

question should, as I remarked, be discussed on better and more convenient occasions during this session. I should like to call attention to the fact that during the last 12 months the members of this House, and not only the different Ministers we have had, are responsible very much for these continued changes and this bad management. You cannot shift the responsibility, or place the responsibility, of the management of these railways upon that Ministry or any particular member of the Ministry. The whole of the responsibility for this bad management during the last 12 months lies evenly balanced between both sides of the House.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No.

THE SPEAKER: Order!

MEMBER: You are not arguing before a Judge.

MR. FOULKES: If I were arguing before a Judge, I should not be liable to so much interruption, at any rate. I should have more opportunity of setting my case forth fairly. I am a new member, my election having taken place only a short time ago, but from what I can gather I cannot help thinking that the country at large has lost confidence in this House. That is in a great measure owing to the fact that the proceedings in the last session of Parliament were not carried on in the way they should have been. The country at large is most anxious that a Bill shall be carried for a redistribution of seats, and I hope the Premier—I think we can all wish him every success in the new office he has taken—will push on with that Bill as rapidly as possible. I shall consider it my duty on this occasion to vote with the Premier against the amendment. I, like many other members, feel that we have many causes of complaint as regards the administration of the railways, but I repeat that this is not the occasion for discussing the matter, and I therefore feel it my duty to vote against the amendment.

MR. P. STONE (Greenough): I take it that in this case the Government find themselves face to face with a great difficulty. One of the principal assets of the State consists of the railways, and the Government find that for every £100 these railways return, they have to pay £115. To alter this state of affairs they

had to make a choice out of three things. They had either to reduce the wages, run less trains, or increase the rates. As to reducing the wages, in the face of what happened last year when we were, I think, unanimous in raising the rate of the wages of the men employed on the railways by 1s. a day—and not only that, but we reduced the hours from nine to eight—it would be out of the question to talk of making the railways profitable by reducing the wages 1s. or 1s. 6d. a day. As to running less trains, the public would not stand that, but they expect the accommodation that any people would require. The next alternative was to raise the rates, and I for one, paying as much as most people towards the railways, say the Government acted in the most discreet manner. It is possible that the rates have been raised more than necessary, but time will alter that, because as soon as people see there is a profit on the railways, they will clamour to have the rates reduced. Better management of the railways is possible. I think they are by far over-manned. I would rather see a man get good pay and work well, two doing what three are accomplishing now. As matters stand at present, there are more idlers than workers.

MEMBER: That is why you vote for the Government?

MR. STONE: I will come to my vote for the Government later on. I take it that when revising the rates, the Government might have considered the manner in which the timber companies and coal companies are favoured. In other parts of the world where there are large timber companies and coal companies, as a rule these companies have to find their own rolling-stock and pay for the haulage over the lines they have to use; but here we find that the Government have to find the rolling stock, and in this matter the companies have the Government pretty well "by the wool."

MR. MORAN: It is all wool and no brain, there.

MR. STONE: What I refer to will mend itself in time. I hope the time will come when those companies will provide themselves with trucks, and not be worrying the Government day by day for trucks which might be used in more profitable work. As to the appointment of Mr. George, I presume the Government

saw something had to be done, and they looked around and picked him out as the most suitable man they could find. They have availed themselves of his services, and I earnestly hope he will prove a success. I do not see why we should not give him a fair show, and why we should handicap him in any way. If the Government have made a mistake in appointing Mr. George, we should remember that mistakes occur in every walk of life.

MEMBER: Every well-regulated family.

MR. STONE: Yes; even in marriage. (Laughter.)

MEMBER: In some cases.

MR. STONE: I am going to vote against the amendment, as after eight or nine months' experience last year it appears to me that the proceedings of this Parliament are more like a contest or football match than the doings of a collection of hard-headed, sound thinkers of this State.

MR. DOHERTY: There is a seat over the other side of the House.

MR. STONE: I occupy this seat (Opposition cross-benches), and I intend to occupy any seat I think fit. I do not feel bound to any particular party, and I shall vote as I think fit. That is the position I have taken up, and I intend to follow it. I long to see the time when the House will be able to sit as one party, the same as the Council, and when the Ministry or the Government do anything the House think unfair and not becoming, they can drive them from office and elect their own chiefs. I would like to see this debate ended and practical business proceeded with as soon as possible. The way the business was conducted last year was such that it seemed to be the laughing stock of the country. Delay was occasioned while attention to useful business was needed. We find now that the Legislative Council have adjourned for a fortnight on account of this amendment, and I hope the subject will soon go to a division.

At 6-26, the SPEAKER left the Chair.

At 7-30, Chair resumed.

MR. T. F. QUINLAN (Toodyay): I shall confine myself strictly to the motion before us. I desire to say at the outset that there is no man in this State whom I would sooner see attain the high and

honourable position of Premier than my friend Mr. Walter James. Being delighted to see him hold the Premiership, I must offer a few words to convey my reasons for casting a vote in opposition to him to-night. I shall vote against the Government, because I was elected as one of the party which has sat, so far, for the most part on this side of the House. I have not felt justified at any time in changing my allegiance, although the person to whom I was attached at the time of my election, Mr. Throssell, no longer leads on this side. I feel in some measure bound to the Opposition. Suffice it to say, however, that I purpose to terminate, after to-night, my adherence to party politics. I think we are too small a community for the carrying out of a strict system of party government. [THE PREMIER: Hear, hear.] Therefore, while intending to-night to vote for the party to which I belong, my future proceeding will be to cast my vote as an independent member. I have a complaint to make concerning the railway policy of the present Government, so far as the appointment of Mr. George is concerned. I believe I only voice the sentiment of a large number of people in this State, if not the sentiment of the majority, when I say that I consider Mr. George's appointment will prove a most excellent one. I have to enter a protest, however, against the manner in which the appointment was made. The House was to have met within three weeks of the date of Mr. George's appointment, and I think it would have been just and courteous on the part of the Government to have waited. For my part, I feel confident that even as the House is at present constituted a large majority of members would have favoured the appointment of Mr. George. I have, ever since I have taken an active part in the public life of this State, advocated a change from the political control of the railways; and I still maintain the position that it is far better for the interests of the State in every respect that the railways should be altogether free from political control. I trust the Government will not, as has been suggested, have a kind of dual control over the department. They should give the Commissioner or the Board of Commissioners, as the House may decide at a later