

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 27th October, 1948.

CONTENTS.

	Page
Questions : Fertiliser, as to supplies of impregnated super	1933
Milk Board, as to price inquiry and financial statements	1934
Housing—(a) as to contract and day labour building of rental homes	1934
(b) as to land resumption, Maddington-Kenwick district	1934
Coal, as to price for imports from Newcastle	1934
Bulk handling facilities, as to liability of Co-op. Bulk Handling, Ltd.	1934
Swan River pollution, as to tabling papers	1935
Midland Junction Workshops, as to costing system	1935
Roads, as to widening of Albany-highway	1935
Motion : Land Sales Control Act, to disallow exemptions regulation, defeated	1937
Bills : Feeding Stuffs Act Amendment (No. 2), 1r.	1938
Western Australian Marine, 3r.	1938
Road Districts Act Amendment, 2r., Com., report	1938
Builders' Registration Act Amendment, Council's amendments	1940
Government Railways Act Amendment, 2r., Com.	1940
Western Australian Government Tramways and Ferries, 2r., Com.	1970

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

QUESTIONS.

FERTILISER.

As to Supplies of Impregnated Super.

Mr. BRAND asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Is he aware—

(a) That for the second year experiments carried out at Dongara on light coastal country have proved conclusively that copper and zinc are vitally necessary as trace elements to ensure satisfactory growth of both cereals and pasture in these areas?

(b) That the last trials revealed that crude zinc and copper ore were as satisfactory as zinc and cop-

per sulphate as trace elements, and are only a fraction of the cost?

(2) Is crude zinc and copper ore available, and from where?

(3) Will he assure farmers that a reasonable percentage of their requirements of copper-zinc impregnated super. will be made available in good time for the coming season?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) Responses have been obtained on light coastal country at Dongara to copper and zinc fertiliser, but further trials are necessary before we can say whether regular applications will be beneficial or harmful. It may be that one initial dressing will leave residual effects sufficient to meet plant requirements for a number of years.

(b) In recent trials zinc dross—a residue from galvanising processes which is composed principally of zinc oxide and an oxidised copper ore, were used. These gave results as satisfactory as those obtained from the sulphates and at materially reduced costs.

(2) Only a limited quantity of zinc dross is produced in W.A. and all of this is being used in the preparation of zinc and superphosphate mixtures. There are no sources of zinc ore in W.A.

Oxidised copper ore is freely available and fertiliser manufacturers will supply it straight or in prepared mixtures as required.

(3) Everything possible is being done to obtain additional zinc oxide. Manufacturers have approached industrial interests in other States and the Under Secretary for Agriculture has endeavoured to assist by contact with the Director General of Agriculture and the Director of Agriculture in South Australia.

There is no need for concern re copper requirements as ample supplies of ore are mined at Wiluna by W.A. Minerals Ltd. and are distributed through the fertiliser manufacturing firms.

MILK BOARD.

As to Price Inquiry and Financial Statements.

Mr. SHEARN asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) When will the result of the Milk Board's inquiry into the case submitted by the Retail Dairymen's Association on the 8th September be made known?

(2) Does he know that in England, and in every State of the Commonwealth except in W.A., the Milk Marketing Boards publish their audited financial statements?

(3) Can he say why the W.A. Milk Board's statements are not published, and will he undertake to have them published and copies provided for the associations concerned in the milk industry?

(4) Was the present price of milk being paid to the producer fixed in accordance with the Royal Commissioner's recommendations, and if so, were the Royal Commissioner's findings based upon the cost of production in accordance with figures submitted by the producers?

(5) Is he aware that the prolonged delay by the board in advising its decision regarding application by retailers for review of allowable margin is causing retailers grave concern, and that some are, at present, threatened with financial ruin?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) This is a matter for the Milk Board.

(2) The Milk Board's audited financial statement for year ended the 30th June, 1947, was tabled in this House on the 8th September last.

(3) Answered by No. (2).

(4) The Board fixed the price to producers under the provisions of the Act and took into consideration the Royal Commissioner's findings.

(5) No.

HOUSING.

(a) As to Contract and Day Labour Building of Rental Homes.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Housing:

Is he yet in a position to answer the following question asked on the 29th September last:—What is the average cost of building a brick house in the metropolitan

area by—(a) contract; (b) day labour, taking into account reasonable administrative costs?

The MINISTER replied:

It is hoped that it will be possible to complete the figures shortly after the return to the State of the Principal Architect, who will be absent from the State for about two weeks.

(b) As to Land Resumption, Maddington-Kenwick District.

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) In view of the statement that the Canning Park Race Course at Maddington is to be used for the establishment of an iron and steel processing plant, has any land been resumed in the Maddington-Kenwick district by the State Housing Commission for the erection of Commonwealth-State rental and War Service homes?

(2) If "Yes" is the answer to No. (1), where is the land situated that has been resumed?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

COAL.

As to Price for Imports from Newcastle.

Mr. MAY asked the Minister representing the Minister for Mines:

What is the price of Newcastle coal—

(1) large, f.o.r. Fremantle;

* (2) small, f.o.r. Fremantle?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

(1) £3 14s. 7d. per ton.

(2) No small coal has been received for some years.

BULK HANDLING FACILITIES.

As to Liability of Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Why have agreements in connection with the handing over to the control of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd., of the State's bulk wheat handling facilities at Fremantle and Bunbury not yet been executed, although

the installation at Fremantle was handed over by this Government to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. on the 29th May, 1947, and that at Bunbury on the 1st October, 1947?

(2) When is it expected that agreements will be executed?

(3) On the basis of the charges for interest and sinking fund which were debited against the Fremantle Harbour Trust and the Bunbury Harbour Board, respectively, prior to the Government's taking the control of the bulk wheat handling facilities out of their hands, what would be the liability of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. to the Government on these accounts for the use of the installations from the date of taking over up to the end of September, 1948?

(4) Does the Government intend to request payment from Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. for the use of the bulk wheat handling facilities during the period that the company has had the use of State assets without agreement as to terms and conditions?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Agreement has not yet been finalised because of one minor outstanding amendment which has been the subject of negotiation between all the parties concerned. A number of departments are involved—the Railway Department, the Agricultural Department, the Crown Law Department, the Fremantle Harbour Trust and the Treasury. However, substantial agreement was reached many months ago on the major clauses of the instrument.

(2) In the near future.

(3) The agreements will provide for payment of interest at the rate of £4 10s. per centum per annum on the amount of capital expenditure on the installations from time to time as certified by the Attorney General and an amount to cover sinking fund contributions thereon as shall be assessed by the State Treasurer in accordance with ordinary Treasury practices. The actual amounts have not yet been calculated.

(4) Yes.

SWAN RIVER POLLUTION.

As to Tabling Papers.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is he aware that the various local authorities in the metropolitan area have indi-

cated their intention to press for a scheme for the prevention of the pollution of the Swan River?

(2) Will he table the following papers so that consideration of the problem by members of the public who are interested may be facilitated—

(a) Mr. Tydeman's report;

(b) a plan of the geological formation of the Swan River basin between Fremantle and Guildford;

(c) P.W.D. Plan 6564?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes, papers will be tabled early next week.

MIDLAND JUNCTION WORKSHOPS.

As to Costing System.

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Has the Government Railway Workshops administration at Midland Junction introduced its own system of costing on some officially recognised system?

(2) Is it a fact that in the present costing system employees are handed a stereotyped instruction as to how repair work should be performed, irrespective of the number of times the same employee has carried out the same job previously, thus building up a system of unnecessary red tape?

(3) Will he request the Acting C.M.E. to take the employees into his confidence respecting the present costing system, with a view to getting full co-operation and removing grounds for criticism?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Railways) replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Production instructions are issued in similar manner to previous work orders as authority to manufacture or repair.

(3) The Chief Mechanical Engineer discussed with and obtained the agreement of the joint unions to the application of the system and later addressed a collective meeting of the shop stewards.

ROADS.

As to Widening of Albany-highway.

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is it the intention of the Main Roads Department to continue the widening of the Albany-highway beyond Nicholson-road?

(2) If "Yes" is the answer to No. (1), when is it expected to commence such work and for what distance will it be widened in 1949?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Not in the near future.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

BILL—FEEDING STUFFS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Introduced by Mr. Wild and read a first time.

BILL—WESTERN AUSTRALIAN MARINE.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 21st October.

THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (Hon. A. F. Watts—Kating) [4.41]: The hon. member who introduced this measure was quite correct in leading the House to believe that the difficulty associated with the letting by a road board of a hall which is under its control to an institution, however desirable it may be, to the exclusion of other tenants, is apparently at the present time outside the scope of the law.

When this matter was first raised it was, as the hon. member indicated, raised in respect of the South Perth Road Board. In comparatively recent times a hall has been erected by that board out of materials acquired from former military properties, the intention of the board being to render assistance to the Community Centre Association of that area in carrying out a desirable social work. The board desires to make this hall available to the Community Centre Association and to allow it to permit bodies associated with it to make use of that hall from time to time by arrangement, not with the board, but with the Community Centre Association.

When all these arrangements appeared to be nicely in train the legal position was brought to the board's notice and it was

questioned whether such an arrangement would be valid. Upon inquiry it appeared that under the existing law a hall erected by a local authority within its district must be available to any member or section of the public that might from time to time require it. In consequence an arrangement of this kind, which was to some extent exclusively for the benefit of the Community Centre Association, was almost certainly outside the scope of the existing law, so the South Perth Road Board took steps to suggest that the Act might be amended. Prior to that the board brought a deputation to me, and the members of the deputation explained the circumstances in which the board found itself and satisfied me completely of the bona fides of their desires. The Bill has been introduced to enable a local authority placed as South Perth was in that instance, to enter into such an arrangement with suitable safeguards which are contained in the measure.

Those safeguards are, firstly, that such an arrangement cannot be made unless the board has more than one hall under its control in its district. Obviously that is desirable because it ensures that there is a hall available, quite apart from such an arrangement as this, for the general public. Secondly, the arrangement shall be subject to the consent of the Minister. That, I think, will ensure that the circumstances of any case are of such a nature as to indicate that some valuable social or other public service to a considerable section of the community is to be rendered. I can hardly believe that in any other circumstances the consent of the Minister would be forthcoming. The third safeguard is that the committee of management of the organisation or association which is to manage the use of the hall, when so made available, is to have upon it two members of the board who will act, I should suggest, as watchdogs for the board and look after its interests as well as being liaison officers between the association concerned and the local authority.

Because it seems to me that this is a laudable desire on the part of the South Perth Road Board in this particular instance, and one which might be equally laudable on the part of any other local authority somewhat similarly placed, and that this desire is being frustrated by the

existing state of the law, I feel that the House should agree to the Bill. If it does not do so it is quite obvious that the arrangement which the South Perth Board has entered into, or desires to enter into, cannot be proceeded with. In that case, considerable hardship will be inflicted on a large section of the community who are public-spirited in character, and who have gone to much trouble in a voluntary way in raising sums of money to furnish and make useful for their purposes the premises which belong to the South Perth Road Board.

We should be the last people, provided the position is properly safeguarded, to prevent associations such as this, whose aim I am satisfied is the betterment of social conditions in a large portion of the South Perth area, from carrying out their legitimate desires. I intend to support the second reading of the Bill, and I say to the hon. member who introduced it that I think he has made an approach to the solution of the problem which is a very proper one. Had he come here with an amendment which provided no limitations upon the powers of the board in this regard, he would have immediately laid the Bill open to criticism. The way he has dealt with it should remove all cause for criticism and I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read, a second time.

In Committee.

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

MOTION—LAND SALES CONTROL ACT.

To Disallow Exemptions Regulation.

Debate resumed from the 21st October on the following motion by Hon. A. H. Panton:—

That Regulation No. 1, made under the Land Sales Control Act, 1948, and published in the "Government Gazette" of the 28th September, 1948, and laid upon the Table of the House on the 28th September, 1948, be and is hereby disallowed.

HON. A. H. PANTON (Leederville—in reply) [4.53]: The other evening the Minister for Education set out to give reasons why the motion for the disallowance of this regulation should not be carried. While

it was a very clever speech on the merits and demerits of the present situation, in my opinion what he had to say had little or nothing to do with the question before the Chair. When I moved for the disallowance of the regulation, it was not a matter of the merits or demerits of the regulations under the Land Sales Control Act, as to whether they were good, bad or indifferent. The whole issue I raised was as to whether this House had been told the facts at any time during its proceedings when dealing with the Land Sales Control Bill. My contention is that when the Minister introduced the legislation, we were given certain facts regarding the position and reasons were advanced later on why we should disagree to certain amendments proposed in another place.

The whole circumstances were such that this House was led to believe, in my opinion, that it was the intention of the Minister, and of the Government, to continue control in respect of land on which offices, flats and so forth were already erected. It has been stated, I think by the Minister for Education, that a definite announcement was made in another place as to the Government's intention. I submit that it is not the business of members of this House—particularly does it apply to members of the Opposition—to ascertain what is said by Ministers in another place. If that were to be the position, we would be continually in hot water, because on more than one occasion a Minister has made a statement in this House and one of his colleagues in another place has made quite a different statement on the same subject. We had an example of that the other night with regard to the Minister for Railways, who admitted that that was the position. Furthermore, the Bill was introduced one evening and it was dealt with the next day.

We went through the whole of the amendments proposed and a conference was held when the two Houses were not in agreement. The conference was not completed until about 5 o'clock on Friday morning. Thus, even if it had been our business to find out what was right or wrong in connection with the statements made by Ministers in this and another place, we had not the time to do so because "Hansard" was not published for nearly a week afterwards. If a mistake were made by someone, we had no opportunity of

finding out; but it certainly seemed that there had been a mistake because the Minister introduced the Bill here and subsequently, after a Cabinet meeting, an alteration was made in another place.

The Minister for Lands: That is correct and, as a matter of fact, I informed the member for North-East Fremantle what had happened.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: The member for North-East Fremantle is not running this side of the House!

The Minister for Lands: Quite so.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Why that hon. member should have received preference in regard to this information I do not know. I had secured the adjournment of the debate and I had undertaken most of the discussion. Yet I was not told anything about it.

The Minister for Lands: That is so.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: At any rate, the member for North-East Fremantle, if the the Minister informed him of the position, did not tell members on this side of the House what he had been told. A most remarkable fact is that although the Minister made certain statements in another place—what was stated has been confirmed on a perusal of "Hansard" at this late stage—is that the member who moved the amendments in another place must have known that it was the intention of the Government to decontrol the land I have referred to, or, at any rate, to exempt such premises from control. In spite of that, the hon. member moved his amendments, later on insisted upon them, and subsequently went into conference as one of the managers and fought for those amendments for a period of four and a half hours. I do not know what happened during the conference proceedings.

We have not been told what occurred there, but it is obvious to me that if the managers from another place went into conference with a full knowledge that what they were fighting for was really to be exempted, and that the Government intended to do what they were fighting to include, they must have indulged in some very fine shadow sparring. Why they kept us waiting about for 4½ hours, I do not know. I again submit that the arguments advanced by the Minister for Education

might have been quite good from the standpoint of the merits or demerits of particular regulations, but that was not what I was concerned with. The member for North-East Fremantle is now present in the Chamber, and the Minister for Lands has told us that he informed that hon. member of the position and that Cabinet had arrived at another decision.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Who said I was told that?

Hon. A. H. PANTON: The Minister for Lands said that he told the hon. member what had happened.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Nothing of the sort.

The Minister for Lands: Come clean!

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Nothing of the sort!

The Minister for Lands: I explained to the hon. member the position with regard to the increases on business premises.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I was not talking about that.

The Minister for Lands: I am speaking to the member for North-East Fremantle.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. A. H. PANTON: The Minister is not entitled to do that when I am speaking.

The Minister for Lands: I told the member for North-East Fremantle what had happened.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: What did you tell me?

The Minister for Lands: I spoke about the increase in respect of business premises and the exemptions under the regulations.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I was not dealing with that matter at all, but with the regulations which the Minister gazetted. He said he intended to allow another 15 per cent., bringing the total allowance up to 32 per cent.

The Minister for Lands: I want to make it clear that after the Cabinet decision, in justice to the Opposition, I told the member for North-East Fremantle that what I said in the House with respect to the increase had been altered.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: You did not do anything of the sort.

The Minister for Lands: All right, I will give you best.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Will you tell me the time you told me, and where?

The Minister for Lands: Do not be ridiculous. You are behaving like a school-boy.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: You will not be fair to me. Tell me what you told me.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: The Minister should be fair to Parliament. Whatever the outcome may be of this discussion between him and the member for North-East Fremantle, I suggest that in future he inform the House, and not a particular member.

The Minister for Lands: But I did not get the opportunity.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: That is a nice way to put it! The Minister says he did not have the opportunity. He had at least two opportunities, to my knowledge. When the amendment came down to this House from another place, if the Minister, instead of rising from his seat, throwing out his chest and saying, "I am going to oppose this amendment," had then said what was intended to be done, but was not done, we would have known where we were. But that was not done. We were like a lot of sheep led to slaughter. We waited for 4½ hours while the Minister and someone else went for a joy-ride with the managers at our expense.

The Minister for Lands: Actually, that is your complaint. You are not against the regulation?

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Yes, I am, otherwise I would not have applauded the Minister when he was fiercely fighting it. With regard to the remarks of the member for Maylands, I do not think I have any apology to offer to members of the Real Estate Institute. I simply said they ought to have a champagne supper. As a matter of fact, I have many friends amongst them and talked the Bill over with them. I do not think they have any complaint against me. I suggest to the Minister that he take the advice of the member for Maylands and withdraw this regulation and accept the others.

The Minister for Lands: Every other State in the Commonwealth—

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I am not interested in the other States. The Minister definitely said that we were doing what Vic-

toria and New South Wales had done, exempting vacant land in the metropolitan-suburban area and in country towns.

The Minister for Lands: Yes.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: We now find that members opposite have suddenly changed. They now want to do what the other States are doing, but when they were on this side of the House that was not the case. The member for Nedlands particularly opposed our copying the other States. He said that we should run our own show. We are quite capable of running it now, too. There is nothing to prevent the Minister gazetting fresh regulations, omitting the regulation which I am asking the House to disallow. I would suggest that we devise some method by which, after a Minister has introduced a Bill in this House, we can follow it up in order to ascertain that the Minister in the Upper House does not say something different from what the Minister in this House said. My experience as a member of the Cabinet for eight or nine years was that each Minister knew what the other intended to do. There was co-ordination in the Cabinet and I suggest to the Premier that he discipline the members of his Cabinet.

The Minister for Lands: You were hard to discipline when you were on this side of the House.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: My Premier knew how to discipline the members of his Cabinet. We had a set of rules by which we abided. One Cabinet Minister knew what the other was doing. Our Premier insisted on that, and he was right in doing so. I appeal to the House to disallow the regulations. It is all nonsense to assert that we were not led up the garden path. We were!

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

Ayes	21
Noes	21

A tie.

AYES.	
Mr. Brady	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Panton
Mr. Fox	Mr. Read
Mr. Graham	Mr. Reynolds
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Hegney	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Smith
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Styants
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. May	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Needham	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. McLarty
Mr. Ackland	Mr. Murray
Mr. Bovell	Mr. Nalder
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Seward
Mr. Doney	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Watts
Mr. Hill	Mr. Wild
Mr. Leslie	Mr. Yates
Mr. Mann	Mr. Brand
Mr. McDonald	

(Teller.)

Mr. SPEAKER: The voting being equal, I give my casting vote with the noes.

Question thus negatived; the motion defeated.

BILL—BUILDERS' REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council with amendments.

BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. HEGNEY (Pilbara) [5.10]: I propose to offer a few comments on the Bill. I disagree with the member for Murchison that there is no necessity for the appointment of more than one Commissioner because one-man control operates largely in the Eastern States. I do not believe we should blindly follow the policy adopted for the management of railways in other parts of Australia if the circumstances are such that some radical alteration in the control of our own system, or of any other State instrumentality, is warranted. Every member will agree that our system today is in such a condition as to make any other system of control worthy of a trial. True, one-man control has operated since the parent Act was passed, but no-one can deny the fact that there is lack of goodwill and co-operation between the various branches of the railway staff. If Parliament can do anything to reduce, if not entirely eliminate, that lack of co-operation, the onus is upon us to do so.

The three main provisions of the Bill deal with the appointment of an advisory board, an increase in the number of commissioners from one to three, and the placing of the ultimate control of the railways under the Minister. The advisory board, in my opinion, will be entirely innocuous. It will serve no good purpose, as I indicated when

speaking to the Prices Control Bill. In the final analysis the advisory board, so far as I can see, will have no plenary or statutory power; it will only be able to advise the Minister on matters affecting the control and management of the railways, despite the fact that the three commissioners may not agree with its views.

The members of the board will include representatives of certain interests—agriculture, commerce and labour. I would like the Minister, when replying, to explain what the functions of the board will be. I notice a very short provision towards the end of the Bill setting out what the advisory board may do, but, as I said, I believe it will serve no good purpose, particularly if the number of commissioners is increased from one to three.

The advisory board is to be on a part-time basis. A member of the farming community from Kondinin or Mukinbudin or some other outlying portion of our agricultural districts may be appointed to it. A member of one of the railway unions, who may be stationed at Meekatharra or Wiluna or some other distant place, may also be appointed. It will be incumbent on those representatives, when a meeting of the board is called, to leave their place of business or employment and come to the metropolitan area. How often are meetings to be held? It is the intention that the board shall meet regularly once a week or once a fortnight, or will it meet once a quarter or once a year? What are its functions to be? Would it in any way be in a position to over-ride the powers and jurisdiction of the commissioners? Those are points I would like cleared up.

I now come to the question of the appointment of the three commissioners. I am in favour of the appointment of three commissioners and expressed this view when the previous Bill was introduced. The previous Bill contained a provision for five commissioners; but when the position was examined, it was found, as far as my memory serves me, that three would be on a more or less part-time basis. I do not think that would have lent itself to efficient management, and I was pleased that the Bill was not passed. One of the reasons I believe the advisory board should be eliminated is that it is proposed to appoint three commissioners, one of whom shall be regarded as the chief commissioner, and shall

be well-versed in the management, control and conduct of the railway system; another of whom must have had considerable experience in commerce and other phases of industry—

The Minister for Railways: No, of the railways.

Mr. HEGNEY: Of the accounts section of the railways. The third is to be a qualified engineer. I have handed in an amendment to the proposal outlined—it does not appear on the notice-paper—the object of which is to alter the status or category of the second commissioner who is required to be a qualified engineer. I believe that he should be a member of one of the organisations enumerated in the previous part of the Bill and should have a comprehensive knowledge of labour and industrial matters. I quite agree with a remark I recall having been made by the member for Roebourne, when the previous Bill was discussed, to the effect that it is not essential for a commissioner to be a qualified engineer.

If we have efficient administrators as commissioners, they will have under them qualified engineers and electricians, and men competent to deal with other branches and departments of the railway service. I would like to know what type of qualified engineer it is proposed to appoint. Is he to be an electrical engineer or a mechanical engineer or a construction engineer? There are different kinds of engineers. In order to be qualified, is he to have a university degree or must he only have served an apprenticeship as a fitter or turner or in another branch of the iron trade? These matters require clearing up.

The main reason I urge the Minister to alter the requirements of the second commissioner to provide for his being a person well-versed in industrial matters instead of a qualified engineer is that it does not matter whether the present system of single control operates or whether we have three commissioners: if there is not a direct representative or spokesman for the 5,000 to 6,000 workers in the railway system, the Minister, I regret to say, is not likely to obtain that measure of goodwill and co-operation and complete understanding which is essential with those men who are employed in the various branches of the railway service. He knows and every member knows, that there is a complete lack

of goodwill and mutual understanding which are necessary for the efficient conduct of the railways. I am not going to blame the Commissioner or the basic wage worker. Suffice to say that indifference and apathy exist from the top to the bottom, and if we can do anything to obviate that and improve the position, we shall bring about a better feeling amongst the whole of the workers in the railway system and the executive staff.

I know—and it is no use anybody denying it—that in the workshops there is a great amount of indifference amongst the tradesmen and workmen generally because things are being done in a most inefficient manner. I understand that whereas previously foremen had complete authority over the tradesmen under them, a great deal of that authority has been taken away and they are foremen in name only, and consequently a number of foremen have not that interest and enthusiasm which are necessary for smooth working. It stands to reason that if there is a certain amount of inefficiency or indifference at the top, it will percolate to the bottom; and that is the position today. I am not dealing with the state of the rollingstock but with the personal factor.

It does not matter what men we get to control the railways, if we do not capture that goodwill on the part of the mass of the workers—from enginedrivers and other men in the traffic section and in the workshop section and so on—the appointment of three commissioners will do little to alleviate the existing situation. That is how I see it. If the enginedrivers, and the people in the traffic branch, and the men in the workshop, and the fitters, and those in other sections of the railway service know that they have a representative on the board of directors, as it were—somebody who understands their position, to whom they can go and who will go to them direct and who, without red tape or formalities, will iron out a lot of the grievances and misunderstandings that exist—there must be an improvement eventually; there must be that enthusiasm and co-operation engendered in the minds of the workers which are entirely absent today.

I have said before, and I repeat, that antipathy between the unions and the work-

men on the one hand and the executive of the department on the other is more pronounced in the railway system than in any of the other Government services of which I have had experience. I have had dealings with the Railway Department, the Forests Department, the Lands Department, the Public Works Department and a number of others, and was a member of the State Disputes Committee of the A.L.P.; and I assure members that when negotiations take place between the Railway Department executive and the workmen's organisation, the atmosphere can be felt with a 40-foot pole. I have the keenest sympathy for the Minister. Whoever occupies the position of Minister for Railways has a very onerous task to perform; but I sincerely believe that if the suggestion I have outlined were adopted, it would prove worthwhile before many years had passed.

I feel certain the Minister knows there is no mutual understanding or give and take between the various sections of the railway service. In passing, I would say that some people are apt to blame the engine-drivers for trains not running on time; but from my personal knowledge of a number of engine-drivers I can assure members that many of them are not in a good state of health. Their health has been undermined because of the hours they have worked, the irregular hours to which they are subjected, the inconvenient mealtimes by which they have to abide, and the state of the rolling-stock. It is no wonder that the nerves of a lot of them are on edge. They performed a wonderful service through the war period, and many of them have just about "had it." If the Minister will have a look at the turnover of labour amongst the younger element in the running section, he will find that the position is worth investigating.

Everybody is entitled to alter his opinion if the position warrants, and I am very pleased to know that the Minister has seen fit to include a provision for ministerial control. Previously he indicated that he did not approve, and neither did the Government approve, of ministerial control. I think it was two years ago that the Minister for Railways in a previous Government introduced a Bill to provide for ministerial control of the railways, and that was defeated. Despite all the prattle about

political control, I believe that the Minister is responsible to his Cabinet and to Parliament. The railways are a State instrumentality and, that being the case, I do not think it fair for any Cabinet to appoint a Minister for Railways if he has not the necessary jurisdiction in matters of policy.

So I hope the House will agree to the provision for ministerial control, and that another place will pass the measure in that form. I know that previous Ministers have been approached on certain subjects, but they have indicated that they have not had authority to instruct the Commissioner except on particular matters of policy. I think the Minister for Railways should have the same power, authority and jurisdiction as are possessed by the Minister for Work, the Minister for Education, the Minister for Lands, and other Ministers. My remarks with regard to the personal or human factor are not extravagant, because reference to that aspect of railway control has been made in the report of the Royal Commissioners.

I honestly believe that if this Parliament gives to the railway workers a very concrete and positive indication that it believes the workers should have representation on the board of management, that will go a long way towards removing the antagonism—and I use that word because in many cases there is antagonism—and apathy and indifference that exist in the department. If the men who have to take their coats off and do the job are told that the Government is prepared to give them a voice in the management, they will pull their weight, as they have done in the past, and will do their utmost to bring the railway system of Western Australia up to a proper level.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [5.28]: I do not intend to speak at any great length on this Bill, because we all expressed our views fairly thoroughly when a similar measure was before the House last session. The main provisions of the Bill appear to come under four headings: The alteration of control by one commissioner to control by three commissioners; the appointment of an advisory board; finance; and the clearing up of the vexed question of whether the commissioners should be under the direction of the Minister, for all

material purposes. Dealing first with the proposal to have three commissioners instead of one, I think it is very doubtful whether any great advantage is going to be derived from that change. I do not know exactly what the set-up will be. Is it the intention, as one of these commissioners must be a qualified engineer, to abolish the position of Chief Mechanical Engineer? As one of the commissioners must have a thorough knowledge of the administration and traffic sides of railway work, is it proposed to do away with the Chief Traffic Manager?

I think we have something closely approximating three commissioners in our present set-up. We have the Commissioner, the Chief Traffic Manager—a man well versed in the running and administration of traffic control—and the Chief Mechanical Engineer, who is in charge of the mechanical side of the railways. In addition, we have the C.C.E. in charge of the other portion of the railway engineering work. I hope that in his reply the Minister will tell members whether it is proposed to have three commissioners in addition to the present set-up of the C.C.E., C.M.E. and Chief Traffic Manager. I do not think there would be any great advantage to be derived from having more than one Commissioner of Railways. I believe we have sufficient administration in the single-unit control and that the addition of two further commissioners would not add at all to the efficiency of the railways.

It is not lack of administrators that has caused the trouble with our railways and I do not think it is lack of efficiency in the administration either. Rather is it the obsolete plant that the staff have been given with which to perform their work. As I have often said in this House, it is just as illogical to expect a first-class railway service with the locomotives and rolling-stock that we have given our railways staff as it would be to place a 1914 model motor truck in the hands of a driver and expect to get from him the same service as would be obtained if he were given a 1947 or 1948 model motor truck. We have a thoroughly competent railway staff but have given them such obsolete plant to operate that they find it absolutely impossible to provide a decent service for the public.

I am of the same opinion as the member for Pilbara with regard to the advisory board. It will have no statutory powers,

and all it will be able to do will be to give certain advice in a purely advisory capacity. On what is it to advise the board of commissioners? Again I say that everything that could be done by an advisory board is already provided for in the present set-up of the Railway Department. Take, for instance, the man who is to have a thorough knowledge of commerce and agriculture! He could not tell the commissioners anything that would make for more efficient service. I feel it is impossible to get a better set-up than we have in the Railway Department at present.

We do not want an agricultural or commercial expert to tell the board of commissioners that a certain amount of traffic will be available for lifting in the coming season, as they would already have that information from other departments. In our Railway Department there is a system by which the Controller can tell where every train is within a section—and the sections vary from three to 10 or 15 miles—at any given time. The set-up between the district superintendents, the stationmasters and the control office in Perth would indicate to the Commissioner or the Chief Traffic Manager, as the case might be, where every truck in the service was at a given time and how much traffic was to be lifted from each siding.

What the advisory board would advise the commissioners on is a mystery to me. Is it to advise that another 30 or 40 locomotives are wanted, or that a different class of locomotive is required? It would not be for that purpose, because it would not know as much as would the board of commissioners about that subject. Seeing that it is to be simply an advisory board, it will not be composed of skilled railwaymen and will not be able to give to the commissioners any information or advice that is not already available from established authorities. I therefore do not think any advantage could be gained from such an advisory board.

I have for many years drawn the attention of the House to the fact that in my opinion the financial statements we get from the Railway Department each year are simply accounts of receipts and expenditure, and nothing else. They do not show the true financial position of the railways in any shape or form. They do not take into account certain commitments that the Railway Department should have debited against it, such as the exchange rate on interest on

oversea loans from which most of the railway financing has been done, and they do not give the Railway Department credit for many of the services that it renders in a gratuitous capacity.

I come now to the question of ministerial control. On different occasions I have taken a great deal of time to point out to the House that this question is 99 per cent. covered already. I have always been of opinion that in at least that percentage of the matters that are of real importance, the Commissioner of Railways is definitely under the direction of the Minister for Railways. It is true that in one section of the Government Railways Act it is laid down that the administration and working of the railways will be vested in the Commissioner, but there is a tag on that which says, "Subject to the provisions of this Act."

A great portion of the Act sets out the different matters in which the Commissioner has authority, subject to the Minister for Railways. The Royal Commissioners were of the same opinion. It is clearly stated in their report that, as regards a large percentage of the operations of the Railway Department, the Commissioner is under the jurisdiction of the Minister. The present Commissioner, Mr. Ellis, when giving evidence before the Royal Commission, said, "Obviously, the intention of the Act is to place the Commissioner free from political influence." Mr. Ellis has always taken up the attitude that he was a free-lance, but let us see what the Royal Commissioners thought about it. At page 56 of their report, they say—

Control and Administration of Railways. Statutory Provisions.

We have given close attention to the statutory provisions under which the railways are controlled and administered. The main provision is Section 4 of the Government Railways Act, 1904, which stipulates that all Government railways shall be vested in the Minister for Railways, on behalf of His Majesty. Under the provisions of the Government Railways Act, 1904-1939, Ministerial and Parliamentary control of the railways covers the following matters, viz.:—

Sections 7 and 13:—The appointment, supervision and removal from office of the Commissioner of Railways is subject to the approval of Parliament.

Section 24 (1) and (2):—The making of bylaws for the working of the railways generally, regulating the traffic on them and the conduct of all persons employed on or travelling on the railways: Control in this section is

exercised by virtue of the fact that all bylaws require to be laid before both Houses of Parliament, which may, if it sees fit, disallow any bylaw.

Which means that, even within that very wide scope, any alteration the Commissioner wishes to make has to be done per medium of regulations that must come before both this House and another place, either of which has the right to disallow any of those regulations. The report continues—

Section 57 (2):—The letting on lease of any portion of a railway, with the rollingstock and other appurtenances thereto belonging, to any person willing to take and work the same: The terms and conditions of the lease must be laid before Parliament not less than 30 days before tenders are called for.

That is another instance where the Commissioner is subject to the approval of Parliament.

Control is exercised by Parliament in respect of finance as represented by the provision for departmental requirements contained in the annual Estimates of Revenue and Loan Expenditure submitted to Parliament by the Hon. the Treasurer.

Section 16 (Part 3):—The onus of management of the Railways by the Commissioner is "subject to the provisions of this Act."

That is the point I have always tried to stress—that although one part of the Government Railways Act places the management, administration and working of the railways in the hands of the Commissioner, that is always subject to the Act, which also provides in great detail and on numerous occasions that certain things shall be subject to the approval of the Minister.

Other sections of the Act laying down that the Commissioner's powers and authorities are subject to the approval of the Minister for Railways are as follows:—

Section 17:—The making of additions and improvements to any railways.

If the Commissioner wants to make any additions or improvements, he must obtain the approval of the Minister for Railways.

Section 21:—The use, in addition to or in substitution for any existing motive or traction power, of any system of electric or other traction of which the Minister may approve, and may maintain, repair and use all works necessary for such system of electric or other traction.

If the Commissioner of Railways desired to employ electric tractive power for the railways, such a change would be subject to the approval of the Minister, as would also a change to any other form of motive or tractive power.

Section 22:—The fixing, from time to time, of the scales of charges to be paid for services performed by the Railways.

That is one of the most important functions vested in the Commissioner, but it is subject to the over-riding provision which says, in effect, that in the event of the Minister not approving of the schedule of fares and charges decided upon by the Commissioner, the Minister has authority to get out a schedule of freights and fares, and it shall take precedence over that issued by the Commissioner. In that very important matter of tariffs the Minister has the over-riding authority.

Section 58:—The letting on lease, for any purpose approved by him, of any land belonging to any railway but not required for railway purposes, and any buildings, workshops or other erections thereon.

If the Commissioner has any land that he considers he does not require for the time being, whether there are buildings on it or not, and if he wishes to let or lease it, his decision is subject to the approval of the Minister.

Section 60:—Entering into agreements or contracts with any person, providing that such person may for a period not exceeding 12 months, use any works, buildings, wharves and jetties constructed and used in connection with a railway.

That provision is similar to the preceding one, and there again the decision of the Commissioner is subject to the approval of the Minister.

Section 61:—Agreeing that any person may lay down any tramway or line of rail in or upon any wharf, quay or dock, or upon any land vested in any such person, for the conveyance of goods and passengers to and from a railway. For the use of machines and appliances belonging to any such person, and for the conveyance or booking through to their destination on a railway, the passengers' or luggage carried or conveyed by the steamers, coaches, or other conveyances of any such person.

Section 62:—Granting of easements in, upon, through, over or under any railway land.

On one occasion the Kurrawang Firewood Company wanted to cross the Government line but the Commissioner did not have the power to grant this without the approval of the Minister for Railways.

Sections 23 and 24:—The Commissioner is empowered to make bylaws upon various subjects subject, however, to the limitation that no bylaws made under Section 23 shall have any force or effect unless they have been approved by the Governor and published in the "Government Gazette."

That is the opinion of the Royal Commissioner in regard to the power that is exercised by the Minister over the Commissioner of Railways at the present time. But assuming that the Minister has 90 per cent. of power over the Commissioner, it would appear, at least with the last three Ministers for Railways, that the remaining 10 per cent. has been an obstacle which they have found difficult to surmount so far as their dealings with that official are concerned. For the purpose of determining once and for all that the Commissioner shall in all matters be under the jurisdiction of the Minister, I give my support to that portion of the Bill.

Much criticism has been levelled at the condition of our railways today. I do not think that such condition is the result of recent occurrences at all. I believe that to a great extent the present condition of our railways can be attributed to the fact that they were put down in a shoddy manner in the first instance. When gold was found in Western Australia there were over 800 miles of railway built in a period of five years, and from 1908 to 1914 there was an enormous expansion in mileages of railway open for traffic. It was not a matter of ensuring that a first class job was carried out but rather a question of setting up as quickly as possible transport communication between the various centres. During the period the lines were being laid adequate financial supervision was not exercised to ensure the provision of all those facilities and appurtenances necessary for the successful working of railways. The fact that the 4,380 miles of line were laid at a cost of £6,158 per mile is some indication that it was a shoddy job. I suppose it was the cheapest railway construction in Australia and I might even say in the world. It is no wonder, then, that the railways did not stand up to the hard work and usage to which they have been subjected.

It is unreasonable to expect that without heavy maintenance and renewals, lines which were laid so cheaply would do other than deteriorate rapidly. The cost per mile of £6,158 included rollingstock, locomotives, station buildings and everything that goes with a railway. Adverse criticism has been levelled, and with justification, at the deplorable service given to the public. That applies not only to the goods trains but also

to the passenger trains. I know that frequently in Kalgoorlie, which is served by the Eastern Goldfields line, the whole commercial life of the district is disorganised by the unpunctuality of the trains. It is not just a matter of one hour; they run five and six hours late. People expecting commodities do not receive them on time and those desirous of replying to mails are subjected to great inconvenience because of the inefficient service. I am aware that in 90 per cent. of instances the locomotives are blamed, but that is a greatly exaggerated percentage of engine failures. There are a lot of other causes for the late running of trains.

The Premier: Tell us about them.

Mr. STYANTS: We go back to the time when the co-ordination of transport legislation was introduced. Prior to that there was a small amount of roadside and goods traffic being carried by motor transport and when that was prohibited very often an additional van was put on a passenger or express train for the purpose of carrying this excess traffic. However, no additional assistance was given to the guard and the consequence is—the Premier can check on this if he rides on the Kalgoorlie express—that whereas it was customary to allow a period of a minute for slowing down and starting again it is now nearer three minutes. If that delay occurs at all the stations between Perth and Kalgoorlie—unless the engine makes up time—it will mean that the trains will always be hours late. There is one station in particular where the train is scheduled to stop for two minutes but it never leaves that station inside seven or eight minutes. This all goes on to the traffic, and the staff and guard are forced to work at top pressure.

There was a time when the driver had his own locomotive and he could then make up the leeway because he took a pride in his engine. I have frequently found that an hour and a quarter was made up from Southern Cross to Kalgoorlie, but a driver could not do it now because often he goes out on the journey with his engine not more than 75 or 80 per cent. efficient. For instance, the engine on the Kalgoorlie express previously came off at Southern Cross, but now it is taken off at Merredin and frequently it will come through to Perth. When the engine is taken off at Merredin it is

often found that the next day it is working a wheat train somewhere along a loop line. It will come back into the shed after the mechanics have knocked off and unless it is a major job the men will not bother about effecting any necessary repairs. It would then commence its 180 mile journey to Kalgoorlie and before it had gone 50 or 60 miles it might be only 50 per cent. efficient. Therefore, the drivers have no possible chance of making up time now because their engines in many instances are not more than 80 per cent. efficient.

Having worked on engines for a period of 25 years I have had long experience of them. The drivers' hearts and the firemen's backs are broken trying to run the service. When a driver is on time he feels just as much pride and pleasure in the fact as do the public, and he is always trying his hardest to run the train to schedule. However, when drivers get an engine they know is inefficient and they run along a certain distance and then have a total failure, nothing disgusts them more and hurts their pride more. Take the firemen working under similar conditions! It was thought we were going to have a wonderful performance when oil fuel was introduced, but I think they have as much difficulty now with oil fuel as they had with coal fuel. During the war period the firemen worked hard under abominable conditions. They toiled long hours and had very indifferent coal. Those who saw the conditions of mining at the Stockton open-cut where the men were blowing down about 14 inches of shale and putting it straight into the trucks without screening, will have an idea of the difficult circumstances under which the service was worked. There was first one disability and then another.

Then we got the ASG engines. They will never give good service, and are breaking down all over the country. There are only about 10 in service although they have been reconditioned. If it were not for the desperate need for tractive power it would pay the Government to scrap them if it could replace them with other locomotives. It is an uneconomical engine and gives indifferent service. It is running poor mileages and because of its shoddy nature and, as pointed out by the Royal Commission, because of its construction in the first place, it will never give satisfaction. I realise

that the Commissioner and the Minister have to keep these engines in service because there is no other tractive power to take their place.

Many of the failures with engines are due to tinkering with the original design. We had that taking place here some years ago. I mentioned it in this House some 12 or 13 years ago, but was told I was only a driver and did not know much about the engineering side of it. However, in connection with the E class engines my words came true. They were scientifically designed and balanced to carry a 17-inch saturated steam cylinder. Someone got a brain wave to superheat them, not with a 17-inch cylinder, but with a 19-inch superheated cylinder, with the result that broken frames occurred, they were over-powered and were most expensive to keep in repair.

The authorities admitted the mistake. Those engines had too much power for the strength of the framing. I do not know whether it is a case of over-strength with the Garratts, or a case of poor material but 14 of them have broken their framing. They were almost new engines so it would not be fatigue that would cause them to break down. There has been wholesale tinkering with the original design of the engine. In many cases the removal of the circulating valve has held up locomotives for weeks at a time. The engineers realised that it was a mistake and are now putting back the circulating valve on the super-heated engines.

The latest bit of tinkering has been to install the cyclone spark-arrester. In order to get it working, they are now tinkering with the original design of the engines in that they are reducing the exhaust nozzle cavity by 21 per cent. This means one of two things—either that the designers of the locomotives provided too great an exhaust nozzle cavity or else our engineers, in order to make a success of the cyclone spark-arrester, have reduced it too much. In my opinion the reduction of the exhaust cavity must inevitably lead to trouble, because what was known as “jimmying” the exhaust cavity by allowing it to be reduced by any unauthorised person has always been frowned upon. The fact that the engine steams satisfactorily with the original exhaust cavity scientifically provided by the designer is an indication that it was the correct exhaust cavity, but now, in order to

continue the use of the cyclone spark-arrester, our engineers are making an experiment by reducing the exhaust cavity 21 per cent.

Thus there are many things that are responsible for the inefficiency of our locomotives. It is not altogether obsolescence; too many people are making experiments. If one interviewed not only the drivers, but also the leading mechanics in the out depots and asked them their opinion of the removal of the circulating valve, and what would probably happen as a result of reducing the exhaust cavity, as well as of many other experiments that have been made, they would reply that tens of thousands of engine hours had been lost to the State through these experiments. We have had experience of the burning out of super-heating elements and that sort of trouble—things that did not occur 15 or 20 years ago, but they are common occurrences today. That is why our engines are breaking down, why we require to have four locomotives on the train between Perth and Kalgoorlie and at times three on the Australind. Once a U class engine breaks down and another class has to be substituted, it usually breaks down also.

I had not intended to deal with these aspects on this occasion because they are matters that can be discussed when the Railway Estimates are being considered. The Bill does not provide for any smaller administration changes, but there is a matter that has been brought under my notice and should be mentioned because, in my opinion, it will not make for a contented service or for amicable working on the part of the staff. I refer to the intention of the Commissioner of Railways to insist that once a driver has reached the first-class grade, he shall be at a dead end and ineligible for promotion.

I remember that 30 years ago this question was very much to the fore and an agreement was made between the then Commissioner, the Chief Mechanical Engineer and the Locomotive Drivers' Union that positions such as running shed foreman and district loco superintendent should form the natural channel of promotion for drivers. While I have the greatest possible respect for the mechanics, I maintain that when it comes to a question of administering the running conditions of a depot, they

do not know much about the work. The driver is the man that knows.

The Minister for Railways: There is nothing in the Bill about that.

Mr. STYANTS: No, but this is a departure that the three commissioners will probably bring into operation. I think a decision has already been made to give effect to it. It was a recommendation of the Royal Commission that all the administrative positions in the running sheds should be filled by members of the mechanical staff.

The Minister for Railways: That is a matter for the determination of the new management.

Mr. STYANTS: In addition, men who have already been appointed to administrative positions such as shed foreman will be passed over by men with no experience at all.

The Minister for Works: You do not know that.

Mr. STYANTS: I do.

The Minister for Railways: You cannot know. The new management has not yet been appointed.

Mr. STYANTS: If the Minister for Works knew as much about this matter as does the Minister for Railways, he would not have made that interjection. What I have stated is an absolute fact. If the departure has not already been made, it has been decided upon. There have been deputations from the Railway Officers' Union, to which the ex-drivers belong—I do not know whether the Minister has received any of them—but strong protests have been voiced against the Commissioner's intention to bring this change into operation. The Minister can imagine what discontent that will cause in the service. Men have qualified for these positions. They must have additional qualifications, such as a knowledge of timetables and rostering before they are eligible for appointment. Some of them have been appointed, and because of the recommendation of the Royal Commission that these positions should be filled from the mechanical staff, the ex-drivers find that what they looked forward to and worked to qualify for is to be denied them. Having got a foot on the ladder leading to promotion, the ladder has been swept away and there is to be no promotion for them.

I believe that in mechanical matters, a mechanic should be in the administrative position, but when it comes to supervising the running of trains and the running section of the loco. department, the position is essentially one for a driver. That is all I have to say. When the Railway Estimates are before us, or possibly while we are dealing with the General Estimates, it will be possible to consider a number of the recommendations made by the Royal Commission. I do not think the appointment of three commissioners or an advisory board will effect any great improvement. I certainly approve of the proposals in regard to the finances of the railways, because the Commissioner of Railways is the largest employer of labour in the State, and I think there should be a greater check on the finances of the railways than there has been.

I support the idea of placing the Commissioner definitely under the control of the Minister, because as he is operating with public moneys he should be responsible to the Minister, who should be responsible to Parliament which, in turn, is responsible to the people. I do not think many people would approve of the finances of the railways going on as they have in the past. I have no great objection to the appointment of three commissioners, but it does appear that if we agree to this we commit ourselves to something for life, because these men will be appointed for life. It will be of no use saying, "We shall give it a trial for three or five years," because these men will be commissioners and assistant commissioners of railways until they reach the age of 65.

It would be somewhat difficult to say, after five years, that we did not want to continue the system, because it would be very hard as far as the status and appointment of those men were concerned, to revert to one-man control. I do not think the advisory board will be responsible for any improvements, but we can give it a trial, and if it is found not to be satisfactory it can be altered. Generally, I approve of the provisions in the Bill, and I intend to support it.

MR. SMITH (Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [6.10]: My first reaction when I saw the Bill was that the mountain had laboured

and brought forth a mouse. I do not think the measure will improve the existing set-up in any way. In some respects it will, in all probability, make it much worse. After all the expense of the Royal Commission, the boosting of it and the superiority complex of one of the Commissioners, this Bill is the result. I do not think much of it! By way of apology for the Royal Commission, the Minister said that the cost of it had been amply repaid because its findings revealed the bad state of the railways. The Royal Commission did no such thing. The state of the railways was not revealed by it. There was nothing discovered by the Royal Commission that our own Commissioner could not have disclosed in detail—and nothing, as a matter of fact, that he has not actually or inferentially disclosed in his reports from time to time. Indeed, most of the matter contained in the Royal Commission's report is based on evidence given by the Commissioner of Railways and his chiefs of staff.

I know that there are some references in the report to certain matters, and to opinions formed by the Royal Commissioners from their own observations—such as references to deteriorated structures, lack of painting and room for organisational improvement in the workshops. But we can go to any railway system in Australia and find that the same criticism can be levelled. Take a trip from Melbourne to Port Melbourne and see the wrecks of railway stations that are doing service on that line! Or take a trip from Melbourne to Geelong and see the same or similar conditions of the railway stations on that section, and then compare them with the condition of the railway stations in many parts of this State! I think that the state of our railway structures, in respect to their appearance and maintenance, is the result of a policy that has been in operation for many years, and which was first inaugurated by Commissioner Pope—a policy of “no paint.” It was probably forced upon him by financial considerations and the necessity to spend such money as was available on more important things than the maintenance of structures or the painting of them.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. SMITH: I was talking about the lack of paint and the deterioration of structures referred to by the Royal Commission. The members of the Commission also referred to the need for better organisation at the Midland Junction workshops, but in doing that they raised a matter in connection with which a great deal of private enterprise would be found to be vulnerable. I know of a big rubber factory in Victoria which, because of the fact that it has grown up piece-meal and has been added to from time to time, is the materialisation of muddle in respect to factory organisation. Another rubber factory started in Victoria some years ago and was successful in attracting to it some of the leading operatives from the other factory to which I have referred. This new factory, with the experience of the old, avoided all the mistakes of the old factory. Its mistakes were inevitable and unavoidable, and the members of that factory are well aware of them and have plans in hand at this moment for building up a new organisation altogether in which the various processes connected with rubber manufacture will be brought closely together. This will enable the material to be passed from one part of the factory to another instead of from here to half a mile away, as exists at present.

So when we are condemning the Midland Junction workshops, we must remember that the same condition prevails in many private organisations, particularly those that have grown up under the conditions that have existed in our railway system in this State. I read a leading article referring to this Bill in “The West Australian” recently. I think “The West Australian” was partly right and almost wholly right when it said that no evidence had been produced to show that the sorry state of the railways today is not of political origin rather than administrative origin. Against that it can be said that railways all over the world in the last 40 or 50 years have experienced, and have revealed, in a deterioration of their assets and revenues, characteristics that are inherent and almost inevitable.

Railway companies in Great Britain had amalgamation forced upon them by circumstances long before the last war. In the United States of America from 1920 to 1930, railway companies were reduced by

amalgamations from 1,550 to 823. Goodness knows how many reductions have taken place since then. In 1935, according to a report made by Lieut.-Col. J. Northcott, the number of railway companies in the United States in receivership or seeking reorganisation under the Bankruptcy Act, was higher than at any previous date in railway history. Failure of most of them was reported by the Interstate Commerce Commission to be due primarily to loss of traffic and to competing transport services both private and public.

The evidence collected by Lieut.-Col. Northcott indicates that our experiences are not unusual. It shows that the experience that we have had as regards our railways in this State is almost universal. Our railways lost the best of their goods traffic to competitors before we had the State Transport Co-ordination Act, and since we have had that Act it has got back only such of it as cannot evade the provisions of that Act. In Canada, according to Lieut.-Col. Northcott, the railways had identical experiences. He says in his report, which was made long before the war, that the serious financial situation of the railways in Canada constituted one of their major problems. So this evidence and these facts show that the inherent characteristics of railways, that have been responsible for experiences almost world-wide, are bedded in the fact, in my opinion, that the equipment necessary to operate them involves heavy capital expenditure. One does not have to be a railway man to appreciate that unless fares and freights are struck to provide, not only interest on capital outlay and depreciation, but also heavy obsolescence, then railway systems, in a comparatively early stage of their history will be saddled with out-of-date rollingstock and the necessity of using locomotives that are long past their real period of usefulness.

That has been our experience in this State. Rapid improvements not only in competing forms of transport but also in transport equipment generally, make a financially starved railway system inevitable with a growing incapacity to compete through its increasing inability to render satisfactory service. One of the Royal Commissioners paid a visit to Victoria. He went over there to look at the Spirit of Progress. This is the train that cost the Victorian railway system £250,000; a quar-

ter of a million, a train that because of its high speed needed greatly increased maintenance of the permanent way. However, this Commissioner was not impressed by the Spirit of Progress. He said "You ought to see our Blue Train running between Cape Town and Johannesburg." The fact of the matter is that the Spirit of Progress has been ten years on the road and although it cost £250,000, it is entering a period where it is becoming out of date, not as up to date as many much newer trains that can be found on railway systems. There is a lesson to be learned from the Spirit of Progress, and that is in the vast capital outlay for the train and the fact that it has become out of date in a decade, or, if not out of date, it is declining in comparison with more up-to-date trains, both in respect to its speed and the service that it renders to the public.

The same, of course, can be said with regard to locomotives. Although it has been stated on good authority that a locomotive is out of date the day it is put on the track and that its life is 30 years, provided one-fifth of its capital cost is spent each year on its maintenance, we have in our railways many old and obsolescent types of locomotives still in service due to the fact that they cannot be scrapped until they can be replaced. There is probably a good reason for that fact but in Appendix A of the Royal Commissioner's report there is a table relating to the age of 391 locomotives in the service. Those 391 locomotives seem to me to be the number of locomotives that we have in the service. I gathered from the report that 20 of them were purchased between some unknown date and 1898; 205 were purchased between 1898 and 1908 and 106 were purchased between 1908 and 1918. Evidently the period from this unknown date until 1918, could rightly be referred to as the locomotive purchasing era of the railways.

Just imagine the situation: 331 of the 391 locomotives which are available, were purchased from 1898 to 1918 and only 60 have been purchased since then! At least 16 of those 60 are over 20 years old. What can we expect from the railways in such circumstances? Railway trucks and carriages are still used that were first put into service before the birth of our oldest inhabitant. Only the use of funds that were not available could possibly have improved the tare to the

gross weight of trucks, or fitted them for greater efficiency with ball bearings. Take the position regarding the 4-berth type of first class sleeping carriage. It can be said that for traffic purposes such carriages are as good today as when they were first operated. They may not run as smoothly as they did when first put on the rails but still are quite satisfactory for traffic.

On the other hand, as a medium of public service, they should have been scrapped 20 years ago, if their competitive efficiency were to be maintained. What has been the capital cost of that type of carriage? I do not know what they cost, but it must have run into thousands of pounds for carriages of that type. Thus, there must be a large amount of money invested in the rolling-stock of the railways, and it would probably represent at least one-fifth or more of the total capital expenditure. Then there is the cost of maintaining the railways that, as the member for Kalgoorlie said, were originally put down at a cost of £6,000 a mile. I consider that, notwithstanding all that the Commissioner has said in this report, the Commissioner of Railways, Mr. Ellis, was right when he said in evidence—

The root cause of the present unsatisfactory condition of the system is the utilisation beyond the limits of prudence and economy, of plant, buildings and equipment which are unsuited to and inadequate for the purpose, not through a lack of realisation of what is needed, but because funds have not been available for the provision of anything better.

I say here and now that I think some of the evidence given by the Under Treasurer, Mr. Reid, was just a parody of the facts. I refer to the evidence Mr. Reid gave to the Royal Commission. For instance, the Royal Commissioner said—

What has been concerning the Commission is that over a number of years there have been two excuses. One is the depression and the other is the war. Both of these I do not think have quite the incidence or weight that is attached to them. There must have been, over a considerable number of years, a lack of provision for maintaining the railways as an effective service, partly due to maintenance not having been done and partly to new equipment not having been provided. I am trying to ascertain where the responsibility for that lies or the necessity for it not having been properly appreciated.

Mr. Reid, who was being asked that question by the Royal Commissioner, said in reply—

I should say that, by and large, the responsibility would rest with the Commissioner of Railways. If he felt really concerned about

an item of expenditure and thought it was going to be costly, he could have approached the Government and made out his case. He might have made out a case perhaps in his annual report, but that is not the way to get money out of a Treasurer. You have to importune him, make your case and keep at him until you get what you want. You have to convince him, in other words, that what you want is really needed.

What a lot of nonsense that is! I regard that as an irresponsible statement and a reflection upon Treasurers, past and present.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: They are generally very hard men, you know.

Mr. SMITH: Fancy saying that one has to importune them! What is more related to the facts is to be found in another statement by Mr. Ellis—

The position regarding cash available to the Government for loan expenditure deteriorated so seriously that a conference was held on the 23rd November, 1936, between the Premier, the Minister for Railways—

I held that portfolio at the time—

—the Under Treasurer and myself when the position was generally discussed.

This was followed by an urgent letter from the Under Treasurer on the 11th December, 1936, as follows:—

The position revealed by the latest statement submitted by departments, together with the unsatisfactory financial outlook for the remaining portion of the year, is very serious, and I am afraid it will not be possible for you to put in hand any fresh work without first ascertaining that funds are available. Many of the works which you have on your loan estimates cannot be carried out this year unless, although it seems highly improbable, we are able to obtain a satisfactory amount of loan money towards the close of the year. I will be submitting to you within the next few days comments regarding the statements supplied by you.

That had reference to the Commissioner of Railways. On the 16th December, 1936, the Under Treasurer again wrote pointing out that expenditure upon additions and improvements was then £22,643 in excess of authority, and he added—

As a substantial reduction of the loan estimates is necessary and funds will not be available to permit of any excess, will you again review your programme so that expenditure on these lines will at least be within the vote?

Later, Mr. Reid said in evidence before the Royal Commission—

You may be confused by the flatly contradictory evidence submitted. I did not wish to convey, as I think Mr. Ellis has assumed,

that I at any time said the railways had not had their financial requests refused. The point I was trying to make was that from the submissions to the Government, such as I have seen, I do not think the Government realised the seriousness of the position, and I think the failure to realise that seriousness was due to the terms in which the railways submitted their requests.

Further on Mr. Reid said—

It is true that during the depression years many requests for money submitted by the railways for the provision of materials would have been declined because the Government just did not have the money. It had to spend all its money as far as possible on labour-absorbing works.

I mention these matters and have quoted these extracts because the Minister, in his speech, quoted extracts that were derogatory to the Commissioner of Railways. They include a quotation from the report of the Royal Commission making it appear as though the Commissioner of Railways was the person culpable for the mess into which the railways had got. I regard the reference to the failure to realise the seriousness of the position as being due to the manner in which the submissions were made as just so much nonsense, because I know that there were occasions on which the Commissioner of Railways was asked to review his submissions before they were presented to Cabinet at all. That was because of the seriousness of the financial position and the impossibility of providing for many of those matters that he, in his report to Cabinet, declared to be essential. It was the expenditure of money on labour-absorbing works upon which Cabinet had to concentrate in those days, and it was that necessity which caused the ex-Secretary for Railways, Mr. Tomlinson, to write the following in an overseas railway journal in November, 1938—

It was not until the time of the world-wide depression in 1930 that any comprehensive programme of railway grading and track improvement was formulated and proceeded with. It appears anomalous that essential regrading undertakings should have been impossible, for financial reasons, during the sharp upward movement of the national economic cycle, but practicable and, in fact, essential during the most difficult years of financial depression. Yet this was the case. The absorption of local unemployed became a depression necessity, and railway track work provided an admirable undertaking for unskilled labour, and, at the same time, it promised reasonable interest and sinking fund returns for loan funds required to accomplish them.

Mr. Tomlinson went on to say—

Although the economic depression has now been surmounted, the unemployment position has not entirely readjusted itself and at the present time (November, 1938) another programme of railway relief works (to cost roughly £160,000) is in hand to alleviate the situation.

It is worthwhile to remember that when consideration is being given to some of the details of expenditure quoted in the report and the estimates of expenditure submitted by the Under Treasurer. For instance, much of it was earmarked for this type of work, not for buying locomotives, not for putting ball bearings in railway trucks and rollingstock, not for painting stations or repairing deteriorated structures; it was for finding labour-absorbing work on the railways for the purpose of feeding our unemployed. That was so right up to 1938. I remember quoting from a speech made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in which he pointed out that the figures in 1940 referred to 10 per cent. of the number of unionists in respect of whom there was unemployment throughout Australia. These are some of the things we have to remember in connection with the criticism of the railways when dealing with a Bill of this description. If some of the desired provisions in this Bill had been in operation over 20 years ago, would the position be much different from what it is today? I do not think it would have been as good, not if what I think the Bill says is what it means. In the course of his report, the Royal Commissioner said—

It is realised that the drafting of a Bill to implement our recommendations for a new financial set-up will be a task of considerable magnitude.

Is the Bill before the House what the Royal Commissioner was referring to when he said it was going to be a task of considerable magnitude to provide for the new financial set-up? Of course, there were authoritative statements that there should be a new financial set-up in connection with the railways. Many years ago there should have been some kind of system under which the railways would have got some return from the Treasury for running trains on railways that were built for purely developmental purposes. But under this Bill—which was to represent a task of considerable magnitude—we are proposing to hand over the management,

maintenance and control of the railways to a part-time board which will advise the Minister on all matters respecting the railways. The Minister will, in turn, I presume, criticise all acts of the commissioners that are not in conformity with such advice. What is the meaning of this board? The Bill provides—

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

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

Those matters are arising all the time. It seems to me that the board ought to be the full-time section of this set-up and the railway commissioners the part-time section. I do not know what the Minister has in mind. All I know is what is contained in the Bill. It seems to me that the Minister wishes to have some kind of pet board at his beck and call, so that it can advise him on matters relating to the direction, management, maintenance and control of the railways. Knowing nothing about those matters himself, he can appeal to some board which will have to carry the responsibility and will advise him. Of the members of the board, the only one likely to know much about the management, maintenance, control and direction of the railways will be the union representative, who will have learned something about the railways, I presume, as the result of his experience.

I do not know whether the Minister intends by this Bill to place himself in a position where he will appear to know all there is to know about the railways. Having obtained advice from this almighty board, he will be able to go along to the commissioners and say, "What you are doing is not right. The board has advised me that what you are doing in a certain direction is not right." I do not agree with the appointment of three commissioners; but I do not regard that as important. The fact is that the present Commissioner of Railways has been divested of responsibility for the control of electricity supplies and will soon, apparently, according to a Bill we had before us the other night, be divested of responsibility for the tramways and ferries, and therefore the position hardly warrants the appointment of three commissioners. I prefer the one-man set-up. I do not like this

idea of having three commissioners who will have to meet before decisions can be arrived at. An organisation of that character makes for slow decisions on important matters, and slow decisions are very often worse than no decisions.

The Royal Commissioners did not recommend the type of board proposed in this Bill. They recommended a board that could advise the Minister on questions of policy not on matters relating to the management control and direction of the railways. The proposed board is quite contrary to the recommendation made by the Royal Commissioners. I know from my own experience that management and policy are inevitably interlaced; but I cannot see that a board is required to advise the Minister on management, when the management itself could give such advice, for which it would be responsible and which it should have to justify. There may be some merit in a board to advise the Minister on policy matters referred to it by the Minister. We need some kind of set-up by which policy can be determined; and a board, if its members were properly qualified—and I do not know that this proposed board would be—could give the Minister much valuable information on policy. If the Bill become law, the Minister will have an impossible task. What did he say in connection with it? He said that under the Bill the commissioners will be subject to the Minister in all things.

What did the Royal Commissioners say about the board which, according to this Bill, is to advise the Minister on the control of the Government Railways? The Commissioners were specific, they said, "To advise the Minister on matters of policy." According to the Minister the board is to keep him and the management fully informed of consumers' or users' requirements. Is that what the Minister meant? Is that what the Bill says? Are the persons who are to give that kind of information also to be the persons who are to give advice to the Minister and the commissioner on the management, control and direction of the railways? The whole thing is beyond my capacity for reasoning. It seems too absurd. What did the Royal Commissioners say regarding the functions of the board of directors? They said—

We recommend that it be laid down in the Act constituting this Board that it shall be

incumbent on the Minister for Railways to consult the Board upon all matters of policy concerning the administration of the railways, but more particularly upon the following matters:—

- (a) The general policy of the railways;
- (b) any substantial alteration in the tariffs of rates, fares and charges of the railways;
- (c) the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, including expenditure from Loan Funds, which are from time to time to be submitted to Parliament;
- (d) all Bills affecting the railways which the Minister proposes to submit to Parliament;
- (e) the expenditure of any sum exceeding £1,000 in respect of any one railway work or service other than a work or service expressly authorised by Parliament;
- (f) the general policy regarding diminution of expenditure;
- (g) any substantial alteration in the scales of salaries, wages or hours of duty of railway servants;
- (h) any substantial change in the organisation of any of the branches of the railways;
- (i) the investigation of such schemes of railway construction and development as the Minister thinks should be carried out;
- (j) the administration of the different railway funds referred to in Chapter 6.

Is that what the Bill provides? The very opposite! Yet it is what the Royal Commissioners recommended. The Royal Commissioners' recommendation is a good definition of what policy is in connection with railways. I shall quote from the report of Lieut.-Col. Northcott which he made in 1937. He said—

'The Interstate Commerce Commission is the oldest and most important of the Federal regulatory bodies. It is an independent establishment in that it is not one of the executive departments of the Government, nor is it subordinate to any such department. It reports directly to Congress, which insists upon the independence of the commission from executive interference. It was created in 1887 to regulate interstate commerce, and for many years was principally concerned with the establishment of through routes and just and reasonable rates on interstate railroads.

Although the railways in the United States of America are mostly privately owned, they are nevertheless still subject, as I can read from this report, to many restrictions that represent policy, not interference with the management of the railways; and it is this interstate commission, which is free from ministerial control, that makes decisions in respect to policy, and it has operated since 1887 with a great deal of satis-

faction. What I cannot understand is the change of front on the part of the Minister on this question of ministerial control. As far as I am concerned, that is the whole Bill. The Minister said, "Under this Bill the commissioners will be subject to the Minister in all things." I can see no great virtue in ministerial control or interference in the management of railways by a Railway Minister. I can see some necessity for it so far as concerns policy, but not management and control.

I remember, when I was a callow youth, learning from an essay by Lord Macaulay that the British form of government was an executive form of government comprised of the leading men of the party that could secure a majority on the floor of the House. I believed it in those days. I thought they were the leading men of the party which could command a majority on the floor of the House, but I have found out differently since. I have found out that they are not always leading men. In many Parliaments we can see men sitting on the side lines who are better than quite a lot of those that are included in the Ministry.

What do we find in the attitude of members towards those comprising a Ministry? We find that they judge the work of Ministers subjectively and not objectively, as they should do, with more reference to what good fellows they are, what nice companionable chaps they are, than to the efficiency with which they conduct their ministerial responsibilities. Yet a proposal like this is put up that some Minister who, by some fortuitous circumstances, gets into a Cabinet should have control of railways. My impression in connection with the Minister for Railways is that it is a portfolio that is always given to the Minister with the least experience, so far as this State is concerned. It is always the new Minister who is handed the position of Minister for Railways. The reason is that all the others have "had it."

Mr. May: You are correct in that conclusion.

Mr. SMITH: I would not be surprised at that, either! One of the cleverest men who ever graced this Chamber was once Minister for Railways; but in three months he gave it up, because he was in a position to do so, being the Premier. I do not think Labour has ever said that we should take

someone out of the mining industry and make him Minister for Railways and give him full ministerial control in connection with railways; or even take a timber worker out of the forests and make him manager of the State Saw Mills. When I was younger in the Labour movement I was always given the impression that Labour advocated publicly-controlled undertakings on the basis that it could get effective control; that it could employ the talent to manage those undertakings the same as could private enterprise. It was not advocated that the management of these undertakings was to be given to a member who, by some fortuitous circumstance, got into Cabinet.

I am not surprised at the Roman Catholic Church issuing a brochure in connection with socialism when it realises the possibilities that can exist under a proposition such as is contained in this Bill, with the Minister vested with full control in connection, as the Minister said, with all things. Here is a reference to the subject in a brochure on airlines which I received the other day. It was prepared by some gentleman who has been writing up our air lines. And in connection with this subject of ministerial control, I would like Government undertakings to be run like the Melbourne Tramways Board, for instance, or the Harbour Trust at Fremantle, or the Commonwealth Bank, or this undertaking—the TAA. This article contains the following:—

Trans-Australia Airlines is the trading name of the Australian National Airlines Commission which was established under the "Act to provide for the Establishment and Operation of National Airlines Services by the Commonwealth and for other purposes," which was given Royal assent on August 16, 1945. The Australian National Airlines Act, 1945, amended in 1947, is the charter by which T.A.A. operates. It ought to be required reading for anybody interested in Australian aviation, for it is one of the most interesting documents ever printed in Australia, and certainly one of the most important.

The Act provides for the establishment of a Commonwealth-owned airline as a major public utility for the carriage of air mails and for civil air transport, and as an integral part of the preparedness for national defence. It is so worded as to give the fullest power to the Commission, keeping the Commission free of political interference in the business direction of T.A.A. This means that T.A.A. is not a Government department and its staff are not part of the Public Service.

As the spontaneous criticism made of the Government's original plans to nationalise the

airline industry was that the Government's airlines would be run like the Government's railways, with maximum loss and minimum courtesy and service, this freedom was essential. It may have been forced upon the Government by the uproar that was created during the Government's attempt to nationalise the airline industry and its subsequent defeat in the High Court. Whatever the cause, the Government's decision to give the Commission complete freedom from political interference in affairs of management was vital. In my view, this freedom from interference is the very foundation of T.A.A. Without it, I doubt whether T.A.A. would be the very efficient airline which it is today.

That expresses my views on the question of publicly-controlled undertakings. I think the Labour Government would be well advised in connection with its socialism programme to see that the publicly-controlled undertakings it advocates have a set-up such as that. It is socialised industries like the railways that have done the cause of socialism more harm than anything that could be imagined. I do not approve of the provision in this Bill that will make the commissioners subject to the Minister in all things. A nice state of affairs that would be! There was a time when I advocated the abolition of another place.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: That was a very wise thing, too.

Mr. SMITH: I do not know that it was. I am not in favour of the manner in which it is elected at the present time, with the franchise on which it is elected, because I am a believer in democracy and in a Parliament that is a reflection of democracy, a reflection of the will of the people. But there is a lot to be said, since this Government has got into power at any rate, for another place reviewing legislation; and I am satisfied it will review this legislation well and faithfully. I will be very disappointed in it if it does not.

I do not think it was ever intended that Labour should advocate publicly-controlled undertakings for the creation of easy jobs for men, for which the rest of the workers in the community would have to pay. What I think is that Labour always advocated, when I was taking an active interest in the rank and file of the movement, that we could hire talent the same as private enterprise could, and that we could organise these undertakings and run them effectively and efficiently. I think that we have yet to prove in many directions that we can do

that. It was always argued that accrued profit should go back into providing more up-to-date equipment instead of being disbursed in the shape of dividends.

I do not say that the present set-up is not capable of some alteration and improvement but I certainly say that this Bill does not make any worth-while improvement in the set-up. I would sooner have the existing system than what this Bill proposes. It is no use saying what the Minister said, about telling consumers where grain has to be carted from and so on. We have to go to the Bill and find out what it says. This system we have is a legacy that has been handed to us. I think it was in 1872 that the railways were first started, and the present set-up dates from about 1907. I do not think that any failure on the part of the railways has been due to the fact that the Minister has not had sufficient control. The probability is that he has had too much control. There has been control over the appointment of the Commissioner, which was referred to in another place by a man who was himself once Minister for Railways and also Commissioner of Railways. He drew the attention of the House to the fact that a Commissioner who is appointed for five years cannot very well go down, as was suggested by the Royal Commission, with a gun in his hand, to the Government to which he is beholden in connection with his re-appointment when his term expires.

If the Government gets this Bill through and sets up the conditions suggested in this measure, in which these commissioners will be subservient to a board and to the direction of the Minister in connection with every tiddly-winking aspect of management, we will find that good men will not apply for the positions. That is what will happen. Good men do not have to hawk themselves around the country to get decent jobs. I know a man in Kalgoorlie at this very moment who went home to England a good many years ago; and while he was there, he was appointed general manager of the Midland Railway Company. He obtained the appointment, left his office, and got on to the ship with the appointment in his pocket.

Some of the London board of directors went to the boat to say farewell to him, as was only natural; and one said, "I hope

you will get on all right with the board out there." He inquired, "What board?" They said, "The local board." "Well," he said, "you never told me anything about a local board." They said, "We thought you knew that," but he replied, "I did not know it and I am not going to take the position out there under any board. If I am to be manager of the Midland Railway Company its management must be vested in me in conjunction with the responsibility that I will have to carry." That is what he said to them on the wharf just before the ship sailed. They replied, "We will have to go back and consider the position." When he reached Ceylon he received a cable in which they said they regretted that they could not do away with the local board and he replied to them, by cable, saying he was sorry that he could not accept the position.

In many instances men will not stoop to accept such situations. Three years later this man was back in London again and met the same directors. They then said they were sorry they had not taken his advice and had not done away with the local board and vested the management and responsibility for running the Midland railway in him. That is one case that I know of, yet here the Government wishes to reduce the status of the commissioners and the prestige of their positions under this Bill. It wishes to reduce their responsibility in connection with the running of the railways, making them mere tools, subject to some Minister with no railway experience at all. If the member for Kalgoorlie, with his 25 years' experience of railway work, was Minister, he would be able to make decisions and talk things over with the commissioners in the language of railwaymen, but others, who have not had that experience, could not carry the responsibility that the Bill would give them.

I come now to the audit by the Auditor General. I have no objection to it but I do not see how accountancy systems are going to make our railways pay. I believe a lot of undertakings are accountancy-ridden and that many Government activities are Treasury-ridden. I drew attention to that on a previous occasion when I quoted the Hon. Artie Fadden, who has previously drawn attention to the growing power of the Treasury in connection with governmental activities. I am no

carried away with the idea that when the Auditor General audits the accounts all will be well and happy in the railways. I do not think we could get a more faithful or hardworking accountant than was Mr. Bromfield, when he was for so many years Chief Accountant of the Railway Department. What does it mean when the railway accounts go to the Auditor General for audit? I have recently quoted certain things in this House in connection with the Industries Assistance Act. There have been many occasions when statements by the Auditor General as to provisions of Acts of Parliament not being complied with have been ignored by the Treasury. All the Auditor General does is to draw attention to these things, and it does not follow that action is taken accordingly.

What about Section 24 of the Industries Assistance Act? That was supposed to have gone over to the Rural and Industries Bank in 1944, but it has not yet gone over, and attention has been drawn to it year after year by the Auditor General. I am not carried away by this proposal about the Auditor General because I have learnt, as the result of some of my desultory research work, that he merely draws attention to things and it does not follow that appropriate action will be taken. In conclusion I wish to say a good word for the Auditor General. Every member of this House should read the evidence he gave before the Royal Commission. He was evidently not afraid of the Commission and told the blunt truth.

MR. PERKINS (York) [8.35]: I do not think there can be any doubt that the Western Australian Government railway system has drifted into a deplorable condition. Most members knew of that before the report of the Royal Commission was published, but I believe it was necessary for the Government to appoint that Commission in order to obtain expert advice on particular problems connected with our railway system, before taking any far-reaching action. The condition into which our railways have drifted is the responsibility of previous Governments and constitutes one of the gravest difficulties that the present Government has been called upon to face. I feel that the action taken so far by the Government has been the right action, in that an expert examination

of the railway system was undertaken by the recent Royal Commission and the Government and this House now have the findings of that body to help in deciding what further steps should be taken. The Bill before us provides the avenue through which reform of our railway system can be effected.

Mr. Styants: There will not be much reform.

Mr. PERKINS: We must give some attention to the reasons why the railways drifted into the position in which we now find them, in order to avoid a repetition of those mistakes. I believe the worst of the difficulties are due to poor administration of the system.

Mr. Brady: What the Royal Commission referred to as inbreeding.

Mr. PERKINS: I think that is correct, but I do not wish to put any blame on the present Commissioner if it does not properly attach to him. Members have read the evidence he gave before the Royal Commission and I have no doubt that he did face an extremely difficult situation. It is hard for the management of any concern to keep it in proper order if sufficient funds are not available with which to do the necessary work. How far that condition applied to our railway system is open to question, and I will not dwell unduly on that aspect. Unfortunately, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that the present administration did not make the best use of whatever limited facilities were available to it. There is a great deal of such evidence available to anyone who cares to examine the recent working of our railway system.

I refer, for instance, to the attitude of the staff employed on our railways. I do not believe that the men employed there are basically any different, in their capacity for work, from men employed elsewhere in industry. No doubt all members of this House have seen instances where men employed under one management have done an excellent job, while the same type of men, or even some of the same men when transferred to work under a different management, have given very poor service indeed. I believe much more depends on the management of the staff than on the characteristics of the employees themselves, and I feel that the attitude that has developed among employees of the Western

Australian Government Railways is largely due to the way in which they have been used by the management. I believe the present Commissioner is an excellent engineer, and he has high qualifications, but it does not necessarily follow that a man who is an excellent engineer will make a first-class administrator. I am afraid that in our railway system a very good engineer has been wasted in a job for which he was not suited.

Some examples of the lack of imagination on the part of the administration of our railway system were mentioned in the report of the Royal Commissioners. That was clearly brought out in the section of the report that had reference to amenities for the men. Those of us who have dealings with employees in any capacity know that if we are to gain the confidence of men and get the best out of them it is necessary to do all that is possible to give them good working conditions and provide for them in every way we can. My experience has been that when necessity arises for men to work under bad conditions, if they realise that because of some difficulty it is impossible to provide them with better conditions for the time being, they are prepared to put up with discomfort for a limited time, and perhaps for a long time, but when they see the situation drifting and no effort being made to provide amenities or better conditions, one cannot wonder that they begin to lose faith in the administration. This is noticeable particularly among employees in outlying areas, who are living under bad conditions while working on the permanent way.

No member of the House can justify the kind of treatment these men have received. There is a reference by the Royal Commissioners to the lack of washing facilities, the ordinary necessary conveniences to enable the men to clean themselves after doing dirty jobs on the railways. They point out how the men were neglected, even in the big centres of the railway system. Anyone who examines the position of the railways will scarcely wonder that the men have lost faith in their management. Another item I recall was the trouble of a few years ago on the occasion when Garratts and double-header engines were used to draw the train through the Swan View tunnel. The dispute lasted some time, and eventually the men were forced to strike in order to obtain

what the public subsequently recognised was a very reasonable request. Any management that wants to retain the confidence of its staff will realise that it is asking too much of it in the circumstances I am dealing with. The trouble that has arisen between the management and the staff explains the attitude that we find existing amongst the employees of the system and accounts to some extent for the lack of service to the public by the staff itself.

I am not at all surprised at that attitude developing on the part of a large proportion of the employees. Any member who has dealings with individual railwaymen when they are put out on a job and are in direct contact with the public and for the most part are able to run their own jobs—I refer to men in charge of, say, small railway stations—will realise that such men have given good service to the public, and have been just as obliging as would be the employees of any private concern. But bring those men back to the larger centres and it will be found that they drift back into the same old rut, often doing as little as possible themselves and leaving as much as possible to other men.

Mr. Reynolds: That is too sweeping.

Mr. PERKINS: That is the fault of the administrative set-up which has been responsible for the attitude that has developed.

Mr. Needham: Who is actually responsible?

Mr. PERKINS: The chief administrative officers are responsible. It all comes back to the chief administrative officer, the Commissioner, and he in turn appoints the senior administrative officers right through the service. I think members will agree that in any private concern a good manager will appoint some administrative officers junior to himself of such a type that they will carry out the general policy which has been outlined to them. I am not sure how much the Commissioner had to put up with in the difficulties with which he had to contend under previous Governments. There is no doubt he made some damning indictments against the treatment he received at the hands of previous Governments, and we can only draw our own conclusions as to how much notice we should take of his evidence on that point before the Royal Commission. Whilst we might like to ap-

portion the blame it cannot have any material effect on the future of the system concerning which we are now endeavouring to bring about an improvement. One other matter I should like to mention as indicative of the lack of imagination on the part of the management is the refreshment rooms on the Perth Railway Station.

Sometime during the regime of the previous Governments the railway refreshment services were taken over by the Railway Department, and we were led to believe we might expect very great improvement in that direction. Admittedly in some centres it would be difficult to effect any startling improvement. In the case of Chidlows and the Spencers Brook stations, because of the buildings available there, it is very difficult to obtain the kind of service to which the public are entitled; but when one comes to consider the Perth railway refreshment room surely one can find no insuperable difficulty about improving the set-up. I frequently have to catch an early train from Perth and desire to have breakfast at the refreshment rooms. I doubt whether if members looked all over Perth they could find a more depressing atmosphere in which to have a meal than that which exists there.

Mr. Leslie: No-one goes there a second time.

Mr. PERKINS: Here is a case where the application of a little paint would modernise the refreshment rooms without much expenditure. Such work has not been prevented by lack of materials or anything of that nature and yet over the lengthy period during which the Railway Department has controlled the refreshment services nothing has been done to improve that important centre.

Mr. Marshall: The Commissioner of Railways had control over that aspect even when the refreshment rooms were leased.

Mr. PERKINS: Employees cannot be expected to work in such dismal surroundings and retain their enthusiasm, no matter what management they may come under. This type of thing is indicative of the difficulties into which the system has drifted and the general lack of imagination on the part of the present administration.

Mr. Bovell: Why do the refreshment rooms close at 6 p.m.?

Mr. PERKINS: Let us hope that the Bill will provide an avenue for reform and that the faults which have developed in the Government railway system may be ironed out. I think the only way to alter the position materially is to set up a new administration. We should have a board of commissioners appointed to take over the management. If they are men of the right type and outlook no doubt it will be possible to generate an entirely new spirit amongst the employees of the system. There is one aspect of the measure of which I am not very much enamoured. I refer to that part which makes the commissioners entirely subject to the Minister. I do not suggest that the present Minister or any particular future occupant of that position would abuse the power, but I do say that if this provision were left in the Bill the power would have to be exercised with great care. If the commissioners were made subject to the Minister in matters of policy only, that would be sufficient, but it is difficult to say where policy ends and administration begins.

Mr. Leslie: You tell us.

Mr. PERKINS: Possibly the term could be extended far enough to give the Minister power to exercise general supervision over the railway system. I do not suggest that the present Minister or any future occupant of that position would take action that could be regarded as extreme, but it is possible to visualise a set of circumstances whereby interference on the part of the Minister could very severely break down the authority of the commissioners. The member for Murchison made a very significant remark when he referred to various deputations he had received, I presume from the union, at which reasonable requests had been made but to which the Commissioner would not agree. I gather from the remarks of the hon. member that he would like to have had power to direct the Commissioner to give effect to those particular requests. No doubt they were quite reasonable. Judging from what I have seen of the West Australian Government railway system in recent years, I think the welfare of the men has been sadly neglected, and no doubt in the case to which I have referred the requests were fully justified.

Mr. Marshall: It all ended up in a strike, anyhow.

Mr. PERKINS: It is possible to visualise a set of circumstances where some irresponsible union could make requests which a Minister might find difficult to resist, but which, if forced upon the Commissioner, might have a very serious effect in undermining that officer's authority. I believe that questions of administration could be covered adequately by means of a competent board of railway commissioners. If such a board were not competent to deal with the administration of the system I would ask, "why employ them?" If in a private concern a board of directors appoints a manager to carry out the policy of the board, I cannot imagine the directors retaining the services of a man who is not capable of taking care of the administrative side of the undertaking. I think that sums up the position of the proposed board of commissioners for the railway system. Admittedly, under the present set-up, it is very difficult to get rid of an unsatisfactory Commissioner of Railways.

Hon. A. H. Panton: And yet you propose to appoint these three for life.

Mr. PERKINS: I think that, rather than make the board subject to the Minister in matters of administration, it would be better to give the Government greater latitude in the direction of changing the commissioners if it were proved that they were not competent to do the job. The position as I view it is that if we appoint a board of commissioners and risk interference by the Minister on numerous occasions, it will be a sorry look out for the railway system. Obviously, if the commissioners giving the whole of their time to the work cannot do a satisfactory job in administering the system, the Minister, with all his other responsibilities, cannot possibly catch up with all the errors of administration such a board would be likely to make.

I have considered the set-up in other States. I think it may be taken for granted that the Victorian system is about the most efficient in Australia. I can remember as a small boy when the Victorian railways administration was not very much better than ours is now. Perhaps it had not drifted quite so far as ours has done, but Victoria certainly was in difficulties at the time Mr. Clapp was appointed chairman of commissioners. Mr. Clapp and his fellow commissioners improved the system to such an ex-

tent that it has come to be regarded as the leading railway system in Australia, and I think commercial circles consider that it is well run.

Mr. Bovell: But Victoria has a small area and a large population.

Mr. PERKINS: I consider the improvement in the Victorian railways to be due to good administration. One has only to go into the Victorian railway refreshment rooms to realise that there is an entirely different touch about the service as compared with that of New South Wales.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Have you been there lately?

Mr. PERKINS: Yes. True, many of the buildings are as old as ours. The back of the Spencer-street station is a very dilapidated place, but the best facilities are made available to the public and I think this is largely due to the good administration of the system.

Mr. Marshall: The employees in the catering and laundry section work under very bad conditions so far as accommodation is concerned.

Mr. PERKINS: The public does not see that. From the point of view of the public, it is quite attractive. The Act under which the Victorian commissioners work contains provision for their being subject to the Government of the day, through the Minister, on matters of policy. Various provisions appear in the Act to define how far policy extends. The point is that this arrangement has worked satisfactorily, and apparently it has been found sufficient to make the commissioners subject to the Government of the day in matters of policy and still give them a reasonably free hand in the administration of the system.

As members will have noticed, I am not particularly enamoured of the corresponding provision in the Bill before us. I think that if the provision is retained in its present form, the Government will have to give special assurances to applicants for the positions that they will not be unnecessarily interfered with in matters of administration. Otherwise, as the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe pointed out, we shall not get men of the right type to apply for these positions. In private industry and private undertakings, there are many attractive positions available to men capable of filling

the post of chairman of commissioners here. So I say that assurances will have to be given that this provision of the measure will not be administered in such a way as to hamstring a capable man in the administration of the system. The reform of our railway service entirely depends upon the quality of management that we can provide for in this Bill.

HON. E. NULSEN (Kanowna) [9.7]: I have read the report of the Royal Commission very carefully and feel that there is nothing new in it—nothing that we did not know prior to the report being made. In fact, I believe that the expenditure on the inquiry has been a waste of money. We have not been given the information that I thought we would get, and the information contained in the report is something we have all known. I do not think that the Minister for Railways even now would deny my statement. The only thing is that the report might accelerate improvement and help us to get out of our trouble, which is due to no fault of the administration and no fault of the Commissioner. I say that advisedly.

Mr. Leslie: Then whose fault is it?

Hon. E. NULSEN: It is the fault of Governments and of the financial system. The members for Murchison, Kalgoorlie, Brown Hill-Ivanhoe and York have given a reasonable exposition of the situation generally, and I have no wish to traverse that ground again because I dislike reiteration, but I hate to think that, because the system has not been successful, the administration should be condemned. It is something like war; if we go to war and win, we bask in the glory of it, but the loser does nothing right and is penalised wherever possible. The same applies to birds; if an unfortunate bird becomes ill the healthy ones peck it to death and get rid of it. That seems to have been the attitude to the railways; everything spoken of them has been condemnatory.

I have had something to do with administration and with business. I have found that the staff was always ready to do the right thing. The staff was capable of doing it, but had not the means; in other words, the necessary finance was not available. No-one can justly cast reflections upon the administration from the Commissioner down to a permanent-way

worker. Of course, in every staff there are some inefficients, and such could be found in a staff of about 10,000. I have always found that to be so. In late years much has been said about our railways, but I wish to go back as far as 1922, when the real trouble began. I shall read only a small paragraph from the Votes and Proceedings, 1922-23, Second Session, 11th Parliament, vol. 1. I quote from the first progress report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the State railway system. The Commissioner, Mr. Stead, had this to say—

Your Commissioner finds that authority has been given for the construction of eight additional Garratt ("M" class) engines at an estimated cost of £80,000, and that consideration is also being given to the construction of additional heavy line engines, at an estimated cost of £240,000, or a total of £320,000. The recommendation for the expenditure on these engines has not, in the opinion of your Commissioner, been justified by evidence elicited during this inquiry.

No difficulty whatever has been experienced in lifting the current wheat harvest, notwithstanding that the tonnage hauled during the months of December, 1921, and January, 1922, was in excess of previous years.

Members will therefore realise how the Commissioner at that time was hampered. He was instructed that he was not to spend any more money on engine power. That was in 1922. It was not a Labour Government that appointed Mr. Stead as a Royal Commissioner. Mr. Stead might have thought that he was doing the right thing, but nevertheless that was the beginning of the trouble. Our main difficulty today is lack of engine power. I venture to say that had it not been for that report, our railways would not be in their present condition. Not long after that we had the financial depression. Money was not available and in consequence our railway system during those three years was badly neglected. Rollingstock was allowed to go to rack and ruin. The permanent way was allowed to drift into such a condition that, when Mr. Collier assumed power in 1933, £500,000 had to be spent on that work alone. Now we have the report of the Gibson Royal Commission, which is the antithesis of the report of the 1922 Royal Commission.

Can any member explain why we should have one Royal Commissioner telling the Railway Commissioner that he is not to

spend money on keeping the railways on a proper footing, and another Royal Commissioner wanting to aggrandise—if I may use that word—our railways in a manner not compatible with the transport needs of the State? Africa has a larger population per mile of railway than our State. Western Australia has the lowest population of any country in the world per mile of railway. We have today about 113 persons per mile, whereas Victoria and New South Wales have nearly 500. I could quote other countries and compare them with ours, but the comparison would not be at all fair. Between the years 1933 and 1939 everything possible was done in an endeavour to put our railways on a proper footing. I still assert, however, that had it not been for the Stead report, our railways would not have been in the bad condition they were in when war broke out, because we would have had more engines and rolling-stock.

Mr. Rodoreda called attention to the state of the House.

Bells rung and a quorum formed.

Hon. E. NULSEN: The cut by the Stead Commission was disastrous to our railways. It was really the beginning of the deterioration of the system. I have heard much comment on our railways. They are condemned because it is said they have not paid dividends. But our railways have paid big dividends in the development of our State. The revenue from the railways since their inception is £140,000,000, and the expenditure £112,000,000. There is consequently a big difference between revenue and expenditure; but, in addition, we have paid £37,000,000 in interest. Had our railway system been a private company floated in London or elsewhere, it would have paid dividends, and the assistance rendered to the State in developing its resources would have been taken into consideration, if the company had owned the State.

The department has had to contend with unpayable lines. It has also carried primary products much below cost. It has carried super. at ½d. per ton per mile, and at times for less: it has carted wheat at 1.12d. per mile. It has also carried timber, water and coal under cost. In the circumstances, the railways have done a very good job indeed. I feel we have always been

unfair to the railway administration. No matter what business a person may run, if he has not the necessary finance he cannot be expected to carry it on successfully. How could he make such a proposition pay? It is an utter impossibility. The fact that the department could not get the money it required has to a great extent undermined the confidence of its employees.

The member for York mentioned that the employees did not have amenities, and he blamed the administration for that. I am perfectly satisfied that had money been available, then for efficiency's sake those amenities would have been provided to a greater extent than they were. The hon. member also mentioned that the Commissioner is a very good civil engineer—and I think he is—but that he is not a very good Commissioner because he did not have previous administrative experience. I deny that. When I was Minister for Railways, Mr. Ellis was very ambitious and wanted to do the right thing; but his greatest worry was that he could not get the money. The member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe said that the Commissioner had gone to him and his associates and discussed the position. He did the same when I was Minister; but there was no money, especially during the war.

Many people, including a lot of our friends on the other side of the House, seem to forget that there was a war. There is no transport system in the world, of which I know, that is today or was 12 months ago really efficient and doing the work it should be doing. The only State in Australia that has not had trouble with its railways is South Australia. Before the war it was showing a deficit of nearly £1,000,000 a year, because Mr. Webb, who I learn reconstructed the whole of the system, had some vision and looked ahead and spent quite a lot of money. But for him, probably the Trans-Australian railway would have been in greater bother than it was. But although the Commissioner here had foresight, the Royal Commission said money was not to be spent even on engine power because the expenditure was not deemed necessary.

Prior to 1944 the Commissioner of Railways had also under his control the Electricity Department and the trams and ferries. The Electricity Department is now governed

by the Electricity Commission and it is proposed to establish a separate management for the tramways and ferries. Yet three commissioners are to be appointed to control the railways alone and there is also to be an advisory board of three to advise on policy. I consider that matters of policy should be left to the Government and there should be no interference. Generally speaking, I feel that Ministers are very sensible men; and I do not think we need fear that they would interfere with the administration of the railway commissioners, of course it might be helpful if the Minister did have control; but I do object to the advisory board which I do not think will be of any assistance to the Minister.

If a Minister cannot get sufficient information from his commissioners, and through his own observations, and through the various organisations with which he comes in contact, he should not hold the position. The member for York mentioned the efficiency of the Victorian Railways, but I do not think the circumstances comparable. Victoria comprises only 87,884 sq. miles, with a population of over 2,000,000, and nearly 500 persons to every mile of railway. In Western Australia we have nearly 1,000,000 sq. miles and over 4,000 miles of railways, with a very scattered population; and the lines pass through quite a lot of country that is not payable from the standpoint of transport. I would remind the hon. member that Victoria spent an immense amount of money which we have not had available for expenditure on our railways. Moreover, it has written off £30,000,000 on which it is not paying interest. If we had the whole of our debt written off, we would be in a very much better position.

As the Minister knows, our interest bill last year was about £1,040,000. That is a tremendous amount for such a few people to have to pay on one means of transport. I hope the House will take a fair and reasonable view of the administration of our railways and that members will not condemn that administration for a state of affairs which, generally speaking, is not attributable to it but is due to financial starvation, not by one particular Government but by all Governments from the beginning. Had the Commission never sat in judgement on our railways, they would have been much better off; but owing to the Commission's inter-

ference, the Railway Commissioner was curbed and so were all future commissioners.

I hope that the measure, if passed, will prove effective. For that to be so, whatever management is appointed must be provided with the money required to make a success of the enterprise. The outlook appears to be much brighter; and I think that there will be a greater sense of responsibility on the part of Governments, which will be prepared to give to the controlling authorities greater latitude than has been allowed in the past, instead of their being restricted and then blamed afterwards for bad administration.

MR. HILL (Albany) [9.30]: I support the Bill, and I want briefly to comment on the objections that have been raised to that portion which provides that the commissioners shall be subject to the Minister. When we consider that part, we must use our commonsense. It is absolutely essential that the Minister be the responsible person, and that the Government should appoint a Minister who has got sufficient commonsense to use his wide powers with discretion. When I gave my evidence before the Royal Commission, I pointed out that in my opinion many of our transport troubles were due to the fact that we had not and had never had a sound transport administration. This measure will have to be followed by further Bills to provide for that sound administration. I have here the report of the Federal Transport Committee of 1929. I will not read it all, but would like to draw members' attention to Chapters 6 and 7 which deal with co-ordination within a State as follows:—

6. Co-ordination Within a State.

Co-ordination cannot be effected solely by the passing of Acts and regulations containing various restrictions. A suitable organisation to meet the requirements of the respective States is necessary, together with adequate executive authority to carry out its duties effectively. The organisation will vary with conditions in each State, but action along the following lines is suggested:—

(a) All transport activities to be grouped under one Ministerial head who will be responsible for the whole transportation policy;

(b) the establishment of a co-ordinating authority which would be responsible for carrying out the transport policy approved by the Government;

(c) the co-ordinating authority may take the form of one of the following:—

Commissioner for Transport with Advisory Committee.

Transport Board.

Advisory Council representative of interests concerned.

7. Functions of the Co-ordinating Authority.

The detailed functions of such an authority will also vary in each State but generally all proposals affecting the provision of new transport facilities involving public expenditure or legislation should be reviewed by the authority, such as:—

(a) Construction or extension of any railway line.

(b) Closing of any existing railway line.

(c) New developmental road construction programme.

(d) Development of new harbours, and consideration of all major harbour works which may affect other transport services and ports.

This authority would also be responsible for the action necessary to effect the co-ordination of transport services, and the control of road motor services for transport of passengers and goods.

It is essential that we consider the problem of transport as a whole. We cannot have an efficient railway administration unless it is worked as part of a complete State-wide transport system.

MR. BRADY (Guildford-Midland) [9.33]:

Following on such talented speakers, my remarks will be brief, but as one who has the Government Railway workshops in his electorate, I feel I should make some comments on the Bill. In the first place, I am concerned about the state of the railways, particularly as they are one of our major projects. An amount of £27,000,000 is tied up in them, and I feel that if the Government could only get over the drift in the railway position, many of our troubles would be ended. I want to say at the outset that I am definitely not in favour of the project whereby we shall have three commissioners. I see by the Estimates that we pay no less than £2,300 a year to one commissioner. With three, I can visualise that treble that amount will probably be involved so that the expenditure in that regard would be around £8,000 or £9,000. I feel that the railways are not in a position to carry that extra burden, more particularly because of the fact that the Commissioner has been relieved of a number of his responsibilities, or probably will be

relieved of them in the next month or two by virtue of certain Bills now being considered by the House. For example, the Estimates set out that the tramways, which have been under the control of the Commissioner, involve an annual expenditure of £610,000.

That undertaking is to be removed from the responsibility of the Commissioner, and so is the ferry service, which involves a sum of £13,000. So I believe that, with reduced responsibility, the Commissioner will have more time to devote to the railways and possibly, will be able to effect some improvements. I also notice, in going through the Estimates, there are no less than 70 heads and subheads in the Railway Department with salaries ranging from £1,000 to £1,500. I feel the Commissioner could well afford to push some of his responsibilities on to his senior officers in the outlying parts of the State. The Commissioner at present makes an effort to visit every part of the system once yearly. As I have said in the House previously, I consider that to be unnecessary. The present Commissioner has held office for about 15 years, and if he does not know the service now, and the difficulties in the outlying parts, he never will. He could well afford to ask some of his heads and subheads to accept certain of his responsibilities rather than that he should have to go over the system from time to time and incur unnecessary expense.

I cannot agree with what the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe had to say about the accountancy system in the railways. He felt it was not everything it should be. He also said that the Auditor General just drew attention to the fact that different things that the Commissioner and certain heads were obliged to do were not done. If a proper costing system had been applied to the railways from the inception, much of the drift that has taken place would have been foreseen long ago, and certain expenditure saved. With a proper costing system, comparison can be made from time to time, and the departmental heads and the Commissioner can see where the major drifts are occurring. If only money figures are available, comparisons and percentages are not quite so obvious as with a proper system.

The member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe mentioned that the auditors only drew attention to the fact that certain things which could

have been done were not done. It may seem anomalous, but auditors are told that that is where their job ends. They are not to do the job of the administration or the management, but simply to audit the books, see that they are kept under a decent system, that money is expended in a correct way, and draw the attention of the management or directors, to the fact that certain things are not done. It then becomes the responsibility of the administration to deal with the auditor's report. I feel there is much room for improvement in the railways because I use them myself and frequently make them my only mode of travel. I consider that the railway system is seriously going back. I am sorry to notice, on the other hand, that motor transport appears to be improving in its service to the community. Members of the public, unfortunately, are now looking to motor transport services instead of the railways.

It is not my intention to discuss the Garratt engines. I would, however, like to deal with the question of amenities. It was estimated last year that £2,000 would be expended on amenities in the railways, but only £400 was spent. It is such things as this that make the men despondent, and lack confidence in the Commissioner and the administration generally. The railway workshops at Midland Junction have for years been crying out for more amenities and yet, year after year, such things have been neglected. If the Chief Mechanical Engineer and the Works Manager would co-operate more with the men they would achieve far better results. The metropolitan railway service is not improving. There are frequent break-downs, and only recently a railway employee pointed out to me that to catch a train out of Perth at 11.5 p.m. on Saturday one has to leave a place such as Maddington at 9.30 p.m., almost two hours before one wishes to leave Perth perhaps for Kalamunda. Following so many excellent speakers, I do not wish to address the House at length, though there are many matters with which I could deal.

Our problem, as I see it, is twofold. It is firstly whether the railways can be made to show a profit or not and, secondly, whether they can be made to give good service to the public. I am convinced that our railways can never make a profit with the present capital set-up. It will be impossible until

many millions of pounds are written off the railways as such. I once heard a Premier say that it was advisable to keep the capital cost of the railways up, because, if we reduced it, farmers and other primary producers would expect reductions in railway freights and fares. There may be something in that approach and therefore it may not be altogether fair to criticise the Commissioner and the management generally for not making the system show a profit, as the set-up is weighted against them.

I feel that the efficiency of the system and the service it gives to the community could be improved considerably, and much of the trouble today is due to lack of consideration of the educational requirements of the staff. I have seen almost complete strangers to the railway system taking out trains worth £150,000 or £200,000. That might sound like an exaggeration but it is not so when one considers that the value of a locomotive is £35,000 or £40,000, and that in addition there is the cost of the rollingstock and brake van. That will give an idea of the equipment that is often placed in the charge of a poorly trained man. Lack of education is seen throughout all departments of the service, workshops, traffic, loco and so on. That is one of the major deficiencies in our railway system today.

The young men are not being trained properly in the requirements of the service that should be given to the public. They are taken into jobs and are given one kind of training only instead of being taken into the confidence of the administration and taught the whole ramifications of the system. Until the department forms classes to train the men in all aspects of railway and transport work we will find such shortcomings continuing for many years.

I do not agree with the proposal that there should be three commissioners. Had such a change been necessary it should have been brought about before recent improvements were foreseen. I refer to the taking of certain important services from the control of the Commissioner. Five or ten years ago the appointment of three commissioners might have warranted a trial but, now that the Commissioner has been relieved of certain of his responsibilities, such an innovation is not warranted, and in any case I do not think the railways could carry the extra financial burden. I agree with the suggestion that there should be an advisory board,

particularly if the employees are allowed to have one representative on that body. There would then be greater co-operation between the administrative heads, the Commissioner and the men, leading to a better service being given to the public. I support the proposal for the advisory board but am not in favour of the appointment of three commissioners.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS

(Hon. H. S. Seward—Pingelly—in reply) [9.45]: I thank members generally for the response accorded the Bill and I sincerely trust the measure will soon take its place on the statute book. There has been some criticism of the proposal for the appointment of three commissioners, and several members have said they did not think three were necessary. The Royal Commission thought them necessary and the Commissioner of Railways has testified to that necessity, because in recent months he has asked for the appointment of an assistant commissioner so that he might get out and around the system to see what was going on and thus maintain better control. That is evidence of the fact that, with 15 years' experience in his present office, he is convinced that there should be more than one commissioner. The Government also thinks there should be three commissioners and that view is supported by the report of the Royal Commissioners. I believe it is impossible for one man to do the job properly. Members who use the railways know the shortcomings of the system and I maintain that under present conditions the Commissioner cannot get out of his office in order to keep himself acquainted with all parts of the organisation. That is one of the main reasons why it is thought that three commissioners should be appointed.

It has been said that we do not require a business man, an engineer, and so on. As I said when introducing the measure, the Government feels that a chief commissioner must have administrative ability in order to get the best from the staff under him and so regulate his department that it will function satisfactorily. Then there is the question of the engineer commissioner. He will have the civil engineering department as well as the mechanical engineering department under him and will be in charge of both sections. It is essential to have a highly qualified engineer in the position of

assistant commissioner, and in all other railway systems an engineer will be found in that position. I come now to the third commissioner, who is to be in charge of the business side of the railways and the traffic generally. I think members representing country constituencies will agree that the business side of the railways has been neglected in the past.

As the Royal Commission points out, it should be the duty of such a commissioner to sell the railways to the public, give the people service and get the business. He should get for the railways all the freight they can carry, see that it is expeditiously and safely handled, and give the public service generally.

Mr. Rodoreda: The railways can get all the freight they want now, without selling the service.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have had it brought home to me forcibly, quite recently, that the railways are not getting all the traffic. With the depleted engine strength that they have at present our railways earned £600,000 more last year than in the previous year. What is the use of talking of an interest debit of £1,000,000? It is the use made of the money on which we are paying interest that counts. I learned only the other day that the phosphate rock that comes here in ships is taken from the port to the superphosphate works by road transport, in spite of the fact that hundreds of railway trucks are available to carry it. That rock should be carried by the railways, because the trucks are available, alongside the ships, to load it. If we had a business man in charge of that section of the railways he could see that that was done.

Mr. Rodoreda: What is the Transport Board doing to allow that to go on?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If the railways say they cannot handle the freight—and I presume they have said so—what is the alternative? As I pointed out, the system earned £600,000 more last year than in the previous year and I am convinced that a lot more revenue could be gained by the railways if they were in a position to earn it. We cannot blame the public for not utilising the railways if the system does not give good service. I would like to pay a tribute to the patience of the public in view of the poor service provided

by the department at present. We cannot pluck new engines from the trees outside nor can we buy 10, 20, 30 or 50 new engines even though we want them.

Mr. Marshall: The diesel electrics were ordered six years ago.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, they were ordered four or five years ago and we still cannot get them. We know the position and we must carry on until such time as we can relieve it. There are many engines that we are hoping can be repaired and put into service. There are 135 of them standing around waiting for repairs out of a total of 440, and a committee has recently been formed to deal with the problem and to see whether the repairs can be expedited in order to get the engines into traffic. This will give us further assistance until such time as we can get new locomotives. The question of ministerial control seems to worry some members. I admit that it is a power that will have to be exercised with due care, as it is in every other department in the Government service. Does the Treasurer run away with the Under Treasurer and tell him he has to do this and that?

Hon. A. H. Panton: The boot is on the other foot.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Does the Minister for Education tell his Director that he must do something and treat him like a schoolboy? All these departments are under the control of Ministers.

Mr. Marshall: Does the Minister for Works instruct the Director of Works in the drawing of his blueprints?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: He does not interfere with the Director any more than the hon. member interfered with the Commissioner of Railways when he was Minister, but the power is in the Bill if the Minister wishes to use it. One member to whom I always listen with a great deal of interest is the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe, because I know that he is a well-informed man.

The Premier: He got off the rails tonight.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: He undoubtedly got off the rails tonight as the Premier says.

Mr. Rodoreda: He put up some arguments that you put up in this House about three years ago.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not know what was the matter with him tonight.

Mr. Smith: I put up some arguments on ministerial control.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member does not usually get astray but he became hopelessly astray tonight. I have that interesting pamphlet here concerning the airlines where it has been said there is no ministerial control. I have more than that: I have a copy of the National Airways Act and I intend to read a few paragraphs from it for the benefit of members. Section 19, Subsection (2), states—

The Commission, with the approval of the Minister, shall have and may exercise in relation to airline services between any place in Australia and any place outside Australia, the like powers as it has in relation to airline services specified in Subsection (1) of this section.

Section 21, Subsection (2) states—

The Commission shall not, without the approval of the Minister—

(a) Acquire by purchase any land, the cost of acquisition of which exceeds the sum of five thousand pounds;

(b) enter into any lease of land for a period exceeding five years; or

(c) in any manner dispose of any property, right or privilege having an original or book value exceeding the sum of five thousand pounds.

Subsection (3) states—

The Commission shall not, without the consent of the Minister, enter into any contract in any case where the contract is for the supply, either directly or indirectly, from places outside Australia, of aircraft, the equipment or materials of a greater value than ten thousand pounds.

Section 25 states—

The Minister may, if he is satisfied that it is in the interests of the development of Australia so to do, direct the Commission to establish, alter or continue to maintain any interstate airline service or Territorial airline service specified by the Minister.

Yet the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe tells us that the airlines have no ministerial control.

Mr. Smith: I said there was no ministerial control over the management.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member said they had no ministerial control. If they have it, then the argument is a good one for the ministerial control of the railways of this State.

Mr. Smith: I was talking about ministerial control over policy and not management.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member got very much astray tonight. I can only call the attention of those members who have not been in the House for many years to the fact that for 15 years those sitting on this side of the House tried to get some inquiry into the railways because we stated times out of number—and it can be found in "Hansard"—that there was need for a Royal Commission or a Select Committee. We originated every motion on the subject, and when the reappointment of the Commissioner was brought up we stated that an inquiry should be held into the railways to endeavour to find out what was the matter with the system. Yet members tonight say that the Royal Commission has not told us anything new. Whenever motions on the railways were before the House members on the other side who were then sitting on this side of the House, defeated them. Yet tonight they say that the Commission's report did not tell them anything new or anything that they did not know about the railway system. If something had been done 15 years ago it would not have been necessary to take the measures which are now so essential to endeavour to get the railways out of their difficulties. Action should have been taken years ago to prevent the system getting into the deplorable state it is in at the moment.

Mr. Kelly: Did you ever offer any constructive criticism?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In 1944 when we on this side of the House opposed the reappointment of the Commissioner—not on any personal grounds or on his inability to do the job but simply because we considered an inquiry necessary—the then Premier admitted that he was not satisfied with the railways, but our move was defeated and still nothing was done to check the state of affairs. Nothing was done to attempt to overcome the difficulties of the railways until we took office.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You will drag along for another ten years and you will still not do any better. The Treasurer will not give you sufficient money.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We will endeavour to provide the necessary funds. As a matter of fact, one of the

first acts of the Premier was to sanction the purchase of 55 extra engines, and they were put on order.

Hon. A. H. Panton: For as long as I can remember they have been sanctioning the purchasing of engines.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I would point out that the member for Kanowna stated that the last engines were purchased in 1922; some 26 years ago, and yet that is all members opposite were prepared to do about the position. I think the question of the advisory board was mentioned by the member for Pilbara and one or two other members. This board will be of considerable help to the management and will keep the Minister in touch with the industrial position in the railways. At the present time he does not know very much about it unless some deputation approaches him after a request has been refused by the Commissioner. The member for Murchison would know all about that.

An advisory board, on which the employees will be directly represented, will be able to keep the Minister in touch with all their disabilities. Consequently he will be able to take up such matters with the Commissioner. As a matter of fact the Commissioner will be present at the meetings, and will be able to deal with them at first hand. At present he is not able to do this and if a deputation is taken to him and he grants the request at an interview it is all right, but if he does not the men come to the Minister and the Minister is then forced to go to the Commissioner to ask him to reverse his decision. The Commissioner naturally does not like to reverse his decision having once given it proper consideration. However, under the Bill the matter will be brought to the attention of the management by the advisory board and something can be done about it.

The same thing applies to the representative of the business interests and the primary producers on the advisory board. These representatives will be able to keep the Minister in touch with the particular requirements of their sections of the community as far as the railways are concerned, and will be able to inform him whether the railways are doing their job and whether they are fitting in with the business and primary producing communities. With the introduction of no work on Saturdays, there has been great difficulty in

coping with the work. These matters will be brought before the Minister and Commissioner by the advisory board and I think it will do a lot of good as far as the efficiency and the management of the railways are concerned.

Mr. May: They will have a full-time job.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They will have for a time but later on I think they will probably not have to meet as often as they undoubtedly will have to do at first.

Mr. Styants: You will need to get improved plant for the men to operate if you want to see any improvement in the service.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. member. I know perfectly well that the plant is in a deplorable state, but replacements are not procurable immediately. We have already taken steps to order new plant for the workshops. I told the House that a committee had been appointed to see whether we could get these engines back into working order. I also stated that buildings have been recommended where there are running sheds in the country so that the personnel will be able to get accommodation. As regards the commissioners, I consider that the proposed board will meet requirements.

The member for Kalgoorlie referred to finance. The financial proposals contained in the Bill, as I explained when moving the second reading, are not the proposals of the Royal Commission, and the reason they are not is that the sub-committee consisting of the Under Treasurer, the Auditor-General and the Controller of Accounts stated that, owing to the intervention of standard gauge proposals, it was not possible to conclude the work. Rather than hold the Bill up until it could be completed, which would probably be in a year or two, it was decided to introduce it and put the accounts under the Auditor General, with the reservation that in due time an endeavour would be made to give effect to that part of the Royal Commission's recommendations where it called for a separation of the railway accounts from the Treasury.

This separation, however, will not make much difference because, even when it is brought about and the Railway Department

has its own finance, it will have to obtain the sanction of the Loan Council, just as the Treasury has to do. The only difference will be that, having obtained that sanction, the Railway Department will have the finance in its own control. I think I have said sufficient to cover most of the points raised by various speakers.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 to 9—agreed to.

Clause 10—Amendment of headnote to Part II.:

Mr. HILL: I move an amendment—

That in the proposed new Section 7 (3) (b) (ii), the words "Perth Chamber of Commerce" be struck out, and the words "Federated Chambers of Commerce of Western Australia" inserted in lieu.

The object is that the choice of a businessman shall not be restricted to Perth, but may be made from all the Chambers of Commerce in the State.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have no objection to the amendment, which will enable a choice to be made from a wider range. Perhaps to have a good businessman from a country centre would be advantageous.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. MARSHALL: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of the proposed new Section 7 (3) (c) (ii) the word "three" be struck out and the word "four" inserted in lieu.

This will enable a selection to be made from all the organisations associated with the railway system. The Railway Officers' Union is not included, and as it has a membership of 1,500 to 2,000, it is only fair that that body should be able to submit a nomination.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I thank the hon. member for directing attention to this omission. I overlooked the fact that the Railway Officers' Union was not an industrial union registered under the Arbitration Act.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. MARSHALL: I move an amendment—

That before the word "industrial" in line 4 of the proposed new Section 7 (3) (c) (ii) the words "Railway Officers' Union and the" be inserted.

The provision will then read that the governing body of the Railway Officers' Union and the industrial unions of workers registered under the Industrial Arbitration Act shall submit nominations.

Amendment put and passed.

On motion by Mr. Marshall, the word "three" in line 2 of the proviso was struck out and the word "four" inserted in lieu.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 11 to 32, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TRAMWAYS AND FERRIES.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 19th October.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [10.15]: I seem fated to commence my contributions about midnight.

The Premier: Not by design.

Mr. MARSHALL: As a subscriber to the 44-hour principle, I take strong exception to it.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: 40-hour!

Mr. MARSHALL: By the measure now submitted for our consideration, the Government desires, for some reason unknown to me, to separate the tramway system from the railway system. It is difficult for me to understand why the Government should want to do so, in view of the fact that it has added to the number of those who are to administer the railway system. When speaking the other evening on the measure with which we have just dealt, I said that the only justification which could be advanced for increasing the number of the commissioners was that they should accept at least the same amount of responsibility as is accepted by the present Commissioner of Railways. Yet by this Bill the Government is separating the tramway system from the railways, while by the other measure it is adding to the administrative body con-

trolling the railways. I do not think the task of the railway commissioners would be a laborious one if the tramway system were left under their jurisdiction.

If the railways were to remain under the jurisdiction of one commissioner only, there might be some justification for separating the tramway system and putting it under other management, thus relieving the Commissioner of some of his present responsibility. No doubt there is some leeway to be made up in the tramway system as there is in the railway system. I am sure there is much to be done in regard to the tramway system. There is some difference between the set-up proposed in the Bill now before us and the set-up in the measure with which we dealt last session. The set-up in the present measure is not as top-heavy as that in the previous measure.

This Bill proposes that there shall be a general manager of the tramways and ferries and a deputy general manager. I do not know that any less could be conceived; and I feel that if there is any justification for separating the tramway system from the railways, the set-up in the Bill of a managerial organisation could not be greeted with any degree of hostility. I do not think the organisation warrants any bigger management, notwithstanding that it takes in the ferries as part of its organisation. I consider that in view of the fact that the measure we have just passed provides for an advisory board, including an industrial representative, it would have probably been wiser to leave the tramway system under the jurisdiction of the railway management. From my experience, the same discontent and distrust of the controlling authorities that existed in the railways also exists in the tramways.

If the advisory board under the previous Bill were going to perform any worthwhile functions, having an industrial representative on it, it might have gone a long way towards inspiring more confidence in the management on the part of those employed in the tramway system had that system been included under the new set-up. A new control is proposed for the tramways, and no doubt the management will be similar to that which is actually operating in connection with the railways. It may not be, of course. I do not know what the Minister has in mind. But I am a little sceptical

about peace in industry so far as the tramways are concerned if the tramways are to be under the management of those who have fallen foul of or who have displeased the rank and file over a period of years, and if there is to be no representation of the industrial organisation so that confidence will be inspired in the employees.

It would appear that there is little likelihood of any change except that the Tramway Department will be separated from the Railway Department. The heads of the Tramway Department will remain in authority but will have added power and jurisdiction under this measure. There will be no advisory board or industrial representative anywhere at the top to infuse harmony into the workers and confidence in the management. To that extent the measure does not please me. With regard to the railway system, any organisation which is displeased can approach the advisory board or its representative on the board, and through that medium establish contact with the administration. But in this case there is no industrial representative anywhere, and the industrial organisations will not have any opportunity of bringing their complaints or grievances to the notice of the management.

I am not altogether sanguine about the measure. I think we would have done much better had we allowed the tramways to remain under the jurisdiction of the new management of the Railway Department. I expect I will be travelling alone in the idea I am about to express; but I feel that those who have reached the top in the administration of the railways and tramways have done so through a groove, and ingrained in them is some idea of authority which now compels them to resent any approach from the industrial organisations made with a view to obtaining redress in respect of grievances which the employees consider serious. I cannot say what the Minister has in mind. It may transpire that once it is relieved from responsibility to the Commissioner of Railways, the managerial set-up under this Bill will develop a changed attitude. I hope it does.

My experience has been that there was little difference in the degree of discontent and inefficiency which prevailed in the tramway system as compared with that existing in the railway system. In both cases the

industrial organisations were very dissatisfied because they did not receive sympathy and co-operation from the administrative authorities, which they considered they should receive; so that over a period of many years the men became apathetic. They felt they could place no confidence in the administrative heads and finally they grew refractory and discontented. Whether this measure, by virtue of the set-up proposed, will overcome the difficulty and there will be a change of front by the management, I do not know. I am doubtful. Only time will tell. I reiterate that I would rather have seen some representative of the industrial organisation placed somewhere in this set-up, if only in an advisory capacity, as is the case with the railway management, in order that there might be some direct approach to the authorities.

I feel that there is much to be done in modernising and rehabilitating our tramway system and that progress will be particularly slow, because I am confident that the Treasurer will experience the greatest difficulty in finding the necessary money to give effect to a speedy re-orientation of all these things. I do not think the Minister is correct in his view that these particular organisations would be under any obligation to go to the Loan Council for finance if they required it. If a board or trust were established to administer the railways or tramways, either jointly or separately, with borrowing powers, it could borrow money without reference to the Loan Council.

The argument was advanced many years ago to the Grants Commission that in the other States the tramway systems, the water supplies and many other State functions were controlled by subsidiary boards or trusts which were able to do all their borrowing and spending without Government advice or assistance. When this was pointed out to the Grants Commission it had to give consideration to it because whereas the Western Australian Government had to find the finance, through the Loan Council, for its transport systems and other public utilities, in the other States there were trusts and boards with separate borrowing powers. It would have been much wiser for such a provision to have been included here. In that respect I suppose the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe would agree that there would be a greater chance of a speedier re-

covery if these authorities had their own borrowing powers.

The Minister argued that if we had had the Royal Commission's report when the Commissioner of Railways was reappointed, we would have made some progress or, as he put it, we would have been out of the mire. I want him to be fair. We would not have been out of the mire because, when the present Commissioner was reappointed, we did not have the men, the material, or the money to do anything. If we had been in possession of all the reports in the world we could not have made any progress. Even now we cannot do much because we have not the men or the materials.

Hon. E. Nulsen: The Government has not yet dealt with the previous Government's recommendations on finance.

Mr. MARSHALL: That is so. At the time the Commissioner was reappointed, every man physically fit was in the Army, and when I left office we had not got all our men back—they were only then being discharged. Even now, with all of them back, the Government finds it has not the necessary artisans or materials to do what is required. I venture to suggest that the present run of prosperity, brought about by overtaking the arrears, will soon be checked for the want of money. See if my prognostications do not materialise in the near future! If we catch up with our labour and materials requirements, I respectfully suggest that the Treasurer will have to call a halt because we will be back to the old position of, no money.

Mr. Bovell: Create a reserve fund now.

Mr. MARSHALL: Out of what? We shall carry on under the stupid idea of borrowing, spending and taxing. That is the only way by which we can get a fresh infusion of money to carry on with the rehabilitation programme of our various departments.

Mr. Bovell: I am creating a reserve fund for a rainy day.

Mr. MARSHALL: The hon. member is lucky to be able to do it.

Hon. A. H. Panton: He is the only eligible bachelor we have.

Mr. MARSHALL: It is only because of the capacity of the country to produce wealth and the ability of the Government

to impose taxes that the investors are willing to answer every call to the ridiculous system carried on by all Governments. There is nothing more stupid than borrowing what belongs to the nation, setting it up as a debt against the people, and then taxing the citizens to service it. But that is another subject. Many people argue that the tramway system is an obsolete and outmoded means of transport. That may be right to an extent, but not wholly. No other mode of transport can move crowds as quickly as can the trams, but their efficiency is limited to a maximum radius of three miles. Beyond that distance trams become slow and cumbersome. We cannot consider discarding trams altogether. Bearing that in mind, the Minister has to plan what tramway systems he will use, and discard those which extend beyond three miles, and replace them with trolley-buses or some other speedier service.

The Minister for Railways: And the single tracks.

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes. That is where the Minister has to be particularly watchful because it is hard to say what is going to happen in the future. I warn the Minister—I have seen some comments in the Press—about diesel electric units. I want to tell him to get the diesel direct, and not the diesel electric, because it is cumbersome and a duplication of generating power. In many countries the diesel direct units are giving good service.

The Minister for Railways: They are very expensive.

Mr. MARSHALL: They provide a cheaper system than the diesel electric. That system is now obsolete. Those who speak of ministerial and commissioner control can hold their own views. I had a few months' experience and it was sufficient for me. I obtained an undertaking, in the end, that the main headlights of the trams would be improved. I do not think any member would argue that the lighting of our trams could not be improved. Apart altogether from the handicap poor lighting is to the motormen, it involves a danger to the travelling public.

The Minister for Railways: Some new headlights have been fitted and the drivers are satisfied with them.

Mr. MARSHALL: The Commissioner resisted my efforts for 12 months until I told him I would not go into Parliament and support legislation to force private citizens to install and maintain certain standards of lighting in order to protect pedestrians, while allowing the trams to operate with inefficient lights. It was only after 12 months' wrangling that he agreed to give an undertaking to improve the headlights on the trams, but I have never seen a tram fitted with any headlight better than that which has been in operation all along.

The Minister for Railways: I went out recently on a tram fitted with a new headlight and thought it was very good.

Mr. MARSHALL: There were one or two bad accidents due to the fact that motormen could not see in wet weather. I think a man was killed on the Causeway and one or two motormen were injured. It is not nice for a motorman to know that he has the blood of a fellow human on his hands, even though it was brought about by accident. I was beginning to think that the present Minister was meeting with the same resistance as I did. The measure leaves little room for complaint. Its object is merely to bring the old tramway law under a separate Act and remove the system from the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Railways. I do not like the idea of separating the control of transport as I believe all forms of transport should be co-ordinated, but I am prepared to give anything a trial in order to see if we can improve the situation.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Hill in the Chair; the Minister for railways in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 38—agreed to.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.50 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 28th October, 1948.

CONTENTS.

	Page
Questions : Petrol rationing, as to monthly gallonage	1973
Liquid fuels, (a) as to State's consumption	1974
(b) as to use for road cartage of wheat	1974
Pollomyelitis, as to treatment at Children's Hospital	1974
Coalmining, as to open-cut sites, Colliery Public Service, as to classified positions, temporary officers, conditions, etc.	1975
Quarry, Bunbury, as to enforcing order for closure	1976
Northern and eastern wheat areas, as to water shortage and transport of stock	1976
Water supplies, as to drilling in north Midland and Wongan line areas	1976
Transport, as to tabling of Bell report	1977
Tobacco, as to control of marketing	1977
Servicemen's land settlement, as to allotment of properties	1977
Housing, as to applicants, Midland Junction and Bellevue districts	1978
State trading concerns, as to representations for disposal	1978
Kalgoorlie Hospital, (a) as to staff shortages, Kalgoorlie	1978
(b) as to filling staff vacancies	1978
Commonwealth Bank, as to State Government's business	1979
Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act, as to court proceedings regulations	1979
Leave of absence	1979
Bills : Stipendiary Magistrates Act Amendment, Message	1979
Road Districts Act Amendment, 3r.	1979
Government Railways Act Amendment, recom.	1979
Western Australian Government Tramways and Ferries, Com., report	1982
McNess Housing Trust Act Amendment (No. 2), Com.	1982
Motor Vehicle (Third Party Insurance) Act Amendment, 2r., Com.	1995
Justices Act Amendment, 2r., Com., report	2000

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

QUESTIONS.

PETROL RATIONING.

As to Monthly Gallonage.

Mr. PERKINS asked the Minister for Transport:

What is the monthly gallonage represented by ration tickets for petrol allotted in Western Australia to—

(a) private motorists; (b) commercial users?