

motion is to achieve something which would be acceptable to all sections of the community, and which could be put into operation gracefully and satisfactorily even if it took years to bring to fruition. In the meantime, the right method might be employed and improved, and the right teaching availed of and opportunities inculcated in these people. Under the present circumstances, with many of these folk in the South-West Land Division, under the Child Welfare Act many of their children can be put into institutions, being charged as neglected children.

Looking at the Child Welfare Act, there are a number of headings under which an application may be made for an order in respect of a neglected child. One of them is a child who wanders about or frequents any public place, or sleeps in the open air or does not satisfy the court that he or she has a home or set place of abode. Another reason under which an application may be made is that a child is living under such conditions as to indicate that the mental and physical state of the child is likely to be in jeopardy. If natives are withdrawn from the supervision and care of the Native Welfare Department, their children could come under the Child Welfare Act.

If this Bill becomes law, they are going to have absolute equality, so I suggest it should be taken in top gear as well as in reverse. It cannot apply only one way. I believe the Bill is premature and that there is much to be done before it can be brought into operation successfully. I mentioned that the best brains of this Parliament should be assembled to consider, not only in their own knowledge, but also with expert and other evidence that should be sought and tendered, a proper solution of this problem and to place on the statute book something which will be to the credit of the State, unanimously or so virtually accepted by the great bulk of the community.

Without labouring the question, I hope the Minister will concede the suggestion and allow this investigation. If he does I am sure members of the select committee will do their best to render worthwhile service to Western Australia.

On motion by the Minister for Native Affairs, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 12.7 a.m. (Wednesday).

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 9th December, 1953.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Public Trustee Act Amendment.
- 2, Bank Holidays Act Amendment.
- 3, Returned Servicemen's Badges.
- 4, Declarations and Attestations Act Amendment.
- 5, Fertilisers Act Amendment.
- 6, Companies Act Amendment (No. 1).

QUESTIONS.

ROADS.

As to Federal Assistance for Highway, Northampton-Wyndham.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER asked the Chief Secretary:

Now that oil has been discovered in the North, will the Government give consideration to making a request to the Federal Government for financial aid for the purpose of constructing a sealed all-weather road from Northampton to Wyndham?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

The position will be examined in relation to the new developments, in order that consideration may be given to making further representations to the Federal Government for additional financial aid to improve road facilities in the North.

NATIVE WELFARE.

(a) As to Number Employed and in Training.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE asked the Chief Secretary:

Side page 9 of the annual report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs—

- (1) How many native girls and boys, or adults, are employed as clerks, typists, telephonists, welfare assistants, nurses and apprentices in the building, electrical, manufacturing and other trades?
- (2) How many of the above are employed in Government, or semi-governmental institutions?
- (3) How many are so employed in the metropolitan area?
- (4) How many are in the course of being trained in the above vocations?
- (5) Where is the training taking place?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

This information is not readily available at the Department of Native Affairs and its compilation will require considerable research and the despatch of a suitable circular to all missions and departmental district officers throughout the State.

If the hon. member, bearing this in mind, still requires the information, I shall request its preparation, but a considerable period will be required to enable this to be done.

(b) As to Alvan and McDonald House Trainees.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) How many half-caste girls have passed through Alvan House since its inception?

(2) How many of them are employed in the metropolitan area?

(3) How many are employed in country districts?

(4) What has happened to the remainder, if any?

(5) Are any such figures available for McDonald House?

(6) If so, what are they?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) 13.

(2) 3.

(3) 7.

(4) One attending Carmel College, Kalamunda.

One residing at the Mogumber Methodist Mission and continuing an arts course.

One returned home to assist parents after two years' employment as telephonist in the Department of Native Affairs.

There are 13 girls at present in residence at Alvan House and of these four will be leaving at the end of the year for:—

(a) One, employment in an office in Perth.

(b) Two, employment in offices in the country.

(c) One, employment as a domestic in the country.

(5) With regard to McDonald House—

Six have passed through the institution since its inception.

Three are employed in the metropolitan area.

Three are employed in country districts.

(6) There are five boys at present in residence at McDonald House and two will leave this year to become apprentices in the building trade.

RAILWAYS.

As to Trial of Freightex System.

Hon. J. MURRAY (for Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham) asked the Chief Secretary:

Since a special visit by representatives of Freightex Services to Western Australia and representation made to the Railway Department, and in view of the attractive conditions offered, will the Minister say—

(1) Has consideration been given to a sincere trial of service to see if it will benefit our railways and public?

(2) If the answer is "Yes," when will the service begin?

(3) If the answer is "No," what is the reason for refusal?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) The proposal was discussed by the Western Australian Railways Commission with the Commonwealth Railway Commissioner recently and is being further investigated. Finality has not yet been reached.

(2) and (3) Answered by No. 1.

TRAFFIC.

As to Frequency of Lights.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH asked the Chief Secretary:

In connection with the newly-installed traffic lights under the West Perth subway—

(1) What is the duration of time between lights?

(2) Has this time been fixed as an experimental measure, or is it a permanency?

(3) If it is a permanency, will the same time between lights apply to other intended traffic light installations.

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) The duration is controlled by the density of traffic and at present is set to provide a minimum of five seconds to a maximum of fifty seconds.

(2) It is possible that the setting will be varied as drivers become more accustomed to the lights.

(3) Answered by No. (2).

STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE.

(a) *As to Tenders for New Building.*

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) With reference to the reply to my question regarding the new State Insurance Office building, can he inform the House—

(a) whether tenders have been called for this work;

(b) if tenders have not already been called, whether it is the intention of the Minister for Works to call tenders; and if so, when?

(2) As the proposed date of commencement is fast approaching, will he supply the House with any other details available regarding this building project?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) (a) and (b) Tenders will not be called as the work is to be carried out by the Public Works Department.

(2) Considerable publicity has been given to the type of building to be constructed and the Government departments which will occupy it.

However, if the hon. member cares to indicate on what particular aspects further information is desired I shall be pleased to see that, if available, it will be supplied.

(b) *As to Estimated Cost.*

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

Following my previous question, can he let me know whether the Government has any idea what the new State Insurance Office building will cost?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

I cannot recall the correct figure at the moment, but I will supply it to the hon. member later.

BILL—REPRINTING OF ACTS AUTHORISATION.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 4th December.

HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Midland) [4.40]: This is purely a formal measure. It sets out that the appropriate Minister—the Attorney General, or the Minister for Justice, as the case may be—will authorise the reprinting of certain Acts that have not been amended, as and when the necessity for such reprinting arises. It is also

provided that the proofs shall be submitted to the Minister, and he shall check them and authorise the number to be printed. The measure further specifies that the date of reprinting shall be indicated on the Act so treated.

Apparently, while there is authority for the reprinting of Acts that have been amended, there is none for the reprinting of those that have not been amended; and from time to time, when stocks have become low, the Government Printer has taken what most of us would imagine to be the commonsense course of reprinting what might be required. While this appears to be a very minor matter, it is seemingly advisable, from a technical point of view, that authority should be granted. There is also need for the reprinting to be done in a certain way to conform with other Acts. So this measure sets out the authority for that to be done and leaves to the Minister for the time being the decision in regard to what form the reprint shall take. The measure is necessary, and I support the second reading.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [4.43]: I support the Bill, and would like to ask the Chief Secretary whether the Government would consider, when introducing large-scale amendments to a big Act, presenting the whole Act to us rather than an amending Bill, so that we have to look through the various amendments, and become bewildered in trying to see where they fit in to the original Act. I understand that when a Bill is submitted to the Commonwealth Parliament, the whole measure is presented, and not just amendments on amendments on amendments.

Although the cost might be greater, and this procedure might be more difficult from the point of view of the Printing Office, I think it would be of tremendous benefit to members. I am not referring to small Bills that can be looked into quite easily; but when major Bills are being considerably amended, I think that the measure should be presented to us as a whole.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (Central) [4.44]: I take this opportunity of asking the Crown Law Department through the Chief Secretary, whether some simpler method could be used for putting up amendments. Sometimes an amendment is submitted that covers two or three pages; and when it is put from the Chamber, it is put as a whole, unless the attention of the Chairman is drawn to the matter and he meets the wishes of members by breaking up the amendment into various subclauses.

In the old days, amendments were drafted with numbers on them instead of our having two or three pages of what are really different amend-

ments, and when they are submitted to the printer for printing, it is most difficult to follow them and to try to put them into the appropriate places in the parent Act. I think that even Mr. Parker, who has had legal training, will have found some difficulty at times in trying to link proposed amendments with the principal Act. I myself have sometimes put in half a day trying to connect them.

If we experience that difficulty here, it must be more difficult for people outside, who have to obtain the advice of solicitors—more difficult, and costly. It would be cheaper for the general public if we had a simpler method of putting amendments into a statute. Sometimes members of the public are referred to the Printing Office for a copy of an Act; and when they go to obtain it, they find that various amendments have been made, and they are absolutely bewildered. I hope the Chief Secretary will draw the attention of the department to the fact that the present method presents difficulties to members of Parliament, especially when we have to deal with rushed legislation, as is the case today. I am sure that if Ministers did not have notes put up for them, it would be impossible for them to deal with the legislation.

I am pleased to know that there will be one authority to authorise the printing of Acts in the future, instead of departmental officers being permitted to print them in their own way. In this way, we may develop a standard method of bringing Acts up to date. I hope that will be so.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West—in reply) [4.46]: I shall be only too happy to have this matter discussed. The complaints made by Dr. Hislop and others were similar to those I have made in past years. I realise the difficulties with which members are faced in attempting to follow various amendments to an Act that has been amended on a number of occasions. I do not know that I will be able to bring the matter to the stage suggested by Dr. Hislop. If I understood him aright, what he would like to see would be Bills accompanied by a complete measure containing the foreshadowed amendments.

I do not know that that is possible at the moment; but, as a preliminary, we could have an Act printed which would contain all the amendments made up to the time of the proposed alterations. Thus members would have before them the Act as it stood, with all the amending Acts embodied, instead of having to consult the original Act and various amending measures. I feel strongly on this matter.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: If we had the statutes amended as the Bills were brought forward it would be a help.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is what I meant. We bring an Act up to date and then there are other amendments to be made to it. If we had a complete measure, that would be a very great improvement, and anyone could pick up the amendments and see immediately what alterations were suggested. I can assure members that during the recess I will see what improvements can be made in this matter.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

Bill read a third time and passed.

BILL—AGRICULTURE PROTECTION BOARD ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST (Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [4.52] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this Bill is to facilitate administration of the parent Act which, members will recall, was passed in 1950. The Act set up the Agriculture Protection Board which administers the Vermin Act and the Noxious Weeds Act.

The idea of the protection board is to co-ordinate the administration of the Noxious Weeds Act and the Vermin Act as well as certain provisions of the Road Districts Act, which relates to noxious weeds. The board consists of the following nine members:—

The Chief Vermin Control Officer, who is chairman.

The Chief Weed Control Officer.

The Government Entomologist.

The Chief Warden of Fauna.

An officer of the State Treasury.

Four members, appointed by the Governor, nominated by the Minister, representing the following:—

one—the pastoral industry.

one—the agricultural industry.

two—local authorities.

The last four are selected from a panel of names, submitted by the respective organisations. The present set-up is based on the recommendations of a Royal Commission, which also intended that the Minister should be chairman of the board. Members can understand that the Minister would not have time to attend to his ordinary duties and to those of chairman of the board at the same time. However, this was not incorporated in the parent Act, but the protection board was made directly responsible to the Minister. Experience has proved that to be unsatisfactory, involving the Minister in decisions

on matters of detail, and also on technical matters, without the advice of the Department of Agriculture.

At present some of the staff are employed by the Public Service Commissioner but others are under the board and, while on similar duties, may have different rates of pay. With a view to correcting these weaknesses a committee was appointed to investigate and report. The committee consisted of the Chief Administrative Officer of the Department of Agriculture, the Assistant Under Treasurer, and the secretary of the Public Service Commissioner's office. The findings of the committee have been endorsed by the Public Service Commissioner, and some of the provisions in the Bill are the result of the committee's recommendations.

At present the Chief Vermin Control Officer is chairman of the board, and this measure proposes that he shall become the Chief Executive Officer, and the Director of Agriculture shall be chairman of the board. Instead of naming the Chief Weed Control Officer and the Government Entomologist, the Bill provides for "two officers of the Department of Agriculture" to be members of the board. In this manner, the officers will occupy their positions on the board as representatives of the department, and therefore remain responsible to the Director of Agriculture.

Under the Act, the Railways Commission is required to pay £500 for the control, prevention, and eradication of noxious weeds, and £2,500 in relation to vermin. From Consolidated Revenue the sum of £105,000 is paid, and it is made up as follows:—

	£
Noxious weeds	7,000
Vermin	44,000
Vermin in the specified area	12,000
Grasshoppers	30,000
General expenses of the Protection Board	12,000
	<hr/> 105,000

At present these amounts are held in trust funds for specific purposes, and may not be used for anything else. However, in some years the pests or vermin may not be in evidence as much as in other years; and, as a result, some funds are unexpended while there is insufficient for the eradication of vermin and pests under other trust funds. The Bill provides for all the funds to be amalgamated into a common fund to be used for whatever pests and vermin the board considers necessary. The proposal in no way increases the amount allotted, but does leave the board free to concentrate on any pests with which it is necessary to deal. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [4.57]: Whilst I appreciate that the idea of the Minister, in introducing the Bill, is to facilitate the administration of the board, I find it rather hard to agree with what he has said. At present, the Agriculture Protection Board is under the chairmanship of the Chief Vermin Control Officer, Mr. Tomlinson; and for the past two years the board has done a good job throughout the State in regard to both noxious weeds and vermin, particularly rabbits.

Hon. G. Bennetts: And grasshoppers.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Yes; but mainly noxious weeds and rabbits. One excuse given for the alteration is that Mr. Tomlinson will not be able to devote sufficient time to the job in hand. I do not know that that is altogether correct. During the last two years Mr. Tomlinson has travelled the State fairly widely, and has still been able to find time to act as chairman of the board. I would say that because of his contacts, and the knowledge he obtains through travelling over the State, there is no man better fitted to be chairman than he.

If we take the chairmanship away from him and utilise him simply as an executive officer, and place the Director of Agriculture in the position of chairman, we will then have a chairman who has more than a full-time job at present, and who will have to study the ramifications of what goes on in regard to noxious weeds and vermin control; because it would be useless for any man to sit in as chairman of a meeting unless he knew the subject involved. I think that to change the set-up for the sake of administration is possibly a retrograde step.

One other provision which I do not favour will deprive the board of the services of the Chief Weed Control Officer and the Government Entomologist. I know it has been said that while the present occupiers of those positions continue to remain with the department, they will be members of the board; but as soon as they die or retire they will be replaced, if this Bill becomes law, by "two officers of the Agriculture Department." That leaves the position wide open. Today the two officers concerned have a wide knowledge of their particular subjects, and they are men who should be members of this board. But what guarantee have we that the two men appointed to take their places will have the same knowledge?

The Minister for the North-West: By virtue of their position they would always be on the board—that is, the men who replace them.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Then why alter the Act?

The Minister for the North-West: I explained why.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I do not think the Minister did. The board plays an important part in the agricultural areas of this State, and I think we can claim that it has dealt a severe blow to rabbits. For the first time for many years producers are not worried about this pest; and that position has been brought about only because Mr. Tomlinson, as chairman of the board, has been able to travel throughout the State and keep in close contact with his officers. Through the knowledge that he has gained, he has been able to direct the policy of the board and the use of myxomatosis has been most beneficial in many areas. We want that policy to continue. We will not necessarily deprive the board of the advice of this officer, because he will be the chief executive officer; but if this measure is accepted, we will take away from him a certain amount of his power, and we will be placing it in the hands of a man who has enough to do now. So we must be a little careful in what we do in this regard.

I agree with the other provision in the Bill which will enable all the money made available to the board to be placed in a common pool. We can all appreciate that in one particular season we might have to spend more than the allotted sum in one area on a certain type of vermin or noxious weed. If this provision in the Bill is agreed to, the officers of the board will be able to use the money to the best advantage. They are the only two provisions in the Bill that members need consider; and I think we should defeat the first provision for the reasons I have given. I will vote for the second reading, and I trust that after members have given it consideration, they will not agree to alter the present set-up as regards the members of the Agriculture Protection Board.

HON. A. L. LOTON (South) [5.5]: I, too, wish to take exception to the appointment of the Director of Agriculture to replace Mr. Tomlinson. The Agriculture Protection Board was established by an Act of Parliament passed in 1950, and the section which this Bill proposes to alter reads as follows:—

The Chief Inspector appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Vermin Act, who shall be chairman;

the officer in charge of the administration of noxious weeds control pursuant to the provisions of the Noxious Weeds Act, who shall be Deputy Chairman and who shall act as chairman in place of the chairman during his absence.

the Government Entomologist, who shall act as chairman during the absence of both the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman . . .

Since its creation, the board has done a good job in the control of vermin and noxious weeds. It has been operating for only two years; but if this Bill is agreed to, Mr. Tomlinson will be superseded by the Director of Agriculture who, at the present time, is the chairman of the Land Settlement Board as well as the Director of Agriculture. Those two jobs keep him fully occupied.

On many occasions we have noted in the Press that the Director of Agriculture has had to travel to the Eastern States to attend conferences; and if the Minister goes to the Eastern States to attend an agricultural conference, it is usually necessary for the Director of Agriculture to accompany him. If he becomes the chairman of the Agriculture Protection Board, on the many occasions he will be in the Eastern States the Deputy Chairman will have to act in his stead. So I fail to see what we can achieve by altering the personnel of the board in the way that this measure proposes. I hope, when we get into Committee, that members will agree to strike out the clause so that the personnel of the board will be allowed to remain as it is.

The other provision in the measure is a good one because, at present, if the board uses up all its funds set aside for a particular purpose, it has to go to the Treasury for a grant, if necessary, and that grant has to be repaid. If the amendment in the Bill is agreed to, the board will be able to use its discretion in the spending of money for a particular purpose, and that seems to be a wise provision. In New South Wales they have had a plague of grasshoppers this year, and they have had to use fire-fighting equipment and all sorts of devices to try to combat the plague. If we had a similar plague here, the board would find it difficult to cope with the infestation, unless it was able to draw on other funds. This provision will overcome what I consider to be a weakness in the Act. Also, the Treasury will increase its contribution to the funds of the Agriculture Protection Board and that will enable the board to increase its work in the agricultural areas. New pests are becoming apparent every day, and there are such parasites as web worm, lucerne flea, and red mite to be dealt with.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: And skeleton weeds.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Yes. There are various other pests that are brought here from the Eastern States and overseas that have to be dealt with. The departmental officers have done a good job in checking the spread of noxious weeds that have been brought into this State. In some cases stock imported from the other States have the seeds of noxious weeds adhering to them, and in a recent case the officers found Bathurst burr at Kalgoorlie on

sheep imported from the Eastern States. Some noxious weeds were found clinging to the hair of cattle imported from New South Wales.

There should be a greater interchange of clearance permits between the Eastern States and Western Australia before stock or sheep are railed or shipped. It appears that at this juncture very little is done by the departmental officers in the other States towards granting clearance permits for the transportation of stock. Stock arrive at Fremantle before departmental officers can examine them; and 4,000 sheep which arrived by rail recently had to be handled individually to discover whether seeds of burr were clinging to the wool. It is an almost impossible task to ensure with absolute accuracy that they were not carriers. Only one burr has to be taken into a district, and it could prove to be a source of noxious weeds. I congratulate the officers of the department on the work they have done in this regard. However, the danger of further spread becomes very apparent. I hope that, in Committee members will support the deletion of Clause 2; and, with that proviso, I support the second reading.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [5.12]: There is some substance in the remarks of Mr. Logan and Mr. Loton. In connection with the work of Mr. Tomlinson, over the last two years in Yilgarn, which is in my electorate, very satisfactory results were obtained in combating the grasshopper menace. For some years that district had a bad spin, but today it has turned into a fine area. I do not support any proposal to dispense with Mr. Tomlinson's services on the board, unless he is placed in a department where those services can be used to good advantage.

Bathurst burr is not new to this State. Over a period of 30 years it has grown at Parkeston. I brought its existence to the notice of the council inspector, and it was destroyed. It has spread along the line from Parkeston to Golden Ridge, and it can be seen growing on either side. It is practically impossible to keep it out of the State in view of the fact that stock arrive from the Eastern States in railway trucks. Nothing is done to Commonwealth railway trucks when they arrive in the State; they are not hosed or washed out here, or when they return to the East. It can be said that burrs drop out of the trucks on to the roads. I trust that the Minister can take steps to retain Mr. Tomlinson in his present position, or else use his services to advantage in the department charged with controlling these pests.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (Central) [5.15]: I endorse the remarks that have been made suggesting that Mr. Baron Hay be not appointed as chairman. I would point out that he is an extremely busy man, charged with most important tasks in the Department of Agriculture.

His work on the soldier settlement scheme is pretty extensive. In addition he is the chairman of other boards. I should think that is enough for one man, if he is to carry out those duties thoroughly.

I think that Mr. Tomlinson wanted to be relieved of his position as chairman of the board. He has done a good job, and he has had two years' experience in that capacity. He got along very well, not only with his officers, but also with the members of the board nominated by outside authorities. For that reason it would be well to leave him in charge for another year. If trouble should arise, the Act could be amended.

Insufficient steps have been taken in this State to destroy rabbits with myxomatosis. I would refer to the province represented by Mr. Loton and his colleague. In those portions of the State the rabbits are far thicker than they ought to be. When I was in the Eastern States recently I saw country identical to the country in Mr. Loton's electorate, yet there they have destroyed practically all the rabbits.

Farmers in this State complain that there are no mosquitoes to spread myxomatosis. Members will appreciate that France, Great Britain, and other parts of Europe are protesting that myxomatosis is killing all the rabbits, yet there are few mosquitoes in those countries. When I was Minister I found it difficult to get farmers to use myxomatosis. Ampoules were sold to them at reasonable prices.

Hon. A. R. Jones: At 8s. 6d. each, but in South Australia they cost 6d.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The farmers are not so hard up that they cannot pay 8s. 6d. for an ampoule which contains a sufficient quantity to destroy 1,000 rabbits.

Hon. A. R. Jones: The Government must be profiteering.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: It is obtained from South Australia by air transport; furthermore it is sent as refrigerated cargo. It is paltry for farmers to complain about paying 8s. 6d. for an ampoule. If it were bought in the ordinary way, and not from a Government instrumentality, farmer would be paying £1 1s. for it.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Farmers are hard up today!

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The hon. member represents Southern Cross and Esperance, and his remark is an insult to the Esperance district. He also represents Salmon Gums and the district as far down as Merredin. He has authority to say whether they are hard up or not. But I do not agree with him; probably he is being facetious. I do not object to the Bill except that I think the present chairman should be retained in that position

because, if the Director of Agriculture takes his place, we shall be appointing a man who is even busier.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [5.21]: I cannot allow the second reading to pass without making a small contribution to the debate. I take the same view as my colleague. It is three years since the Act was passed and in that time the board has been organised and has operated very satisfactorily. It has gained a tremendous amount of experience, too, and yet, under this amendment, it will be upset for some reason or other.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: No ulterior motive.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: It seems extraordinary that, after three years, we should upset a board that has already done good work and possibly will do much better work in future. By making the Director of Agriculture the chairman of the board, we shall be asking too much of one man. His job of Director of Agriculture and Director of War Service Land Settlement is already more than sufficient for one man. The job of chairman of the board is not a small one, either. In Committee, I shall, for those reasons, vote against the clause.

HON. C. H. HENNING (South-West) [5.23]: I think the only portion of the Bill we can question is that dealing with the representation on the board. The Minister told us that experience had shown that the present arrangement was unsatisfactory, and involved the Minister in giving decisions on matters of detail and technical matters that should be dealt with by the Department of Agriculture.

It is very difficult to follow what he meant because the present chairman, Mr. Tomlinson, is also an officer of the Department of Agriculture, and is shown in the Public Service List as being officer in charge of the Vermin Branch and Registrar of Brands. Some of the staff are under the Public Service Commissioner while others are under the board, but I do not know that that enters into consideration to any extent on this measure. However, I should think that the matters dealt with by the chairman would necessitate the attendance of the Director to advise the Minister. Some of the recommendations that have been made by the committee have been embodied in the Bill, but it would have been a great help to us had it been possible to see the recommendations.

With other members, I consider that we are trying to centralise too much control in the hands of one man. No one will deny that the Director of Agriculture, who is also Chairman of the War Service Land Settlement Board, is a very capable officer; but are not those jobs alone big

enough to occupy one man, without adding a little more here and a little more there? If adopted, the proposal in the Bill would mean that the decisions of the board, and any publicity, instead of going through the chief executive officer, would be published in the name of the officer who is the Director of Agriculture.

I cannot make up my mind what is best to be done in the circumstances. I appreciate that the Government has considered the matter and must have definite reasons for its action, but what has been put forward so far by the Minister has not been sufficient to convince me that this change is necessary. I should like to know whether there were any other reasons that led to the decision to change the representation. It seems that the Minister alone is unable to carry on without the advice of officers of the Department of Agriculture, but could not the chairman of the board report to and deal with the Minister in the presence of the Director of Agriculture?

One other matter is that relating to the appointment of two officers of the Department of Agriculture as members of the board. These appointments probably need not change the personnel of the board in any way; but the Minister said that they would occupy their positions on the board as representatives of the department, and therefore would remain responsible to the Director of Agriculture. I should say that when appointed to the board, their responsibility would be purely and simply directed to carrying out whatever policy was best calculated to lead to the destruction of vermin, noxious weeds, etc. For all their decisions, they should be responsible to the board and not to the Department of Agriculture. I am not keen about voting on the Bill if it goes into Committee until I know what further information the Minister can give on the points raised. However, I support the second reading.

HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [5.28]: I shall support the second reading, but I have the same objection as has been voiced by other members to the proposed change in the chairmanship of the board. The board has been operating for only two years, and has done excellent work, and should not be interfered with at this stage. I do not know what prompted the Minister to propose this change. The Minister here has given reasons, but I do not think they are the real reasons.

Mention has been made of the fact that myxomatosis has not been given the attention it deserves by farmers and land owners. I consider that a big field is being covered by myxomatosis in an endeavour to exterminate the rabbit pest; but more inspectors are necessary, and I hope that the Minister will ask for additional money so that more inspectors may be provided.

It is all very well to say that the myxomatosis is made available to farmers at a very cheap rate. I agree that it is not dear, though it is more costly here than in the Eastern States. Possibly the reason for this was the one given by Sir Charles Latham. Allowing that the cost is not a matter of concern to the farmers, I believe the fact that they are ignorant of the method of carrying out the work is the main reason for its failure in some districts. It has been very successful in the Geraldton and Greenough area, but that area has always been under the control and supervision of an excellent inspector; and where, over the years, they might have had the same opportunity, with the same stagnant pools and prevalence of mosquitoes the control has not been so successful.

So I appeal to the Minister to ask the Government to make more money and inspectors available so that the farmers may be instructed and that the inspectors may go on to the farms, if necessary, to treat the rabbits; as, unless that is done, I do not think we will get from this process the good which could come out of it. When the Bill is in Committee, I trust members will consider the urgent necessity of carrying the board on in its present form, as it has done a good job and is of only two years' standing. I think it should be given a run of at least three or four years before its personnel is changed. I support the second reading.

On motion by the Minister for the North-West, debate adjourned.

BILL—MARKETING OF ONIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (Central) [5:37]: This Bill provides for the appointment of another member to the board. When I was Minister for Agriculture, the onion-growers of the Fremantle area interviewed me and asked that they be given better representation, and I promised that would be done during the next session of Parliament; so I endorse this measure. Previously, the board appointed its own chairman, but the Bill proposes that the Minister shall nominate the chairman of the board. Generally speaking, the board has controlled the production and distribution of onions reasonably well. Unfortunately, we do not grow in this State a type of onion that will keep, and three or four months is the outside period for which they can be stored. I am anxious that we should try to grow here the type of onion grown in Victoria. We have good soil, but so far have been unable to produce a supply of onions of a type to meet the State's requirements all the year round.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Does not the type produced in the wheatbelt keep?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Yes; but the farmers will not produce them. I am anxious that we should obtain seed from Ballarat, where the onions are seeded and harvested by machinery. Here, of course, they are planted in seed beds, and are later set out by hand, which involves a great deal of work. I might add that there is only one type of Australian who is prepared to do that work in a big way.

I understand that some seed was procured from the Eastern States and sent to Mt. Barker for a trial, and Mr. Loton may be able to tell us what the result was. At one time, we placed five tons of onions in refrigeration, and they kept so well that they were still in good condition just before the next crop came on the market. That test was successful, the loss in cold storage being less than 1 per cent.

We grow onions here cheaply, compared with most of the other States, in spite of the fact that there is a good deal of handling done in planting and harvesting. If that difficulty can be overcome, I see no reason why this State cannot produce all the onions it requires and export more than it now does. At present, we export some to Singapore in the season, and we used to export some to the Eastern States; but, speaking generally, we produce only enough to meet our own requirements for three or four months of the year.

The Bill also proposes to register the growers and the ground used for growing onions. That will mean some degree of restriction—

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: It will not mean restriction.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: It will, because last year there was a glut of onions, and great difficulty in even handling them all, so I can quite understand that growers do not want more onions produced than can be marketed, because otherwise the local consumer would get cheap onions for a period of the year at the expense of the grower. Old Dame Nature determines many things for us, and in some years we can grow things prolifically, and in other years crops fail.

The Bill provides that an area of a quarter of an acre or upwards used for growing onions must be registered, and that the grower must register also. The provisions in this regard are almost in line with the legislation relating to potato-growing. The Potato Marketing Board has been successful in this State, and has established a good market in the Eastern States. Some of our potatoes sold for £100 per ton in Sydney last year.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Who got most of that?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I suppose the dealers over there got most of it. The Bill proposes also to register pre-

mises where onions will be handled. I would like to compliment the onion-growers on what they have done in this State. Had I remained Minister for Agriculture, I would have brought down this measure, and so I have no objection to it. I hope we will be able to get the onion-growers here to produce a hard brown onion that will keep sufficiently long to maintain supplies throughout the year, instead of having, as in the past, to import onions from Japan or Egypt at a cost of up to 1s. 6d. per lb. to the consumer.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

Bill read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—PUBLIC WORKS ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [5.44] in moving the second reading said: There are only two amendments of any consequence in this Bill. The first deals with one of the positions of assistant commissioner, and the other with the term of appointment of the three commissioners. As members are aware, the sole commissioner was replaced in 1949 by a commission of three, which comprised a commissioner, with a comprehensive knowledge and experience of railway management, maintenance and control; an assistant commissioner who had to be a qualified engineer and to have a comprehensive knowledge and experience of engineering as related to railway management, maintenance and control; and an assistant commissioner with a comprehensive knowledge of and experience in the conduct of railway commercial traffic, and accounting matters.

Members are probably aware that, up to his recent death, the late Mr. Raynor was the Commercial Assistant Commissioner. Not long after assuming the railway portfolio, the present Minister suggested to the commission that there be some arrangement to provide representation on the commission for the employees of the Railway Department. The commission decided that Mr. Raynor should assume this responsibility, as well as looking after the commercial angle. This arrangement continued until Mr. Raynor's death.

It is a fact that employee representation on governing bodies has become recognised as a distinct advantage in the attainment of harmonious industrial conditions. At this juncture, I might say that the relations between the commission and the railway unions are happy. Only recently the unionists agreed to forgo annual leave and so work overtime to handle this summer's harvest. It is felt that with direct representation on the commission, the employees would possess a better appreciation of the difficulties and problems which from time to time confront the commission.

As an instance, a fortnight ago the unions of the Midland Junction workshops complained that the commission had found it necessary to let a contract to an outside firm for the repair and rehabilitation of 100 waggons. The unions considered that this work could conveniently and efficiently be done in the workshops. After hearing the commission's side of the case, the Minister for Railways called a conference of the parties, at which he presided. After one hour's explanation of the position, when the commission pointed out to union officials that the workshops were working to 100 per cent. capacity, the unions were satisfied that there was no danger of any retrenchment in the workshops.

These minor disputes, as well as graver ones, could be avoided, and time saved, if the employees were represented on the commission. The proposal in the Bill is that instead of being a commercial, traffic, and accounting representative, the assistant commissioner shall carry out such duties as are agreed on by the commission and are approved by the Minister, and he shall also represent the employees. At present the Act provides that the tenure of appointment of the three commissioners shall be permanent. The Government does not consider that this is a wise provision. Not only here is such an opinion held, but also everywhere in the British Commonwealth. In no other British country or State, so far as can be ascertained to date, are railway administrators appointed for life. In Victoria there are three commissioners, the chairman of whom is appointed for seven years, and the other two for five, with the right of renewal. In Tasmania the railways and road transport are supervised by a Transport Commission. In New South Wales there is one commissioner and he is appointed for a term of seven years; similarly in Queensland and South Australia. As I have said, this applies also to other British countries.

The only manner in which a commissioner can be removed in this State for incapacity or misbehaviour or for other reasons, is for the Governor to suspend him, and for a report to be placed before Parliament which shall decide whether or not he shall be restored to office. It is considered that it would be far more pre-

ferable for the appointment of the commissioners to be reviewed from time to time. This is done in the case of other appointments, such as that of the Public Service Commissioner, etc. The suggestion in the Bill is that the commissioner be appointed for seven years, and the assistant commissioners for five years. The Bill specifies that this provision shall not apply to the two commissioners at present holding office, Mr. Hall and Mr. Clarke, as their appointments were permanent.

So far as the new appointee is concerned, it is practically certain he will be a railway employee. If so, it is possible he may not be reappointed for a further term; so the Bill provides for his reinstatement in the department without any loss of privilege or classification. This would encourage the younger men in the higher classifications to offer themselves for appointment as assistant commissioner.

A minor amendment seeks to rectify an oversight. When the commission of three was appointed in 1949 to take the place of the one commissioner, it was necessary to include in the Act a provision to abolish the body corporate by the name of the commissioner and to transfer the functions exercised by him to the Minister and the new commission. The Act specified that this should be done on an appointed day by proclamation. However, this was never done. To overcome this, the Bill provides that the appointed day shall be the 1st July, 1949, and that any actions taken subsequently by the Commission and the Minister shall be validated. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Midland) [5.50]: When introducing the Bill the Minister said it dealt with two relevant matters. I think they may be summed up as being four relevant matters. The first one is to amend Section 8, Subsection (5) so that one of the two assistant commissioners shall represent the employees on the commission instead of his being allotted specific duties as at present. The second is to make future appointments of commissioners or assistant commissioners for seven and five years respectively. The third is to preserve the rights of reinstatement, classification, and privileges in the case of the assistant commissioner; and the fourth is to resolve a legal doubt of a technical nature by including a provision to validate acts done by the Government.

To understand the background of the Bill, it is necessary to realise that the Government is faced with the need to fill the vacancy created by the death of the late Mr. Charles Raynor. At this stage I would like to pay a tribute to Mr.

Raynor. He was a man of strong character and was very able. I think he knew more about certain aspects of the coal industry than possibly any other man in the State. He was a man of decided opinions, was very loyal and was one on whom reliance could be placed in relation to the discharge of the duties allotted to him. I found his advice at all times extremely valuable, and no one regretted more than I did his untimely death, when he still had apparently some years of active work in front of him as a member of the commission. It seems to me that the Government desires to appoint some particular person to succeed Mr. Raynor; otherwise the amendment to Section 8, Subsection (5) is not clear.

To enable members further to appreciate the general background, I would like to explain that in 1904 the old Government Railway Act was passed, and a single commissioner was appointed to control the railways. He was made substantially independent of Ministerial control. In effect, he was responsible to Parliament only. When the McLarty-Watts Government took office in 1947 it appointed a Royal Commission to inquire into the condition of the railways. That commission reported that the state of the railways was extremely grave, and the then Government thought it might be of advantage to appoint a Commission of three, because the Royal Commissioner said categorically that our railway system was the worst in the world.

To attract men of the highest capacity those positions were created for a life tenure. If the term had been limited to, say, five or seven years, highly competent men might have hesitated to accept such appointments feeling, possibly, that with the change of Government the appointment might not be renewed. That, in essence was behind the idea of the appointment: to make the terms as attractive as possible in the hope of getting most highly qualified men.

We have had six years of trial, and at this stage it is still difficult to say whether the experiment has been wholly successful or not. As Minister for a number of years, I appreciate the fund of special knowledge that the two imported commissioners were able to bring to the study of our railway problems. It is common knowledge however that there is a measure of disagreement between two of the senior officers of the commission, and that makes co-ordinated administration difficult. So I am inclined to agree with the Government that at this stage, while the proposed change to a fixed tenure of office would not affect the actual incumbents, there is always the possibility of future appointments causing trouble; and it might be desirable to have a fixed term in each case.

Dealing with the clauses of the Bill seriatim I must say, firstly, that the proposed amendment to Section 8 Subsection (5) is one that I view with disfavour. While I am prepared to vote for the second reading of the Bill, and would advise other members to do the same, I would strongly counsel them to delete this clause when the Bill reaches the Committee stage. At present Section 8 Subsection (5) reads—

One of the persons appointed to the office of Assistant Commissioner shall have a comprehensive knowledge and experience in the conduct of the commercial, traffic, and accounting aspects of the business and the management, maintenance and control of railways.

The provision demands of a commissioner that he should have a comprehensive knowledge and experience of the management and control of railways. The provision governing the appointment of the second assistant commissioner specified that he should be a qualified engineer and that his knowledge or experience should relate to the engineering side of railway operations. But this particular appointment which we are examining was specifically set out to cover the traffic and accounting side of railways operations.

It is most desirable, I think, that the terms of appointment should be adhered to in their entirety. If the proposed amendment is included, it will then read that "one of the persons appointed to one of the offices of assistant commissioner shall carry out such functions as are resolved by the commission, and as are approved by the Minister, and shall represent the employees on the commission." It seems to me that the appointment would be political. I take it the reason for the need, as the Government envisages it, to amend the Act is to make it possible for their selection to be chosen; his primary qualification will be loyalty to the employees.

I can visualise in a case like that if he desired reappointment at the end of his five-year term, he would be particularly careful to be active—and indeed militant—on the side of the employees in the deliberations of the commission, so that pressure might come from the employee angle to have him reinstated at the end of his term. I think that would be his natural inclination and his primary qualification—that he should represent employees. There is no insistence on his having knowledge and experience, as at present set out. The commissioner should have the right to set out the duties. It is most important that not only should his experience and knowledge as a railway man be a primary qualification, but there should be no other qualification stated in regard to such appointment. The Minister could tell the commissioner whom

to appoint. The appointee would regard his loyalty to the interests of the employees as paramount. The most important part is that he could very easily play politics and could work with one commissioner against another—perhaps turn about—to see that he got what he wanted. I think that would be most undesirable.

Apart from that, the presence of an employees' representative on the commission—when those points of difference were being considered, between the employer and the employee—would, I think, be most embarrassing to the commission. I feel that the other two commissioners would sometimes be disinclined to say what they really thought, because they would have to bear in mind that the commissioner representing the employees would feel obliged to pass on the substance, if not the details of those deliberations to the union and the employees.

We have to remember that the Railway Department is the biggest business undertaking in the State. It has 13,000 employees, and they are in four major unions and a number of minor ones. If we are going to select a member of a union, which one would he represent? He might be a man with a good deal of experience of accounting. Would he adequately represent the permanent way side, the traffic side, or the workshops' side? I doubt it very much.

To be qualified for a job like this, not only has a man to have a good deal of railway knowledge and experience; but also it is desirable that he should have some experience of administration, because this commissioner, who would be No. 2, would take the place of the chief commissioner if he were away on sick leave, or holidays, or long-service leave. It would therefore be desirable to have in that position one who could advise, criticise, control and direct; a man to whom his juniors could go with some assurance of getting the right sort of advice; not a man that they felt they could not respect, and on whose advice they felt they could not rely.

There is everything in favour of our adhering to the present terms of appointment and voting against that part of the Bill which will alter them. It cannot be said that the employees do not receive consideration. They already have their appeal boards—their punishment appeal board and their promotions appeal board. They have, if they care to take advantage of it, the right of access to the commission to discuss the different points that arise between the administration and employees.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I think the Chief Secretary gave an example of that during his second reading speech.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: He may have done so. There is an industrial staff officer who is an adequate connecting link between the representatives of the unions

and the commission, and he is in constant consultation with the union officials in matters of rights and privileges and interpretation of awards and things of that kind. I admit that when it comes to the Arbitration Court the industrial agent may represent the commission whereas the union official, for the time being may represent the other side. But, as members will realise, there is often, without recourse to the court, the opportunity of discussing matters between themselves; and, from my knowledge of the internal workings of the railways, I know that discussions are held frequently in a very friendly way.

But I ask myself this question. If we had had a commissioner representing the employees last year when the strike took place, what would have been his attitude? I know the Government will claim that he would have been most helpful; but I am afraid that he might have been a source of continual embarrassment to the commissioners in their stand against a strike created not by the railways as a whole, but by a very small militant section of workers. I hope members will be particularly careful to bear that in mind when the Bill reaches the Committee stage.

In regard to the appointment of commissioners for a limited term of tenure, I have already said that I will support that; I think it will work out all right. Concerning Clause 3, dealing with the right of reinstatement of a railway employee at the end of his term, if he is not reappointed, I can see that that would present some difficulties. But, on balance, I think the advantages would outweigh the disadvantages. It would encourage the younger men to qualify for appointment, with the knowledge that, if they could not stand the strain, or did not measure up to the job, they could at the end of the five years get their old jobs back. In actual practice I do not think it would matter very much because this particular appointment could most advantageously be made from within the service itself.

It would probably be made from one of the existing senior officers who would have reached an age fairly close to retirement, so that if he were demoted at the end of the five years, he would probably retire rather than go back to the junior position. This does not apply to the Chief Commissioner whose appointment for seven years could or could not be renewed, but there is no suggestion that he could be reinstated, and I imagine he would prefer not to be.

Clause 4 validates certain things done by the Commissioner. I notice that the Minister claimed that the original Act set out that the change-over from a single commissioner to a commission was to take place on a date to be fixed by proclamation, and he said that this had never been done. As a matter of fact, on page 1410

of the "Government Gazette" of the 1st July, 1949, we find over the name of H. S. Seward, Minister for Railways, a proclamation of that very thing. It finishes up with the words "God Save the King!" So, that statement, in essence, is not correct. But I will say this: that owing, possibly, to a typographical error, or an error in checking, the proclamation refers to Section 2 of the Railway Act and not to Section 12. Section 2 concerns interpretations, so obviously it does not apply. Section 12 provides—

For the purpose of this section "appointed day" means a day to be fixed by proclamation.

The amending Bill provides that "appointed day" means—

the day fixed for the coming into operation of the Government Railways Act Amendment Act, 1948, namely, the first day of July, one thousand nine hundred and forty-nine.

If the proclamation which was made and published in the "Gazette" is rendered invalid by the error I have mentioned, then I have no objection to the relevant clauses in the Bill being passed as they would definitely validate anything that had been done; and would prevent any legal quibble whatsoever. With the reservations I have made concerning paragraph (a) of Clause 2, which I shall, when the measure is in Committee, move to have deleted, I support the Bill.

On motion by the Minister for the North-West, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.9 p.m.