

(2) The actual management and working of the railways cannot be undertaken efficiently by a body whose members have not an expert knowledge of railway management and railway operation.

We wish it to be clearly understood that it is our intention that the board of directors shall function purely in an advisory capacity to the Minister for Railways, and shall not have any jurisdiction over the actual management and working of the railways, which we regard as the function and responsibility of the Commissioner of Railways.

It is quite apparent that this 1948 Royal Commission did regard the actual administration and management of the railways as being a matter for a railway expert. It was also well aware that an expert would need guidance in policy matters from the Minister and from a board of directors. I suspect that that particular commission was aware that our railways had been hamstrung by political interference over many years and this was its way of removing the railways from further political interference.

With these remarks I support the second reading of the Bill and will expect to hear some further information from the Minister in reply. This as a change which we must hope will be for the better. I support the second reading.

On motion by Mr. Nalder, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 11.28 p.m.

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 23rd October, 1957.

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

QUESTIONS.

SHEEP.

Rail Transport from Gnowangerup to Midland Junction.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN (for Hon. A. R. Jones) asked the Minister for Railways:

Because of complaints from the management of the Kayanaba Pastoral Co. and the Westwood Grazing Co. made to me with regard to the transport of sheep by the Government Railways, I desire to ask the Minister the following:—

- (1) Is it a fact that the railways lifted several wagons of sheep from Gnowangerup on the 9th October at 9 a.m. consigned to the above companies?
- (2) If the answer to No. (1) is "yes"—
 - (a) what time and date did the train hauling the stock arrive at Narrogin;

- (b) what time and date did the stock leave Narrogin;
 - (c) what time and date did the stock arrive at Midland Junction?
- (3) What is the total distance from Gnowangerup to Midland Junction?

The MINISTER replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) (a) 11.50 p.m., the 9th October, 1957.
- (b) 5 a.m., the 10th October, 1957.
- (c) 7.30 p.m., the 10th October, 1957.
- (3) 266 miles.

RAILWAYS COMMISSION.

Future Appointments from Present Staff.

Hon. J. D. TEAHAN (for Hon. G. Bennetts) asked the Minister for Railways:

In view of the findings of the Royal Commission into the railways, will he assure the House that any future appointment will be made from the staff at present employed in the Railway Department?

The MINISTER replied:

When the final report of the Royal Commission is completed the hon. member's request will be taken into consideration.

STATE SHIPPING SERVICE.

Future of s.s. "Kybra."

Hon. J. D. TEAHAN (for Hon. G. Bennetts) asked the Minister for Supply and Shipping:

- (1) Is it correct that the s.s. "Kybra" is shortly to be offered for sale?
- (2) If so, will he consider the renovation of this vessel to carry tourists and cargo between Fremantle and Esperance?

The MINISTER replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Passenger accommodation on this aged vessel is unsuitable for present-day requirements, and there is not sufficient cargo offering to warrant its retention for the Fremantle-Esperance run.

SUPERPHOSPHATE.

Tonnage Railed to Centres South of Norseman.

Hon. J. D. TEAHAN (for Hon. G. Bennetts) asked the Minister for Railways:

Will he inform the House the total tonnage of superphosphates carted by rail to centres south of Norseman, for the year ended the 30th June, 1957?

The MINISTER replied:

The quantity was 7,368 tons.

BILL—CHIROPODISTS.

Read a third time and returned to the Assembly with amendments.

BILL—LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Standing Orders Suspension.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS
(Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [4.37]: I move—

That Standing Order No. 206 be suspended in order to facilitate the third reading of the Local Government Bill and thus enable the subsequent proceedings on the Bill to be implemented without delay.

My purpose in moving this motion is to obviate the necessity for having the Bill reprinted. The amendments made to this Bill will be set out in a schedule and forwarded to the other House, and this will facilitate the conference which is to take place in connection with the amendments made.

Question put and passed.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and returned to the Assembly with amendments.

BILL—ROMAN CATHOLIC VICARIATE OF THE KIMBERLEYS PROPERTY.

Read a third time and passed.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 2), £18,000,000.

Third Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS
(Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [4.40]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [4.41]: Having lost the call on the second reading, I wish to discuss one or two points while the Bill is still before the House. This is the second Supply Bill presented to Parliament this year. On the first occasion the Bill involved an amount of £15,000,000 for revenue and £4,000,000 loan funds. This one is for £14,000,000 for revenue and £4,000,000 for loan funds. I take it a third one will be introduced to cover the remainder of the revenue and loan.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The Appropriation Bill will come next.

HON. L. A. LOGAN: While the Estimates are being discussed, I would like the Minister to give consideration to the Geraldton hospital. Some time ago land was made available for a hospital, and a contour survey was allegedly made. Whether it was ever carried out, I am not in a position to say; but some five or six years ago it was alleged that it had been made.

A levelling scheme was promised by the Minister for Health to a deputation in 1955, I think. He then promised he would put this item on the Estimates for 1956-57. The reason for asking that the land be levelled then was that with the sand as it is in Geraldton, it is necessary to leave the land idle for some years after being levelled, to allow it to consolidate before erecting on it a building of the size of the regional hospital that was planned. However, to date the land is still in its virgin state.

I have asked a few questions in the House and have had replies stating that even as far back as 1950 and 1951 plans were in the course of preparation. They have been in a rough stage, and by now we think they could be presented in almost a mature form, but up to date we do not know where they are. We have not seen them. I would like to know whether any further work has been done on them since my last inquiry.

The present building has been in existence since before the turn of the century. If members look at it they will appreciate that it no longer conforms to the modern ideas of a hospital because it is a shambles of buildings spread all over the place; so that not only is it difficult to work there, but the costs must be heavy.

The outpatients' section is just a small enclosed portion of a verandah which would not be more than 6ft. wide and approximately 16ft. long, with a low slanting roof. All the outpatients' work, including minor operations, is done in this room. For this state of affairs to exist in a town of the size of Geraldton is disgraceful, and it is time there was some improvement. I hope the Minister will take this matter up with the department and the Government to see whether something can be done.

The people of Geraldton realise the tremendous cost of building a hospital, and that it is impossible to set aside sufficient money in any one year, or even two years, to enable the building to be completed at the one time. As a result, we made a suggestion—I made it first on behalf of my party at the last election—that a certain amount of money be set aside each year for perhaps 10 years, so that a portion of the hospital could be completed annually; and at the end of the 10 years we would have a completed hospital. Whether that is feasible I do not know; but I think it should be, and I ask the Minister to give consideration to the proposition.

Another matter I wish to deal with—I must twit the Minister in regard to this—concerns the fact that a little while ago an application was made by the Northampton Road Board to the Minister to run a special stock train when stock sales were held in the district. The Minister replied—

I have to inform you that the running of special trains on the occasion of livestock sales cannot be agreed to.

It has been found that the permanent way deteriorates quickly once regular maintenance ceases, and as the railway gangs have been withdrawn from the area, no attention to the line has been given in the interim.

I ask members to recall what was said when the motion for the discontinuance of certain railway lines was before the House last year. On that occasion the Minister had this to say—

“As I mentioned before, the committee recommended the closure in stages so that it would be possible to observe results. If a mistake were made, the service could then be reintroduced.

I take it from those remarks that it was intended that for a considerable period after the closing of the lines they would be kept in a fit state of repair. Yet five minutes after the closure the Minister said the lines had deteriorated, and it was impossible to run a train on them. That is rather unfair.

When the proposition to discontinue the lines was before the House the Minister said that they would be maintained in a reasonable state of repair, so that if a mistake were made they could be reopened; yet within five minutes of their being closed, and when an application is made for a line to be used, the Minister says that the tracks have deteriorated to such an extent that it is impossible to run a train over them.

The Minister for Railways: Did I say they would be kept in a reasonable state of repair?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The Minister said the service could be reinstated, which is exactly the same thing.

The Minister for Railways: No.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: How can a service be reinstated if the line is not in a reasonable state of repair? I claim the track is still in a reasonable state of repair, and that a train could be run over it if it was so desired.

Further, on the same subject, when these lines were closed—particularly the Yuna line—because of the state of the roads we asked the Government to continue running trains until such time as the roads were in proper order. The Minister replied that the roads were in good condition and capable of standing up to the traffic.

As a matter of fact, when he spoke on the motion for the closure of the lines, he said that the roads—this came also from the Transport Board—were capable of taking all the traffic available. I think the Minister will agree that this statement was made; yet within a few months of the closing of the Yuna line, a gang of men were rushed to the area to try to repair the roads, which were badly damaged and unable to stand up to the traffic.

The Minister for Railways: Which part?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Not only the 12-mile section which was not bituminised, but portion that was. Within three months of the closing of the Northampton-Ajana line, the Minister, in answer to a question that I asked, said that the Government was going to spend £40,000 on the road. Does that sound as though the roads were capable of standing up to the traffic?

The Minister for Railways: That was to appease you.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: It certainly proves that the roads were never in a condition to carry the traffic expected of them. These are matters which should be aired; and that is why I have raised them. It is wrong that we should be given information in this House which, in my opinion, is totally incorrect.

On looking through the statement presented by the Premier in another place, I am rather perturbed at some of the balance sheets of Government business undertakings. The balance sheet of Cave House discloses a loss of £10,768.

Hon. L. C. Diver: What was it the previous year?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: There was a loss of £7,000; £5,000 for the year before; £2,000 the year before that; and £1,500 the year before that.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It is gradually getting worse.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: When an undertaking like that starts to lose to such an extent it is time for the Government to look around to see whether somebody else is prepared to take it on, someone who may be able to make a profit from it. I think it would pay us to give it away, if this state of affairs is to continue.

Last year the State Saw Mills showed a loss of £13,500, and for this year the loss was £50,000. Surely there is something wrong with a business undertaking that loses £50,000 in 12 months! Surely it is time something was done to stop the drift! If private business concerns can run their businesses at a profit, and pay dividends to shareholders, surely the Government can run its business undertakings either at a profit or in such a way that they do not show losses!

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: They do not have to pay any rates and taxes.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: When a business undertaking loses £50,000 in 12 months it is time something was done about it. I believe we have about seven State hotels in Western Australia, and I will agree that one or two of them are situated in places where it would not be possible for them to make a handsome profit; if they could just break even with their accounts, that is all that could be expected of them. But the whole seven of them made a profit of

only £5,500 in 1952-53; £4,900 in 1953-54; a slightly lesser sum in 1954-55; and a loss of £2,400 in 1955-56. This year there was a small profit of £1,500.

Surely we could lease the seven of them and get more than £5,000 or £6,000 per annum from the leases alone! It does not seem feasible that any business undertaking should be expected to carry on under these conditions, and it is high time that the Government took cognisance of the figures and did something about them.

If we cannot sell these hotels, or the Government has no right to sell them, surely it could lease them! If that were done with all the State hotels in Western Australia, I am certain that we could make a profit of between £5,000 to £6,000 on the leases alone.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: They could not be sold because they have no licences.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: But they can be leased.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Licences would have to be obtained first of all.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Surely we can introduce legislation to cover that aspect! In introducing the Bill the Minister also made reference to our railways; and the Premier, in another place, made an urgent plea for members to take a serious view of the position. That is a rather surprising statement when apparently the Government itself is not taking a serious view of the situation.

I will grant the Government this: At the moment a very capable Royal Commissioner is inquiring into some of the ramifications of the operations of the railway system. But when the Government decided to close 842 miles of line, the deficit was approximately £4,500,000. Since the closure of approximately 800 miles of line, the estimated deficit for this year is approximately £7,000,000. So it seems as though somebody else is not taking a serious view of these increased losses.

Just prior to the closure of these lines the work force was 3.4 men per mile; and the cost, for wages, salaries and allowances was 81 per cent. of the cost of the railways. Since these lines have been closed the work force of the railways has been reduced by only 500-odd men, which still leaves a work force of over four men per mile; and the cost of wages, salaries, and allowances has increased beyond the 81 per cent. So is it any wonder that our losses will increase from £4,500,000 to approximately £7,000,000? Instead of the Premier appealing to members to take a serious view of the position, I think it is time the Government took a serious view of it.

I know it is not easy to sack men. But if some of these men were transferred from the Railway Department to other jobs, we would be getting better value from them than we are today. At the moment our railway losses are increasing, and we are

getting no benefits from the work these men are doing. There are many projects in Western Australia waiting to be put in hand. There are many country towns which are waiting to be reticulated; many schools and hospitals have to be built; and some of these men could be employed on that work.

I have had a look at the figures of railway staff; and I find that since 1953, the number has increased by almost 2,000 men. Throughout these discussions on railway closures the Minister has said that the railways are not carrying any more traffic today than before; yet there has been an increase of 2,000 employees since 1953. When one realises that 1,000 employees mean £1,000,000 a year in wages, one can appreciate the colossal sum required to run a show such as that. When one also considers that the percentage of men per mile on the lines closed was only 2.32, one can appreciate the cost of the other sections.

We are told that there is not sufficient money to carry out all these necessary works. But if the Government went about things the right way, and transferred some of these men from the Railway Department to essential work, I think we would be getting somewhere. If the Government will not reduce the staff employed on the railways, surely it could do the same as the other States have done—enter into discussions with the Commonwealth Government about the standardisation of gauges.

I do not want to see anybody put out of work. But as I have said before, if the Government intends to keep its present work force, the cost of that work force must be debited against some other fund, and not only to the Railway Department. It is unfair that the Railway Department should have to carry that charge, because I am certain that its present work force is not needed to run the railways in a proper fashion. I hope that these one or two items will be given some consideration.

One other subject, which was raised by Dr. Hislop the other night, in my opinion had a lot of merit. That is in regard to a community chest being available to meet appeals. All members of Parliament know exactly what easy marks they become for charitable donations. Since I have been connected with the Cancer Appeal Committee I have appreciated what amount of money is being asked of business people and others by various charitable organisations.

It would be a much better idea to have one all-out appeal in one month of the year, so as to raise a huge fund which could be distributed by a trust to the organisations worthy of receiving assistance. Such a proposition would be better for businessmen and private individuals. Without doubt, every day of the week

people are being asked to buy a raffle ticket here and there, and to make donations to charitable or church organisations.

When we consider the huge number of appeals—for legacy, kindergartens, St. John Ambulance, church homes, orphans, the physically-handicapped, and others—and the sums which are raised by them, we realise the colossal amounts taken out of the community each year. The suggestion made by Dr. Hislop is, therefore, worthy of consideration. I know that such a system operates in other countries, and in one town of Australia to very good advantage.

One further aspect should be considered very seriously, and that is the sale of raffle tickets. All of us realise that in these days many tickets in unauthorised raffies are being sold. We may shut our eyes to that practice; but one practice with which I disagree, and which should be stopped, is the sale of these tickets by children.

The Chief Secretary: That is an offence.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I know that; but nobody ever attempts to stop it. Last Monday morning I had a personal experience of a kindergarten child walking through my lounge after opening the front door without knocking, down the passage, and into the kitchen. He said to my wife, "Buy a ticket in this raffle." The sale of raffle tickets by children is occurring all the time. I do not mind buying these tickets, but I think it is wrong that children should be permitted to sell them.

Hon. F. D. Willmott: Do you win anything?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Occasionally. In all seriousness, I say the practice is wrong and should be stopped. I will refer to one other matter and that is the use of surplus railway employees. One project on which they could with benefit be engaged is to bring Geraldton harbour up to a proper standard. I know that the Government has spent £50,000 on a fendering system which was recommended many years ago. It is working very well. The only trouble is that it was not established a few years previously. That would have saved us and the shipping companies a lot of concern.

Geraldton has limitations in regard to the depth of the harbour, the depth of the channel, and the limitation on the draught of ships able to use the harbour. The shallow draught has a detrimental effect on Geraldton harbour. We all realise that the size of ships being built today is increasing. Because of that, it will not be possible to use Wyndham harbour to ship meat when the cargo ships increase in size, unless the harbour is deepened.

The Minister for Railways: That will be done by extending the jetty.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Which is the same thing. The shallow draught is having repercussions in Wyndham, and the same thing will apply to Geraldton. When there

is a maximum draught of 27ft. 6in., the greater the size of the boats the less will Geraldton be used as a port. This is a project on which surplus railway employees could be used with advantage. I support the third reading.

HON. F. R. H. LAVERY (West) [5.5]: There are three subjects to which I wish to make reference. In regard to the first, most members who drive cars will agree that with the installation of more traffic lights at intersections in the main streets of Perth—and more will be installed in the future—there will be greater danger at the intersections to pedestrians and to motorists, particularly the motorists who have to turn to the left.

On several occasions recently, since this matter has been drawn to my attention, I spent some time making a survey at the intersection of William-st. I noted in particular the traffic going out of Hay-st. and turning into William-st. at times not one motorist was able to turn to the left before the lights changed to red; that was because of the heavy pedestrian traffic using the cross-walk from east to west. That matter should be brought to the attention of the traffic authorities. Although it may not be of very great consequence at the moment, as the city extends and the number of people and vehicles increase, so will this difficulty.

This point was brought to my notice by a man fairly high up in traffic matters in this State. He is not in a position to make statements in the Press because he is a Government employee. I remember quite well a survey I made on Wednesday of last week. I remained for three-quarters of an hour at the corner of William and Hay-sts. I made a complete check; and in that period, on nine occasions when the light showed green, to allow the vehicles to travel west along Hay-st., or to turn south into William-st., not one single motorcar was able to turn left because of the large number of pedestrians using the cross-walk. Not one vehicle was able to turn before the red lights came on.

The second matter to which I wish to refer relates to the safety angle. I have a proposal with which the Main Roads Department may not agree because of the cost involved; but to me the life of one child is more important than the cost of building the Canning Highway. In the planning of new regional roads, a number of them will cross fairly close to established school areas. My suggestion is that wherever that occurs, subways should be built under the roads to allow the children to cross from one side of the regional road to the other.

I had this point brought very clearly to my attention at a meeting a few weeks ago in Riverton where a new regional road is to cross a number of properties and close to the Riverton school. It seems to

me that the subways could be built very cheaply when the roads are constructed. It would take a bulldozer less than an hour to shovel away the sand for a subway. After building the walls and putting girders across for the road, the total cost would be less than £800 for each subway. What is such an amount compared to the life of a child?

The third subject to which I wish to refer is the interim development plan. This is being held up pending decisions in respect of certain areas. That is causing a lot of concern not only to private home-owners but to the business community as well. I hope that when the Bill comes before Parliament—it is supposed to be introduced this session—some consideration will be given to arriving at decisions so that the people affected can plan for the future. I support the third reading.

HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (Suburban) [5.11]: I did not intend to say anything at the third reading stage, but the remarks of Mr. Lavery have prompted me to make a few comments. Firstly, I join with him wholeheartedly in asking the Government to do the very thing which he has urged; that is, to let the people in the various districts affected by the regional development plan know exactly what is to happen.

For a period of weeks I have found it necessary to make representations to the Government in order to ascertain what is to take place with regard to certain properties in my district. As yet I have not been able to get any finality. This is not a matter of open criticism of the Government. It has got to the stage of pleading with the Government to make some decision so that the people affected will know where they stand.

A small but important matter has been exercising my mind. It was brought up when I heard Mr. Lavery talking about traffic lights. I would like to refer to the stop signs and the "slow, 15 m.p.h." signs. Because of the action taken by Mr. Logan in this House some months ago—

Hon. L. A. Logan: Two years ago.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: —the Government made a very direct improvement in regard to stop signs. Many of them were removed, and the 15 m.p.h. signs were erected in place of some of the stop signs. I would point out to the Chief Secretary—whom I am very pleased to see back in the House—that at times there is confusion in the minds of motorists in respect of stop signs and the 15 m.p.h. signs, for the reason that both types are painted in the same colour.

When a motorist travels down a street and sees a sign on the right-hand side of the road on which he is not travelling, but which he is about to cross, he can

only see the back of the sign and the yellow post on which the sign is erected. Unless he has a full knowledge of the metropolitan area and the location of the stop signs and the 15 m.p.h. signs, he will be unable to tell, by looking at the back of the signs, whether they are stop signs or 15 m.p.h. signs.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Don't you think they should be a different shape?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: They are a different shape. If a motorist is keeping a proper lookout, as I am sure motorists do—

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Some of them.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: All of them should. If a motorist is keeping a proper lookout, he finds difficulty when making a fleeting glance, in seeing clearly any of the things about him. Without indicating any discriminatory colours, I suggest that if one sign were painted all the way up the post, and the back of the plate were painted a different colour, a motorist would be able to tell at a glance whether it was a stop sign or a 15 m.p.h. sign. At a fleeting glance under present conditions he is not able to tell what sort of sign is before him; and he is therefore uncertain whether the man in the cross street is going to stop—as he is obliged to, by a stop sign—or is going to slow down in obedience to a slow-down sign.

So I ask the Government to get the department to investigate the desirability of painting a stop sign a different colour from a 15 m.p.h. sign, and to give due publicity to the fact when it is to be done so that the motoring public will know that a change is being effected.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS
(Hon. H. C. Strickland—North—in reply)
[5.18]: I was hoping that the Bill might have been read a third time a little while ago. I know that unfortunately Mr. Logan missed the call yesterday, after having previously secured the adjournment of the debate, and he was therefore quite within his rights to speak on the third reading, and I appreciate his making his comments today.

I know that he and other members in the district for which he is concerned have for the past five or six years been drawing the attention of Governments to the condition of the hospital at Geraldton; and I can assure him that I will see that the Minister for Health reads the remarks that have been expressed in connection with that establishment.

With regard to the railways in the hon. member's province, I am sorry if he has misinterpreted my remarks made when I introduced a motion here last year and stated that the reason for the submission of a motion rather than a discontinuance Bill was that if it was found that the cessation of a service was not working out as expected, the Government would be able

to start that service again. At no time did I say that lines would be kept in repair.

Hon. L. A. Logan: How can you start a service again if they are not kept in repair?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member will know very well that once a Bill goes through Parliament to close a railway, another Bill is required to be passed to reopen that railway if such a course is deemed desirable.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: No Bill went through.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I know that. I never said it did. But that was the reason the motion was submitted. I want to correct the wrong impression of Mr. Logan that I stated that the lines would be kept in repair. It would be just ridiculous to cease operations on any line and spend money on that line to keep it in repair.

Hon. L. A. Logan: How could you reinstate a service if the line were not kept in repair?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In regard to the request for a stock train to Northampton, I gave the departmental advice that I received. That would perhaps be the only time that there would be any demand at all for a train service to Northampton. I have been in that district once or twice since the line closed, and on no occasion have I heard anybody in the district complain about the loss of the railway service. I mentioned here before that I had received only one complaint in writing. That was from a farmer at Dartmoor, and his was the only written objection I ever received from that area.

The hon. member also complained about roads. Heavens above! Of all the areas in which lines ceased to operate in Western Australia, his has by far the best roads. From memory, there are 120 to 150 miles comprising the section to Yuna and Ajana, and only 12 miles of that road were unsealed. When he drew attention to the matter, the hon. member said he doubted whether the roads could carry the traffic. My advice from the Main Roads Department was that it could carry the traffic; and the hon. member said that men were rushed out to repair the roads.

Men were rushed out to repair that 12 miles of road not because it was not carrying the traffic, but because all the members representing the district—particularly Mr. Brand and Mr. Simpson—pointed out that the previous winter had been a bad one, and that boggings were heavy on some particular section of the 12 miles linking Yuna with Geraldton.

The representations were taken to the Minister for Works and the Main Roads Department. A personal inspection was made of the section, and it was deemed advisable to do something before the weather set in, in case there was a recurrence of last year's boggings. The money was

spent and the road was put in order. Unfortunately the rains have never been so heavy from the farmers' point of view as they were before; but had the reverse been the case, the roads could have handled all the traffic which has been placed on them since the railway line ceased operation.

I was interested in the remarks concerning Geraldton harbour, and was pleased to hear the hon. member say that the fendering system is working very well. When in Geraldton only two weeks ago, I was informed that on the occasion of a very severe storm—not as heavy as the one that damaged the wharf previously—one interested person walked down to observe what was going on, and was much impressed with the work that the new fendering system is doing. He informed me it was 100 per cent. successful.

We all realise that extensions to the harbour are necessary, but there is another factor involved. Has Geraldton harbour a higher priority than perhaps Albany, Fremantle, Bunbury and North-West harbours with regard to expenditure? After an expert examination of the position we were advised that the shipping through Geraldton last year was exceptional, and that it was unlikely that the demand in the next few years would be as great. Consequently there was a diversion of expenditure for the time being to other ports that sadly needed it. But there is not the slightest doubt that in its order of priority Geraldton will be provided with the extensions or the protective works that it deserves.

I was interested in Mr. Griffith's remarks concerning the interim development order. I suppose that in some cases that order is somewhat of a nuisance and a little disturbing to people. But its purpose is to hold the position until legislation is passed through Parliament to enable some progress to be made.

The order has a limited period of operation and is no different from the one which was placed over all the land around Kwinana and Coogee and Spearwood when it was known that an oil refinery was going to be established there. These things are necessary in order to retain control and to prevent people from selling properties to others who would perhaps lose on the deal.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: But they got on with the job at that time.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We cannot get on with the job in this case until the law is enacted. A Bill will be introduced into Parliament next week which will partially cover a lot of the area about which the hon. member is disturbed, and we are hoping Parliament will accept it. That is part of the overall scheme, and is one of the reasons why the interim development order was required.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Will the order continue to operate with the introduction of the Bill?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No. The order has a limited period of operation.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: It expires in December, 1957.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Then it has not very long to go.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Would you attempt to reintroduce it?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I imagine that whether it would require to be introduced again would depend on the fate of the legislation which will be introduced. In all probability Parliament will be requested to extend the term of the interim town planning development order.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and passed.

BILL—JUNIOR FARMERS' MOVEMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and passed.

BILL—JURIES.

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to amendments Nos. 1, 3, 5, 8, 10 to 14, 17, 22 to 26, and 31 to 35; had disagreed to Nos. 2, 4, 6, 7, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 36; and had agreed to No. 9 subject to a further amendment.

BILLS (4)—REPORT.

- 1, Church of England School Lands Act Amendment.
 - 2, Betting Control Act Continuance.
 - 3, Public Service.
 - 4, Optometrists Act Amendment.
- Adopted.

BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [5.32] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this measure is to make a few small amendments to the measure amending the principal Act which was passed by Parliament last session; and which has not yet been proclaimed, for a reason which I will explain shortly.

Last year's Bill provided that service stations shall open for business only between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. from Mondays to Fridays, 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays, and 9 a.m. to noon on Sundays. The only days on which they shall not open are Christmas Day, Good Friday and Anzac Day.

During the debates on the Bill last session the Minister in charge of the Bill in another place, and I, in this Chamber, mentioned that those service stations which provided a 24-hour daily service would not be affected by the Bill. It was later found that this information was erroneous, as it was not intended to allow any firm the right of unrestricted 24-hour trading.

The purpose of the Bill was to rationalise trading hours, and, so that a small minority of the travelling public should not be handicapped, to arrange a roster system, whereby zones would be proclaimed and service stations would take their turn if their proprietors so desired in staying open after trading hours to cater for emergency needs.

In view of the misconception created by the incorrect advice given to Parliament, the Government decided that it would not proclaim last year's measure until Parliament was informed officially regarding the mistake. As it was found further small amendments were necessary it was decided to acquaint Parliament of the position when the necessary Bill was introduced.

Apart from this mistake, I think that a majority of members supported the principle in the Bill of regular trading hours, with service stations taking their turn in catering for motorists outside normal trading hours.

The proposals in the Bill now before the House, include an alteration to the penalty provision. The penalty provided last year for trading outside the prescribed hours is £20. It is proposed in the Bill that this penalty shall continue to apply, except where a person has offended more than three times within a period of 12 months. More than three offences within 12 months would bring about an irreducible minimum penalty of £50 for each additional offence.

The opportunity is taken in the Bill to ensure it shall not be an offence for a person to supply petrol, or motor requisites, outside normal trading hours for an ambulance, or for the Royal Automobile Club to give emergency service to one of its members.

As members will be aware, last year's Bill provided that the Minister may seek the recommendation of the W.A. Automobile Chamber of Commerce in regard to the prescribing of zones and as to which premises in each zone should open outside the ordinary trading hours.

The present Bill provides that a service-station proprietor, who is not a member of the Automobile Chamber of Commerce, may take his share of opening during the extraordinary hours. The Bill also provides that any proprietor may elect not to be included in the roster, or after having experience of such trading may advise he does not desire to take a further turn.

I trust that this Bill and my explanation regarding last year's error will be accepted. It is obvious that if we are to have legislation of this nature we cannot exempt a few from its provisions. Although I cannot vouch for the correctness of this, I have heard that all but one of those carrying on 24-hour trading now are prepared to accept the provisions of the Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—INSPECTION OF MACHINERY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS

(Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [5.37] in moving the second reading said: As members are aware, the parent Act makes provision for the issue of certificates of competency for engine drivers, crane and hoist drivers and boiler attendants. Section 59 (2) of the Act restricts the issue of certificates to British subjects, or to ex-servicemen and workers who served in the merchant navy or merchant marine of an allied nation during the 1939-45 war and whose knowledge of English is sufficient to enable them to hold a certificate.

As a result of the Commonwealth's immigration policy there are migrants in this State whose technical experience and command of English would qualify them for a certificate, but whose length of residence in the State precludes them as yet from obtaining naturalisation and who were too young to have served in the war, or who could not do so for some other reason.

No other State in the Commonwealth requires applicants for such certificates to be of British birth or to be naturalised. It is considered that the restriction in the Act bears hardly on those migrants I have referred to, and it must be born in mind that obstacles should not be placed in the path of migrants obtaining work for which they are qualified.

The Bill seeks, therefore, to enable the board to grant certificates to migrants, with a sufficient command of English, who have not yet met the residential qualifications necessary for naturalisation. The board is given power to cancel a certificate if the person concerned does not apply for naturalisation when entitled to do so, or if naturalisation is refused or the person later ceases to become an Australian citizen. These proposals have been agreed to by the executive of the Federated Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Union.

There is no doubt that the provisions of the Act at present create hardship for some migrants. A person entering this country has to wait for the prescribed five-year period, before he can become

naturalised, and so he has to wait that time before he can obtain a certificate to drive a hoist or some other type of machinery. The object of the Bill is to remove that anomaly and give the board authority to grant certificates to people who have all but the residential qualifications. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. C. H. Simpson, debate adjourned.

MOTION—SCHOOL CHILDREN AND CROSS-WALK HAZARDS.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

Debate resumed from the 18th September, on the following motion by Hon. A. F. Griffith:—

That a select committee be appointed to inquire into, and make recommendations for, proposals to invoke the aid of suitable age pensioners in connection with the manning of cross-walks used by school children in journeying to and from school, with particular emphasis upon the urgent necessity for a plan which will provide more defined and specific protection for school children against ever-increasing traffic hazards, which protection at present is totally inadequate.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS

(Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [5.40]: Some years ago a committee was set up, to inquire into the subject of the hazards faced by children when crossing roads and going to and fro between their homes and school. In 1955 the then Minister for Police, Hon. H. H. Styants, appointed a committee to confer and report to him on the subject of child safety, in relation to the use of roads by children proceeding to and from school.

That committee consisted of Sir Thomas Meagher, chairman; Dr. Robertson, Director of Education; J. M. O'Brien, Acting Commissioner of Police; H. W. Dettman, Chairman of the School Safety Activity Committee of the National Safety Council; N. Sampson, president of the Teachers' Union; H. K. Kahan, secretary of the W.A. Federation of Parents & Citizens Associations; T. S. Edmondson, executive member of the National Safety Council; and R. G. Clark, executive director of the National Safety Council.

This committee approached the matter by considering three questions: (1) the need for protection of children at road crossings; (2) methods of providing safety for children at road crossings; (3) a policy in relation to safety at road crossings for pedestrians, particularly children. After careful consideration of much information submitted by the Acting Commissioner of

Police, the committee agreed that there was a need for the protection of children at road crossings.

The methods of providing safety for children at road crossings were then examined. Information was made available regarding the methods used elsewhere in Australia and in other countries, and this information was supplemented by the personal experiences of members of the committee in this and other countries.

The committee agreed unanimously that any duty involving the direction of traffic, was a matter for trained police officers and should not be delegated. The alternatives to police control were then considered. The committee again agreed unanimously that by far the most favourable alternative was the pedestrian-operated traffic light. The committee agreed that other alternatives, such as paid adult patrols and elderly citizen volunteers were not desirable. The committee did not favour a scheme to employ those people.

The committee was divided on the subject of child safety patrols, but was in complete agreement that no pressure should be brought to bear on either teachers or pupils to take part in such patrols if the system was inaugurated in any Western Australian school. The committee was unanimous that any child patrol system should be on an entirely voluntary basis and that no child patrol should be established until adequate protective legislation had been enacted covering teachers, parents, and the children involved. The committee therefore made the following recommendations to the Minister:—

- (1) That the most satisfactory form of supervision of children's cross-walks is by police control.
- (2) That the most satisfactory alternative to police supervision is a system of pedestrian-operated traffic lights.
- (3) That traffic lights be immediately installed at nine named locations.
- (4) That further installations on a priority basis be carried out.
- (5) That this policy be extended when practicable to country towns.
- (6) (a) That no pressure should be brought to bear on teachers or children to take part in child safety patrols.
- (b) That no child safety patrols should be introduced, even on a voluntary basis, until after protective legislation as in force in New South Wales and Tasmania had been enacted covering teachers, parents and the children who took part in the patrols.

Those were the findings of the committee that was set up in 1955. They were presented to the then Minister, I

believe, early in 1956. It is known, of course, that Mr. Styants at that time had no intention of standing for Parliament—there was an election about to be held—and the matter apparently has not received a great deal of attention since that time.

It is interesting to note that school-crossing patrols appear to be operating successfully elsewhere in the world. In Chicago, paid part-time female civilian patrols operate outside schools in the vicinity of their own homes.

Civilian school guards, mostly women, are employed on a paid basis on about 700 of the 2,000-odd school crossings in New York. In Washington a female patrol operates on school crossings on a part-time basis. Men and women are employed at school crossings on a part-time basis in London and Oxford. In Ottawa, Canada, all schools co-operate in a very successful children's patrol system.

In other American cities such as Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Milwaukee and Louisville, the use of women as school traffic guards has proved entirely satisfactory. In Australasia, child patrols are operating to some degree in New Zealand, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. So it will be seen that the principle which the hon. member seeks to introduce is operating successfully in other parts of the world; indeed, he told us he had seen it in operation during his recent visit to Britain.

Although the Minister acted on the advice of the committee formed at the time in this State to investigate the problem, not very much headway has been made with the installation of pedestrian-controlled traffic lights. I have not the details of the number that have been installed; but in my travels around the suburbs I have seen only two—though there could be more—pedestrian-operated lights. One of these is on Canning Highway and the other on Stirling Highway.

There are, of course, other pedestrian-crossing lights that flash on and off continuously. I have not been supplied with any information as to why there has been perhaps such slow progress made—if I might use that expression—but I understand that the funds allocated for the installation of traffic lights and pedestrian lights of all kinds are limited. There is a priority committee which deals with these installations and selects the sites which in its opinion are the most suitable for the establishment of these lights—the selection being made on a priority basis. That has operated for some time now.

Members who travel in the country are well aware of the number of country railway crossings, and other crossings, that have been equipped with flashing lights in order to protect motorists and pedestrians. All those sites are allocated by the priority committee to which I have

referred; that committee makes the final determination. I must admit that the hon. member has drawn the attention of this House, and that of the Government, to the fact that something is required, in the city anyway.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: In the metropolitan area.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is so. It is necessary to protect school children on busy highways such as Albany Highway, which is in the district the hon. member represents. I cannot but agree with him that another investigation into this subject can do nothing but produce some worth-while result. But while agreeing with the hon. member to that extent, I also feel it does not require the appointment of a select committee, particularly at this stage of the session.

A number of select committees have already been appointed; in fact, judging by the number already in existence, it seems that we have suddenly got very selective and the appointment of select committees appears to have become a fashion rather than a necessity.

There would be no objection to the appointment of a parliamentary committee, with the hon. member in the chair, and perhaps a member from each party, to go into this matter and make a recommendation to the Government. I am sure the Premier would make available to such a committee all facilities that it might require to move about; and also facilities to enable it to have its correspondence handled in the appropriate manner. By that I mean that the usual clerks would be made available.

But in view of the number of select committees already in existence, and the fact that each of them has to return its report before Parliament rises in three or four weeks' time, it would be asking too much of the staff if we appointed another select committee. Besides I do not think the subject is serious enough to warrant such an appointment.

I appreciate the hazards and the dangers involved; but because there is not a total neglect of those hazards and dangers that confront school children in the metropolitan area, I believe the matter is not serious enough to warrant its being investigated by a select committee. I do think, however, that it should be investigated by some committee; and that that committee should be able to look into every angle and make a recommendation to the Government which would no doubt be carried out.

It would not require legislation to comply with any recommendation that might be brought down by such an investigating parliamentary committee. If it were found that the partial employment of aged or invalid persons at cross-walks would be a better safeguard than lights

or police control when the children go into school, or when they are coming out, or at lunch time—

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Nobody suggested that.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No; but I am saying that if it were found that it would be better, it would not require legislation to implement that employment.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: I think it would.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not think any legislation would be required. The Government would, no doubt, give very serious consideration to any recommendations brought down, and it would be a matter of employing them.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Don't you think it would require an amendment to the Traffic Act to give these people the right to control traffic?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am not too certain about that; but I think there is provision in the Traffic Act to enable regulations to be made for various officers or individuals to be delegated power to control traffic. I would, however, have to check on that point. I do not think that such legislation would be required, should such a committee recommend the employment of these people, and should the Government adopt that recommendation.

I feel there is much merit in the proposal submitted by the hon. member, but I also feel that with the strain and stress of the work involved on the existing select committees, we would be placing an undue strain on our Hansard staff if another select committee were appointed, particularly in view of the time that is left to us, and the long hours that Parliament will be sitting from now on in order to finish the legislation it has on the notice paper. The job could be done just as well, and more economically, by a parliamentary committee. I offer that suggestion to the hon. member, and I trust he will give it serious thought. I can assure him that as far as possible all facilities would be made available to him.

HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (Suburban—in reply [5.57]): I thank the Minister for Railways for his contribution to this debate. I am obliged to say, however, that being the Minister in charge of the House, had he not kept this motion in the position in which it has been on the notice paper since the 17th September until this day, before allowing it to be debated, the arguments he put forward concerning the business of the session and the number of select committees now in existence, would have carried no weight at all.

For some reason, however, the Minister has kept this matter down on the notice paper, until today not allowing it to be debated. Accordingly I am obliged to agree with him that there is a lot to be done

between now and the end of the session. To hear the Minister for Railways say that he did not think that this matter was important enough to warrant an inquiry by a select committee—

The Minister for Railways: I said not serious enough.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I beg the Minister's pardon. To hear him say that it is not serious enough to warrant an inquiry by a select committee is rather surprising to me to say the least. The Minister knows that the situation in this State, particularly the metropolitan area, so far as this subject is concerned, is that there are insufficient police in the department to do the task that is required of them. Every time I write to the Commissioner of Police, or the Minister for Police, or ask questions in the House concerning some accident that happened to a child on a cross-walk in my district, the answer is invariably the same. It is to the effect that there are insufficient members of the Police Force to provide a policeman to protect this particular cross-walk. The Minister knows only too well that that has been the answer now for a number of years.

The Minister for Railways: I do not know.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I am surprised.

The Minister for Railways: You didn't tell us. I am not the Minister for Police.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I know. But not so long ago the Minister gave an answer on behalf of the Minister for Police in connection with a child who was knocked down crossing the road to the South Kensington school. When I asked a question as to whether the child was hurt and the possibility of a policeman being allocated to this particular trouble spot in order to avoid further accidents, the reply was, "No, there are insufficient police." That is in Hansard; and other members have asked similar questions.

There is also the question of traffic lights. A recommendation of the committee was that traffic lights are the answer to child safety and the answer to adult safety. So far as crossing roads is concerned, and according to information given me by the Minister, the next best thing was control by the police. However, owing to force of circumstances, neither of these things are being done.

So, because the Police Force is over-taxed and is unable to take on further duties; and because of the inability of the department to obtain sufficient supplies of mechanically-operated lights, or manually-operated lights, we have sat down since 1955, when an investigation was made, and done nothing about it.

The suggestion I make is that the House agree to the appointment of a select committee for the purpose of inquiring into

the possibility of using suitable age pensioners. I emphasise that point because the Minister referred to invalid and age pensioners when he was making his speech, and I want to correct his statement.

It is not my idea to use invalid pensioners, but to use suitable pensioners purely as a temporary arrangement to do something which is not being done at the moment; and that is, protect the children going to school. The Minister said it would be more desirable to have a parliamentary committee. I ask: What is the difference between a parliamentary committee and a select committee?

The Minister for Railways: One has to report back—

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The Minister says that one has to report back. Is he suggesting that a parliamentary committee would sit and deliberate without reporting back?

The Minister for Railways: You did not let me finish. A select committee would report back quickly.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I think it could report back quickly. It is something to which some consideration has been given and there would not be a great deal of work involved so far as the investigations of a select committee were concerned. There is no fundamental difference between a parliamentary committee and a select committee, because members of a select committee are members of Parliament. I think perhaps one technical difference might be that a select committee is bound to secrecy while deliberations are being conducted.

The Minister for Railways: A select committee has wide powers.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Yes. But on the word of the Minister, the Premier would give all co-operation to the committee; and if he gave all co-operation, the powers of a parliamentary committee would not fall short of those of a select committee.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I presume Hansard would be involved in both cases.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: That is the next point I am coming to. Does the Minister expect that the appointment of a parliamentary committee to inquire into this matter would preclude the services of Hansard?

The Minister for Railways: Not necessarily; but they would be made available when it was more convenient.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Surely members have had the complete answer as to whether a parliamentary committee or a select committee should investigate this problem!

The Minister for Railways: You don't want to summon people and cross-examine them as to whether an invalid pensioner could do the job better than a policeman.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I would like to elucidate this a little. If a parliamentary committee inquired into the matter, I think it would be able to make a full and proper investigation into the possibility and desirability of putting this scheme into effect. In order to do that it would call for papers; call for documents; call witnesses and take evidence; and would ask the overtaxed Hansard staff to report it. I think the Minister will agree with all these things.

A select committee would do nothing different. It would investigate, summon and request people to give evidence. It would put a simple advertisement in the paper to the effect that it was sitting and ask that people who desired to give evidence voluntarily come and do so. It would call witnesses from various departments, and it would make its report. I suggest it would be no different and no more expensive than a parliamentary committee. Therefore, I cannot see any force in the Minister's argument that a parliamentary committee would be better and cheaper than a select committee.

The Minister for Railways: It could do the job just as well and would not be as expensive.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: It would not do it better, nor would it be cheaper.

The Minister for Railways: You do not want only the world, but the box it came in.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The safety of children going to school is something which is important to all of us.

The Minister for Railways: I think I have been generous.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The Minister has.

The Minister for Railways: What are you moaning about?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Because a parliamentary committee is offered instead of a select committee.

The Minister for Railways: I am suggesting it would fill the bill.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: My final point is this: I find it hard to understand why the committee that investigated under the instructions of the Minister for Police in 1955 made a set of recommendations, but did not recommend the use of suitable age pensioners for this purpose. I find that hard to reconcile with the information given by the Minister that a similar scheme was operating very successfully in many other parts of the world.

The Minister for Railways: That is true.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I know; but I find it hard to reconcile. The Pensioners' League in Albany has written to me stating that what I am trying to bring about is operating there on a satisfactory basis. One of the high schools in the metropolitan area has written to me commending my action to have an inquiry into this matter.

In addition, the principal of Scotch College, Mr. Maxwell Keyes, was kind enough to indicate his appreciation, and told me that he saw similar schemes operating very successfully when on a recent trip to Canada. Therefore, it is hard to understand why a scheme of this nature, which operates so successfully in other countries, should have been considered by the committee to be undesirable.

I hope the House will agree to the appointment of a select committee. I regret the over-taxing of the Hansard staff in this matter. The Minister said that he thought select committees were the fashion rather than a necessity. However, I think he will agree that all the select committees in operation at the moment are not a matter of fashion; a couple of them are very necessary. I commend my motion to the House.

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

| | |
|------------------|----|
| Ayes | 13 |
| Noes | 14 |
| Majority against | 1 |

Ayes.

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Hon. N. E. Baxter | Hon. G. C. MacKinnon |
| Hon. J. Cunningham | Hon. R. C. Mattiske |
| Hon. A. F. Grimth | Hon. C. H. Simpson |
| Hon. J. G. Hislop | Hon. H. K. Watson |
| Hon. A. B. Jones | Hon. F. D. Willmott |
| Hon. Sir Chas. Latham | Hon. J. Murray |
| Hon. L. A. Logan | (Teller.) |

Noes.

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Hon. L. C. Diver | Hon. F. R. H. Lavery |
| Hon. G. Fraser | Hon. H. L. Roche |
| Hon. J. J. Garrigan | Hon. H. C. Strickland |
| Hon. W. R. Hall | Hon. J. D. Teahan |
| Hon. E. M. Heenan | Hon. W. F. Willesee |
| Hon. R. F. Hutchison | Hon. F. J. S. Wise |
| Hon. G. E. Jeffery | Hon. E. M. Davies |
| | (Teller.) |

Pair.

| | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Aye. | No. |
| Hon. J. M. Thomson | Hon. G. Bennetts |

Question thus negatived.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

BILL—SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—JETTIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Assembly without amendment.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 15th October.

HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (Suburban) [7.32]: The Government placed the responsibility for the handling of the Bill

in the capable hands of Mr. Wise, who, when he was introducing the measure, said—

I would say that rarely is it the case that amendments to the Electoral Act can be said to be introduced without some political bias. But this measure is non-political in character.

With due respect to the hon. member, I would say that whilst he contends the Bill is non-political in character, I contend it is most contentious.

The Bill does a number of things. It seeks to reduce the residential period from three months to one month; to increase the cost of the rolls from 1s. to 5s.; to repeal Section 43, which deals with claim cards and the fact that such claim cards are open to inspection by the public; to provide for the registration of political parties; to provide for the political party of the candidate to be entered on the ballot paper against his name; to alter the system of postal voting; and to alter from 50yds. to 20ft., the distance that a person canvassing with "how-to-vote" cards on polling day may stand from a polling booth.

If I could pick out the one or two small things that I think the Bill seeks to achieve which would be of benefit to all concerned in the administration of the Act, and leave apart the controversial provisions, then the Bill would be a good one; but I fear I cannot separate those portions of the Bill, because it is altogether too controversial.

When dealing with some of the things it seeks to bring about, Mr. Wise said that the proposal to reduce the residential period from three months to one month was an attempt to bring about uniformity or to have the State Electoral Act conform more closely to the provisions of the Commonwealth Act in this regard.

That may be so; but I argue that it is not necessarily a fact that the Commonwealth Electoral Act is the correct one. I think it would be better if the Commonwealth Electoral Act were brought into conformity with the State Act so that the residential period under the Commonwealth law became three months rather than that it should be one month. That would lend itself to uniformity in a more balanced way than in the manner suggested by the Bill.

The small amendment which will provide for an increase in the price of rolls from 1s. to 5s. is, I think, not well placed. After all, surely it is the task of the State to provide all the instruments that are necessary in the conduct of an election, and it does this right up to the point of making a nominal charge for the roll.

The charge for a roll should remain as it has been for ages past—a nominal one of 1s. The State should continue to pay the cost of the roll. The fact is that individual rolls are getting larger than in the past. The Legislative Council rolls are getting larger than they have ever been.

and this only proves that many more thousands of people have got on to the rolls by divers means.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: They are learning a bit more about it.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Or the Electoral Office, through the instructions of the party to which the hon. member belongs, is teaching them more about it. Nevertheless, the rolls are becoming larger; and that only proves, as I was saying, that more people are on the rolls and are entitled to vote. Nevertheless I see no reason why the price of the rolls should be increased.

The Bill seeks to amend Section 43, which deals with the question of claim cards. Because the Bill contains other provisions, these changes, it is thought, are necessary. The measure also provides for the fact that the name of the political party shall appear on the ballot paper next to the name of the candidate seeking election, where the political party for which the candidate is standing for election has been duly registered at the Electoral Office with the Chief Electoral Officer. This is the part of the Bill which is indeed contentious.

When the hon. member was introducing the measure, he said that there was only one provision which had been previously introduced, and that was one which had been introduced by a previous Government. I would correct him in that regard and say it is within my memory that, when I was a member of the Legislative Assembly, a private member introduced a Bill the object of which was to provide the very thing which is contained in a portion of this measure; and that is, that the name of the party to which the candidate belonged should be placed on the ballot paper next to his name.

In order to refresh my memory upon this point, I looked up that most reliable book called Hansard; and I saw—not to my astonishment or surprise—that when the matter was debated I, as a member of the Legislative Assembly at the time, opposed this provision because I said it was against the principles for which we stood. The Electoral Act provides that a candidate shall offer himself for election.

We do not elect political parties to Parliament, but individuals who are representatives of the people. The fact that they have the backing of political parties is not significant. We still should adhere, to my mind, to the name of the candidate appearing on the ballot paper and not the name of the party of which he is a representative.

At that time Mr. Wise—he, too, was then a member of the Legislative Assembly—also made a speech. He and I have at least one thing in common; and that is, that we both remain consistent in our thoughts on this matter; because when the Bill was introduced into another House, he held the same views as he holds about

it now. He thought then it would be a good idea to have the name of the candidate appear on the ballot paper.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The candidate?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The name of the political party. However, I stick to my point and say that the name of the political party should not appear on the ballot paper, because we do not elect political parties but individuals. The Electoral Act itself, in the way it is worded, refers to a candidate who offers himself for election. It makes no reference to the political party which offers a candidate for election. In that respect the suggestion in the Bill is, I think, against the principle of the Act.

Another even more violent change suggested is contained in the rather long verbiage in the measure which seeks to prescribe that political parties shall apply to the Chief Electoral Officer for registration. One of the provisions in the Bill states that the Chief Electoral Officer in the performance of his duties shall do certain things and one of the things he shall do is that he shall observe—

That the name and party designation specified in the application are not the same as those of any other party registered under this subsection, or are not so similar to those of any other party so registered as to be reasonably likely to mislead.

There is another paragraph which states—

That it is practicable to print on the space available on ballot papers, the party designation so specified.

Let us assume for a moment that this Bill were to become law and a party which we have seen come to light in recent months—I refer to the Democratic Labour Party—immediately sought registration with the Chief Electoral Officer. That officer, having no other applications for registration before him, and not being in the position of having to ensure that the name was not the same as that of another party, or that there was any similarity in the name, would be obliged to register this political party, so long as it fulfilled the rest of the conditions laid down in the Bill.

Let us assume also that just subsequent to that action taking place another party, called the Australian Labour Party, applied to the Chief Electoral Officer for registration. I suggest that the names of “The Democratic Labour Party” and “The Australian Labour Party” being similar would come within the scope of the provisions in the Bill; and as the Democratic Labour Party had already been registered, I wonder what the Chief Electoral Officer would do in the circumstances. I wonder what action he would take.

Would he say to the Australian Labour Party, "You cannot be registered because the name of your party conflicts with the name of another party which is already registered"? Would he say, upon the application of the Liberal and Country League to be registered, that the party designation was too similar to that of the "Country and Democratic League"? Could he say that there was likely to be a mistake, because of the similarity of names, and therefore he could not register one or the other?

I think that it would be reasonable to assume that the Australian Labour Party would receive registration at the hands of the Chief Electoral Officer, and that any other well-recognised political party would also receive registration; but when it came to the registration of a political party such as the newly-formed Democratic Labour Party, it might find itself in difficulties.

The Bill provides that if a party should find itself in the position that it cannot be registered, the names of the candidates concerned shall appear on the ballot paper with the designation "Independent" against them.

Another party which has been very active in all States of Australia in recent years is the Communist Party. There would be no reason why the Communist Party could not become a duly registered political organisation in the same way as any other party; and so long as its name was not similar to that of any other party it would be difficult to refuse it registration. The Bill also states—

A party registered under this subsection may in manner prescribed by the regulations renew the registration before the expiration of three years from the anniversary of the original registration, or, as the case may be, from the last preceding renewal of registration, and shall pay such renewal of registration fee as the regulations prescribe.

That means that, every three years, the political party that applies to the Chief Electoral Officer for registration has to keep on applying to make sure that its registration with the electoral office is current. The Bill also states—

Where a party designation is not authorised under this section to be shown on ballot papers in connection with the name of a candidate, the Chief Electoral Officer will cause the word "Independent" to be shown in connection with that candidate's name on ballot papers.

There is no question about it. If any candidate wants to stand for Parliament under the name of the Independent Country Party, the Independent Democratic and Country League, the Independent Liberal Party, the Independent

Socialist Party, or any other independent party, the name would appear on the ballot papers with the word "Independent" against it, because the person would be unable to gain registration under the provisions in the Bill.

The Bill also provides for certain things which I have never heard of in my short political experience. It places tremendous power in the hands of the Chief Electoral Officer; and one provision states—

A person who having been lawfully summoned to appear at the hearing of an objection does not appear in obedience to the summons, and a person who appears whether summoned or not, and who

- (i) refuses to be sworn or affirmed as a witness;
- (ii) refuses to answer any question he is lawfully required to answer; or
- (iii) refuses to produce any document or record he is lawfully required to produce;

commits an offence against this Act.

Penalty—Fifty pounds.

In addition to that, a political party has to supply all sorts of information to the Chief Electoral Officer. It says—

(b) A valid application shall be made in the manner prescribed but—

- (i) shall include the name of the party;
- (ii) shall include particulars of the offices whose occupants constitute the executive of the party;
- (iii) shall include particulars of the address at which, and office bearer by name of office on whom, notices to the party may be served;
- (iv) shall include particulars as to how, and by what office bearers of the party, endorsements may be authenticated, authorising persons nominating for election to use the party designation, and particulars of that designation;
- (v) shall include specimen signatures of those office bearers and of the description of the respective offices held by each;
- (vi) shall be signed by the chief administrative officer of the party on behalf of all of the persons constituting the party;
- (vii) shall be accompanied by such fee as the regulations prescribe.

(c) If it appears to the Chief Electoral Officer

- (i) that the application is validly made;

- (ii) that the name and party designation specified in the application are not the same as those of any other party registered under this subsection, or are not so similar to those of any other party so registered as to be reasonably likely to mislead;

And so on. I think we would get into very deep water if we amended the Electoral Act in this manner.

Why are these changes necessary at this stage? We have been satisfactorily conducting our electoral affairs in this State ever since the Electoral Act was first placed on the statute book. We have had none of these difficulties which have been mentioned. We are told that the provisions in this Bill will enable the public to become better educated about the electoral affairs of this State. We are also told that it will make it easier for the public to understand our electoral laws.

If one of the provisions of the Bill provided that "how-to-vote" cards should not be handed out, and electioneering should not be carried out on polling day; and that people could go into the polling booths without being harassed and chased along the street by people canvassing for votes, I would agree with it. If my memory serves me correctly, we had a Bill in this House not many years ago, in which that particular provision was embodied. But it did not get very far in this Chamber; and so we still have "how-to-vote" cards handed out on polling day.

This Bill provides that the distance shall be reduced from 50 yds. to 20 ft.; and that is a provision with which I agree—that is, in reference to the distance from the polling booth at which "how-to-vote" cards may be handed out. However, there is still some ambiguity about the words "entrance to a polling booth." I have not yet been able to get a satisfactory interpretation of them.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: There will be one, if this Bill is agreed to; but you will not accept it.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: If the hon. member had read the Bill, and had understood it, she would know there was no attempt to do anything in the Bill other than to alter the words "50 yards" to "20 feet."

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: Why do you want to suggest I have not read the Bill?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I do not suggest that the hon. member has not read it. But I do suggest that she does not understand it; because if she looks at page 23, she will see that there is a clause dealing with the alteration of 50 yards to 20 feet. It says—

By substituting for the words "fifty yards" in line 3, the words "twenty feet."

It does not attempt to make any further explanation of the term "entrance" to a polling booth."

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: I suppose they are intelligent people and will understand that.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The practice that I invariably employ, in order that a person with such small intelligence as I possess can understand the situation is to inquire from the returning officer at the polling booth what he regards as the entrance.

Members are aware that frequently the Electoral Department uses one classroom in a school building as a polling booth. The entrance to the school is through the gate; so I would be pleased if anyone could tell me where the entrance to the polling booth is, under the Act. Is it 50 yards from the school room, or 50 yards from the school gate?

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: That could be defined.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Those of us with sufficient experience in these matters know that the interpretation in this respect is very wide, is most varied, and is frequently given in different ways by different returning officers. I have experience of a returning officer saying that he regarded the entrance to the polling booth as being 50 yards from the door of the building; yet I have heard another returning officer saying that he regarded the entrance to the polling booth as the gate of the schoolground. If some attempt had been made in the Bill to define that, people would be able to understand more easily. However, that has not been done in the Bill, and I cannot support it.

The one or two small matters covered by the measure are not sufficient compensation for the two innovations referred to: one, the placing of the political tag against the name of the candidates on the ballot paper; and the other, registering the political party with the Chief Electoral Officer. That cuts right across the principle of democracy which has been practised in this State ever since it has been a State. I oppose the second reading.

HON. R. F. HUTCHISON (Suburban) [8.3]: Mr. Griffith has taken up some time to inform the House that this Bill is not very acceptable, but I did not hear very much reason given. To start with, he objected to the placing of a political tag against the name of the candidate. We on this side of the House do not mind having a political tag placed against our names, because we are not ashamed of our party. If that is done people will know which party they are voting for.

At times the electors are confused when they go to vote. Often they are not very politically conscious, so there is much need for the people to be more informed in view of the undemocratic franchise for the

Upper House. When the electors have to vote compulsorily—an aspect also covered by this Bill—it is very essential that they know the parties of the various candidates, because the first question they invariably ask is, "Whom does this candidate represent?" That is a good principle and I can see nothing wrong with it.

The opposition to this measure seems to be based on the policy of "Hands off the Electoral Act." There is such a restricted franchise here that there is not much democracy about it.

Hon. A. R. Jones: It is a wonder that you nominated to come here.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: The Opposition are against the idea of having the people informed. The people are beginning to wake up that something is wrong; and as a result, the electoral rolls for the Suburban Province and other provinces are growing. I have never considered that the people are not sufficiently intelligent to understand the franchise, but the difficulty is that there is no means of informing them. The Press does not help us in that regard.

What occurs in regard to the Legislative Council is seldom mentioned in the newspapers; consequently the people are in the dark. Nowadays it seems that they are getting out of the dark. They are becoming more informed; and as a result, the members on this side of the House have increased. I hope that the number will grow further after next year.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: It cannot be such an undemocratic franchise.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: There is no ambiguity about the entrance to the polling booth, because there is a provision in the Bill to clarify the interpretation. At present we have the spectacle—most outstanding in Bunbury—of the entrance being 50 yards away from the polling booth. But people drive up in cars, and it is no use trying to hand out "how-to-vote" cards. I would not mind if these cards were not distributed, if the ballot paper bore the name of the political party against the name of each candidate. The latter would be a much better step. That would be a better way of informing the electors.

The Bill seeks to ease the present conditions. It provides much-needed amendments to the legislation. The time has arrived to get down to facts. One of the amendments contained in the Bill is the method of witnessing enrolment for the Legislative Council rolls. Mr. Griffith said the present practice had gone on for years.

That is precisely what is wrong with that method. It would not have gone on if we, on this side, had been able to alter it. We have had to fight every step in this House, and reform has been achieved by members of the Labour Party tramping the streets to inform the people.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Is that the democratic way?

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: That is the democratic way: to go out and inform the public. We do not have the numbers behind our party in this House, and the Opposition is definitely against us in respect of this legislation. If there is a more undemocratic method of election I would like to know it; and if I were on the Opposition, I would not treat this matter as a joke, for it might rebound, as it has done in the last year or two. Much trouble has been taken to introduce the Bill. I was on the committee which assisted in this matter.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: It looks like it!

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: Some of the clauses are most desirable. The Bill attempts to place the present procedure before the people in a more explanatory form. That is the only way, if adult franchise for this House is to be brought into being. We know very well that we have not a hope of achieving that, no matter how the measure is introduced.

I would point out that when the Labour Party is in office, it governs the State, but is never in power. People who are politically conscious will not deny that. That is precisely what we are trying to teach the people—that this House has an undemocratic franchise. The voting power is very much loaded against the Labour Party.

Hon. A. R. Jones: This Bill seeks to disfranchise some people.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: It does not. I suggest that the hon. member has not read the Bill or else he would not be saying that. To place the political party designation against the name of the candidate on the ballot paper is a good move for the purpose of informing the people whom they are voting for. It is as fair a method to one candidate as to the other.

If there was any ambiguity, it was in Mr. Griffith's reference to the parties. I know he likes to drag that point in; but it will not make any difference in the long run, because the people now are not so much in the dark as they were a few years ago. That is evidenced by the number of Labour members who have been returned in the constituency I represent. There are only two non-Labour members in that province; one in the Legislative Council, and one in the Legislative Assembly. That speaks volumes.

This Bill is a good one. It is much needed. It does not go nearly as far as I would like to see it go. I realise it is almost impossible to get it through this House. If the Labour Party were to ask for a democratic franchise here, we would not get it; therefore we have to seek our objective step by step, as was

done in the workers' compensation legislation where small hand-outs were made from time to time.

As I said before, proof that what our Government is doing meets with the approval of the people lies in the fact that when we have put a reform on the statute book, nobody has been game to challenge it. It has remained there. The policy of the Labour Party has permeated every avenue of society in the few years it has been able to govern. It is the only party able to govern within its own rights. Other parties have to join together to form a government; that shows that the majority of the people are in favour of the Labour Party policy.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Isn't this an amendment to the Electoral Act?

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: It is a political act.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Why make a political speech?

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: If I could move for the introduction of adult franchise I would be a happy woman. I cannot do that. Therefore I must support the second reading of this measure.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

BILL—INTERPRETATION ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to the amendments made by the Council.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.30 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 8.13 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 23rd October, 1957.

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