway system, it must be borne in mind that the director of any large firm is himself its director and is the man to formulate the policy.

I would like to know more about the position myself and what is behind all this. I believe the solution is to be found only by obtaining the services of one who is competent fully to administer our transport facilities. I believe the present Commissioner of Railways is an excellent man as an engineer. Probably not many of those sitting on the Opposition side of the House really know why he was appointed to the commissionership. I understand that years ago, when the appointment of a new commissioner was under consideration, there was a deadlock in the Cabinet. There were three nominees for the position—and Mr. Ellis happened to slip in. It is a hard thing to criticise any civil servant who has been appointed to an important position by a Government, particularly if he has to run the gauntlet of public criticism. If the present Commissioner has proved himself successful in his position—

Hon. E. Nulsen: He has done as well as any other commissioner.

Mr. MANN: If the hon. member, who was at one time Minister for Railways, is right, and the condition of affairs that has developed obtained during his period, then it is a total condemnation of members of the present Opposition. They were responsible for confirming him in his position years ago.

Mr. Hoar: And you say the position will be just as bad in three years' time!

Mr. MANN: If the hon. member is right and the member for Murchison, who also was formerly Minister for Railways, believes that the present Commissioner of Railways is a competent man and one of the most competent in Australia to administer the railway system—I would like to remind him of

his remarks in that connection—then obviously the present Opposition is more culpable than ever, particularly if it means that they appointed an incompetent man. I believe that we require in this State the services of the most practical man the world can produce. This is no small problem. The position will grow from bad to worse. I remind the House that road transport has proved its ability to compete successfully with the railways. It has proved definitely that it can handle the whole of the transport of the State except, perhaps, wheat, super. and timber.

Mr. Rodoreda: At what cost?

Mr. MANN: At no greater cost than that of rail transport. Road transport handled 19,000 sheep at the Midland Junction saleyards in one day.

Mr. Marshall: Mostly pigs.

Mr. MANN: There is no doubt about it! Years in Parliament have not had the effect of enlightening some members. They seem imbued with ideas that do not rise above sheep and pigs. Surely today we are dealing with a matter that calls for more than sarcastic smiles. We are trying to tackle a problem of vast importance to the State, one that calls not for ridicule and sarcasm but a display of sincerity on the part of members.

Mr. Marshall: Would you say that road transport could compete with the railways on a cost basis?

Mr. MANN: I gave the exceptions of wheat and super. which are railed at a low cost. I pointed out that apart from that type of consignment, road transport could handle all the other requirements of the State, including wool and stock lines.

Mr. Kelly: Would you run your railways for wheat and super. only?

Mr. MANN: It could be done. We want members to have some vision and to show some enlightenment with respect to railway problems. I say candidly that I expected more from the present Minister for Railways in his ministerial capacity. I expected more because when he sat in Opposition he pointed out from time to time the policy that should be followed and condemned the Labour Government and the Commissioner of Railways down the years for the condition of affairs that had been set up and

for the manner in which the transport facilities of the State had been handled.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Hear, hear!

Mr. MANN: I say it to my sorrow that during the last six months the railways are in a damn sight worse condition. Take the position regarding passenger trains! They are late every night, and the position is growing worse each week.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: White ants!

Mr. MANN: That is the opinion that prevails amongst railwaymen themselves. There is no encouragement extended to them to make a success of the service.

Mr. May: You stick to your Minister!

Mr. MANN: Look at the Midland Junction Workshops! No-one seems to care, and there is no incentive to work. If a man shows any keenness at all, because of the extraordinary attitude adopted in Perth and the red tape that has developed, his heart is broken in no time. The result is that we have the most deplorable, decrepit system possible. If this is the type of socialisation that is preached by Opposition members, then there is no great prospect for the future of this country.

Mr. Fox: You always have your hand out to help them.

Mr. MANN: This is a most important matter, and the Bill is the most important that has been before Parliament.

Mr. Rodoreda: What do you think of it?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It should not be here at all.

Mr. MANN: The Minister should withdraw the Bill.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Hear, hear!

Mr. MANN: A Royal Commission appointed by the present Government is now sitting, and I feel that while that Royal Commission is prosecuting its inquiries the Bill itself is futile and must be so until the Commission's report is presented to Parliament.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: I think you are right, too.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: He is absolutely right.

Mr. MANN: The Royal Commission may present certain recommendations which, if adopted, might mean the whole set-

up of railway administration must be altered. If the Minister attempts to push the Bill through the House and succeeds in doing so, I hope the Act will not be proclaimed until the findings of the Royal Commission have been issued and considered. I understand that Mr du Plessis, who has come from South Africa, is a man of particularly high repute in connection with transportation matters.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Not much of a compliment is being paid to him by putting this Bill through.

Mr. MANN: Mr. du Plessis is a man of outstanding ability.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Do you think it fair to him that the Bill should be before the House?

Mr. MANN: In view of the findings that he and Mr. Gibson, the chairman of the Royal Commission, may include in their report, I hope that they will furnish some solution of the problem. If they do that, then I trust that if they are known before the end of the session, they will be dealt with, or if they are received early in the New Year that Parliament will re-assemble for a special session to give consideration to the report and effect to the Commission's recommendations.

Mr. Hoar: Are you telling us that the Government is wrong in placing the Bill before Parliament?

Mr. MANN: I am saying what I believe, and I am entitled to speak my mind.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That is true democracy!

Mr. MANN: I have not had my hands tied as happened to members of the Opposition when they sat on the Government side of the House.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I think that is just a bit doubtful.

Mr. MANN: No. I regard this as a matter of vital importance. If the Commission should solve the problem, the railways will be in a more satisfactory position for years to come. If that is not so, then we will continue as we are, with much worse conditions regarding transport. If we are to increase production in Western Australia, which we must, what will be the position? Take the position of the current harvest! It is necessary to haul it to the

seaboard and at the present rate of haulage of 6,500 tons per week, it will take two years to get the wheat there. The Government would be wise to weigh the whole situation and await the findings of the Royal Commission. Then if it should be deemed necessary, a special session of Parliament could be called in the New Year to pass whatever legislation is required.

Hon. A. H. Panton: If you keep on talking we will be here in the New Year.

Mr. MANN: I shall speak as long as I like! I may have been letting off a lot of hot air in this Chamber in discussing the Bill, but I assure members opposite that there has been just as much hot air from their side of the House. I think there is no general tendency on the part of members to deal with this subject as a political or parochial issue. I think every member has tried to point out to the Government the serious problem confronting the State.

MR. READ (Victoria Park) [8.29]: This Bill is designed to improve the management of the Government Railways.

Mr. Marshall: Will you explain how it does that?

Mr. READ: I do not think it should be treated as a Party measure.

Opposition members: Hear hear!

Mr. READ: The Bill deals with a vital undertaking necessary to the progress of the State. I was considerably heartened by the speech of the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe, the only member who has given credit to the railway system for its share in creating and contributing to the prosperity of the State. He gave the railways credit at least for some of the developmental work. Every other member who has spoken to the Bill seemed to have something against the management of the railway system. We have to ask ourselves what our railway system is. We know what it is not. Everybody seems prepared to point out its defects. We were told by the speaker on my left that if something is not done soon our railways will come to a sticky end.

We have also been told that if something is not done at once to improve the management, disaster will overtake the system and it will cease to function. I point out that that is what we have been told for the past 30

years, yet the railways have done their job of servicing our rural populations. If we consider the railways in this light and realise their value to the country districts, we will at least support this measure if we are of opinion it will improve the management of the system. We know that the railways do not pay, that they are losing thousands of pounds per annum and that the loss over the years amounts to millions. But we do not want to treat the railways entirely as a trading concern; rather should we treat them as a vital public utility, essential to the progress of our State.

Without our railways, our far-flung primary producing communities could not exist. We do not expect other Government departments to pay, for instance, the Education Department, the Health Department or the Police Department; but all these departments are essential to the progress of the State. They are not trading concerns. They are not departments from which we derive profit; but they render vital service to the State, a service which is paralleled by the Railway Department. If we can contribute anything at all towards the betterment of the railway system we shall be doing a national service. No-one would ever want to buy our railways. No person would consider them in the light of a business which could make a profit.

Hon. E. Nulsen: If they were put on a business footing, they would be a good proposition.

Mr. READ: The great mileage of our railways would always prevent them from making a profit. We must get away from the conception that the railways are a trading concern which will earn the State profit. They contribute to the development of the State and we have to regard them in the light of the service which they render to the people. About 75 per cent. of the people living in the towns and cities depend upon the produce of the country for their very existence, and without railway transport our country people could not exist. I would direct attention to one item alone, namely, the cartage of water during the dry periods of each year. That service costs the State thousands of pounds, but it has to be rendered.

I have seen trucks waiting at sidings for the water train. The men have had to load the water and take it to their farms some

seven or eight miles away before the housewife could wash the baby or prepare a meal. Without that particular service, many of those farmers would be forced to abandon their properties. Then there is the long distance between our seaports and inland towns. Consider Esperance, Fremantle, Geraldton, Day Dawn, Cue, Meekatharra and other inland places, and one realises that road transport could never serve the outback people. We must have railway communication between the seaports and those inland places, because otherwise the people in the sparsely populated districts could not exist. We need the railways to transport the heavy produce of the country, the wheat, wool, meat, sheep and cattle and potatoes, for export oversea and to the Eastern States. We need the railways to supply the outback people with food, clothing and machinery.

It will therefore be seen that with our vast area the railways will never pay. However, we might perhaps be able so to improve the management as not to lose as much money as we have lost in the past. More important, we might be able to provide a better service to those people. What occurs to me is that the finance of the Railway Department has been neglected. No matter what Party has been in power, whether Labour or Liberal, almost every Treasurer has used railway reserve funds for some other purpose. I am told by the accountants that on many occasions, when it was found inconvenient to repair the permanent way or to replace rollingstock, money has been transferred, certainly for other national purposes, but at the expense of railway development.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I think that is a misconception.

Mr. READ: That is what I am told by the management.

Mr. Styants: I would say it is a misstatement.

Mr. Marshall: No accountant would pass books audited on that basis. What accountant would give you a certificate?

Mr. Hegney: Do not take any notice of him!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member may proceed.

Mr. READ: I support the Bill, as I consider it is an attempt to improve the management of the railways and make them more efficient. I do not know whether that statement will meet with the approval of the member for East Perth, because on another occasion when he voted against me he made the observation that I was a so-called Independent. So I took it that if I voted on the side of the Party which the hon. member represents I would be really an Independent; but if I voted against his desires, I would be a "so-called" Independent. I would like to relate a little story that was published in "The West Australian" many moons ago. During the war one of the Home Guards in England was having his pot of beer at the hotel when one of the crack regiment soldiers came in and in the course of conversation said to the Home Guard who was standing in his old green uniform, "I do not really know what use you fellows are. I do not know what you are here for." The Home Guard replied, "Well, you have been kicked out of Dunkirk and you have been kicked out of Greece and Crete and we are here to see you are not kicked out of England."

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must get back to the Bill now.

Mr. READ: Yes. Coming back to our muttons, I myself am not quite in love with a directorate consisting of five or six members. But this is a sincere attempt to improve the railway management. When the Leader of the Opposition was analysing the position and the qualifications proposed for these members of the directorate, he took great exception to the commercial representative. That shows the divergent opinions that we have. He considered that a representative nominated by the Perth Chamber of Commerce would be least likely to serve in an effective capacity. I myself think that if the right man were chosen he would be the best man to have on the directorate, because he would be a businessman and business management is all that is required for the running of our railway system.

Hon. E. Nulsen: If they gave him enough money it would be all right.

Mr. READ: That could be done also. But it is not the money, but the quality of the management that is important. Large concerns all over Australia are run by business-

men. I do not suppose the manager of the B.H.P. is an accountant or an engineer, but he is a wonderful businessman and he has under him all those technical men such as we have in the railways to put into effect the business methods that he prepares.

Mr. Styants: And modern machines to work with!

Mr. READ: There are aspects of this Bill that the Leader of the Opposition does not like and there are things with which I do not agree, but I do hope the Bill will pass the second reading and then, in Committee, we will be able to submit amendments that may prove acceptable to all.

HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Northam) [8.45]: The railway system in this State is a very important instrumentality. Therefore any Bill brought before Parliament in connection with the management under which the system is to operate is also very important. The first question that comes to my mind in considering this measure is whether the Bill should be before Parliament at present. That ignores for the time being the question whether the Bill is desirable or otherwise. It is well-known that the present Government appointed some three or four months ago a Royal Commission made up of two Commissioners, one from Eastern Australia, and one from South Africa, to investigate thoroughly the railway system in this State, including the present method of management and control and to report upon the investigations and, I have no doubt, to make recommendations to the Government regarding the best method of control in the future. Yet we have before Parliament now, concurrently with the investigations being made by the Commission, a Bill which aims drastically to amend the railway Act and very drastically to amend the present system of management and control.

To my mind the action of the Government in bringing this Bill before Parliament at present is almost impossible to understand. I cannot imagine any other Government appointing a Royal Commission thoroughly to investigate the control and management of an instrumentality or institution and, two or three months afterwards, while the Commission is still proceeding, introducing into Parliament a Bill for the purpose of completely altering the

system of management and control of that instrumentality or institution. Not only does an action of that kind appear to indicate lack of confidence in the Commission, but it seems also to be a reflection on it. It seems to suggest that the Government has little or no trust in the ability of the Commission to recommend properly in regard to what the management and control of the Railway Department have been in the past and what alterations should be made in the future.

I am much more at a loss to understand the action of the Government in this matter when I read through the speeches made last year in this House by some members of the present Ministry on this very point. I propose to quote from some of those speeches because the quotations will prove beyond any shadow of doubt that the present Minister, the present Attorney General and the present Premier all argued very strongly last year that no Bill should be introduced into Parliament to alter the existing system of management and control of the railways until such time as a Royal Commissioner had been appointed and thoroughly investigated the system, and made a report and recommendations to the Government. I quote, first of all, what the present Minister had to say on the 10th December, 1946—

We should have some inquiry before we condemn the Commissioner of Railways.... I certainly have criticised the Commissioner but we, on this side of the House, have always said that we want an inquiry to be held so that all sections of the community will be able to present their case. The Commissioner of Railways will be able to appear before the commission and be heard regarding any complaints that are made. Then when the matter came before the House and members were asked to decide whether a commissioner should be appointed or a board set up to control the railways, the House would have the evidence before it.

The Minister on that occasion was speaking in connection with a Bill introduced into this House by the member for Murchison who was, of course, Minister for Railways at the time. The Bill was one to vest much more legal control of the railway system in the Minister and thereby take from the Commissioner much of the power legally vested in him by the provisions of the Government Railways Act. The argument of the present Minister on that occasion—and it is only some nine or ten

months ago—was that no attempt of any kind should be made to amend the Act for the purpose of altering the existing system of control and management, until such time as a Royal Commission, which had then been suggested, had had the opportunity to investigate the position thoroughly and make its report and recommendations to the Government, and through the Government to Parliament. The present Minister, in a later part of his speech, went on to say—

For many years we have asked for an inquiry into the administration of the railway system. The Minister in his reply to a question a few nights ago intimated that the Government had decided to appoint a Royal Commission. Does not that savour of putting the cart before the horse? The Government arrives at the decision embodied in the Bill, and proposes to strip the Commissioner of Railways of his powers and transfer them to the Minister, and after doing that to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate the administration of the railways. Would it not be more logical to appoint the Royal Commission to conduct a thorough investigation enabling its report and findings to be placed on the Table of the House so that members could deal with the matter next session? I contend that that is the logical course to adopt.

So strongly did he favour that method of procedure in December of last year that he moved an amendment to the Bill which was then before the House, and that amendment was to delay further consideration of it until a commission had been appointed and had had every opportunity to carry out its investigations and make its report. I think, therefore, that the present Minister, by his speech at that time, strongly condemned the course which he is now following. His present course is much worse, and must be much worse in his own mind, if he is logical and consistent, than was that followed by the previous Minister last year. The position is worse because the Royal Commission has actually been appointed and is now in operation. It has already taken a considerable amount of evidence regarding the Railway Department and the system generally. It is in the middle of its inquiries.

If it was wrong and illogical for the Government last year to introduce a Bill to take power from the Commissioner of Railways and vest it in the Minister because it was the intention of the previous Government to appoint a Royal Commission at a later

date, then surely the action of the present Government, and especially that of the Minister, is a hundred times more wrong, as the Royal Commission has already been appointed and is now functioning. How the Minister can accommodate himself to these circumstances is completely beyond my understanding. How he came to allow himself to take a part, and a very prominent part, in having this Bill introduced at this time is something which he has not explained and something which, in view of his speech last December, it would, I suggest, be impossible for any one else adequately to explain. I come next to the speech made by the present Attorney General, and this is what he had to say on the 10th December, last year—

If we are going to set up a Royal Commission to advise us what sort of administration and legislation we should have for our State Railways, then leave the lot to the Commission, especially the important question of Commissioner or Ministerial control.

As usual, the Attorney General was clear-cut in his declaration on this matter of principle, because it is indeed a matter of great principle—

The Attorney General: He always is, this year and last year.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE:—as to whether a Government should introduce legislation seriously and drastically to alter the prevailing system of management and control of the Railway Department when, at the same time, a Royal Commission appointed by the Government is investigating the situation and will, within a few weeks, deliver its report to the Government and make recommendations as to how and to what extent, if any, the present system of management and control should be altered. I am glad the present Premier made a speech on this matter in December last year. This is what he said on the point I have been discussing—

I am prepared to leave that question—

That is the question of the control and management of the railways

—to the Royal Commission. The Royal Commission will make a thorough investigation into the working of the railways generally and on its recommendations we should be able to frame a satisfactory Bill.

The only construction logically to be placed upon that statement is that a satisfactory Bill could not possibly be framed otherwise.

So we have a straight-out declaration by the present Premier, made in December of last year, that a satisfactory Bill in connection with the management and control of the Railway Department could be framed on the recommendations of a Royal Commission. The present Premier went on to say—

At this late stage of the session the Minister would be well advised to drop the Bill and have an inquiry made, and then members should be given the fullest opportunity to examine the report and see what has been said from the Government's side and the Commissioner's side.

Mr. Styants: That seems pretty logical.

Mr. Marshall: What is the Minister blushing for? Is his conscience pricking him?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I have quoted from the speeches made in this House in December last by the three most prominent Ministers in the present Government. I have shown, by quoting from those speeches, that each of them at that time was very strong on the point of principle that no attempt to amend the Government Railways Act, to alter the existing system of control and management, should be made until such time as a Royal Commission of inquiry had been appointed, and had been able to carry out its investigations and present its report and recommendations to the Government. If that was the stand they took so strongly in December last, when a Royal Commission was not in fact appointed, but only proposed, how much more strongly should they take the same stand now, when the Royal Commission has been appointed—by the present Government—and when one of its terms of reference is to investigate thoroughly the present system of management and control and report thereon to the Government with any recommendations that it sees fit to make, so far as alterations for the future are concerned.

I appeal to the three Ministers I have mentioned—and also to every other Minister—to reconsider the position in which we now stand regarding this principle. I said at the beginning that, in my opinion, the Government is not treating the Royal Commission very courteously, to say the least of it, by introducing a Bill of this kind at the present stage—a Bill that proposes drastically to alter the present system of control and management of the department and of the whole railway system.

Mr. Rodoreda: They would not be trying to influence the Royal Commission, would they?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I have sufficient faith in each of the members of the present Government to believe they would have no intention of influencing the Royal Commission in regard to the kind of recommendations it should make upon the management and control of the railway system, but nevertheless I suggest that the introduction of this Bill does place the Royal Commissioners in an unfair situation. It puts them in the position either of bringing in recommendations in line with the Bill or saying in their report, in effect, that the Government when it introduced the Bill did not know anything about the subject it was tackling. The Government has nothing to lose by awaiting the report of the Royal Commissioners. Why is it that the Government has introduced the Bill at this time?

The Minister for Works: Do you suggest that the Government has anything to gain by bringing the Bill down before the Royal Commission has reported?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I say it has nothing to gain by bringing down the Bill at this time.

The Minister for Works: And therefore it has no ulterior motive?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: In my opinion there could be none.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: Has the Minister for Works a pang of conscience?

The Minister for Works: I did not hear what the hon. member said.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: My description of the Government's action in bringing down this Bill at the present time is that it is a very unfair and unwise action. It is unfair to the Royal Commission, and to Parliament, and it is unwise because, as I have proved from statements made in this House only 10 months ago, the present Premier, the present Attorney General and the present Minister for Railways each strongly condemned any action that would bring before Parliament a Bill seriously to amend the Government Railways Act—especially in connection with management and control—at a time when a Royal Commission was either proposed or actually established and carrying out its investiga-

tions. I therefore ask the Government earnestly to reconsider the question of whether it will proceed with this measure. If the present Premier, Attorney General and Minister for Railways were approximately correct in the stand they took last December on the principle we are now discussing, they would be absolutely right in taking the same stand today. But what stand are they now taking? Today they are taking an exactly opposite stand.

Mr. Kelly: They are now on the opposite side of the House.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Instead of arguing today the principle that they argued 10 or 11 months ago, they say that a Bill must be introduced to alter the control and management of the railway system even though they, as a Government, have appointed this Royal Commission, and even though it is at present carrying out its investigations. I suggest that there has never been a worse somersault than that in this House, and I do not use the word "somersault" in an offensive way. The complete change of attitude on the part of the Ministers concerned is one that I am not in a position to explain, nor do I think they could explain it satisfactorily.

I believe the Bill must have been developed, in the pre-sessional rush, in order to have a legislative programme ready when Parliament met, and that it was fully prepared and considered and approved by someone—goodness knows who—apart from the Minister, and that it came along here in the normal course of events, with no-one subsequently taking into consideration the fact that the Government had appointed a Royal Commission which was getting into its stride and carrying out its investigations. Surely if the Premier, the Attorney General and the Minister for Railways had realised when the Royal Commission was actually appointed that its appointment clashed in principle with this Bill, which perhaps even then was before Parliament, they would have taken the necessary action to see that the Bill was not introduced, if it had not already been introduced, or alternatively was not proceeded with, if it had been introduced.

I shall be very disappointed if the Government, in face of the extracts I have quoted and of what I and other members have said, does proceed with the Bill at

the present time. It would be not only an inconsistent act but also an indecent act on the part of the Government insofar as the Royal Commissioners and members of Parliament are concerned. The Government stands to gain nothing by passing the Bill at this stage—

Mr. Marshall: Nothing at all.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE:—and it stands to lose nothing by not passing the Bill.

Mr. Marshall: Nothing at all.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: One member suggested that the Bill was all right because, even if the Royal Commission did recommend changes in management and control that conflicted with the provisions of the measure, the Government could, next month or early next year, introduce another Bill to amend this legislation. Are we a commonsense assembly or are we just a bunch of individuals who have no sense at all? What is the object of this debate and all this disputation if it is to be understood that the Bill may have to go by the board early next year if the Royal Commission brings in recommendations at variance with the main contents of the Bill? Is that a sensible procedure to follow? I am sure the Premier, if he gave the matter serious consideration, would realise it is a most senseless procedure, a waste of Parliament's time and ability, a waste of effort.

I have spent a good deal of time on this particular point because I consider it to be one of vital importance. Some member opposite might think that the Labour Government introduced a Bill last year to amend the Act in regard to the management and control of the railways when, at the same time, an assurance was given that a Royal Commission would be appointed at a later date to investigate the railway system. As I have already pointed out, the three Ministers I have named were very vigorous and clear-cut in their opposition to any amendment being attempted in view of the assurance given that a Royal Commission would be set up. Yet, with an inconsistency that beggars description, they now introduce a Bill after they themselves have appointed a Royal Commission to inquire into the whole of the railway system, including its management.

Our Bill was introduced as a step to overcome what was then considered to be a difficulty as between the Government and the

Commissioner of Railways. It was a Bill to give the Government more authority legally in the management and control of the system, because it was felt that, as the Government was responsible to the people as a whole for the management and control of the department, it should legally have the authority to decide what should be done and what should not be done, instead of the Commissioner's having so much power under the Act. The assurance given by our Government was that a Royal Commission of investigation would be set up this year and that, when its investigations were complete and the report and recommendations were available to the Government, the future policy would be decided upon that basis.

I was pleased to hear the member for Beverley thunder at the front ministerial bench on this point. He strongly condemned the action of the Government in bringing before Parliament at this stage a Bill drastically to alter the present system of control and management. He used exactly the same arguments as were used last year on the same point of principle by the present Premier, the Attorney General and the Minister for Railways. His argument was that it was quite inappropriate, quite inopportune and quite wrong for Parliament to be considering a Bill drastically to alter the management and control of the railways while a Royal Commission appointed by the Government was investigating the system to find out for sure its weaknesses and shortcomings, to report upon these matters and make recommendations as to the best system of management and control for the future.

Upon what has the present Government based the proposals in the Bill? Upon what is the proposed directorate based? Had the Government anything solid at all upon which to base a proposal of this sort, even if no Royal Commission were sitting at the moment? Where have the ideas about the directorate and its personnel come from? I suggest that the proposed directorate and its personnel are not based upon anything solid—not based upon the finding of any committee or commission of inquiry or even upon anything that is happening elsewhere in Australia. Therefore, as the Government has not had the opportunity to obtain any expert recommendation as to whether a directorate should be

set up and as to who should be members of it, why in the name of commonsense is the Government rushing ahead at this stage with the Bill? Why is it not awaiting the report and recommendations of the two experts chosen by itself? This is the Government's own Royal Commission.

I take it for granted that the Government chose the two best men available to be members of the Royal Commission to ensure that the best possible investigation and the best possible report and recommendations would be made. As that undoubtedly is so, why is the Government proceeding with this Bill? I can understand its action in introducing the Bill because I believe it was brought down before the Commission was set up, although, if we revert to the speeches made last December by the three Ministers mentioned, we could not even then understand why the Government should introduce a measure of this sort at this time, because even though the Commission had not been appointed there would be no doubt that the Government would have had in mind the question of appointing it.

If I remember rightly, the question of appointing a Royal Commission was one of the undertakings given by the Government Parties to the electors at election time. Therefore, it was an undertaking given by the present Government to the people, and the Commission is now in session. The only possible shred of justification I have heard for the introduction of the Bill at this stage is that the Government at the last election gave a pledge to the people that some sort of directorate or commission of this kind would be set up to manage and control the railways. Even if that be so, the Government is not bound to rush headlong into the business of carrying out the pledge this month, and the people of Western Australia will not become immediately hostile because the Government has not done so. As a matter of fact the people of Western Australia logically expect the Government to await the report and recommendations of its own Royal Commission before introducing any drastic legislation covering the control and management of the railway system. The Premier, the Attorney General and the present Minister for Railways all expected that 10 or 11 months ago, too.

If the Premier would give an assurance at this stage that the Bill will not be proceeded with until the Royal Commission reports to the Government I would be very happy to have no more to say on this measure. If no such assurance is to be given to members of this House then there are some other things to be said. There are several Royal Commissions sitting in this State at the present time—all appointed by the present Government. I wonder what answer any member on this side of the House would get, or even any member on the other side, if he introduced a Bill—a comprehensive Bill—dealing with vital matters relating to any one of the subjects now being investigated by the other Royal Commissions. Would not the Premier and each of his Ministers be thoroughly justified in condemning utterly any such Bill that a member might introduce whilst the Royal Commission was still proceeding with its investigations of the problem?

I would not like to be a private member who introduced such a Bill because it is quite easy to imagine how vigorous would be the denunciation that would be heaped upon him by Ministers. They would say—very justifiably—that the subject-matter of the Bill was being thoroughly investigated by a Royal Commission appointed by the Government, that such commission was obtaining expert evidence from every person available to give such evidence, and that in due course the Government itself would most probably introduce a Bill based on the report and the recommendations of the Royal Commission concerned. Just as that would be a proper course to follow in connection with any such Bill so it is a proper course to follow in connection with this Bill dealing with the management and control of the railway system.

I am not at all happy with the proposal in the Bill for the establishment of a directorate. I think the title in the first place is quite silly, and I am at a loss to imagine where the Government obtained it, but it appears to me, in relation to the railway system, to be quite a foolish one to give to those who might be charged with its management and control. I am opposed on principle to any directorate or commission of any kind for the railways, except where it functions under the Government of the day.

This brings me to one of the points put forward by the Minister in his second reading speech. He said the present Government was opposed to the ideas of the previous Government about ministerial control, because the present Government considered that was political control. Therefore the proposal in this Bill to constitute a directorate, which would have very great legal powers, undoubtedly raises the argument whether there should be responsible governmental control of the Railway Department with some commission or commissioner functioning under the Government and the Minister, or whether the Government should shed even a lot of legal power and responsibility that it has today and give much more legal authority in the future to this proposed directorate than even the Commissioner of Railways now has. I am not a bit scared by the cry of political control—not one scrap scared by that cry. We have in this State other Government departments of extreme and vital importance, more important actually from the point of real value than the Railway Department, which after all is said and done is only a transport instrumentality.

What about the departments that have a great deal to do with production? Are they not, on strict analysis of real values, much more important to the people of the State than a transport department such as the railways? Yet all these other departments are under what the Minister for Railways would be pleased to call political control. Is not the Education Department—although it is not associated with production in the ordinary sense of the term—of vital importance not only to the children of the State but also to the people as a whole? Which member of this House would say that in the scheme of things in Western Australia from the point of view of real value—flesh and blood value—that the Railway Department is the most important of all Government departments? It might be one of the most important from the pounds, shillings and pence point of view. Therefore if it is wise and right to have political control of the Education Department, of the Agricultural Department, of the Industrial Development Department, the Public Works Department and all the many other Government departments, there can be nothing seriously

wrong with similar control in respect of the Railway Department.

I do not claim to have any very close and certainly not any expert knowledge of the railway system in respect of its inside workings; but I have a very strong feeling that the Railway Department would have been a much better department today and that the public would have regarded it much better than is the case if in the years that have passed there had been the same sort of control and management of the Railway Department as there has been of the other departments to which I have referred. Ministers and Governments have to take all the back slack, as it were, which comes from the public in regard to the railway system. They have to take all the criticism and all the abuse. They are held responsible by the public and they are held accountable by the electors at election time for the way the railway system is managed and controlled.

I am one of those who believe that where responsibility is there control should be also. Is the Director of Works any less efficient, any less valuable to the State because he happens to be under the direction of a Minister and under the direction of the Government? Is the Director of Education or the Director of Industrial Development or any of the other leading officers of other departments any less valuable and efficient, any less energetic to achieve progress for Western Australia because they are under the direct control of a Minister and a Government? I think that the answer to those questions is undoubtedly no. And that answer is given by practical experience and not by any theory that might be developed out of the air in regard to the dangers of political control, as the Minister was pleased to describe it. When the Minister used that term he gave it a tone of voice which seemed to clothe it with a good deal of evil; yet on analysis, what is political control? Is it not democracy in action?

Are not members of this Parliament elected by the people to govern the State, and does not the majority Party after an election elect Ministers to form a government to manage the affairs of the State? And when those Ministers control the different activities of the State are they not doing the very thing for which the people of the State elected them to office. In my

opinion, based upon the experience of the the things that Governments in this State years, especially in this State, there is not have to face up to. a department less efficient than the Railway Department; and yet the Railway Department is the one department in this State that has been outside of political control as the Minister terms it.

Mr. Marshall: And has had the most criticism from the public.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I think that every member who has studied the situation over the years will agree that every department in this State under the direct control and management of Ministers and the Government has a much better record to its credit than the Railway Department. I am quite aware that no Government has ever been able to make available to the Railway Department all of the money it requires to keep itself completely efficient and completely up-to-date with regard to modern developments. But has any Government been able to make available to the other departments all the money they have needed in a big State like Western Australia? Of course not! It is a great pity that in a discussion of this kind, when party politics does come in on the side from some members, the Railway Department should occupy the whole picture.

One could quite imagine, listening to some of the speeches on this Bill, that Governments in the past have had to find money only for the Railway Department. One would never imagine that out of the loan funds available from year to year, Governments have had to find large sums of money in the majority of instances for the following undertakings:—Railways, tramways, electric power supply, Fremantle Harbour Works, harbour works and rivers generally, sewerage in the metropolitan area, water supplies, development of the Goldfields, development of agriculture, assistance to settlers, industries and the like, agricultural group settlement, land settlement for soldiers, colleges of agriculture, purchase of plant, State Sawmills, State Steamships, workers' homes working capital, Workers' Homes Board, war housing, State hotels, forests, State engineering works, public buildings, hospital buildings and equipment (including grants), roads and bridges, bulkhandling of wheat, quarries, W.A. Meat Export Works, Welshpool industries, native stations, hospitals and the like. Those are

Does anyone suggest that in any one year all the loan money available to the Government should be handed to the railways, to enable the system to be brought up-to-date? If that were done, it would have to be done not only for one year but for several years, and during the time that the whole or practically the whole of the loan moneys available were being devoted to that purpose all the other vital undertakings in this State would be going to rack and ruin. So Governments, from compulsion even if not from choice, have to work out a balanced programme of expenditure in connection with loan funds available to them. They have to allocate to each end a fair amount of the loan funds available. If members care to study the loan fund schedules over the years they will see that that has been done.

It is quite easy to stand up in the House when a railway Bill is being discussed and condemn past Governments because they have not given enough money to the Railway Department. But if it suited their purpose, the same members, had that been done, would have been the first to get up and condemn vigorously past Governments for having neglected one or other of all these other vital matters to which I have referred. If anyone cares to study the loan allocations from 1924 to the present day, he will find that in certain years very large sums of money were made available to the Railway Department, and that in those years other departments did not receive nearly the amount of money they required, or deserved, to play their important part in the development and progress of Western Australia.

As to the period from 1933 to the beginning of the war, every member who is honest with himself and knows the facts, must admit that the over-riding consideration in those years was that of providing employment in order that men might earn some wages and maintain some sort of standard of living for themselves and their families. What is the over-riding consideration when funds are limited and unemployment more or less unlimited? It is to supply as many jobs as possible. The ability of a Government to provide jobs when an emergency of that kind arises depends upon how many pounds of money

are to be used in the payment of wages, and how many pounds of money are to be used in the purchase of materials.

The vital consideration in the years 1933 to 1939, in connection with this problem, was to provide such employment that the wages paid would be greater, in total, than the money paid for the purchase of materials. Had that not been so, many hundreds fewer men would have been employed, and those not employed would, with their families, have been struggling on sustenance. I am sure that every member in this House tonight who has been a member of Parliament from 1930 until now will know that that is the approved policy of Governments on the point of principle which I have just enunciated. He will know that everyone was in favour of providing work for as many men as possible. If any Government of that period had expended large sums of money on materials, plans and equipment, most of the employment required in the manufacture of those things would have been provided in other States of Australia, or other countries of the world.

As a consequence, the number of men to be provided with employment in Western Australia would have been far less than it was, or, if we had provided employment for the same number, each man employed would have received so much less each week. As it was, all of those men were employed on a part-time basis for the greater part of the period from 1930 to 1939. But if the policy, which some wise-heads today now say should have been adopted, had been followed, the economic condition and situation of thousands of those men and tens of thousands of their wives and children would have been infinitely worse than it was. So I ask members, who are inclined to slip the Party aspect of the railway situation into this debate, to become possessed of the facts, if they are not already in possession of them. After learning the facts covering the loan expenditure by the Governments in past years they should be reasonable and honest in the criticism they might develop. If they do that, then there can be nothing to fear from any criticism that might be levelled against members on this side of the House, or any Labour Governments that were in office in this State from 1924 until 1947.

I could go a lot deeper into this matter, but I do not propose to say much more except to appeal again to all the Ministers to reconsider very seriously the question whether they should proceed any further with the Bill. I ask them as a mark of respect to the members of this House and of another place, and out of respect to the Royal Commissioners now investigating our railway system, to allow the Bill to remain on the stocks, as it were, or be put aside or withdrawn, or at least take no further step towards putting it on the statute-book until the Government and Parliament have the benefit of the expert advice which will be available when the Royal Commission makes its report and its recommendations, as it is likely to do in the not distant future.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth) [9.47]: I appeal to the member for Northam to reconsider his opposition to the Bill, and to do so in the interests of our railway system, the people of the State and the economy of Western Australia, and, in particular, in the interests of the farmers who have grown a crop of some 27,000,000 bushels for export, that has to be sent from the farm to the seaboard in the next few months. Let us examine the position for a moment or two. Last year, as the member for Northam pointed out at great length, a Bill was introduced by the then Minister for Railways, the member for Murchison, to amend the Government Railways Act and to deal with the control of our railway system. It was a most drastic amendment. For 42 years this State had had a system of commissioner-control under which, to a large extent, the administration and the management of our railways were divorced from ministerial control and left in the hands of a Commissioner. After 42 years of that system, the member for Murchison, as Minister for Railways, decided to revise it. By his Bill, the railway system was to be placed completely in the hands of the Minister, and the Commissioner was to act entirely in accordance with the directions of that hon. gentleman. If there could be imagined any drastic and revolutionary alteration of the control of our railway system, the Bill of the member for Murchison last year represented that alteration.

When the Bill—I approach this subject almost with amazement after listening to the speech of the member for Northam—came before the House last year it was indicated, on the Government side, that a Royal Commission was in contemplation to inquire into the whole of the administration of the railways including—as I understood it and still understand it—the control of the railways. In view of the revolutionary change of control involved in that Bill the then Opposition not unnaturally asked, “Why not leave these alterations until you have the report of the Royal Commission?” That is just the argument that is being used in the case of the present Bill. The member for Northam and other Opposition members have said, “Here you have a Bill effecting a change in the control of our railway system, and you have a Royal Commission that is inquiring into the matter. Why not postpone the Bill until the Royal Commission has reported?”

I mention, in passing, that the Bill now before the House is a mere child of change or alteration compared with the giant involved in the Bill introduced last year by the then Minister for Railways, because the present Bill still leaves the control of the railways in the hands of a specified set of people—there being five, instead of one—but does not involve ministerial control although, contrary to much of the reference that has been made to this Bill, it does involve less control by the board of directors to be appointed than has hitherto been vested in the Commissioner, and to that extent more supervision by the Minister over the proposed board of directors. But the present Bill, compared with that of last year, is a mere trifle. It simply says that the Government Railways Act shall be left exactly the same, with regard to the division of powers between the Minister and the management, but, instead of having one man as the management, we shall have five representing different interests involved in the railway management.

Mr. Rodoreda: And they will all be fighting each other.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Almost every large business is run by a board of five directors.

Mr. Rodoreda: Defining policy.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Not only policy, but a great amount of detail, as I know from my personal experience. Whether we take the B.H.P. or a large shipping or transport company, we find that in fact all successful businesses in British countries are run by boards of directors consisting of five or six men—not one man. We do not find the Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd., or any other big commercial organisation being run by one man, but by a board of directors, each of whom contributes his ability and experience to the control of the business concerned. Let us examine the attitude of the then Government—now His Majesty's Opposition—when it had a Royal Commission in contemplation and brought down a Bill to alter, in a revolutionary way, the management of the Western Australian Government Railways. When the then Opposition said, “Why not await the report of the Royal Commission,” that Government said, “No.” That Bill was one to come into force immediately it was passed and had received the Governor's assent. It was a Bill for immediate operation. In view of those circumstances, I am completely at a loss at this argument being so fervently used in respect of what is alleged—quite wrongly—to be the attitude of the Government over this Bill.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I think the two Bills are comparable.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: We are not even taking up the attitude adopted by the previous Government, when it brought in its revolutionary Bill with a Royal Commission in contemplation, and said, “We will not wait for the report of the Royal Commission. Our Bill is to go through now.” We do not take up that attitude. How it can be said that there is any inconsistency or lack of logic on the part of the Government, in the light of the attitude of the previous Government, as disclosed by references to the very “Hansard” referred to by the member for Northam, is completely beyond my power of understanding, because the attitude of the Government as I understand it—I make this statement because I have been referred to very kindly by the member for Northam with regard to my remarks last year, and I do not pretend to be an expert on railway matters—is that this Bill is a most significant and important departure from the Bill of last year. Where-

as, with a Royal Commission in contemplation, the Bill of last year proposed to make a revolutionary alteration in the management of the State railways at once, without waiting for the report of the contemplated Royal Commission, the present Minister for Railways has inserted an important and significant provision in his Bill, under which it shall come into operation not on receiving the Governor's assent but on a day to be fixed by proclamation.

Mr. Rodoreda: What is the hurry for this Bill?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Exactly!

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Does that mean it might never come into operation at all?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: As I understand the Bill, it means this—it all makes up an entirely logical pattern and one which I think represents responsibility to the people of the State and the control of the railways—that the Government has it in its power to proclaim the Bill, if at all, when the report of the Royal Commission has been received—

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: If at all!

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: If the Commission had not reported drastically otherwise—

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: That is a wonderful admission.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There might be some consideration—

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Attorney General says the Bill will be proclaimed "if at all."

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The Bill is intended to be proclaimed in some form or other.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: You are getting into deeper water now.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I am getting into the position into which I want to get, because if this Bill—as I understand it—is not radically inconsistent with the recommendations of the Royal Commission, it can operate at once, and the member for Northam has said, in his usual emphatic way—rightly or wrongly—that of all departments of State the record of administration of the Railway Department is the weakest and poorest. I do not profess to quote his exact words, but

that is the effect of what he said. I think it is to a certain extent true and that there is something to be done by any Government, not next year or the year after, but immediately, to deal with a department of State that is of the utmost importance to the economy of the country and that the hon. member says is the weakest department of all.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Will the measure be proclaimed before the Royal Commission reports?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That is a matter on which the Minister can speak for himself. I take this Bill to be a measure that can be proclaimed when the Royal Commission has made its report. It can be proclaimed and can take care of a most urgent situation between the present time and the time when Parliament meets again next year.

If we are to meet what is a position of grave urgency in our railways—the member for Northam has said it is the weakest department of State—which during the next 12 months has the biggest burden to bear of any department of State and which with great haste and speed needs to transport 27,000,000 bushels or 750,000 tons of wheat to the seaboard while carrying out all the other duties imposed upon it, I do not think that any Government could suggest it was carrying out its duties unless it took the earliest opportunity to make the best provision possible to meet the situation. If it is the weakest department of State, as the member for Northam said, and has been so for years, then obviously the first thing that would suggest itself to anybody's mind is that one or two other people should be called in to help in that administration, instead of leaving it to one man for whom possibly it might be far too heavy a burden and one that he should not be called upon to bear.

This Bill is to take care of the situation and provide the additional representation of interests that are vitally concerned with the railways and, if this legislation should be needed in the light of all the circumstances, then Parliament, as with any other Bill, has the power to review it and make any alterations that may be desirable. I am concerned to say that it is impossible to reconcile the attitude of the member for Northam last year with his attitude

now. By no stretch of imagination can those two attitudes be reconciled. The attitude adopted last year by the then Opposition against a Bill of immediate application is a very different matter compared with a Bill introduced with an express provision that the period of operation shall remain within the control of the Government and of the Minister concerned.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: You are arguing in opposite directions at the one time.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: My argument, I think, will stand the test of any disinterested person, but I will say this, on looking at the "Hansard" of last year, that the member for Northam has got to take it one way or the other. He cannot have it both ways.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Nor can you.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Either the member for Northam was right last year and is wrong this year, or he was wrong last year and is right this year.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Last year your argument was not as to the degree of alteration of the management, but as to the principle of it.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: My argument is that the hon. member can take his choice; he can be right one time, this year or last year, but he cannot be right both times, because he cannot be right in respect of completely different and conflicting arguments on the same facts. It is a very different position for a Government in a state of emergency, even though the Royal Commission is inquiring to bring in a Bill, not for operation next week, but for operation at a convenient date to be proclaimed.

That is a very different proposition from a Bill which was to operate at once—and this appeals to me although I, unlike the member for Northam, do not profess to be an expert on railways—especially when, if the one-man-control system has resulted in the Railway Department being, again in the words of the hon. member—and he knows more about it than I do—the weakest department of State, we have to do something about it, and wisely and prudently have on the statute-book means by which we can give to the Commissioner, as needed, the assistance of another expert and of persons well versed in the interests involved.

It may be very necessary for him to have that help next year, when the railways are going to meet possibly the greatest, most exacting and important test of their career from the point of view of the economy of the country.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It is a wonder the Royal Commissioners do not hand back their Commissions and say, "You know what you want; you do not need us to inquire."

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The Commissioners are not going to be so simple—

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Of course not.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL:—as to what has been said by the other side of the House during this debate. The Commissioners would first of all take this Bill, of which possibly they know—I am not aware whether they know of it or not—

Hon. A. H. Panton: I bet they do.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL:—and regard it as a statement of policy on which the Government was elected by the people.

Mr. Rodoreda: You have not even got a majority.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: We have the good fortune not to be a minority Government, which has happened at times in the past. The Commissioners are men of the world and they would take this Bill and say, "This is a Bill to be proclaimed at some future date and that lies with the Government. In the meantime, we have been commissioned to inquire into all the factors involved in the administration of the railways." If the Commissioners are the class of men that I think they are they will say, "The Government has told us that it wants to know about the control of the railways. It knows we are inquiring into the matter and will want to hear from us what we consider should be the form of control."

Whatever might be the wishful thinking of some speakers on the opposite side of the House, I do not think from what I have seen of one of the Commissioners and what I have heard of the other, that they are going to be affected in the slightest degree by what any member considers to be the best thing for our State railways. I think we will get from them, as experts and men of experience, an honest and objective

statement of what they believe is the best set-up for our railways in all the various aspects of administration and control.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Government's action in introducing this Bill does not prove that; otherwise you would have waited for the Commission's recommendations.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I have endeavoured to explain the situation there and I think I have done so.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You are not doing too well.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I think I have done so, but I do not expect the member for Northam to admit it. It would be too much to ask him to admit it. I would be content if he merely admitted—to use a favourite expression in Parliament, not that I use it myself or that I condemn other members for doing so—that he painted a picture of inconsistency with his tongue in his cheek, a picture which he tried to apply to the Government, knowing all the time that it applied only to himself.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: You do not look very happy about it.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is a legal quibble.

MR. TRIAT (Mt. Magnet) [10.12]: I have listened very keenly to the reply made by the Attorney General to the references of the member for Northam, and I fully anticipated that the legal mind of the Attorney General, keen and clear on matters like this, would be used to make a precise and clear explanation why this Bill was introduced at the time the Royal Commission was sitting. But notwithstanding the closeness with which I listened to the Attorney General, I failed to detect sufficient evidence to lead me to believe that he was well founded in his facts. In saying that, I mean that he did not have sufficient time to prepare the evidence he desired to put before the House to make his explanation clear. I say that because I consider a man with the clear logical mind the Attorney General possesses is very seldom astray in placing his views before an assembly such as this Chamber.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: He is in a tender spot.

The Attorney General: I was on the top of the world! I never enjoyed a speech so much!

Mr. TRIAT: The Attorney General said that the Bill would be proclaimed in some form or other.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Perhaps!

Mr. TRIAT: No-one can tell me that a keen legally trained man would come to this House and ask it to agree to a Bill that would be proclaimed in some form or other.

The Attorney General: It will be proclaimed in the form in which it leaves this Parliament.

Mr. TRIAT: The Attorney General's words were that this Bill would be proclaimed in some form or other. "Hansard" will have a record of the words, if it has not altered them.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: "Hansard" does not alter anything.

Mr. TRIAT: That is a statement made by a man with a keen alert mind. It is totally wrong to ask this House to agree to a Bill which the Government introduced and which will be passed in some form or other.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: That is the way the Government does its business.

Mr. TRIAT: If any alteration is to be made to the railway system for the coming harvest, I do not see how the proposed directorate will have sufficient time to handle the 27,000,000 bushels of wheat. It will not have the plant, according to the statement made today. How can it have the time to make the necessary arrangement to shift the 750,000 tons of wheat from the coming harvest to the coast if the plant is not available? Anything this proposed directorate may do will not affect that matter one iota so far as this season is concerned. But the findings and recommendations of a Royal Commission determined to sift the wheat from the chaff as far as the railway system is concerned will be of value to the Government. I think anybody could draw up a Bill that would be suitable to meet the situation once the recommendations of the Royal Commission are made.

I am going to bet that this Commission will not make any recommendation which it considers could be implemented successfully within the next two or three months. The Commission is perfectly well aware that

its findings and recommendations will require a long time to catch up with the lag in the railways. Every member opposite knows perfectly well that the rollingstock and tractive power required cannot be obtained within the next two, three or four years in sufficient quantities to make any great alteration in the normal carriage of goods on the railways. Members opposite know it is physically impossible to obtain the goods required in sufficient time. How can this Commission in a matter of minutes, hours, weeks or months, make any alteration to the great wheat traffic which must be coped with during the coming season?

The Attorney General definitely said that the farmers would require 27,000,000 bushels of wheat to be transported under the new system. Has the Railway Department said it cannot transport the 27,000,000 bushels? It does not make any difference; the harvest will come in and the department will transport it as it has done in the past. The position today is a peculiar one. I am glad it is not a question of justice in this case, because I think the prisoner would hang while the jury was considering the evidence on the question. That is the position today. This Bill has been introduced while the Royal Commission is sitting. The Bill deals with the powers proposed to be conferred on a board or a directorate. I am a little worried about that.

Before I start dealing with the board, I would point out that I favour a board of management. Ever since I have been a member I have advocated a board of management for the railways. The member for York stated that Labour members claim to have the same feelings towards such a board at the present time. The member for Irwin-Moore may realise that I have always favoured a board.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I think he has a bad memory.

Mr. TRIAT: There are to be five members of the directorate. Two of these, as has been explained, will be members of the railway service. We anticipate that one will be the present Commissioner of Railways and another an officer of the department. Those two gentlemen, no matter what their ages may be, will sit on that board at the pleasure of the Government so long as both Houses of Parliament decide to leave them there. I should prefer

to have younger men appointed. If we are to have an alteration, we should appoint a younger type of man with better and younger ideas, not a man who has fallen into a railway groove and has remained in it. Such a man would not have any advanced ideas. I think he should be appointed from outside the railways altogether. As far as the present Commissioner is concerned, I have nothing against him, but he is not a suitable man for the position. Yet he will be a member of the directorate as long as the Government desires him to remain on it.

If the Bill is proclaimed before the Royal Commission makes its findings, I do not know how it will dispose of the Commissioner and his colleague, unless both Houses of Parliament agree to sack them. The other three members are to be selected from various bodies and will be appointed for a definite period of five years. At the end of that period they may be dismissed or reappointed. How will they be selected? One is to be selected from the people. Will he be selected from the coal industry, the timber industry, the dairy industry or the goldmining industry or from among the travelling public who use the railways, or from the taxpayers? No, he will not be selected in that way. He will be selected from a body, the Primary Producers' Association. I presume he will be a farmer, because he must be nominated by the Primary Producers' Association. Evidently he will be a member of that organisation, a farmer.

We have recently listened to much talk in this House about farming and about the way farms are managed. The evidence adduced before the Commission is enough to make me believe that very few farmers—except perhaps the member for Irwin-Moore—would be a suitable type of man to appoint, as they have no business acumen from what we hear.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You are kidding!

Mr. TRIAT: Why should he be selected from the farmers?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Do you think the member for Irwin-Moore would be suitable?

Mr. TRIAT: I am using his own words: why should a farmer be the only man suitable to represent the people? Why not the

coal producers, the timber producers or dairy producers, the goldminers, or the taxpayers? They have a right to say who should be selected. Why select this one class of individual, the class that the railways have been feeding for years and years and playing up to for years and years, men whose products have been carted on the railways at less than the cost of freight in many instances, especially with regard to superphosphate? Yet we are going to select one of these men to run the railways, or to assist in doing so. I do not think he is the right type. The man who runs the railways should be a taxpayer and a man of intelligence; never mind whether he is from the timber workers or the coalminers or wherever he comes from.

Mr. Reynolds: The farmers have intelligence.

Mr. TRIAT: I am not going to say they have not, but I do not see why they should be the only ones entitled to have a say in running the railways. The second man is to be a representative of the workers. He will have no axe to grind and will not have much say, because he will be only one of five. This is a very excellent man to include on the directorate. I do not know from what union he will be drawn, but he will not have any axe to grind; he will not want his goods carted at a freight less than cost. The third man is to be from the Chamber of Commerce. Will he have an axe to grind? Will such a man, if the railways are not paying a decent revenue into the coffers of the department, say, "We will increase the freights"? I can see him doing that, I don't think! His idea will be to cut the cost, to cut freights to the bone. He will certainly not want freights increased on goods that he and his friends are sending over the railways. I disagree with a representative from the Chamber of Commerce being on the directorate.

Mr. Reynolds: Have two farmers instead of a representative from the Chamber of Commerce!

Mr. TRIAT: I would rather agree to that. But we want people to whom the question of railway freights will not be of great consequence. It is only natural for farmers and the Chamber of Commerce to want freights to be as low as possible. They do not care so long as their stuff is carted

at a reasonable rate. Power will be taken out of the hands of the Government through the administration suggested. All that can happen, no matter what this directorate may do during its period of office, is that it can be taken to task by Parliament. The people will have no control. The directorate will not be like the Minister for Railways, for instance. It will not have to approach the people every three years and ask for their franchise. All that it will have to do is run the business for five years, or for whatever the period may be; and whether its management is good, bad or indifferent, it will have nobody to speak against it except members in Parliament. I believe that the finding of the Royal Commission will be extensive. It will go into the question of freights and rollingstock and all matters that would be likely to be of importance to any Commission dealing with a big industry like that of the railways.

Speakers on this occasion, and on previous occasions, have seemed to hold different opinions as to the cause of the trouble. Some do not think the Commissioner is to blame; others do not think the Minister is at fault. There is really nobody to blame. We do not seem to know where the trouble is. I think myself that the railways were efficient in the days of competition with horses and carts, but since then they have not shown any efficiency. Once motor transport was introduced they lost their kick, because people were disposed to send their goods by the faster method of transport. Passengers travelled by car and sent their commodities by truck.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Motor traffic took the goods that paid higher rates.

Mr. TRIAT: I agree with that. It was a business proposition. They would not cart super. for practically nothing, like the railways. They took the higher freight goods and made a profit and allowed the railways to carry goods that were not so remunerative. Finally the Government had to take steps to prevent motor traffic from competing with the railways by introducing the transport co-ordination measure. Since the days of horses and carts, the railways have not shown much efficiency. Whether that has been due to bad administration or shortage of money, I am not prepared to

say. I would suggest that it has been due to a combination of those circumstances. I do not think that the rot started at the roots or in the top limbs; it has been a case of general dry rot setting in throughout, caused by Governments not giving sufficient money to the department and to the railway administrative officers getting fed up with the job because of lack of sufficient capital. The position has been deplorable, especially in the back country. I heard the member for Victoria Park say that the railways were a wonderful project for Western Australia.

Mr. Read: They have been.

Mr. TRIAT: In the far-flung areas.

Member: Who flung them?

Mr. TRIAT: They have been flung a long way and they were badly flung. These railway lines were put down without much foundation and with very light rails. They were badly laid. In the wheat areas, particularly on the Ajana line, it is nothing unusual for a train to be five or six hours late. That is a disgraceful state of affairs. If a schedule is laid down and the train cannot run to time, then the schedule should be altered. In my district trains are sometimes seven and eight hours late, not one day, but every day.

Mr. Rodoreda: Mail trains are two or three days late!

Mr. TRIAT: They are not run to schedule. The department says, "You will get your mail when we get there." These schedules were laid down 30 or 40 years ago for the engines in use then, and yet the trains cannot run to schedule today. There is something wrong and it should be investigated. I am not prepared to support this Bill because I do not think it is the right way to go about the matter. The proper thing to do is to hold an inquiry into the whole workings of the railways, and then bring the findings before Parliament and let members decide what is going to be done. Under those conditions a reasonably decent Bill could be introduced.

Consider the new sleeping carriages and dining-cars! It is the taxpayers of this State who stand most of the burden, paying much higher rates between here and Kalgoorlie than trans. passengers pay—50 per cent. more—for the opportunity to en-

joy the privilege of a lounge-car to the Goldfields or a modern sleeping-car or to eat in a modern dining-car. The administration of the railways says, "These things are not for the local man and woman, but for trans. passengers." There is a trans. passenger complex. I do not know why. But the people who produce the goods and use the railways have a right to the better class of travelling which is kept for trans. passengers only. That sort of administration must be done away with. The people who reside and travel in this State are the ones who should have the best consideration. Instead of that consideration is given to people from the Eastern States.

A lot of members have been through the back country recently. Those who travel there should take notice of the class of habitation in which workers along the line have had to live—not for the last two or three years, but since the railways started. The buildings consist of 7ft. 6in. sleepers standing on end with earth floors and little gable roofs, and in these a man with his wife and two or three children are expected to live during the hot summer. People who talk about the wonderful administration of the Railway Department should realise that no system can be regarded as efficient that permits of people living under such conditions. Now that work is more plentiful such folk are leaving the department and seeking other fields of labour, something more congenial so that their wives and families can live in better surroundings. People should not be put in these pigsties. I have heard members opposite, when travelling in the back country, mention that sort of thing. But no alteration has been made. It is early for this Government to make an alteration, but the administration has done nothing. It has not even thought it worth while to build some sort of prefabricated house for its workers. But those in control are rapidly waking up to the fact that they must offer better conditions to those whom they employ.

I dislike the Bill, and am surprised, after listening to the speeches tonight, and especially that of the member for Northam who drew attention to the remarks made last year by three of the Ministers, that a Bill should be introduced while the Commission was sitting. The Attorney General said that effect may be given to some parts of

the Bill at a later stage. I am not going to support the measure and I hope the Government will let it remain over until the Royal Commission has given its findings. It will then be possible for a decent Bill to be brought down. The time is long overdue for our administration to be put on a proper footing. I do not know whether the railways can be made to pay, but a better service can be rendered than has been given in the past.

MR. SHEARN (Maylands) [10.33]: As the Bill has been thoroughly and exhaustively dealt with by a number of speakers, I do not propose to detain the House for any great length of time, but I want to submit one or two suggestions to the Minister in the hope that he will give us a lucid explanation when he replies. What he has to say then will have a considerable effect in determining whether I shall support the second reading. It has been said that this is a very important measure, and one with many interesting aspects. I recall that the Minister who introduced it has, each session, ever since I have been a member, been a very caustic critic of our railway administration. Now we have that hon. gentleman as the Minister, introducing what is regarded by the official Opposition as being a highly contentious Bill. I am willing to allow the Minister the opportunity to implement the measure he has submitted to us in the belief that because of the intense amount of research he has given to this subject over the years he knows what he is about.

Some reference has been made to the inadvisability of introducing this measure. But, after all, the Government has been elected on a policy, and in looking through the Lieut.-Governor's Speech, I notice that this particular measure was forecast. I presume that the Government has the right to introduce these proposals, and must assume the responsibility for their success or otherwise. Whilst the House carries some measure of responsibility if it passes the Bill, I submit that the Government must accept the major responsibility because it, and it only, is in a position to know the circumstances under which the present measure has been formulated and presented to us.

It is interesting that the Government should have introduced the measure at this juncture because, as other members have pointed out, there is a Royal Commission inquiring into the management of the railways. Of course, as someone has already said, there is a reason for it. The previous Government forecast the same proposals, although it did not go to the same length. But I am not very interested in that. I have no doubt that the Royal Commissioners know as much about this Bill as we do, for it has been public property for some days. The Government has probably acted on the advice of its expert officers, and in a large measure will be influenced by the report into the administration of this particularly wide-flung department.

I, like other members, readily agree that the responsibility for the deplorable financial position into which the department has drifted cannot be laid at the door of any particular Government. It has been due to a set of varying circumstances over a long period, and there is a fairly good explanation for them. Our railways were originally constructed, and progressively extended in the interests of the development of the State. We know that the genesis of the railways did not lie in the showing of a profit. I do not think that any railway system should set out primarily to return a profit, but it certainly should endeavour to balance its budget. Its prime object should be to render service to the community concerned. Who will deny that the railways have played an important part in that respect?

We all know that many of our lines have been constructed without due consideration being given to the financial aspect but, there again, they played their part in the development of those portions of the State. With the advent of the better type of road, and faster and heavier motor transport, the position has been reached when any management, sensible of these developments, would seriously consider the advisability of discontinuing many of the unpayable branch lines. I am interested to know, and I shall expect the Minister to answer this unequivocally, how the Government proposes, under this Bill, to maintain the necessary financial control over this tremendously important instrumentality.

It has been said that there is an amount of £27,000,000 of the taxpayers' money involved. It is, therefore, necessary that the Government should maintain a very strict control of its expenditure. That is also important from the point of view of our relationship with the Commonwealth. Each year the Grants Commission deals with the financial structure of this State, in common with that of the other States, and I am wondering what will be the position of Western Australia when the proposed directorate is handling £27,000,000 of public money, in no way responsible to the Government for the time being, and the Treasurer has to go to the Grants Commission and present his evidence. I would also like the Minister to inform the House whether the members of the proposed directorate, apart from the two specifically mentioned in the Bill—one as being an engineer and the other a man experienced in transport and administration matters—are to be full-time members, or whether they are to act in an advisory capacity as is done in Victoria and, I understand, to some extent in South Africa.

I desire also to know whether the Minister will agree to some amendments that I propose to place on the notice paper if the Bill passes the second reading, one of which will have reference to the retiring age of members of the directorate. I believe the principle has been accepted, in the Public Service of this State, that members of that service must retire at 65 years of age. It is consistent to ask that other Government employees retire at that age. I wonder what will be the reaction of the Minister to that proposal. I also find difficulty in understanding why the Minister picked out the Chamber of Commerce to be represented on this directorate, in preference to the Chamber of Manufactures, members of which are more concerned with Railway Department activities than would be members of the Chamber of Commerce. I propose to place on the notice paper an amendment—to which I hope the Minister will agree—the effect of which will be to give the Chamber of Manufactures opportunity of nominating a member of the directorate.

I hope the Minister will see the wisdom of allowing the Chamber of Manufactures—which is closely allied to the Chamber of Commerce but whose activities are more

closely associated with the transport activities of this State than are those of the Chamber of Commerce—to be represented. I wish also to make it clear that I do not think a mere change in the personnel of management of the railways will bring about a new era in the control of that department. It will depend, as it has in the past, on what funds are made available. I agree with previous speakers that many of the difficulties that have confronted the department in the past, and that are becoming more acute at the present time, are due largely to the paucity of the funds made available to the Railway Commissioner.

I take it that the Minister sees the practicability, by some means or other, of making available to the department additional funds, without which I suggest there is little hope of improvement in railway administration. There is no gainsaying the fact that over a considerable period the railway service has been entirely unsatisfactory from a public point of view. From time to time I have spoken to men employed in all sorts of positions in the Railway Department and have found many of them to be labouring under a sense of frustration. I think the Government is entitled to assume responsibility for making this drastic change, realising that it must accept responsibility for the success or otherwise of that change. I believe it is our duty to give the Government the opportunity to carry out this programme, which is the first practical attempt that has been made, since I have been a member of this House, to grapple with the problem. With the reservations that I have made I propose to support the second reading. I hope the amendments that I shall place on the notice paper will appeal to the Minister and that he will explain to the House the points that I have raised.

On motion by Mr. Rodoreda, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.50 p.m.