

BILL—FREMANTLE HARBOUR TRUST ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [5.13]: I have had a look at the Bill, which deals with two very minor matters, namely, the payment of fees to the chairman and members of the trust and the method of signing cheques. I am satisfied that both amendments will make for improvement, and I have no objection to the increased fees. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—GAS UNDERTAKINGS ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day. Hon. J. A. Dimmitt in the Chair; Hon. G. Fraser in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported after Clause 1 had been agreed to. Clauses 2 and 3, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

House adjourned at 5.17 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 7th November, 1951.

CONTENTS.

	Page
Questions : Dredge "Sir James Mitchell," as to cost and suitability	520
Education, as to school hostel accommodation	521
Railways : (a) as to sand gear defects on "P.M." engines	521
(b) as to closing of Pt. Hedland-Marble Bar line, celebration	521
Potato exports, as to port of shipment	521
Metropolitan Market, as to registration of vegetable growers	521
Housing, as to tenders for workers' homes, Kalgoorlie	521
Prices control, as to conference proposal and Minister's attitude	522
Metropolitan bus services, as to subsidy by Transport Board	522
Rural Training Centre, as to continuance at Harvey	522
Bills : Eastern Goldfields Transport Board Act Amendment, 1r.	522
Metropolitan Market Act Amendment, 1r.	522
Totalisator Duty Act Amendment, 3r.	522
Inspection of Machinery Act Amendment, 3r., passed	522
Agriculture Protection Board Act Amendment, 3r., passed	523
Parliamentary Superannuation Act Amendment, report	523
Natives (Citizenship Rights) Act Amendment, report	523
Optometrists Act Amendment, returned	528
Companies Act Amendment, returned	528
Electoral Act Amendment, discharged	528
Acts Amendment (Superannuation and Pensions), 2r.	528
Motions : Railways, as to new marshalling yards, Bassendean	523

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

QUESTIONS.

DREDGE "SIR JAMES MITCHELL."

As to Cost and Suitability.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Works:

(1) On whose advice was the dredge "Sir James Mitchell" purchased?

(2) What was the cost of this dredge?

(3) Did it prove suitable for the work at Albany it was sent to do?

(4) Is it being removed from Albany to Fremantle?

(5) Will it be suitable for the dredging of the present Fremantle Harbour?

(6) If not, what dredge is to be used for this work?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Engineer for Harbours and Rivers.

(2) £310,000.

(3) Yes.

(4) It is proposed to transfer the dredge to Fremantle at the end of the year after the arrival of the Dutch contractors' dredging plant at Albany.

(5) It will be suitable for the dredging required for the construction of a new berth between the wheat silos and the existing railway bridge.

(6) Answered by (5).

EDUCATION.

As to School Hostel Accommodation.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE asked the Minister for Education:

What progress has been made since November, 1950, in the department's endeavours to overcome the shortage of school hostel accommodation at centres such as Northam?

The MINISTER replied:

Nothing has transpired since this matter was raised in December, 1950, which, in the opinion of the department, would warrant the provision of hostel facilities at Northam.

RAILWAYS.

(a) As to Sand Gear Defects on "P.M." Engines.

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is he aware—

(a) that the sand gear workings on "P.M." engines are causing considerable delay to trains on the "down" runs to Chidlow;

(b) that engine crews are at times greatly distressed by inefficient working of sand gear;

(c) that some loco. men attribute the recent serious accident at Stoneville to this faulty sand gear;

(2) Will he have inquiries made with a view to remedying the sand gear defects on "P.M." engines?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

(1) (a) Yes.

(b) Reports of faulty sand gear have been received from enginemen.

(c) No.

(2) Experiments with modified sand gear are being carried out at present.

(b) As to Closing of Port Hedland-Marble Bar Line, Celebration.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is it a fact that in connection with the running of the last train on the Port Hedland-Marble Bar railway "free beer flowed at the Ironclad Hotel at the expense of the Railway Department" as reported in the "Daily News" on the 29th October?

(2) If so, what was the quantity and cost of the liquor?

(3) By whom was this action authorised?

(4) Is this sort of thing customary?

(5) When will the department make free beer available at East Perth?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) One keg, the account for which has not yet been received.

(3) The Railway Commission.

(4) This is customary in the district when a business closes or changes hands.

(5) If and when the occasion warrants it.

POTATO EXPORTS.

As to Port of Shipment.

Mr. GUTHRIE asked the Minister for Supply and Shipping:

(1) Is she aware that an interstate ship is loading potatoes at Fremantle?

(2) Can she inform the House from which districts the potatoes come?

(3) Will she endeavour to see that, in future, cargoes such as these are despatched from Bunbury, the natural port for this class of produce?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes. The "Borda" had to load a considerable quantity of general cargo at Fremantle; consequently, the potatoes were loaded there also.

(2) Yes—Harvey to Dardanup.

(3) Yes. The "River Hunter" lifted approximately 1,200 tons and sailed on the 3rd November. The "Kooringa" has been scheduled to go into Bunbury to lift approximately 1,000 tons for Adelaide, on the 12th November.

METROPOLITAN MARKET.

As to Registration of Vegetable Growers.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Are growers supplying vegetables to the Metropolitan Market registered?

(2) If so, with whom?

(3) What is the number of growers so registered?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied:

(1) No.

(2) and (3) Answered by 1.

HOUSING.

As to Tenders for Workers' Homes, Kalgoorlie.

Mr. McCULLOCH asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) How many tenders have been received by the State Housing Commission for the 10 timber-framed houses to be built in Kalgoorlie?

(2) Has any tender been definitely accepted; if so, what is the name of the successful tenderer?

(3) When is it expected that erection of those houses will be commenced and completed?

(4) Will the necessary material be made available immediately for the erection of these 10 workers' homes?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Housing) replied:

(1) Four.

(2) No.

(3) When funds are available.

(4) Immediate releases will be given for controlled materials when the Commission is in a position to proceed.

PRICES CONTROL,

As to Conference Proposal and Minister's Attitude.

Mr. W. HEGNEY asked the Attorney General:

(1) Is it a fact that, as reported in "The West Australian" of the 5th November, at the recent conference of Prices Ministers he voted against a move for the Commonwealth to resume control of prices?

(2) If so, will he outline to the House the reasons which prompted his action?

(3) Will he state, for the information of the House, the policy of the Government in this matter?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

(1), (2) and (3) In the opinion of the Government the control of prices in Western Australia can be administered under State control with greater advantage to the State than it would be if administered by Federal control from Canberra. I have on all occasions taken up this attitude.

METROPOLITAN BUS SERVICES.

As to Subsidy by Transport Board.

Mr. J. HEGNEY asked the Minister representing the Minister for Transport:

(1) How many private bus services operating in the metropolitan area received a subsidy from the W.A. Transport Board during the periods 1950-51 and July, 1951, to date?

(2) What was the amount of the subsidy, the name of the route, and company receiving the subsidy in each case?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

(1) The only subsidies paid by the W.A. Transport Board to metropolitan omnibus operators during the periods stated were—

1950-51—To W.A. Government Tramways Department for Midland Junction-Swan View Route—£271 0s. 1d.

July, 1951, to date—To North Beach Bus Co. Pty. Ltd. for Perth-Morley Park Route—£245 13s. 11d.

(2) Answered by preceding reply.

RURAL TRAINING CENTRE.

As to Continuance at Harvey.

Mr. MANNING (without notice) asked the Premier:

Is he aware that the Rural Training Centre at Harvey is shortly to close? In view of the great assistance this has been to ex-Service land settlers as a refresher course, will he give consideration to having this centre carried on for the benefit of farmers and the junior farmer movement?

The PREMIER replied:

I did hear that the last rural training course under the rehabilitation scheme was shortly to be held at Harvey. I think it would be advantageous to the State if we could maintain the school at Harvey to provide these refresher courses, to which the member for Harvey has referred and which he suggests junior farmers could attend. If such a course were established I think it should be established for farmers and their sons which would, of course, include junior farmers. I would have to give consideration to this matter, or at least the Government will, and this we will do. At this stage I would say, however, that we cannot sponsor a free scheme, and we would expect those attending the courses to pay something towards the cost if such a school were established.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Eastern Goldfields Transport Board Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Education.

2, Metropolitan Market Act Amendment.

Introduced by Mr. W. Hegney.

BILL—TOTALISATOR DUTY ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—INSPECTION OF MACHINERY ACT AMENDMENT.

Third Reading.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—Mt. Lawley) [4.45] in moving the third reading said: I think it will be remembered that I undertook to confer with the Parliamentary Draftsman to make quite sure that some of the points raised by the member for South Fremantle were not applicable. I have conferred with Mr. D'Arcy and in his opinion the objections raised by the hon. member are not warranted. I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—AGRICULTURE PROTECTION BOARD ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and *passed*.

BILLS (2)—REPORTS.

1, Parliamentary Superannuation Act Amendment.

2, Natives (Citizenship Rights) Act Amendment.

Adopted.

MOTION—RAILWAYS.

As to New Marshalling Yards, Bassendean.

MR. BRADY (Guildford-Midland)
[4.46]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House the new marshalling yards at Bassendean should be connected to the Welshpool-Belmont line by utilising the existing Perth-Midland line and the Perth-Belmont line.

At the outset I would like to read to members a letter I received from the Bassendean Road Board in connection with this matter as they will then understand the position in regard to the board's difficulty. The letter reads as follows—

It is desired to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 15th October, in which you advise that the motion moved by you in Parliament in an attempt to secure the appointment of an independent engineer to report upon the Bassendean section of the proposed Welshpool-Bassendean Chord line was defeated by 21 votes to 19 in the Legislative Assembly.

Your letter was placed before the above board at its meeting on the 24th inst., and it was the unanimous wish of those present that a further attempt should be made to protect the future of this district. As previously stated the Bassendean Road Board did not raise any great objection to the marshalling yards proposal, as it is realised that this was a necessity from the State welfare point of view, but it was thought that the present Government would honour promises and give consideration to the proposals of a local authority especially in a matter of such great importance to a district as the proposed new railway is to the Bassendean district.

The board at its meeting unanimously agreed to the following resolution which it is hoped will meet with success:—

that Mr. J. Brady, M.L.A., be asked to move during the present session of Parliament for the repealing of that section of the Act

which relates to the Bassendean Road Board district, and that the new marshalling yard area be connected to the Welshpool-Belmont line by utilising the existing Perth-Midland railway line and the Perth-Belmont line.

Anything which you can do to help give effect to the above proposal will be greatly appreciated.

The board felt greatly concerned at the decision of the House not to permit an independent engineer to investigate its proposal. Since then the report of the independent engineer on the Welshpool-Belmont section has been presented, and it would seem that this backs up the argument of the Bassendean Road Board in regard to the short curve being taken to the existing Perth-Midland line and into the marshalling yards.

If I may allude to the previous session, I was very disappointed when the motion for the appointment of an independent engineer was defeated on party lines. Not one member on the Government side of the House supported my proposal for a report by an independent engineer. The only member who spoke to the motion was the Minister who represents the Minister for Railways. Several inferences may be drawn from that fact. One may infer that members on the Government side were asked to support the Government on the ground that this was an attempt by the Labour Party to put over something with the object of embarrassing the Government. It might be inferred that members considered there was a shorter cut than by supporting the appointment of an independent engineer and they preferred to take that short cut. It is the short cut that I am putting before them today.

As a layman, I find myself in a difficult position when trying to present technical matters relating to an engineering project. I apologise in advance to the House and the Bassendean Road Board for the case that I shall present, because I am not qualified to enter into the technicalities of engineering problems as the board and its officers could have done had the matter been referred to an independent engineer. However, I shall do my best in the time at my disposal to put up a reasonable case for the board.

I shall endeavour not to traverse again the ground I covered when moving my previous motion. It may be that I shall again have to touch on some of the arguments adduced on that occasion, but I shall endeavour to advance other reasons such as would have been presented to an independent engineer. As the member for the district, I feel that the Government has treated the Bassendean Road Board in a scandalous manner. As I remarked on the previous occasion, the question was rushed through Parliament in the dying

hours of the 1950 session, and assurances that were given by the Government have not been carried out in their fullest sense, despite the fact that a statement has been made from the Government side to the effect that the fullest consideration has been given to the matter. The Bassendean Road Board at no stage was taken into the confidence of the Government when the original inquiries were being made, and even to this day the scheme has shortcomings that may not be fully apparent to the board. However, I enter a protest against the manner in which this board has been treated.

The Belmont Park Road Board was granted an inquiry by an independent engineer and its case, though perhaps it had equal merit, possessed no greater merit than that of the Bassendean Road Board. Consequently, I feel that the Bassendean Road Board has been treated very unfairly by the Government.

The main reason for my moving this motion is that I, as a private member, am not permitted to move for the repeal of the section of the Act concerned, but I understand that the Public Works Act, under which the line would be constructed, permits of a deviation of the route up to one mile either side of the authorised route. The main line from Perth to Midland Junction could be utilised and it is less than a quarter of a mile from the line the Government intends to build, known as the chord line. I trust that even at this late stage the Government will be persuaded to accept the proposal of the Bassendean Road Board as the lesser of the two evils. I shall explain the two evils and I think members will appreciate that the proposition I present of behalf of the Bassendean Road Board will represent the lesser of the two.

Since this question was dealt with by the House, and the proposal for the appointment of an independent engineer was put up, considerable activity has occurred. The House has since passed a motion that a line on a route south of the river should be constructed to link up with Fremantle. This has a bearing on the congestion in the heart of the city, because, if that line were built in the near future, the existing bottle-neck in the city would be eased considerably.

When the independent engineer was making his inquiry into the proposition of the Belmont Park Road Board, the local authority claimed that the line to the racecourse was not needed because road transport could cope with all the passenger traffic offering. Had the Bassendean Road Board's case been submitted to an independent engineer. I believe that that local authority could have put up a proposition that road transport would be able to handle quite a lot of the traffic that possibly would pass over the railway. That is another reason why the Government should have approved of the matter being investigated by an independent engineer.

In "The West Australian" newspaper recently there appeared a leading article dealing with the closing of the Port Hedland-Marble Bar railway. The writer contended that it was time the Railway Department thought of pulling up lines rather than laying them down. I believe there is something to be said for that contention even in relation to the chord line. There is an existing line which, in the opinion of the Bassendean board, could do the work in every respect—I stress "in every respect"—and do it just as well as could the chord line that is to be built.

There is another aspect that could have been given fuller consideration. I have already stated that I considered the independent engineer's report on the Belmont Park Road Board section backed up to some extent the argument of the Bassendean Road Board. I intend to read the findings of the independent engineer. They are not lengthy and I believe they will help members the better to understand the facts that the Bassendean Road Board wishes me to place before them. The report begins—

I have the honour to submit herewith my report and recommendations on the route of the proposed Welshpool-Bassendean railway.

In accordance with the directions contained in your letter of 14th July, 1951, I examined the route proposed by the Western Australian Government Railways Commission and the alternative route proposed by the Belmont Park Road Board. I also investigated the possibility of any other route, or any amendment or deviation of the proposed routes within the statutory limits of deviation.

My comment on that is that the report was presented within three months of his having received instructions from the Premier.

I conferred with all members of the Railways Commission and with Messrs. F. D. Wilson, Chairman; J. W. S. Paulett; P. J. Faulkner and H. L. McGuigan, Secretary, all of the Belmont Park Road Board. Plans, estimates and other technical information were furnished by the Chief Civil Engineer and Assistant Chief Civil Engineer of the Railway Department, and by the Western Regional Director of Civil Aviation.

At the request of the West Australian Turf Club, I met the President, Mr. A. L. B. Lefroy, who presented the views of the club.

Thus, the independent engineer had regard to the views of the board, the Civil Aviation Department and the West Australian Turf Club.

The route proposed by the Railways Commission is shown coloured red on accompanying plan. The alternative route proposed by the Belmont Park Road Board deviates from the above as shown coloured blue and as amended to keep within the limits of deviation imposed by the Act by dotted blue.

The deviation shown in dotted red is referred to later in this report.

There are no major engineering problems involved in either route, and the grading and curvature is comparatively easy with approximate summit levels of 59.50 and 71.00 on the respective routes. Both routes have been carefully and skilfully located.

The Bassendean Road Board considers that the grade and curvature in its proposals are equal to those of the Belmont proposition. In fact, as I said here previously, about seven-ninths of the proposed Bassendean Road Board route is already in existence, and therefore it would suggest that the curvature and grading are entirely satisfactory at present. The engineer goes on—

The Commission's route was selected by its expert officers as the one most suitable to railway requirements and its location was very skilfully planned to reduce disturbance to property to a reasonable minimum.

Similarly, the road board's route was carefully located to reduce to a minimum the disturbance of property and interference to the roads and planned development of the district.

We were given to understand from the outset that the only possible route was the one drawn up by the Chief Civil Engineer, yet we have the road board at Belmont putting up an alternative route which was seriously regarded by the independent engineer. Just as it was possible for the Belmont Park Road Board to do what it did, so is it possible for the Bassendean Road Board to present a similar proposition. The report goes on—

It can be accepted that within reasonable and practical limits the above routes are the best obtainable for the purpose for which they are designed, and any comparison of routes must be on overall considerations.

Route and Mileages.

The length of the routes is as under—

Railway Commission's route—
6M. 64C.

Belmont Park Road Board's route—7M. 41C.

The difference in favour of the Commission's route is 57 chains. The additional operating cost of this extra

mileage is estimated at between £6,000 and £7,000 per annum, and for purposes of comparative estimates of cost, has been capitalised at £50,000.

The Bassendean Road Board is putting up the proposition that there is two miles 17 chains, approximately, of line already existing that is capable of being utilised as against the two miles 17 chains which the Chief Civil Engineer wants to build. So we must first consider the cost of building the line, and then the cost of the mileage to be run. Members, if they are reasonable, cannot do other than support the idea of the Bassendean Road Board that a curve, less than that advocated by the Chief Civil Engineer of 15 chains, should be constructed off the main Perth-Midland line. The engineer continues—

Estimated Cost of Construction.

The estimated cost, including compensation and provision for road diversions for a double track railway, is as under—

	£
Railway Commission's route	530,691
Belmont Park Road Board's route	606,186

The latter figure, however, includes a sum of £15,000 for a connection to the Bayswater-Belmont line at Whatley, as shown in dotted blue on the plan, and £20,000 for a new bridge over the Swan River on the Bayswater-Belmont line. Both these items are contingent upon future policy.

The estimates indicate that the Commission's route would be the cheaper to construct. This is an important consideration, though not a primary one, as pointed out by the Railways Commission.

The engineer went on to deal with road crossings and diversions, disturbance to the public and then with the Perth racecourse. Dealing with the Perth racecourse he said—

The Perth racecourse and siding at Belmont is at present served by a branch line from Bayswater, crossing the Swan River on a bridge that is nearing the end of its useful life, an estimated period of not more than another ten years.

The Railway Commission's proposals include a new bridge alongside the present one to serve both the existing and proposed new line.

Under the Belmont Park Road Board's proposal, this would not be possible, and the Government would have to determine in the near future whether to replace the existing bridge or to abandon the Bayswater-Belmont line. The Belmont Park Road Board has suggested that the race-

course traffic could be sufficiently catered for by road services. The West Australian Turf Club do not agree with this view.

I have read that portion to show that the road board has in mind that the many thousands of passengers who go to a race meeting could be catered for by road passenger services. This is another argument, as I said earlier, why an independent engineer should be appointed to consider these aspects. I shall not read the balance of the report, but I want to read the recommendations of the independent engineer. These are important because they will show members that the Bassendean Road Board has, in the main, been working on the right lines. The board advocated the abolition of the new line in favour of an existing one. The engineer in reporting on the Belmont proposition said—

1. It is shorter and cheaper to construct and affords slightly better grading and easier curvature.
2. The selected station site is well placed to serve the proposed industrial area for goods traffic and for future passenger traffic if such be developed.

I draw members' attention to finding No. 2 where the engineer refers to future passenger traffic and the importance of the station site—

3. It provides an easy and useful connection to the Belmont-Bayswater branch line, and avoids the necessity for two railway bridges over the Swan River, or the ultimate closing of the line to the Perth Race Course.

The Bassendean Road Board proposals are such as to enable the use of the existing Belmont bridge; and they would also avoid the necessity of building two railway bridges, and possibly three—

4. It avoids the possibility of disturbance to the operation of the Guildford Airport and interference in its future development.

If the Bassendean Road Board proposals are accepted it is possible that any disturbance of the huge industrial area concerned would be prevented. I refer here particularly to Hadfield's and, to a less extent, Cuming Smith's. Finally, the engineer reported—

5. It is simpler and cheaper to operate and maintain.

He then says—

Its major disadvantage is purely a local but an important one.

So much for Mr. Brisbane's report. It contains features of which I think not many members are aware, and with which an independent engineer could have dealt. I want members to listen to this letter which the Minister for Railways wrote to me on the 30th October in regard to

a complaint I lodged with him re the demolition and re-erection of a house at Bassendean. The letter is as follows:—

I referred your letter of the 3rd instant, regarding the demolition and re-erection of a house at Bassendean owned by a Mr. A. C. Martin, to the Railways Commission, and I can now advise you that the Department has secured a small supply of 5in. x 5in. stumps to replace the old ones and they will be correctly spaced and braced to conform with the by-laws of the road board.

The next paragraph is the important part of the letter—

All houses in the Scaddan street area, particularly the roofs, have suffered from the fumes emitted by the nearby superphosphate works, and in the circumstances Mr. Martin's demand that his roof be replaced with completely new iron is scarcely reasonable.

It is a well-known fact that all the iron roofs in Scaddan-street, where the marshalling yard is to be established, are corroded with the fumes from the super works. This has been public knowledge for years, and it could have been enlarged upon at an inquiry in such a way that it would have made the Commission think twice about putting the marshalling yard in close proximity to the super works. It would have an important bearing, because all kinds of goods go through such a yard—perishable goods, and goods and other things that will be affected by the fumes and dust. No end of compensation will be claimed from the Commission as a consequence of damage to goods and perishables, and the hundred and one different kinds of articles that will go through the marshalling yard; apart altogether from the effect that the fumes will have on the chrome-plated parts of the railway carriages, on copper in various railway trucks and on rubber and metals which will all find their places in the make-up of the marshalling yard.

For some time there has been an agitation in the north ward of the Bassendean Road Board for removal of the super works altogether because of the great inconvenience they cause to the 10 or 15 houses in the area. What the position will be with hundreds of men working there, and probably acres of buildings containing thousands of pounds' worth of railway machinery as well as hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of rolling-stock and so on, it is hard to say. This letter from the Minister for Railways acknowledges that the super fumes are even now causing all this damage. Had an independent engineer been appointed, this is something else to which he could have paid attention.

I believe that Messrs. Hadfield Ltd. have been greatly upset as a consequence of the railway going through two and a half acres of their land. I understand they have about 11 acres, and that the railway will go through two and a half acres on which they intended to build in the near future. Hadfield's have been there for the last 25 or 30 years, and they thought they would have that ground for many years to come, and so were planning to build on it. I am given to understand, on reliable information, that Hadfields are going to make a claim against the Commission for a quarter of a million pounds compensation if this particular two and a half acres of land is taken from them.

I believe this matter should have been put before an independent engineer so that he could have considered it. It is certainly something which wants ventilating in the House so that members will understand the implications. I think the proposed railway will cost about £500,000 more than was originally estimated. The Government must have regard to that position and to its responsibility to the Loan Council. If Hadfield's intend to claim a large sum of money as compensation I can visualise the super company doing the same thing. If the Bassendean Road Board proposals are adopted then only the super company's ground will be encroached upon and to my mind that would be preferable because then there would be only one compensation payment instead of two.

I refer to the question of the railway station in the independent engineer's report. If the proposal of the Bassendean Road Board is accepted there is already the nucleus, if not the actual substance, of a railway station at Ashfield. There is a railway signal box there at the moment, between the Bassendean railway station and Bayswater. People have been agitating for years to have a railway siding built there because several industrial establishments have been set up nearby, and there are sufficient people living in that part of the district to warrant at least the establishment of a siding. Such a siding should be built now, not in 10 or 15 years' time, and it could be built on the existing line rather than on the proposed chord line.

I hope members will adopt a different attitude on this occasion from what they did when they voted on my previous motion. At that time the voting was strictly on party lines. However, I would remind the House that the Bassendean Road Board members are of all shades of political thought. Even since last year the road board has changed its personnel and there is a new chairman, a new vice-chairman and a change as to some of the other members. I am not too sure, but I think that one of the men who was removed from office was not re-elected because the rate-

payers were incensed about this proposed chord line. Despite the fact that the personnel of the board has changed, it has still unanimously decided, the same as it did previously, to try to stop this new chord line. That means that two separate boards, comprising men of all shades of political thought, have twice unanimously decided that they do not want this new chord line to be established. I hope that members sitting on the other side of the House will have some regard to that point because this is not a Labour proposition. It is one that has been put up in all sincerity by the members of the Bassendean Road Board.

Mr. May: Will this line interfere with Hadfield's?

Mr. BRADY: Hadfield's will be seriously inconvenienced and I believe that they may claim anything up to a quarter of a million pounds as compensation. They claim that it will interfere with their future expansion and that it will stultify their operations. Because of that the company may have to move its premises lock, stock and barrel, from the district. There is a lighter side to this question.

I understand that in these days it is public policy to erect effigies of persons, and push those effigies off the ends of jetties and into rivers if certain people do not carry out the particular wishes of the residents concerned. I have no desire to see my effigy pushed into the Swan River when the opening of this new chord line takes place. I would prefer to see the effigy of the Minister for Railways, or even the Premier, pushed into the river. I do not want to have this chord line referred to as "Brady's Bungle." I would much rather have it called "McLarty's Muddle" or "Simpson's Sell-out" or something of that description. Therefore I want to fight all the way to see that at least the Bassendean Road Board proposals are given a fair hearing. I hope the Government will accept the full responsibility for this chord line and not ask either the member for the district or the road board to shoulder any share of it.

I suppose I could speak for the next two hours on this question but I would probably be going over ground that has already been covered on previous occasions. I am sure the majority of members know the story and I do not intend to traverse the ground again. However, a tremendous number of engineering problems will be overcome if the Government will, even at this late stage, take the lesser of the two evils which are open to it—that is to have the Chief Civil Engineer take a curve in off the main line from Perth to Midland and thence into the marshalling yards, even though that curve be less than 15 chains. I believe that the whole foundation of the Government's argument, and that of the Chief Civil Engineer, in re-

spect of the chord line as against the proposal of the Bassendean Road Board, is the question of the 15 chain curve.

I understand that it is recognised in railway engineering these days that a curve must be at least 15 chains. That might be all right for an engineer to advocate but as the leading article in "The West Australian" said recently, when dealing with the outer harbour at Fremantle, there are other than engineering viewpoints that must be taken into consideration. There are all sorts of things, such as the disabilities which the public would suffer, the economy of the State, and many others as well. If the curve were 10 or 12 chains instead of 15 chains, the Government would probably save £100,000. As the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, a financial debacle is about to descend upon the Commonwealth and this State. The Loan Council has already asked the States to give consideration to curtailing their expenditure of loan moneys. Here is a good opportunity for the State to do something in that regard.

There is another point. If the Government feels that ultimately this railway line must proceed as it is proposed at the moment, then let it resume the land in anticipation, but in the meantime it could try out the proposals of the Bassendean Road Board and take in the lesser curve. That would save enormous sums in compensation. It would also save money because a new line would not have to be put in and an old one pulled up. I commend the proposals of the Bassendean Road Board, and hope that members on the other side of the House will be fair and realise that this matter has not been brought forward in a party political sense but that the road board is trying to do something for its district as well as the public generally. I believe that the ground is available for the line to be extended for a few chains or even a quarter of a mile, if necessary.

During the discussion on the chord line the question of the sharp curves on the Collie line came up, and I was reminded that the Minister for Railways did not agree with these sharp curves even though there were several in existence in the South-West. I made inquiries and I understand that the difficulty has been overcome by the use of special engines.

Mr. May: And good drivers.

Mr. BRADY: Yes, they come into the picture, too. However, special types of engines are used for the "Australind" and throughout those areas where the lines have sharper curves. I think that a special type of engine could be run on this chord line through to the marshalling yards. The haulage of goods from the South-West line could be taken as far as Welshpool, and then the special type of locomotive could take over for the haulage into the marshalling yards over these shorter curves.

It may be that there will not be any necessity for a shorter curve. It may be that the 15-chain curve can go in at the Bassendean end of the line, and the marshalling yards pushed over a quarter of a mile from where they are now. That might mean the resumption of another 10 houses on the north side but, if so, it would offset the need for resuming the 15 houses on the south side which would result in a balance in favour of the 15 homes. I commend the proposition to the House. I hope members on both sides of the Chamber will favour the Bassendean proposal, and that we shall shortly hear that the Chief Civil Engineer's proposition has been amended along these lines.

On motion by the Minister for Education, debate adjourned.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

1, Optometrists Act Amendment.

2, Companies Act Amendment.

Without amendment.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Discharge of Order.

On motion by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, Order discharged.

BILL—ACTS AMENDMENT (SUPER-ANNUATION AND PENSIONS).

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray) [5.30] in moving the second reading said: The object of this Bill is to fulfil a promise made to State Government employees and ex-employees to review pension benefits in order that some relief may be afforded to offset the effects of the increase in the cost of living. The Bill also includes minor machinery amendments of the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act. As members know there are three different types of pensioners who will receive increases in their pensions if this Bill is approved by Parliament and, as indicated in the course of my remarks when introducing the Budget, it is proposed that payment of the increases will commence on and from the pension period nearest to the 1st October, 1951.

The Bill is a composite measure to amend the three Acts under which the three types of pensions are payable and in that regard it has been framed in much the same way as the Act passed in 1950 to increase statutory salaries and Parliamentary allowances. The three parts of the Bill and the type of pension covered by each are as follows:—

Superannuation and Family Benefits Act, 1938-1950, Amendments—Pensions payable under the voluntary contributory scheme which came into operation 1/7/1939.

Superannuation Act, 1871-1947, Amendment—Free pensions payable under the Act of 1871 in respect of permanent officers who commenced their service with the State prior to the 17th April, 1905.

Government Employees Pension Act, 1948, Amendment—Free pensions payable to permanent wages employees who commenced their service with the State prior to the 17th April, 1905.

Before dealing separately with each part of the Bill it would be as well that I should provide members with an outline of the steps which have been taken to ensure that the greatest possible benefit, within the limits of the State's capacity, will accrue to the greatest possible number of beneficiaries. It will be agreed by all that the State should endeavour to provide the fullest measure of protection to its old employees in their retirement. There are, however, limits prescribed by financial considerations and similar benefits payable by other Australian Governments, beyond which we cannot go. For the financial year 1950-51 our pension bill aggregated £551,656. This was made up of—

Free pensions—	£	£
Under Superannuation Act, 1871	162,601	
Under Government Employees Act, 1948	28,909	191,510
		<hr/>
Contributory pensions—		
Under the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act, 1938-50	360,146	
		<hr/>
	551,656	

The increases now proposed will add an estimated annual commitment of £102,200 to this bill, or approximately £75,000 for the current financial year. This is a very heavy outgoing, especially when it is remembered that the cost of pensions under the 1871 Act in the year 1938-39, which was then the only provision for the payment of pensions to ex-employees, was £134,241. In a little more than a decade, therefore, our annual pension bill, by the end of this financial year, will have increased by more than £519,000, or to a total not much less than five times the cost in 1938-39.

Then again, we must regulate the scale of our beneficence by what has been done or is proposed to be done by other Australian States. Repeated and regular inquiries are made to ensure that our State does not lag behind others in its treatment of employees both in respect of salary and wage conditions and superannuation benefits. Inquiries made in the early part of this year, followed by other inquiries in the middle of the year and again within the last few days, show the following to be the present position in relation to pensions in the Commonwealth and various State Services.

Commonwealth—The first 8 units of pensions were increased to 15s. and the remaining units remained at 12s. 6d. by an amendment passed at the end of 1950. A Bill is now before the Commonwealth Parliament to increase the remaining 18 units (making 26 in all) from 12s. 6d. to 15s. At the same time, however, it is proposed to alter the salary scale so that unit benefits, instead of being available to contributors on the basis of one unit for each £52 of salary, will in future be available on each £62 of salary to a certain limit, and then on £124 of salary to the maximum of 26 units on a salary of £1,984. The previous salary for 26 units was £1,664.

Victoria—Increased the value of all units to the maximum of 26, from 12s. 6d. to 15s. per unit on 1/7/1950. The maximum pension of £1,014 is payable on a salary basis of £1,664.

Queensland—Has no superannuation scheme comparable with other States.

New South Wales—No action has been taken to increase the unit value above 12s. 6d. Employee organisations are making strong representations to secure increased benefits, but no indication has yet been given of the Government's intentions.

South Australia—Has under consideration an increase in benefits. At present the benefits are restricted to a maximum of 20 units of 12s. 6d. each on a salary in excess of £1,040.

Tasmania—Units were originally of 5s. each. On a comparable basis with other States, the maximum number of units which can be taken out is 24. A Bill was passed by the legislature at the beginning of October, 1951, to increase the value of the first 8 units (4 on our basis) from 6s. 3d. to 7s. 6d., all remaining units, 40, (20 on our basis) will remain at 6s. 3d., or 20 at 12s. 6d. on our basis.

From this summary of what has been done elsewhere in regard to contributory pensions which, in general, are the type of pensions payable, it will be seen that only in the Commonwealth and Victorian services has any action been taken to increase the benefits throughout the scale. Tasmania has provided a maximum benefit of 10s. weekly under its new legislation, but no other State has yet made a definite move to increase contributory pensions beyond the rates in existence under the legislation which is already in operation in Western Australia.

As a dependent State we must maintain reasonable comparability with South Australia and Tasmania, otherwise the Grants Commission would impose a penalty because of our more generous treatment. The proposals submitted in this Bill are more generous than the treatment extended to pensioners in either South Australia or Tasmania at the present time; nevertheless it is thought that, while reaching the limit, they will not be considered to be unreasonable by the Grants Commission in present-day circumstances.

I will now comment on the separate parts of the Bill. It provides for an increase in pensions under the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act similar to that originally granted by the Commonwealth last year, namely, an increase of 20 per cent. in respect of the first eight units, to be met from Consolidated Revenue. The unit value of those particular units would be increased from £32 10s. to £39 per annum, and all other units would remain at the value of 12s. 6d. each or £32 10s. per annum.

The increase will be applied to existing pensions as well as future pensions, and the increased annual cost to the State will be about £74,000. The commencing date of the increase is included in the Bill as the pay day, the 5th October, 1951. It is also proposed to increase the scale of units from the present maximum of 20 to 26. In view of the cost of living and the adjustments in salary rates, the unit range was previously increased beyond 12 in 1947. The maximum number of 20 units is allowed an employee in receipt of a salary of £1,040 and over, to contribute for a pension of £650 per annum, but that amount is now not very much more than the present basic wage of approximately £536 per annum.

That amount of pension, £650, would debar a contributor from receiving Commonwealth social service benefits, although he must make a substantial contribution to the Commonwealth in social service contributions as well as quite a large sum for superannuation units. The provision for a maximum of 26 units affords contributors on the higher ranges of salary the opportunity to provide pensions for themselves on retirement on a scale which could be regarded as reasonable to enable them to live in comparative comfort. The maximum pension for 26 units under the new scale will be £897 per annum, but the number of cases will be limited.

In addition to the features mentioned, the opportunity has been taken to include in the Bill two items of a machinery nature to facilitate the working of the Act. The first will allow a contributor, who receives an increase in salary after the date on which contributions cease and the date of his elected retire-

ment age, which increase brings his salary range to a new unit group, to increase the number of units held. That was the provision before the 1950 amendment Act was passed, whereby the ceasing date of contribution was altered from the actual date of attainment of the elected retiring age to the anniversary date of the initial contribution.

The other amendment proposed is in respect of the provident account. At present a male employee is permitted to withdraw the whole or portion of subscriptions made to the account at the expiration of five years. Recently certain appointments made to the Public Service were subject to the employee making subscriptions to the provident account as a condition of service, in lieu of superannuation or life assurance. To ensure that, in such a case, an employee does not withdraw his subscriptions at the expiration of the five years, a proviso has been added to the relative subsection to exclude him from the general provisions of that subsection.

The original Superannuation Act, 1871-1947, provided for the payment of pensions to permanent officers on the basis of a maximum pension of two thirds of the average salary of an officer during the last three years of his service; the maximum pension being based on 40 years' continuous service. Only officers whose commencing date of employment was prior to the passing of the Public Service Act on the 17th April, 1905, became entitled to pensions under this Act. Pensions are "free," being entirely met from the State's revenue without any form of contribution by the officer. These pensions were increased under authority of an amendment of the original Act which was passed in 1947, and which then provided for the following increases:—

25 per cent. on all pensions up to £288 per annum; and the increase of pensions between £288 per annum and £360 per annum to £360 per annum.

It is now proposed to extend the benefits in the following manner:—

By further increasing pensions up to £260 per annum by 20 per cent.—maximum additional benefit £52 per annum.

By increasing all pensions between £260 per annum and £650 per annum by £52 per annum.

By increasing pensions between £650 per annum and £702 per annum to £702 per annum.

The annual cost of these increases is estimated at £23,500. The increase to the lower pension group—that is pensioners now receiving £260 and less—will bring their rates of pension to equality with the average salary on which their pensions were originally based, in all cases where the officer had served for 40

years or more. In other cases—up to current pensions of £360 per annum—the proposed increase will move the pension rate to near equality with salary on retirement.

It is recognised, of course, that the great majority of pensioners who will receive a pension of around the £300 per annum mark, retired at a time when a salary of that amount was adequate for their needs. Officers, who later filled the positions they in their time had occupied, now receive salaries of two and three times more for the same work. This, I submit, is a phase of the times through which we are passing and one which the Government of a State with the restricted financial resources of Western Australia cannot hope to remedy—it can only mitigate the circumstances and must expect the national Government through its social service benefits to accept its share of the burden.

Some easement of the "means" test has already been provided by the Commonwealth Government. To an extent, therefore, the lot of pensioners in the lower bracket has been improved by the State and Commonwealth and may be further improved. But I would like to point out that our increased payments of pensions in a large number of cases merely transfer to the State charges which otherwise would be met by the Commonwealth.

The limit of £702 for benefits under this part has been fixed, because this is the maximum amount payable to a pensioner under the 1938 scheme. As members know, the 1938 scheme is a contributory one, that is that the officers have to pay contributions which meet part of their pensions. The Government feels that it would be unfair to these contributors to extend pension benefits to non-contributory pensioners beyond what is being done for the contributory pensioners.

The Government Employees Pension Act, 1948, came into operation on the 1st February, 1949. This resulted from many years of representation to Governments for the recognition of wages men, mostly railwaymen, who had served continuously in a permanent capacity from dates prior to the 17th April, 1905, and who had been refused pension rights under the 1871 Act. The maximum pension of £2 10s. per week was based on 4 units of pension under the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act of 1939. Altogether about 300 retired wages men were brought under the provisions of this Act but deaths have since reduced their number to 200. It is proposed that they, in common with 4-unit pensioners under the contributory scheme, shall benefit by having their pensions increased by 20 per cent., bringing up a maximum pension of £156 per annum instead of the £130 per annum which they have been receiving.

I have said already earlier in my remarks that the increases which these amendments propose to extend to pensioners have been based on the greatest possible benefits to the greatest number. Out of a total of 3,900 receiving pensions at the 30th June, 1951, only 15 will not receive anything at all under these proposals. It may seem that we should include all when only so few have been omitted from such a large total. However, the 15, who have been excluded from benefits are all receiving "free" pensions of more than £702 per annum, under the 1871 Act and, even though it would not cost much to extend the benefit of £52 per annum throughout the whole list of pensioners, the Government is of opinion that there is no immediate necessity to grant to them something which no other member of our service can yet obtain.

The following summary of the total annual commitment of £102,200 will show that nearly 73 per cent. of the amount will be disbursed to pensioners who now receive less than £5 per week.

Present Rates.	Increased Cost. £
1871 Act pensions up to £260 per annum	11,000
Government Employees Act pensions up to £130 per annum	5,200
Superannuation and Family Benefits Act pensions up to £130 per annum	58,000
	<hr/> £74,200
The balance of £28,000 is made up of—	£
1871 Act pension now over £260 per annum	12,500
Superannuation and Family Benefits Act pensions now over £130 per annum	15,500
	<hr/> £28,000

I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.55 p.m.