

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**WEDNESDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 1914**

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## PAPERS.

The following papers, laid on the table, were ordered to be printed:—

Report of the Commissioner for Railways for the year ended 30th June, 1914.

Report of the Chief Inspector of Machinery and Scaffolding for the year ended 30th June, 1914.

Annual report of the Benevolent Asylum, Dunwich, for the year 1913.

## QUESTIONS.

## STATION ACCOMMODATION, WOOLLOONGABBA.

Mr. BERTRAM (*Maree*) asked the Secretary for Railways—

“What steps, if any, have been taken to give effect to the wishes of the deputation which waited upon him some weeks ago in regard to—(a) The necessity of abolishing the open railway crossing at Woolloongabba; (b) enlarging and improving the goods shed and railway yard at Woolloongabba; (c) constructing an overbridge at the railway wharf?”

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. W. T. Paget, *Mackay*) replied—

“(a) and (c). This matter is at present under the consideration of the Deputy Commissioner. (b) The Deputy Commissioner does not consider it necessary at the present time to extend the goods shed, but he is considering a proposal for the erection of a separate office for the goods clerks who are now located in the shed.”

## COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT AND STATE SAVINGS BANK.

Mr. BERTRAM asked the Treasurer—

“1. Have any steps been taken to ascertain whether the present Commonwealth Government are prepared to accept the proposition of the Treasurers' Conference regarding Savings Banks?”

“2. If so, what has been the result?”

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Bulimba*) replied—

“Action is being taken in this matter.”

## DUNWICH BREAD SUPPLY.

Mr. BERTRAM asked the Home Secretary—

“1. Is it true, as alleged in an article published in ‘Truth’ on the 27th instant, that the baker employed at Dunwich is not a practical baker, and that the bread supplied to the inmates is frequently sour?”

“2. If so, will he take immediate steps to have this unsatisfactory state of affairs remedied?”

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. G. Appel, *Albert*) replied—

“1. No.

“2. See No. 1.”

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

WEDNESDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER, 1914.

The SPEAKER (Hon. W. D. Armstrong, *Lockyer*) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

## CENTRAL SUGAR-MILLS.

The SPEAKER informed the House that he had received from the Auditor-General his annual report on the accounts of central sugar-mills for the financial year, 1913-1914.

Ordered to be printed.

[*Hon. T. O'Sullivan.*]

#### FAULTY CATTLE AT ENOGGERA SALEYARDS.

Mr. WELSBY (*Merihyr*) asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

“In view of the large number of diseased cattle that are at present being sold by auction at Enoggera yards, will he give directions to the inspector to supply the Press weekly with full particulars of consignors, sellers, and buyers of all faulty cattle sold at Enoggera saleyards?”

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE AND STOCK (Hon. J. White, *Musgrave*) replied—

“No.”

#### COST OF LEATHER.

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*) asked the Premier—

“In view of the fact that hides for some weeks have been selling at a greatly reduced price, will he instruct the Food Prices Board to inquire into the excessive cost of leather, with the object of bringing about a corresponding decrease in its value?”

The PREMIER (Hon. D. F. Denham, *Oxley*) replied—

“The leather now on the market is the product of hides purchased before the war. I am informed, on expert authority, that a period of from four to nine months, according to the thickness of the hide and the uses to which the leather is to be devoted, elapses between the putting of the raw material in the pit and the placing of the finished article on the market. Consequently, it is not thought advisable to ask the Control of Trade Board to postpone matters that are really urgent in order to consider this question.”

#### EXERCISE OF FRANCHISE BY EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

Mr. WINSTANLEY (*Quenton*) asked the Home Secretary—

“1. Has his attention been drawn to the fact that the New Zealand Liberal Government made provision for the men leaving with the Expeditionary Force, to exercise the franchise for the forthcoming elections before leaving New Zealand?”

“2. In view of the forthcoming elections in this State, and the departure of more troops, will he take steps to make provision for these men recording their votes before leaving?”

The HOME SECRETARY replied—

“1. Yes.

“2. Consideration will be given in due course.”

#### MEN EMPLOYED ON SEWERAGE WORKS.

Mr. WINSTANLEY asked the Treasurer—

“1. What is the number of men working on the sewerage works in Brisbane?”

“2. What department is responsible for the welfare of the men working in the shafts and drives in connection with this work?”

“3. Is it a fact that the men handling the winches are men who have no certificates?”

“4. Is it wise, where the lives and limbs of men are at stake, to allow this?”

The TREASURER replied—

“1. Seventy-six.

“2. The Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board is responsible. The Water and Sewerage Act is administered by the Department of Public Works.

“3. Yes.

“4. The Department of Public Works has no jurisdiction over the men employed driving electric motors.”

#### AGRICULTURAL BANK DEFAULTERS.

Mr. GILLIES (*Eacham*) asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

“Will the Government show leniency to clients of the Agricultural Bank who are unable to meet their obligations as a result of the war, as already promised the borrowers under the Workers' Dwellings Act?”

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE replied—

“Clients who go to the front will have every consideration extended to them; other cases will be considered by the trustees of the bank on their merits.”

#### SPRINGVALE AND SULIEMAN CREEK RAILWAYS.

Mr. HAMILTON (*Gregory*) asked the Secretary for Railways—

“How many men are engaged on construction work on the undermentioned railways:—Winton to Springvale, and Duchess to Sulieman Creek extension respectively?”

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS replied—

“Winton-Springvale—There are no men actually engaged on the construction of the line, but the necessary plant is being assembled. Duchess-Sulieman Creek—74.”

#### NORTHERN SUGAR FREIGHTS.

Mr. FOLEY (*Mundingburra*), on behalf of Hon. R. Philp, asked the Secretary for Railways—

“1. What are the distances from Carstairs to Bowen and Carstairs to Townsville?”

“2. What is the rate of carriage for sugar per ton respectively to each port?”

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS replied—

“1. Carstairs to Bowen Jetty, 65 miles 60 chains; Carstairs to Townsville Jetty, 57 miles 76 chains.

“2. The rate is 8s. 9d. per ton to each port.”

## CLONCURRY-MOUNT CUTHBERT RAILWAY.

Mr. FIELLY (*Paddington*), on behalf of Mr. May, asked the Secretary for Railways—

"1. How many men are now employed on the second section of the Cloncurry-Mount Cuthbert Railway?

"2. When will the specifications of the second section of the aforesaid railway be laid on the table of the House?"

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS replied—

"1. One hundred and one men are engaged on the Cloncurry-Mount Cuthbert line.

"2. Please see my reply given to this question on the 10th September last."

## RAILWAYS BILL.

## RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

On clause 10—"Suspension and removal from office"—on which Mr. Lacombe had moved, by way of amendment, that the words "both Houses of Parliament," on lines 43 and 44, be omitted with the view of inserting the words "the Legislative Assembly"—

Mr. MURPHY (*Burke*) said he did not know whether the Secretary for Railways had prepared an amendment to meet the case presented to him the previous evening, but he would point out that the Commissioner for Railways was not likely to be suspended, except for some grave dereliction of duty, and that after any such suspension the matter would be duly notified to the House. If the Assembly decided that the Secretary for Railways had done the correct thing, members would support him; but under the clause as it stood, after the Assembly had supported the Minister and decided that the Commissioner for Railways deserved to be suspended, the Legislative Council might decide otherwise, and the Commissioner for Railways would then have to be reinstated. Would that not place the Secretary for Railways in a very awkward position? Would it not be a vote of no confidence in the Cabinet, by whom the matter would be considered before the Commissioner was suspended? If the Assembly decided that the Commissioner ought not to have been suspended, there was only one thing the Cabinet could do, and that was to send in their resignations, because that decision would be a vote of no confidence in the Government. The Minister might smile, but he would not smile if he suspended the Commissioner for Railways and the majority of the Assembly decided that he had done a distinctly wrong thing. On such a decision by the Assembly any decent Secretary for Railways would at once tender his resignation.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, I quite agree with you.

Mr. MURPHY: Very well. The Minister having accepted that proposition, he would now come to the principal point: If the Assembly decided that the Minister did the correct thing, and the Legislative Council decided that he did the wrong thing, what position would the hon. gentleman take up then? Would he meekly bow to the decision of the Council, and allow the Commissioner

for Railways to take up his position again? Would he allow the nominee Chamber to foist upon the people of Queensland a highly-paid officer whom the Cabinet, as representing the interests of the people, had decided was not fit for the position? When the amendment was first moved, he did not think it was a matter worth debating, but now he regarded it as a very important matter—one to which the Secretary for Railways should give serious consideration. The hon. gentleman might never have occasion to suspend the Commissioner for Railways, but some future Secretary for Railways might be called upon to exercise his authority in that way, and when the Committee were passing a Consolidated Railways Bill, they should see that the Minister was placed in a decent and proper position, so that he should not be compelled to reinstate an officer whom it had been necessary to suspend, merely because the nominee Chamber disapproved of his action. If the action of the Minister received the endorsement of the members of the Assembly, that should be sufficient, and for that reason he intended to vote for the amendment.

Mr. BERTRAM (*Maree*) thought it was a wise move on the part of the hon. member for Keppel to seek to put in the Bill a provision which would prevent the nominee Chamber thwarting the wishes of the representatives of the people, and he was somewhat surprised that the Secretary for Railways had not seen fit to accept such a reasonable amendment. It was quite conceivable that something might arise whereby it would be necessary for this Chamber to suspend a highly-paid officer, such as the Commissioner for Railways, and they would be in rather an awkward position if the other Chamber, consisting largely of men who had been rejected by the people, should be in a position to thwart the wishes of this Chamber. He hoped the Minister would indicate that he intended to accept the amendment.

Mr. HAMILTON (*Gregory*) thought the hon. member for Burke had brought strong reasons to bear as to why the amendment should be accepted. There was a strong reason in the fact that if this House decided that they would uphold the Minister in suspending the Commissioner, and the other House refused to endorse it, there would be a deadlock straight away, and there was no machinery by which it could be overcome. He considered that this House, being a representative House, and the one which dealt with the fixing and raising of the salary, should be the only Chamber to decide matters of this kind.

Mr. MURPHY: And the Chamber to which the Minister is responsible.

Mr. HAMILTON: Yes. This House could move a vote of want of confidence in the Government, but the other House could not do so. It was going out of the way altogether to place this power in the hands of a Chamber which was responsible to no one but themselves, and who could come and go when they liked. Sometimes it was a hard job to get a quorum to carry on the business there, and yet they could thwart the whole of the wishes of the elective Chamber of the people by refusing to endorse what this Chamber had decided upon. It would be wrong for them to put some future Secretary

[*Mr. Murphy.*]

for Railways in a position in which his wishes would be thwarted by the other Chamber.

Mr. LENNON (*Herbert*) quite agreed with the reasons advanced by the hon. member for Burke in favour of the amendment, which was a very desirable amendment indeed. No Minister for Railways realising the responsibilities of his office would go to the length of suspending the Commissioner for Railways unless it was thoroughly deserved. Subclause (2) appeared to be put in for the protection of the Commissioner; it would be very difficult to remove a Commissioner. He did not wish his remarks to be understood as in any way applying to the present Commissioner. If the Minister decided to suspend the Commissioner, and the House upheld the action by an overwhelming majority, and the other House, by a narrow majority, disagreed with that, the Commissioner could not be removed. On the other hand, this House might not sustain the Minister, but might vote against him, and the other House, by an overwhelming majority, might say that they wanted the Commissioner removed. Those were very invidious positions which the Minister for the time being might occupy. He hoped it would appeal to the sense of the Minister that this was a very objectionable clause. If it was amended in the way proposed by the hon. member for Keppel, it would render easy the removal of a Commissioner whose actions warranted removal. In the other States, Commissioners had been removed from office, and we might have a Commissioner in Queensland who deserved dismissal; but under subclause (3) it would be impossible to get rid of a Commissioner whose actions called aloud for his removal.

Mr. BOOKER (*Wide Bay*) thought the clause was a very wise provision. He was opposed to the amendment for this reason: assuming there was a grave industrial outbreak in the railway service, and the Commissioner took up according to his lights a strong attitude antagonistic to the men in the railway service; or the Commissioner, whoever he might be, took up the same attitude in connection with the industrial upheaval in the Railway Department as Major Cahill did at the time of the industrial outbreak in Queensland.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: There is no analogy.

Mr. BOOKER: He was dealing with this question without any feeling, and taking up a purely logical attitude. Assuming that hon. members opposite were administering the Government at that time, they would naturally take up the same attitude that they took up with Major Cahill. It was freely stated at that particular time by influential members on the other side that if, at that time, the Opposition had been on this side, Major Cahill would not have been the Commissioner of Police to-day. (Hear, hear!) If the Commissioner for Railways was forced into that position, and the Opposition were on this side with the same majority which was behind the present Administration, would the Commissioner receive the legitimate notice that the Bill provided? He would be passed out. There should be some provision to protect a Commissioner from a majority of the Lower House dealing with him, when, according to his lights, and from no political consideration whatever, he had taken up a certain attitude which he believed was in the interests of

the railway service and the country. He would cast his vote against the amendment, because he believed that no public officer should be subject to the passions or prejudices of Parliament at any particular time when a crisis was pending, or when they had just recovered from a crisis.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yesterday he had said that he was under the impression that it was advisable that an officer of Parliament should be dealt with by both branches of the Legislature. Since then he had given the matter careful thought, and he was of the same opinion still. The hon. member for Burke had asked him what his position would be if this House carried a vote that the Commissioner's suspension should take place and the other House should not move in that direction. They should remember that before such a grave step was taken by any Minister for Railways he would surely consult the Cabinet. (Hear, hear!) There were members of the Upper House in the Cabinet, and they must take their joint responsibility.

Mr. RYAN: The Minister is not given power to suspend.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Well, the Governor in Council. The Commissioner was placed in full control of a business undertaking, in connection with which there had been £33,845,675 expended on the opened lines, and for the past year there was over a million of money expended on the unopened lines, making a total of nearly £35,000,000 of public money, for which he was the corporation. He represented the Crown in that position, and that corporation employed at the present time some 14,000 men. Was it not reasonable to expect that, when an officer had those powers, and the power to put on or dismiss any of those men under certain regulations and restrictions, that if he misbehaved himself, or the Governor in Council thought he [4 p.m.] misbehaved himself and suspended him, that he, being an officer of both branches of the Legislature, both Houses should have the opportunity of saying whether they thought the suspension should be confirmed or not? He would also point out that the position of the Commissioner was not unique in this direction. With respect to the Auditor-General, section 28 of the Audit Act of 1874 provided—

“The Auditor-General shall hold his office during good behaviour, and shall not be removed therefrom unless an address praying for such removal shall be presented to the Governor by the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly respectively in the same session of Parliament, and at any time when Parliament is not sitting it shall be lawful for the Governor in Council to suspend the Auditor-General from his office for inability or misbehaviour, and when so often as the same shall happen a full statement of the cause of such suspension shall be laid before both Houses of Parliament within seven days after the commencement of the next session thereof, and if an address shall at any time during that session be presented to the Governor by the Legislative Council or Legislative Assembly praying for the restoration of such Auditor-General to his office, such Auditor-General shall be restored accordingly, but if no such address

shall be so presented it shall be lawful for the Governor in Council to confirm such suspension and to declare the office of such Auditor-General to be and the same shall thereupon become and be vacant as if such Auditor-General were naturally dead."

The Land Court was dealt with in the same way, as the members of the court had the protection of both Houses of Parliament. Section 23 of the Land Act of 1910 provided that—

"The members of the court shall hold office during good behaviour, and shall not be removed therefrom unless an address praying for such removal shall be presented to the Governor by the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly respectively in the same session of Parliament:

"Provided that, at any time when Parliament is not sitting, the Governor in Council may suspend any member of the court from his office for inability or misbehaviour, in which case a statement of the cause of suspension shall be laid before both Houses of Parliament within seven days after the commencement of the next session thereof.

"If any address shall, during that session, be presented to the Governor by the Legislative Council or Legislative Assembly, praying for the restoration of the suspended member to his office, he shall be restored accordingly; but if no such address shall be presented, the Governor in Council may confirm such suspension and declare the office of the member to be vacant, and the same shall be vacant accordingly."

Judges were not dealt with exactly in the same way, but section 15 of the Constitution Act of 1857, relating to the removal of judges from office provided that—

"The commissions of the present judges of the Supreme Court of the said Colony and of all future judges thereof shall be continued and remain in full force during their good behaviour, notwithstanding the demise of Her Majesty (whom may God long preserve) or of her heirs and successors, any law usage or practice to the contrary thereof in anywise notwithstanding."

Section 16 provided—

"It shall be lawful nevertheless for Her Majesty, her heirs, or successors to remove any such judge or judges upon the address of both Houses of the Legislature of this colony."

And section 9 of the Supreme Court Act of 1857 provided—

"Provided always that it shall be lawful for Her Majesty, her heirs, and successors to remove any such judge or judges upon the address of both Houses of the Legislature."

For an officer in the position of the Commissioner for Railways, it was not reasonable to expect that one Chamber of the Legislature should have the right to say whether his suspension should be confirmed or not. If the Commissioner for Railways—whoever he might be—was liable to be removed from

[Hon. W. T. Paget.

office on the vote of the Legislative Assembly only, might it not lead him to do things which he otherwise would not do?

Hon. R. PHILIP: It would make him a politician.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The whole of the Railways Acts of the State tended in the direction of removing all political influence in the working of the railways of the State. He regretted he could not accept the amendment, and hoped the Committee would reject it.

Mr. GILDAY (*Ithaca*): The amendment was a very reasonable one, and it was to be regretted that the Minister could not accept it. The so-called "corner party" recognised that the time had arrived when something should be done with another place, and the least they could do was to support the amendment, but he was not surprised at the member for Wide Bay shepherding the old parochial system that existed at the present time. That hon. member saw fit to bring in the recent strike that took place in Brisbane, and he foreshadowed something because he recognised that after the next election the Labour party would be on the Government side of the House, and he wanted to safeguard the interests that he was supposed to look after. He wanted to have the other House there to do the work that the Tories expected them to do. If the Labour party had been in power two or three years ago, there was not the slightest doubt that Major Cahill would not have done what he did—(hear, hear!)—as there was absolutely no justification for his actions, and he would have still occupied the position of Commissioner of Police. That was what the hon. member had in his mind, and it showed what he thought about the people of Queensland, and particularly the people of Brisbane. There was absolutely nothing of the kind three years ago so far as the workers were concerned.

Mr. BOOKER: That is beside the question. That is not the argument; don't misrepresent.

Mr. GILDAY: The workers of Wide Bay would be the best judges of that, when the hon. member appealed to them at the next election. When an hon. member would stoop to the tactics adopted by the hon. member for Wide Bay, he was trying to sow disension amongst the people of Queensland. The Labour party believed that in a democratic country the representatives of the people should be the best judges as to whether the Commissioner should be suspended or not. Was it not a fact that men were no sooner rejected by the people than they were put in a position to veto the people's representatives? The time had arrived when the Legislative Assembly should be supreme in all matters, and he hoped the amendment would be carried.

Mr. GRANT (*Fitzroy*): As long as the system of two Chambers prevailed in the Legislature of Queensland, the other Chamber must have the same rights as the Assembly.

Mr. RYAN: They have no power over money Bills.

Mr. GRANT: Not over money Bills, but they had in everything else. If the Committee did not think the final right of suspending the Commissioner should rest

with the Governor in Council, and that an appeal should be made to Parliament, then the other Chamber should have a say in the matter.

Mr. MURPHY: This Bill could say that an appeal should be made to the Legislative Assembly only.

Mr. GRANT: He did not think that would be right. If they wanted to get rid of the other House, well and good; but they had an opportunity of doing it in another way. That clause was not exactly the same as the clauses in the Land Act. In the appointment of Land Court judges and the Auditor-General, it was provided that while the House was sitting the Governor in Council had the right to suspend, but in the Bill it was provided that on an address from both Houses the Commissioner might be suspended, so that his position was not so secure as that of the Auditor-General or members of the Land Court. If it was desired to remove the railways from political influence altogether, then they ought to place the Commissioner for Railways on exactly the same footing as the Auditor-General and judges of the Land Court.

Mr. ADAMSON (*Dockhampton*): He would support the amendment, and in doing so he was consistent with the policy of the Labour party, as they stood for the abolition of the Legislative Council altogether. He supported the amendment also because the Assembly only had to do with the appointment of the Commissioner for Railways. He did not know that the appointment of the Commissioner for Railways ever went before the Upper House, and if the appointment did not go before the Upper House, then the Assembly should be the one to deal with anything that might take place so far as his suspension was concerned. He would also like to remind the Committee that the Assembly dealt with all grievances in connection with the employees of the Government, and, after all, the Commissioner for Railways was an employee of the Government. He might be at the head of the Railway Department, but he was as much an employee of the House as any other railway employee, and he was not sure that it would not be a good thing if the appeal board could deal with the suspension of the Commissioner for Railways just as it dealt with the suspension of any other member of the railway staff. Very often they found that the Commissioner or one of his officers was the complainant in a case before the appeal board and the judge at the same time, and it was possible for them to get a case against some of the employees which was not got in the fairest way. As the Assembly voted the salary of the Commissioner, and decided all matters that had to do with finance, then that House alone should have the right to deal with the question of suspension. The Upper House was composed of men who were put there through privilege, and if the hon. member for Wide Bay thought that the Assembly was not going to do the fair thing in the position he had conjured up in his imagination, then the Labour party had just as much right to say that the Upper House would not do the fair thing as far as the employees were concerned—that they would be prejudiced in another direction. However, he did not think they should take that sort

of argument at all. If a case such as the hon. member had conjured up should occur, then the representatives of the people, and not the representatives of privilege, should have the opportunity of saying whether he should be dealt with or not. He held that this Chamber and not the Upper House was the one fitted to deal with the strike and Major Cahill, and the argument of the hon. member for Wide Bay was not well-considered.

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): The Minister had said that he did not think it right that one Chamber should have the right to suspend or reinstate a Commissioner, but, at any rate, the clause really gave one Chamber the right to reinstate him. It certainly did not say that one House could suspend him, because both Houses had to agree in confirming the suspension; but, if there was a disagreement between the two Houses, the effect was that one House would have the right to reinstate him, because in that event the suspension was not confirmed, and he went back to his occupation. He certainly thought that that was not a power which should exist, any more than that there should be a power in one Chamber to dismiss. They had two Houses at the present time; and, whilst the two Houses existed, they had to recognise the Upper House as part of the Parliament of Queensland. The amendment, he thought, had been moved simply because the Opposition did not approve of the Upper House and they wanted to deprive them of any power that they might have now. He had suggested last night that in the event of a deadlock between the Houses, there should be some way of bringing the two Houses together, but it did not meet with the approval of the leader of the Opposition because he was opposed to the Upper House for party reasons.

Mr. FIDDELLY: The farmers' party are, too.

Mr. MORGAN: The farmers' party believed in an elective Chamber. But whilst they had the present Houses, both should get consideration. Whilst he did not propose to support the amendment, he thought it was wrong to let the opportunity go by of providing some way out in the event of a deadlock, as was provided in other States.

Hon. R. PHILP: That is all provided for in an Act passed seven or eight years ago.

Mr. MORGAN: It was provided then that in the event of a deadlock between the two Houses, the case went to the people, but a deadlock like that would not bring about an appeal to the people. That was the only provision of which he could think like what the hon. member for Townsville suggested. He thought it was much easier in the event of a deadlock that both Houses should meet together and decide the question.

Mr. FIDDELLY: Is your party represented in the Upper House?

Mr. MORGAN: That might be a matter of opinion. He certainly thought that the farmers were not represented in the Upper House, and that they would never be represented there while it remained a nominee Chamber.

The bell indicated that portion of the hon. member's time had expired.

Mr. THEODORE (*Chillagoe*): It was quite evident that the hon. member for Murilla was labouring under a delusion. The hon. member for Townsville thought that there

*Mr. Theodore.]*

was a remedy. He suggested that there was machinery already provided for this case. But the restoration to office of the Commissioner did not involve the passage of a Bill. It only involved the passage of a resolution, and there was no provision in the Referendum Act for the submission of a resolution to the people. In the event of that House passing a resolution supporting the Ministry in the suspension of a Commissioner, and the Upper House passing a resolution favouring his restoration to office, then the Commissioner was restored to office. There was no deadlock; there was no further business for either House to consider. The Commissioner went back in spite of the Ministry and in spite of that House. Personally, he objected to the tone adopted by the hon. member for Wide Bay on the several occasions he had spoken on matters involving the Upper House. He seemed to have no confidence in members elected by the people, but reposed all his confidence of fair play and straight dealing for high public officials in the members of a Council nominated by the Governor in Council, or by the Government. He thought that was a wrong attitude to adopt, and that they could repose full confidence in the members of this House no matter what party might be in power. He did not think there was any necessity for hon. members to belittle their own capability, or the possibility of giving a fair deal to any public servant who might be criticised. He thought that the amendment was one that might be accepted as giving the Government power to control the State Treasury. It might be that the Commissioner might not advance sufficiently with the requirements of the times, or the policy of the Government, and in cases like that why should not the whole of the representative body of the Legislative Assembly finally prevail? Why should a Commissioner, who might not be in accord with the policy of the people, be sheltered behind a conservative Upper House?

Mr. PAYNE (*Mitchell*): The Minister argued that because they had two Houses of Parliament it was necessary that both should deal with the suspension of a Commissioner. It had already been pointed out that the Legislative Assembly had everything to do with the Commissioner in New South Wales, and for the life of him he could not understand why it should not be so in Queensland. He thought every hon. member who had spoken against the amendment was a business man, or was supposed to have a business turn of mind, and would any of them like to have to employ a man, find the money to pay him, and then, if he did not suit him, have an outside body have a say in whether he should discharge him or not? (Hear, hear!) That was the whole thing in a nutshell, and he thought the least thing the House should do was to carry on the business of the country on strictly business lines. This House had all to do with arranging the salary of the Commissioner, and he did not see why a Chamber which did not represent the people should have a say as to whether he should be dealt with. As he said last night, he did not think a Commissioner worth the name would object to the passage of the amendment; he would not want to be sheltered behind anybody.

HON. R. PHILP (*Townsville*) hoped that the Commissioner would not be interfered with. A Bill containing the clauses they were discussing was passed specially to take

the position of the Commissioner out of the hands of the Ministry of the day. At one time a man could not get into the railway service unless he was born in Ipswich. Members were getting their friends into the railway service, and the Government of the day made up their mind that all that patronage should cease, and that three men should be appointed who were entrenched from the influence of either side of the House. The hon. member for Chillagoe wanted the Commissioner to be a politician, and do as they did in America—every election meant that the “ins” went in, and the “outs” went out. They did not want that in Queensland. They wanted men who would do their duty safely entrenched from both political parties. Let him remind hon. members that the Labour party established a bank and appointed a man for a certain number of years who could not be interfered with by anybody, no matter what he did. They wanted a man free from the influence of either side. He thought they had a man of that sort now, and no Government would appoint a man whom they did not know something about. They had two Houses of Parliament, and this House could do nothing by itself. The hon. member for Rockhampton talked about the Assembly passing the Estimates, but it should be remembered that no Bill could become law until it was passed

[4.30 p.m.] by both Houses, and that being the case, they should recognise the position of the Council in the Legislature of the State. We did not want the American system introduced in Queensland. If a Commissioner was appointed, he should be so entrenched so as to be free from political influence. If he held office at the will of the majority of one House, then he would be a politician. The present Commissioner had risen from the ranks, and more power to him.

Mr. RYAN: No one is saying anything about him.

HON. R. PHILP: At all events, members opposite wanted to have the power to dispense with his services if they thought it necessary.

Mr. RYAN: This House.

HON. R. PHILP: What was the majority of the House but the Ministry of the day? If the hon. member for Barcoo ever came over to that side of the House he would be supported by a majority of members. A man occupying such an important position as that of Commissioner for Railways, who had sometimes to deal with properties worth £20,000,000, should be strongly entrenched in his position and entirely free from political influence. While it was a proper thing to establish safeguards with regard to the construction of railways, the Commissioner should be untrammelled in his administration of the details of the department, and should not be influenced by the fear that a vote of the majority of the House would remove him from office.

Mr. FIELLY (*Paddington*): The ideas of the hon. member who had just resumed his seat belonged to a very remote age. The very thing that the hon. member accused the leader of the Opposition of, he had also accused the Premier and Minister for Public Instruction of, and there was no one more bitter on those occasions than the hon. member for Townsville. Now they found the hon. member going back to water-worn ideas which belonged to the age of the dodo. If they followed out the argument of the hon.

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member, then they would say that every Under Secretary in the service, and even the Clerk of the Assembly, should have an absolutely free hand, otherwise they would drift back to the old Tammany administration. What was the Tammany administration of Queensland a few years back? When the hon. member for Townsville was Premier, they had the brother-in-law industry, and a brother-in-law was appointed inspector of totalisators at a salary of £800 per year.

Hon. R. PHILP: Quite untrue.

Mr. FIDELLY: They had also the dredge scandal. The other day a dredge was sold for a song, and it cost a quarter of a million. Then they had the tank engine scandal.

Hon. R. PHILP rose to a point of order. The statement of the hon. member that some brother-in-law of his was appointed as an inspector at £800 a year was quite untrue. It was also untrue that a dredge cost half a million of money.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member for Paddington must accept the hon. member's statement.

Mr. FIDELLY: Quite so. He thought it was Mr. Foxton's brother-in-law who was appointed totalisator inspector.

The CHAIRMAN: That has nothing to do with the amendment.

Mr. FIDELLY: Very well; getting away from the hon. member for Townsville, he would at once say that he was in favour of the amendment. They did not want the Upper House interfering in these matters. The Assembly was not "the Lower House"; it was the intelligent House, and when it decided upon a certain line of procedure in connection with any public servant, that should be enough for all purposes. The hon. member for Wide Bay made reference to Major Cahill, and what hon. members of the Opposition had said in regard to that officer. The most scurvy trick that was ever played on a public servant was played by hon. members opposite on Major Cahill when he was recommended for an increase of salary as a reward for services rendered.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. FIDELLY: The two cases were on all-fours. The House decided at the time not to give Major Cahill an increase of £100 a year.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not see what that has to do with the amendment.

Mr. FIDELLY: He was dealing with the financial part of the question. The Assembly controlled the finances. The other House could not interfere with a money Bill, and if the Assembly had passed Major Cahill's increase of salary, he would have received it. The same principle should apply in the matter under discussion; they should wipe out the Legislative Council in this matter, and leave it entirely to the Assembly. He trusted that the representative of the Government in the other place would not insert advertisements in the newspapers asking for a quorum, but that the members of that Chamber would conduct their business in a dignified way and form a quorum without being invited to do so by advertisement.

Mr. LENNON: From the remarks of the hon. member for Townsville it might be inferred that the Opposition had something against the present Commissioner.

Hon. R. PHILP: I did not say so.

Mr. LENNON: The hon. member did not say so, but he said that the present Commissioner had worked his way up to the top from the position of guard, and more power to him. That remark would lead people to infer that some attack had been made on the present Commissioner. There had been nothing of the sort. He knew the present Commissioner nearly as well as the hon. member for Townsville knew him, and had every confidence in him as Commissioner for Railways. The amendment was not aimed at him, but was aimed at a principle. They wanted to alter the method of dealing with a Commissioner who did not give satisfaction. The present Commissioner had given full satisfaction, but the time might come when the gentleman holding that office would not give satisfaction. That time might be next year or next month, and the Secretary for Railways might think fit to suspend the Commissioner. In that case, under the clause as it stood, the matter would be submitted to both the Assembly and the Council. The Assembly might, by an overwhelming majority—might unanimously—uphold the Minister in his action, and the other House might, by a very narrow majority, disagree with the Assembly, and the result would be that the Commissioner for Railways would continue in office. Was that a proper state of things? Knowing the temper of the present Ministry, particularly that of the Minister for Railways, he was quite certain that, in such circumstances, they would immediately send in their resignations. It would be observed that the Deputy Commissioner for Railways, who was appointed for a period of seven years, in certain circumstances performed the duties and functions of the Commissioner. The Commissioner might suffer from a prolonged illness. At the present time he was absent from the State, and had been absent for some months, and the Deputy Commissioner had been doing all his work. Why did they not hedge round the Deputy Commissioner with the same safeguards as were provided for the Commissioner? Hon. members opposite spoke of the amendment as if hon. members of the Opposition had started out to do some terrible injustice to men in the public service. He was sure that nothing of the sort had ever occurred to hon. members on that side of the House, and that their sense of justice was just as keen and as true as that of members supporting the Government. The hon. member for Wide Bay and other hon. members on that side thought it a proper thing to hurl innuendoes at the Commissioner. The Labour party ought not to submit to that kind of thing; certainly he, for one, would not submit to it without protest. They claimed that the amendment would be a good departure from the proposal in the Bill. No Minister for Railways had found it necessary up to the present to go so far as to suspend a Commissioner for Railways, but the time might come when it would be found necessary to do that.

The bell indicated that a portion of the hon. member's time had expired.

Mr. LENNON: It would be a very unpleasant duty for a Minister to have to suspend a man who had the handling of so much money and discharged such important duties as the Commissioner for Railways. Hon. members opposite quite forgot that the Cook Ministry went up into the Northern Territory and discharged many of the permanent public servants there with-

*Mr. Lennon.]*

out rhyme or reason, simply out of political prejudice and spite. Hon. members opposite were measuring the corn of the Opposition by their own bushel, and they thought that the Opposition would do as they would do. But he ventured to say that the Opposition would not do as hon. members on the other side would do.

Mr. BOWMAN (*Fortitude Valley*) supported the amendment. The difficulty he saw in connection with the clause was the possibility of a difference arising between this Chamber and the other. The present Commissioner was one of the best men they had had, and was endeavouring to do his best for the community as a whole, and any remarks he made would not apply to him, nor did he think that any remarks which had been made by any hon. members on this side would apply to him. (Hear, hear!) He could imagine that a Minister might be in power with a Commissioner who would adopt the same rôle which had been recently adopted by the Commissioners in New South Wales, where they came into conflict with the Government of the day. If this House were unanimous in upholding the suspension by the Governor in Council of the Commissioner for wrongdoing, there was no certainty that he would have any satisfaction, if there were a majority in the other House to uphold his conduct as against the action of this Chamber. He thought the hon. member for Townsville was altogether wrong in his criticism regarding the hon. member for Chillagoe, who he did not think desired that this Chamber should revert to the old system which the hon. member for Townsville referred to as obtaining in the railway service long ago. He was glad the Commissioner had been removed from any political power to interfere with him; that he held office subject to good conduct, and that this House, as well as the other Chamber, had to ultimately deal with him. If a man was doing his duty, he did not think it mattered what political party was in power—whether Liberal or Labour—as neither party would do anything unjust to any man who they believed had done the right thing. He was quite prepared to trust the present and future Assemblies of Queensland with the final say, when a man had been suspended for something which was not in accordance with the wishes of the Government of the day, as to whether he should be reinstated or not.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted (*Mr. Larcombe's amendment*) stand part of the clause—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 35.

Mr. Allen	Mr. Grayson
.. Appel	.. Gunn
.. Archer	.. Hodge
.. Barnes, G. P.	.. Luke
.. Barnes, W. H.	.. Mackay
.. Bebbington	.. Mackintosh
.. Bell	.. Morgan
.. Blair	.. Parrot
.. Booker	.. Petrie
.. Bridges	.. Philp
.. Caine	Lieut.-Col. Rankin
.. Corser, B. H.	Mr. Roberts
.. Corser, E. B. C.	.. Somerset
.. Crawford	.. Swayne
.. Cribb	.. Tolmie
.. Denham	.. Vowles
.. Forsyth	.. Welsby
.. Grant	

Tellers: Mr. Bell and Mr. B. H. Corser.

[*Mr. Lennon.*

NOES, 23.

Mr. Adamson	Mr. Kirwan
.. Barber	.. Land
.. Bertram	.. Larcombe
.. Bowman	.. Lennon
.. Fihelly	.. McCormack
.. Foley	.. Murphy
.. Gilday	.. O'Sullivan
.. Gillies	.. Payne
.. Hamilton	.. Ryan
.. Hardacre	.. Theodore
.. Hunter	.. Winstanley
.. Huxham	

Tellers: Mr. Larcombe and Mr. Gillies.

PAIR.

Aye—Mr. White. No—Mr. Coyne.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 11 and 12 put and passed.

On clause 13—"Deputy Commissioner"—

Mr. GRANT: This was a new provision by which the Deputy Commissioner was appointed for seven years, to assist the Commissioner, and receive the salary appointed by Parliament, but there was no power for the Commissioner to dispense with him. They were fortunate at the present time in having a very good Deputy Commissioner, but it might happen at some future time that the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner might be at loggerheads, and the Commissioner would have no power to dispense with the Deputy Commissioner, because he was appointed by a power outside himself. He did not think it was a particularly good position.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS thought the hon. member for Fitzroy had misapprehended the addition to the clause. The Deputy Commissioner for Railways had not been under the direct control of the Commissioner, and, therefore, the Deputy Commissioner had always been appointed by the Governor in Council. It was considered, in view of the responsibilities he must take, in case the Commissioner was absent through illness, or in the event of death, to be reasonable that an officer holding such a responsible position should have an appointment for some specific time up to seven years.

Mr. FIEHELLY thought the hon. member for Fitzroy had made a rather good point. The Deputy Commissioner must assist in general management and supervision of the railways, and could not possibly be removed, as he had a seven years' tenure of office. How was the Minister going to get over that? Suppose the Deputy Commissioner had some disagreement with the Commissioner, and there was trouble in the office? There was nothing to say that the Deputy Commissioner must take instruction from the Commissioner, but the Deputy Commissioner was secure in his place for seven years. There were practically two Commissioners, but one was senior and could direct and control the other, but he could not sack him. A peculiar position might arise. The Commissioner could order the Deputy Commissioner to go out and wheel a barrow on the platform—(laughter)—but he could not sack him if he refused to do it. He hoped the Minister would give some further consideration

[5 p.m.] to this clause, and either have a senior and a junior Commissioner, or else a Commissioner without a

Deputy Commissioner. He did not know that the office of Deputy Commissioner was required, as there was no deputy to the present Commissioner. At present they had an Acting Commissioner, and he did not know that there had been any big loss while Mr. Evans had been away.

Mr. GRANT did not think that the Minister for Railways had made it any more clear why the Deputy Commissioner should be independent of the Commissioner for Railways. There was another aspect of the question, and that was that the Committee now had a good opportunity of providing for decentralisation, such as the appointment of a deputy commissioner at Rockhampton and another deputy commissioner at Townsville, both responsible to the Commissioner. At the present time the officers in the Centre and North had to report everything to Brisbane—practically everything was subordinate to Brisbane control. It would conduce to the easier working of the railway systems if a deputy commissioner were appointed at Rockhampton and another at Townsville, as they would be on the spot, and many a thing had to be done in a hurried manner.

Mr. MURPHY: Have they not got traffic managers at those places?

Mr. GRANT: They had traffic managers who had extended powers, but they had not sufficient powers at the present time, and it was desirable that they should be given more power. With the object of providing for decentralisation, he moved that after the word "Deputy," on line 27, the words "Commissioners to be stationed at Rockhampton and Townsville" be inserted. Although he moved the amendment in that way, he did not altogether approve of the term of seven years, because, as the hon. member for Paddington pointed out, the Commissioner for Railways ought to have control over all the officers under him. At present they had three officers who were quite independent of the Commissioner's control, and there might be a disagreement between them and the chief officer, which would certainly not be conducive to the efficient working of the railways.

Hon. R. PHILP: When the second reading of the Bill was going through he mentioned that he would move in the direction of the amendment, so as to have the railways decentralised more than they were at the present time. He knew from many years' experience in Townsville that if they wanted an extra truck or a passenger train at that place a telegram must first of all be sent to Brisbane. That was carrying the thing too far. All the time Mr. Evans was in charge there he was always talking about how little power he had and contended that he ought to have more power. He quite agreed with Mr. Evans that the Traffic Manager in Townsville ought to have the full management of all the Northern railways. He had spoken on the matter last year and this year too, and now that a concrete proposal had been made, he would certainly support it. In any business of any extent which had branches in North Queensland they allowed the manager to carry out the details of the work. Even the manager of a bank had certain powers, but the man in charge of the railways had no power at all. The railway system in North Queensland was a very large one, and all railway matters ought to be carried out promptly. Sometimes a delay might mean an accident or loss of

considerable business, and the time had come when they should decentralise the railway systems as much as possible. They had done so in connection with the Real Property Office, as it was possible at present to transfer a deed in either Rockhampton or Townsville, which at one time could not be done. Decentralisation had also taken place in connection with other matters, and he hoped the Government would see their way to accept the amendment, as it would save the Minister a good deal and save the Commissioner a good deal, and tend to the efficiency of the service generally.

Mr. FHELLY: It seemed to him that some hon. members had an idea that by appointing a public officer at a big salary it meant increased efficiency. They had an illustration of that in connection with the Railway Department. Recently several high officials in the Railway Department had their designations altered, and they were told by the Minister in all seriousness that that meant increased efficiency. The thing was absurd. He could not see what difference a mere alteration in the designation would make.

Mr. GRANT: It is not the designation. It is the appointment of an officer on the spot to deal with all matters.

Mr. FHELLY: Why not give the traffic managers at those centres more powers without putting them on the plane of a deputy commissioner and appointing them for a term of seven years with a big salary? The officers in Rockhampton and Townsville could be given extended powers, so that it would be unnecessary to wire to Brisbane for an extra truck. It was absurd to think that the calling of a man a deputy commissioner would prevent a wire having to be sent to Brisbane for an extra truck. If the Minister, as a Northern man who was supposed to have a fair knowledge of railway matters, thought it was necessary for the efficient working of the Northern system to have more decentralisation, he could do it with a signature. He could do the same for the Centre; and, if he could not, the Commissioner could. The amendment might be a good thing, but it was quite unnecessary for the Committee to deal with it as it was a matter of administration.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He could not agree that it was necessary for the efficient carrying on of the work of the Northern and Central railways that they should have deputy commissioners at those places. He was quite aware that when Mr. Evans was in charge at Townsville some years ago he was in favour of being made deputy commissioner, but it was now possible for the Traffic Manager at Townsville to put on an extra truck without consulting Brisbane. He could assure hon. members that the very fullest powers in the way of decentralisation had been put in the hands of the Traffic Manager, Mechanical Engineer, and Resident Engineer in both the Central and Northern districts, and there was not the slightest occasion for the Traffic Manager to refer any such matters to Brisbane. As a matter of fact they had power to expend up to £20 or £30 without any reference to Brisbane. A deputy commissioner, as deputy commissioner in Townsville, could not say whether £10,000 or £15,000 should be spent on a particular line. Even if a deputy commissioner were appointed, he could not do any more work than was at present done by the Traffic

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Manager. He could not fix rates and fares, as they must be fixed by the Governor in Council, and with respect to the general working of the traffic on the railways, the responsible officers in those particular districts, and in Cairns as well, had the fullest powers. Why, even in Mackay district, which had a very small railway system, the Traffic Manager had the fullest powers in connection with the running of the necessary traffic.

Mr. HUNTER (*Maranoa*) did not feel disposed to support the amendment, although it seemed to him that there was need for some revision. He failed to see that the appointment of a highly-paid officer—because that was what would happen if they had a deputy commissioner at Townsville and at Rockhampton—would lead to greater efficiency. It would only lead to more expense. The fact that the Minister did not agree with the hon. member for Townsville, who at one time was Minister for Railways, and did not agree with the hon. member for Fitzroy, who also had been a Minister of the Crown, showed that there was need for further information for the rest of the Committee who knew nothing about the internal workings of the railways. If they could not agree upon the point, it was clear that the House needed more advice than they had at present. He thought that just proved the need for a Royal Commission, as had already been suggested. Before they spent more money they should know what they were going to spend it upon. He was inclined to think that our railways were rather expensively manned, and there was not that efficiency which there should be, and he would be more satisfied if more light was given to the Committee on this very big and important department. However, on the information of which they were in possession, he failed to see how they could support the amendment. Personally, he believed that a commissioner and a deputy commissioner, who had power to delegate authority to traffic managers—

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: And who are constantly travelling.

Mr. HUNTER: When one was in Brisbane, the other could travel over the whole of the system. There were two commissioners, and large powers were given to the traffic managers in the North and Centre, and, to his mind, if the department was properly worked and organised, there was absolutely no need for any further appointment. He was opposed to the amendment on broad business lines.

Mr. E. B. C. CORSER (*Maryborough*) could not support the amendment. He failed to see that it would be good business to do away with the Deputy Commissioner in Brisbane. He understood that the amendment meant that there would be one deputy in Rockhampton and one in Townsville, and only the Commissioner in Brisbane. He thought it was absolutely necessary that a business concern such as the Railway Department was—where something like £35,000,000 or £40,000,000 were invested—should have a commissioner and a deputy commissioner in close touch with one another. If there was any necessity for additional powers to be given to the traffic managers in Townsville or Rockhampton, by all means let them have them, if they were suitable men to give them to. Doubtless they were men who would be selected as deputy commissioners if such appointments were made,

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and if they could be trusted as deputy commissioners, then, as traffic managers with extended powers, they should be equally trustworthy. He failed to see that it would be a good business proposition to do with less than one commissioner and a deputy commissioner in Brisbane.

The PREMIER: Hon. members would remember that at one time there were three commissioners in Brisbane. Business was not at all active, and for that reason, and others into which it is needless to inquire, the number was reduced to one. Then it was found that the work was becoming too great for one man—and that man was a master of his craft, the late Mr. Thallon. (Hear, hear!) The duties were burdensome, and did not give him the opportunity to look into matters of policy and administrative details of the railways. Therefore it was decided that he should have help, and a deputy commissioner was appointed. And clearly in the interests of the State there should be a deputy at headquarters to enable the Commissioner to have more freedom to travel. He did not think there could be any manner of doubt as to the wisdom of having a deputy in the South.

Mr. LENNON: They generally travel together.

The PREMIER: Very rarely, indeed. One was a specialist in traffic, and the other was their old chief engineer, so that they were just the type of men who should be in charge of affairs. He did not think it was necessary to have a deputy in Townsville and a deputy in Rockhampton, and he thought that they could not argue by analogy that the same principle would be adopted by a firm or a bank. There was no manager of a bank in Townsville or Rockhampton who would take upon himself certain responsibilities. They all had their limitations. He had been requested in Townsville that a deputy commissioner should be appointed. Of course, it would add something to the kudos of the city, and, therefore, would mean greater expenditure, but it would not increase the efficiency one iota. There was a fixed policy which was controlled by the Commissioner, and his instructions could be carried out by officers in charge. There were three in Townsville, the chief of the locomotive branch, the engineer in charge of maintenance, and the general traffic manager, and they had absolute and full control over their staffs and in the expenditure of money voted by Parliament. If a special train was required for the conveyance of stock or anything else in the ordinary way of business, they undertook it. But if there was something extraordinary, they had to refer to Brisbane, and if it was extraordinary there could be no harm in the necessary delay. There was no doubt that the appointment of such deputy commissioners would add to the charges of the department. If it correspondingly benefited the efficiency, there would be compensation, but so far as one could learn from association with the department, there was nothing to demonstrate that the appointment of a deputy at £1,500 a year would secure great efficiency.

Mr. GRANT: No salary was mentioned.

The PREMIER: Well then, "a rose was just as sweet by any other name." Call the Traffic Manager, Deputy Commissioner.

Mr. GRANT: Give them the power.

The PREMIER: They had full power to carry on the traffic of the department. They did not refer to Brisbane except in the matter of policy, or new expenditure of loan money. It seemed to him that under existing arrangements as effective a decentralisation as was practicable under the present conditions had been secured. Some day, when separation came about, they could have a full-blown Commissioner and a deputy too, if they wanted it.

HON. R. PHILP: He knew something about Townsville and North Queensland, and the Premier did not, and he knew that there were managers and inspectors of banks living in Townsville and Rockhampton and Bowen with the very fullest powers.

The PREMIER: No man has the full power of the head office.

HON. R. PHILP: He never for one moment thought that the deputy should control the railway policy, or the rates either, but they wanted a man with sufficient power to carry on the business of North Queensland, which he had not at the present time. Only the other day an arrangement was made, not by the man in Townsville, but by a Brisbane man, giving one port preference over another. He could assure the Premier that there had been a lot of dissatisfaction about the matters being managed not by the Commissioner, but by a junior clerk, who was controlling the men on the railways in the North and the Centre of Queensland. No man, or no bank carrying on such an enormous business as the Railway Department, should have everything settled in Brisbane. At one time, Mr. Thallon was appointed Deputy Commissioner in Townsville, and the reason why the three Commissioners were reduced to one was because they could not agree. Had those three men been living in Rockhampton, Townsville, and Brisbane respectively, the chances were they would be most efficient, and would be there still, but they all lived in Brisbane unfortunately, and they travelled about together. He supposed, too, that there was about as much doing in Townsville at the present time as there was in the whole of Queensland when they appointed those men. He had no wish to create highly-paid positions, and when they were going through the Estimates he could show where they could dispense with highly-paid men, and very likely they would do it. He believed the man in charge was a competent man, but they should give him ample power to carry on the detail work of the people in the North.

Mr. FOLEY (*Mundingburra*): Notwithstanding what the Minister and the Premier had said, he knew from the men themselves that they had not the power.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: What men?

Mr. FOLEY: the traffic managers themselves.

The PREMIER: What does he lack?

Mr. FOLEY: He lacked power to do many things. He knew of one instance in which he had to refer to Brisbane, and he was told by a young man who used to be in his office at one time that unless he altered the thing as the young fellow wanted it, he could not recommend it to the Commissioner. That was a complaint made by the Traffic Manager himself, and the present Commissioner had told him when he was Traffic Manager that he did not have the full powers he wanted. The people were crying

out for more power to be given to the officers in the North—that everything had to be done through Brisbane. He did not care whether the amendment was carried in the terms that deputy commissioners should be appointed, but he did demand that the men in charge at Rockhampton and Townsville should have power to conduct their part of the railway business in their own way, of course, always subject to the Commissioner. Very often traffic managers squirmed under the regulations they were compelled to carry out,

and when members asked that [5.30 p.m.] deputy commissioners should be appointed it was with the hope that whoever was appointed to such positions in the Northern and Central divisions would be clothed with all the necessary powers. He had brought this matter up more than once, and had been told by the Minister that the Traffic Manager had all the power necessary; yet they found from the traffic managers themselves that they had no power. Indeed, traffic managers, as well as the general public, had complained that they had not sufficient power to enable them to carry out their business in the interests of the people for whom the railways were run.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He regretted that he had not with him the papers relating to the decentralisation scheme which had been brought about by the present Commissioner in regard to both Rockhampton and Townsville. He had given an assurance to hon. members that the officers in those particular centres had the fullest powers to deal with all general traffic on their respective railways. It had been stated that the Traffic Manager at Townsville had not been able to run a special passenger train. It was quite true that he was not able to run the train under certain conditions. The General Traffic Manager at Townsville was continually running special trains for various purposes under the specified rates and fares, but he could not impose special rates and fares, as all rates and fares had to be approved by the Governor in Council. The only train that Mr. Brown, the Traffic Manager at Townsville, did not run, was a special passenger train which was asked for under exceptional conditions, involving differential rates.

Hon. R. PHILP: They only asked to be given the same rates as are charged in the South.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: When special rates were asked for, they must be agreed to by the Commissioner. No special treatment was meted out to the South with respect to special passenger trains. The instance he referred to was the only one on which the General Traffic Manager at Townsville had to wire to Brisbane. There was no occasion whatever for the Traffic Manager at Townsville or Rockhampton to communicate with Brisbane on general matters of administration in their particular departments.

Mr. ARCHER (*Normanby*): The discussion on the amendment would probably clear up points upon which many members were uninformed. From their experience in dealing with railway matters, they were under the impression that most of the things concerning the convenience of their constituents along railway lines had to be referred to Brisbane. That might be an erroneous impression, and might be due to the fact that members usually went to the head office in

*Mr. Archer.]*

order to lay the wants and wishes of their constituents before the department. He supposed the department referred the matter to the local officer, though the answer members received came from Brisbane. That created in their minds the impression that everything had to be referred to Brisbane, even small details concerning conveniences at a railway station.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They are referred to the local officer.

Mr. ARCHER: He should like the Minister to say definitely whether the ultimate decision rested with the General Traffic Manager, or with the local officer?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There is no occasion for the Traffic Manager at Rockhampton to refer to Brisbane on traffic matters.

Mr. ARCHER: He had power to settle all traffic matters?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Except those matters I mentioned.

Mr. ARCHER: Then, he understood that as long as it did not involve the expenditure of a lot of money the Traffic Manager could deal with traffic matters. He was very glad they had that assurance from the Minister, and thought the discussion which had taken place would serve a useful purpose.

Mr. KIRWAN (*Brisbane*): The debate on this matter had been very interesting. It appeared that the whole trouble was that the powers at present vested in the general traffic managers at Rockhampton and Townsville, were not sufficient, and it had been suggested that the difficulty could be got over, and more effective administration secured, by the appointment of deputy commissioners. He objected to that proposal on the score of expense. The Minister had assured the Committee that additional powers had been given to the general traffic managers in order that they might be better able to deal with matters in their respective districts, which their personal knowledge and experience enabled them to deal with in a much better way than they could be dealt with by the head office. The trouble was that practical men like the general traffic managers had often to submit to men in the office who had had no experience in traffic. He did not say that those men were not qualified in other respects, but simply that they had no experience in traffic matters. If Mr. Brown was fit to be General Traffic Manager at Townsville, and Mr. Chambers was fit to be General Traffic Manager at Rockhampton, then they should have the responsibility and powers of those positions, and should be responsible to the Commissioner only. If he found that they blundered in their administration, or misused public funds, or failed to take proper care of railway property, then he should dismiss, or reduce, or disrate them, and appoint to their positions persons who could carry out the duties. Some of the statements made by hon. members that afternoon were a surprise to him. Certainly, the Minister ought to make full inquiries and ascertain whether it was a fact that an office boy, as stated by the hon. member for Townsville, in the Commissioner's office could run the General Traffic Manager's business at Townsville. If that was a fact, it would be a standing disgrace to the department, but he was inclined to doubt the statement.

Mr. ADAMSON: He was going to support the amendment, in the first place, because he believed it would be a step towards

[*Mr. Archer.*

decentralisation, and, in the second place, because he believed it would be a step towards the more efficient management of the railways in those different centres. He held that increased powers should be given to traffic managers, and that many matters for which they were now required to get the sanction of the head office in Brisbane should be dealt with in Rockhampton. If application was made for a concession, it should not be necessary to write to Brisbane about it. The traffic manager in Rockhampton or Townsville should have power to arrange for a special train without reference to Brisbane. Not many years ago a serious inquiry was made because a certain traffic manager wanted to manage a district in regard to trucks and other matters in the way that he thought was best in the interest of the district, and he had to pay for that inquiry, which was not altogether as equitable as it might have been. The traffic manager ought to know what trucks he wanted, and how those trucks should be arranged and used, and should not be interfered with by Brisbane officials in such matters, unless he was doing something which was exceedingly wrong. He did not think that any traffic manager wanted to do what was wrong, but rather to do the best he could for the district under his control. Then there were often things that the traffic manager in Rockhampton should be able to grant which could only be granted in Brisbane, such as, for instance, the matter of trucking yards. There had been a request to have them at Nanking Junction for eight or nine months before they were able to get them. They were asking for trucking yards at the show-grounds at Rockhampton now, and the matter had been going on for about six months. The plans were before the department, but because the plans of the Alton Downs Railway had not been approved of by this House they could not even get the siding into the show-ground with trucking yards, so that they might sell the cattle there. The present trucking grounds at Rockhampton were a disgrace and dangerous to both men and beast, and it was a wonder that there had not been some people killed before now. If the traffic manager had increased power, or a deputy commissioner was appointed with the powers necessary, these things could be attended to more rapidly and expeditiously, and there would be greater efficiency throughout the Railway Department. He would like the Premier to tell them when they were going to get separation, because they would then have their own traffic manager and be able to pass the railways which they wanted in the Central district. They had been told how many railways have been constructed in the Central, Southern, and Northern districts, and that per head of population they had had all they ought to get. If they were only to get railways on the per head of population basis all the way through, the Southern and Northern districts would always be far ahead of the Central district. They felt that decentralisation was a good thing, and it would tend to increase efficiency in the working of the railways. Many things would be more promptly attended to than they were at present if they had had a deputy commissioner, or the traffic manager was given increased power. He was going to support the amendment.

Mr. GRANT was sorry that the two railway experts, the Minister for Railways and the hon. member for North Brisbane, should

oppose this amendment, but the lines on which it had been moved was not in regard to giving extra salaries and increasing the expenditure of the department, but to make the department more efficient. Mr. Chambers, the Traffic Manager in Rockhampton—who, he might say, was an excellent officer and one of the best traffic managers they had ever had in that district—had not the powers which he should have. All they wanted was that the officer in charge there should have power to manage the railway business of the district, which was now a very large one. The mileage in the Central district was much greater now than it was when there were three Commissioners in Brisbane. Let them consider the mileage which had been added in the last ten years. It wanted a man there to look after the whole business, and not to have to refer things down to Brisbane. He could give many instances where matters had to be referred to Brisbane.

Mr. FIDELLY: What did you do when you were a Minister?

Mr. GRANT: Each Minister was responsible for his own department. When he was there, there was a certain amount of decentralisation carried out, but not enough, in his opinion. They ought to go further, and put each railway system almost on its own, so that there would be uniformity in the working. Each officer in charge should be responsible for the working of his district. In that case, they would not carry people 397 miles for £5 10s. in one part, and 327 miles for £2 10s. in another, which was hardly the right thing for a terminal port. He remembered an instance where a quotation was asked for in connection with a certain consignment from an inland town to Port Alma. The traffic manager could not give any quotation until he had referred the matter to Brisbane, and the business might have been lost while waiting for an answer from Brisbane. The man on the spot should be able to give a quotation, and arrange special rates if the traffic required it. He hoped the Minister would reconsider this matter.

Mr. G. P. BARNES (*Warwick*): As far as the Darling Downs was concerned, the outstanding feature in connection with railway administration since the appointment of the present Commissioner had been the way in which the business of the department had been decentralised. He knew that vast powers had been given to the Traffic Manager at Toowoomba, and the Deputy Traffic Manager at Warwick, and they were enjoying facilities in the direction of arrangements for traffic that were altogether unknown in the years gone by. It struck him that the Commissioner had laid himself out to accommodate the general increase in the traffic in the various centres of Queensland. His own experience, which was fairly considerable with regard to traffic, was that the latitude allowed to traffic managers to-day was very different to what they enjoyed in the past. If the powers enjoyed by the officers in Rockhampton was not as great as was necessary, they should be enlarged, and there should be no necessity to refer matters of minor importance to the Commissioner at a distance.

Mr. LENNON: The hon. member for Warwick thought that because they had larger powers in Toowoomba and Warwick that that was no reason why the same powers should not be given to Townsville and

also Rockhampton. Toowoomba could communicate with the Commissioner by telephone, but they could not communicate from Townsville by telephone. For many years there was a strong feeling upon the part of the people in Townsville to have a deputy commissioner appointed to administer the affairs of the Railway Department in that centre, and the Government went so far as to appoint one, and had a house erected. They sent up an officer from the Railway Department, who was there for several weeks, but he supposed that some sinister Southern influence operated, as the deputy commissioner was never appointed. That was eighteen or twenty years ago, and they could imagine the wonderful extension in North Queensland since then. Railways had gone to Cloncurry, Friesland, and other places in the neighbourhood of Cloncurry. The railway was now going on to Mount Cuthbert, and later on would go to Mount Oxide, and probably to Burketown or some other Gulf port. It was absurd to think that one man should be charged with the administration of railways extending 1,500 miles from the seat of Government. The amendment ought to commend itself to the Committee, if they could only shake themselves free of Southern prejudice. There had been a feeling that anything was good enough for the North, and that had brought about the desire for separation, as was mentioned by the hon. member for Townsville. When they got separation, they would not have to thank the Premier for it, because he had shown himself strongly opposed to it on every occasion that it had been discussed. All they asked was that the local officer—call him what they might—should have the power of administering the railway affairs of that particular section of the State without reference to Brisbane. Had they not a local Supreme Court both in Townsville and Rockhampton? It had also been pointed out that there was large commercial and banking institutions giving to their Townsville representatives practically unlimited power, and he hoped that hon. members opposite would consider the amendment free from Southern bias.

Mr. THEODORE: A suggestion had been made by certain hon. members that the object of the amendment could be accomplished by giving additional powers to those who were acting as heads of the department in the several places mentioned, and that if the district Traffic Managers in Townsville and Rockhampton were given the additional powers necessary for the control of traffic, it would meet the case. They knew the Railway Department had already made arrangements in the Engineering Department.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: And the Traffic.

Mr. THEODORE: Yes; but certainly in the engineering branch. They had delegated greater powers in Townsville than those officers previously held, but the hon. member for Townsville was under the impression that they had not yet sufficient power. He knew that it was felt up to a little while ago that the necessity of referring trifling matters to Brisbane was most irritating. If that had been remedied, the position would have been partly met. Possibly greater powers could be delegated to the traffic managers without any danger to our railway system.

*Mr. Theodore*]

Mr. HARDACRE (*Leichhardt*): Whilst he recognised that this was not the best place to deal with the question of decentralisation, he was inclined to agree with the spirit of the amendment. Some years ago there was a change in the administration of the department giving greater powers to the different traffic managers, locomotive foremen, and district engineers in the various districts, yet

as a matter of practice there had [7 p.m.] been little, if any, alteration.

As a matter of fact, at the present time if anyone wanted even the grievance of a railway lengthsman rectified, instead of going to the maintenance inspector in the Central district, they had to go right down to the Maintenance Department in Brisbane. If they wanted a little extra water supply created, or even a wicket gate, or a small siding, the final decision was arrived at in Brisbane. In order to try and get more decentralisation in the Railway Department he would vote for the amendment. The question had been raised as to the Commissioner having power to appoint general traffic managers, and other high officials. Instead of the sole power of appointing those officials being left to the Commissioner as a matter of administration, the appointment of those officials should be made by the House, and their powers specifically laid down in the Bill. If that were done, the officers would know what was expected of them, and by that method they might be able to get more decentralisation.

Mr. RYAN: The idea of the amendment was a good one. It had been held that the Traffic Manager in the Central district had not the necessary power to carry out the duties that ought to be entrusted to him without reference to Brisbane, and if the Government were determined to have a majority against the amendment, a definite undertaking should be given that if those powers were not held—

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have already stated they have the power.

Mr. RYAN: That was so, but they were not exercised.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Why don't they exercise them?

Mr. RYAN: That was the fault of the department.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No; it is the fault of the officers if they do not exercise their powers.

Mr. RYAN: If it was their fault, then it should be pointed out by the Commissioner, but he thought the officers, not only in the Central district but in other districts also, were thoroughly competent to carry out their duties. (Hear, hear!) The Minister might go further than he had gone and say that he would go into the matter and see for himself that those officers had the powers that those who came in contact with them thought they should have. The hon. member for Fitzroy, and various other hon. members, had expressed the view that they had not sufficient power with regard to local matters, and it was the duty of the Minister to see that they had those powers. There was one other point to which he would like to refer. As far as he could read the clause, the security of tenure of office of the Deputy Commissioner was greater than that of the Commissioner under the clause. In the Act

[*Mr. Hardacre.*

of 1896 the Deputy Commissioner was appointed by the Governor in Council and held office during pleasure, while under this clause he held office for such period as he was appointed, not exceeding seven years. If he was appointed for seven years, the Governor in Council had no power to remove him. He was a fixture independent of Parliament and independent of the Governor in Council, so that if he were dismissed it would be wrongful dismissal, which would immediately give him the right of action against the Government, and he at once got damages to the amount of the loss of salary.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He would not be dismissed without good cause.

Mr. RYAN: It did not matter what the cause was, if he was dismissed he had the right to sue the Government for damages. With regard to the Commissioner, there was power given for his removal provided that removal was agreed to by both Houses of Parliament, but that was not so with the Deputy Commissioner, and that amendment ought to be made. If the Deputy Commissioner were appointed during pleasure the Governor in Council always had the power to remove him when they thought fit, and he hoped the Minister would consider that aspect of the question.

Mr. FHELLEY trusted the Minister would give some assurance on the matter before the Committee passed the clause. As a matter of fact, the question of appointing deputy commissioners at Rockhampton and Townsville had quite overshadowed the real issue in the clause, and the Committee should have some statement from the Minister as to the Ministerial attitude on that particular aspect of the matter. As the leader of the Opposition pointed out, if a deputy commissioner were appointed he could not be dismissed and could not be interfered with for seven years. They had the machinery for fixing up the Commissioner but not in regard to the Deputy Commissioner.

Mr. ARCHER: There was one point on which he was not quite clear in regard to the powers of the general traffic managers. The Minister had told them that the traffic managers had very wide powers. Had they power in regard to certain expenditure, such as the putting in of a gate or the extension of a shed, or the putting in of a door at the back of a shed for the sake of convenience, or had everything of that sort to be referred to Brisbane? As far as he knew at present, it had to be referred to Brisbane, and that was the reason the amendment providing for a deputy commissioner had been moved. If a deputy commissioner were appointed at the various centres, a certain amount of money could be allotted to the various districts for disposal by the deputy commissioners, which would meet the case.

Mr. MAY believed that a certain sum of money should be placed at the disposal of the deputy commissioners in the North, Central, and Southern divisions of the State, who should have power given to them to carry out the improvements required by the different districts. If there were small things in the North and Central districts which were required to be done, they had to come to Brisbane and go through a certain amount of red tape. The officers in those districts should have more power, and there should



not be all the circumlocution which at present existed over every little pettifoggish matter. When the present Commissioner, Mr. Evans, was in the North, they had far better administration than they had now. He thought they should have a deputy in the North if they put the right man in the right place, but there was the danger that if they got a good man the Government would think he was capable of running the whole State. There was no doubt that they had the best system, and the smartest running of all the three divisions in the State in the North; and, in fact, when Mr. Evans came down to Brisbane, he brought a lot of Northern men to help him run the railways.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: With respect to the point as to whether it was possible to suspend or dismiss the Deputy Commissioner during the term of his appointment, he was advised that the question of the appointment for a term of years was a matter of contract, and that the Deputy Commissioner could be suspended or dismissed for incompetence or misbehaviour. They certainly could insert a proviso to that effect, but the Parliamentary Draftsman told him there was no occasion for such a proviso, because the power already existed with the Governor in Council.

Mr. RYAN: You will agree to have a proviso?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Parliamentary Draftsman says it is not necessary.

Mr. RYAN: I do not agree with him.

Mr. PAYNE: He did not know whether it was necessary to appoint deputy commissioners in the North and Centre, but he was satisfied that the traffic managers required more power. If the Traffic Manager had full power, he would never allow second-class carriages to travel on the mail train from Rockhampton to Longreach, a distance of 434 miles, carrying women and children, without a lavatory. When Mr. McGrath was traffic manager, he told him he could not help it because he had no more carriages there. Then, again, if the Deputy Commissioner had power even to recommend that some improvements should be made at such centres as Longreach, where the station was quite insufficient, the present condition of things would not be allowed to continue. He was satisfied that the officials had not the power which the Minister had told the Committee existed, because those officials recognised just as much as anybody else the great inconveniences that were caused to the general public by such things as the travelling of those second-class carriages. He had put that particular matter before the Commissioner here on several occasions. He did not know what had taken place now, but only last year, when he was in his electorate, there was one second-class carriage on a train doing that run of nineteen or twenty hours without any conveniences, and the stoppages in that run would be about three. He did not think that was a good thing.

Mr. HARDACRE was rather disappointed because the Minister did not make some statement as to what he intended to do to give the traffic managers extra powers in practice. He hoped, at any rate, that he would promise to make some inquiry into the matter. Had the general traffic man-

agers in the Central and Northern districts power to expend money without the sanction of the department down here?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They have not power to expend loan moneys; that rests with the Minister.

Mr. HARDACRE: But did the officers have power to expend any sum otherwise than by sending the proposal down to headquarters and getting the necessary authority?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have already said that certain small expenditures are within the power of local officers.

Mr. HARDACRE: It would be necessary to make those powers really live powers. He thought the Committee ought to know just where they were. It was not good to have general statements. Suppose that a work costing £1,000 was required in the Central division in the Maintenance Branch, would the head of that branch in the Central district undertake to do that work without asking for authority?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No.

Mr. HARDACRE: Then, as a matter of fact, they had not the powers which they had been told they had. For instance, there was a request from Alpha for permission to build a small siding costing only about £120, but power could not be given until that was referred to Brisbane.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Of course, that is from loan money.

Mr. HARDACRE: Now they were getting to know what was the nature of the powers which the officers had, but unless they got real power they should always be having these telegrams back and forth which, he ventured to say, cost almost thousands of pounds annually.

The PREMIER: It was perfectly correct that the House voted certain sums of money. Those lump sums were made up of certain specific amounts, and if district officers were permitted to spend them as the hon. member had just desired—£120 on this siding—would he limit it to one siding only?

Mr. HARDACRE: No.

The PREMIER: Then there would be no kind of control on the expenditure, and the House for some years past had been very emphatic as to how much loan moneys they should expend. The local officials had power to spend money up to a limited sum without reference to the department, but neither the traffic nor the public were incommoded if proposals for expenditure of loan money had to be submitted to the head office. So far as the traffic was concerned, the traffic managers had a perfectly free hand. The Minister had repeatedly stated that, so far as special trains were concerned, the Traffic Manager could arrange for as many as were asked for, unless the request were of an exceptional nature, so far as fares and conditions were concerned. Then it was essential that he should communicate with Brisbane. They had not made much progress so far. There were many clauses in the Bill, and he did not think they wanted to sit there until Christmas. He did not. He would like to see the House adjourn the first week in December, twenty-two weeks from when they started, which was the longest time a session had ever occupied. But they would have to protract the session until Christmas,

*Hon. D. F. Denham.*]

or have extra sitting days, if they were going to spend as many hours over clauses as they had over clauses such as this. He would ask hon. members to consult their own convenience in the de-patch of business by being a little less verbose on what may be called small issues. Of course, if they were going on in this way, he would simply ask for extra sitting days, but he did not think that anybody wanted it.

Mr. GRANT: He did not know that this was a frivolous matter. Might not the session be brought to a close at the time desired if more important Bills than the present were brought up, and the time occupied with them? Most of the present Bill was already law.

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted (*Mr. Grant's amendment*) stand part of the clause—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 19.	
Mr. Adamson	Mr. Lennon
.. Archer	.. May
.. Booker	.. O'Sullivan
.. Crawford	.. Payne
.. Foley	.. Philp
.. Grant	.. Ryan
.. Hamilton	.. Theodore
.. Hardacre	.. Vowles
.. Land	.. Welby
.. Larcombe	

Tellers: Mr. Adamson and Mr. Archer.

NOES, 42.	
Mr. Allan	Mr. Gunn
.. Appel	.. Hodge
.. Barber	.. Hunter
.. Barnes, G. P.	.. Huxham
.. Barnes, W. H.	.. Kirwan
.. Bobbington	.. Luke
.. Eell	.. Mackay
.. Bertram	.. McCormack
.. Blair	.. Morgan
.. Bouchard	.. Murphy
.. Bowman	.. Paget
.. Bridges	.. Petrie
.. Guine	Lieut.-Col. Rankin
.. Corser, B. H.	Mr. Roberts
.. Corser, E. B. C.	.. Somerset
.. Cribb	.. Stevens
.. Denham	.. Swayne
.. Filhelly	.. Tolmie
.. Forsyth	.. Trout
.. Gillies	.. White
.. Grayson	.. Winstanley

Tellers: Mr. Bertram and Mr. Huxham.

PAIR.

Aye—Mr. Coyne. No—Mr. Mackintosh.

Resolved in the negative.

Mr. FOLEY: Provision was made in the Bill for the appointment of a Commissioner, and for his suspension or dismissal subject to the approval of both Houses of Parliament. Provision was also made for the appointment of a Deputy Commissioner, but no provision was made for the suspension or dismissal of that officer. No one appeared to have any power to suspend or dismiss him for anything he might do. That being the case, he thought the clause should be amended to provide for those things, and he therefore moved that on line 28, after the word "years," there be inserted the following words:—

"The Deputy Commissioner shall at any time during the term of his appointment be subject to suspension or removal from office by the Governor in Council on the grounds of incompetency or misconduct."

In proposing this amendment, he wished

[*Hon. D. F. Denham.*]

it to be distinctly understood that he was not in any way reflecting on the conduct or ability of the gentleman who at present held the office of Deputy Commissioner, and who it was generally recognised was a real good man for the office. But, as they were passing a consolidated measure, which would probably be in force for many years, and which would possibly cover the appointment of several gentlemen to the office of Deputy Commissioner, he thought it just as well that they should safeguard the interests of the State and the Railway Department by putting such a provision in the Bill. The Minister would be well advised if he accepted the amendment, as the Government would not then be bound to keep in office for several years a Deputy Commissioner who was incompetent or had misconducted himself.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS:

He had already stated that the Parliamentary Draftsman advised him that the Governor had this power now, as the appointment of a Deputy Commissioner for a certain number of years would be a matter of contract, and if the Deputy Commissioner was incompetent or misbehaved himself, the Governor in Council would have power to suspend or dismiss him. Personally, he had not the slightest objection to the amendment being inserted, as, in his opinion, it was like a chip in porridge—it did neither good nor harm.

Mr. THEODORE: What the Minister had said might be correct, but he did not know, as he had not the legal knowledge to enable him to express an opinion on the point. But it was not only lawyers who would read the Bill, and they wanted to put in something which a layman could understand.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I stated that I would accept the proviso.

Mr. THEODORE: He thought the Minister was wise in accepting it.

Mr. HARDACRE: If they put this amendment in the Bill would it make any difference? (Laughter.) He understood the Minister to say that an appointment for a certain number of years was a contract, and that whether this provision was in the clause or not, the Governor in Council would have power to dismiss the Deputy Commissioner.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Or suspend him, for certain reasons.

Mr. HARDACRE: Even if they did dismiss the Deputy Commissioner they would still have to continue paying him. What he would like to do was to get something in the Bill to provide that if sufficient reason was found to dismiss him, he should not continue to receive payment.

Mr. RYAN: The Minister had confined himself to saying that he accepted the amendment. He did not wish to enter into a long argument as to whether the Governor in Council had the power which the Minister had been advised they had.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is advice I must take. I am not a legal man.

Mr. RYAN: It was advice with which he did not agree, but, if it was correct, he would like to ask the Minister why in the case of the Commissioner, who was appointed in the

same way as the Deputy Commissioner, it was necessary to have a clause saying that he might be suspended from his office by the Governor in Council.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He is a scheduled officer, and an officer of Parliament, and the Deputy Commissioner is not.

Mr. RYAN: That did not make the slightest difference. However, as the amendment had been accepted, it was unnecessary for him to argue the matter, but if the Minister desired to get his Bill through it would be sometimes better to simply say he accepted the amendment, without giving a lecture to the Committee, when he knew the source from which the amendment had emanated; otherwise he would have the matter discussed.

Amendment agreed to; and clauses, as amended, put and passed.

Clauses 14 and 15 put and passed.

On clause 16—"Monthly conference of Commissioner, Deputy, and heads of branches"—

Mr. BOKER moved as a consequential amendment the insertion, on line 49 of "Engineering" in lieu of "Construction, Maintenance," with the view of reintroducing in the following clause the system of the management of the department of the construction and maintenance of the railways by a chief engineer. The late chief engineer was Mr. Bell. Under present conditions there were two engineers, one controlling the construction branch, and the other the maintenance branch. They each occupied an equal position, and to him there appeared to be a difficulty in defining the duties of each. In connection with the guarantee system, it had been contended with regard to the estimate which was submitted to the House as to the cost of a railway, that when the railway was completed it was sometimes found to have cost £30,000 or £40,000 more than the estimate, and the guarantors had to carry the burden. With a divided authority it was difficult to know where one engineer's duties finished, and the other engineer's duties began, and in the interests of everybody concerned it would be better to have one sole authority. Under Mr. Bell, the work of the department was very creditable—not to say that it was not so now—but it would be much more satisfactory to have one responsible head. There seemed to be a tendency in the Railway Department, both in the engineering and traffic branches, to divide the authority. Whether it was a good thing or not remained to be seen, but there was a great deal of discussion going on in the country as to divided authority.

\* Mr. ARCHER said that to deal with the proposed amendment in this clause, one had to refer to the amendment which it was intended to propose in clause 17, as the amendment in this clause was supplementary to a further amendment which it was proposed to move in that clause to the effect that they should go back to the original Act, which laid it down that the Commissioner should appoint a chief engineer for railways, and such other officers as he might find necessary. The grounds on which he supported the proposal were these: It had taken over thirty years to build up the very fine system and organisation of the

engineering branch in connection with our railways, and in that time they had had such able men as Mr. Stanley, who for about twenty years was perfecting the system and organisation of railway engineering in Queensland. He was followed by Mr. Pagan, who was an exceedingly able man, who was in turn succeeded by Mr. Bell. The result of having a chief engineer for railways through all these years had been to build up a very fine department based on system and organisation. It seemed to him to be a retrograde movement to cut off the head of that department; and not only retrograde in regard to one of the most important departments of our railways, that of construction and also maintenance, but it was removing the incentive for men of ability in the engineering profession to go into the service of the Queensland Railway Engineering Department. It was reducing the status of the department and removing the legitimate ambition of every engineering cadet who was induced to go into the department in the hope of securing the blue ribbon of the service. It was taking away the incentive that existed in every other department of attaining to the head of the department. There was another point. They had seen that recently the control of all our engineering had been removed from one chief engineer, and that there was now a maintenance engineer in the various districts quite independent of the Chief Engineer. Then, they had the engineer in charge of construction, who had nothing to say as to the maintenance part of it. One man was responsible for the construction of our engineering works in regard to railways, and when he had finished the construction, another man had to take the responsibility of maintaining the work that someone else had constructed. He did not think that was a sound position. This was not an argument for centralisation at all. Perhaps it might be said that a short time ago they were arguing for decentralisation, and that now they were arguing for centralisation, but that was not so. In regard to running our railways, where it was a matter of local concern it was one thing to have decentralisation, but in regard to the work of professional railway engineering it was desirable that the construction and maintenance of all our railways in Queensland should be under one supreme head, so that the same system in regard to these matters could be followed out; otherwise there would be a double system in connection with our railway engineering, which was one of the most important departments in the development of Queensland. He sincerely hoped that the Minister would be able to accept the amendment.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS pointed out that the clause was passed by the Committee last year in its present form, but since that time a change had

[8 p.m.] come about in the engineering branch of the department, as Mr. Bell, who was then chief engineer, had accepted the position of head of the Railway Department of the Commonwealth. The Commissioner for Railways, for quite a long time past, had been desirous of splitting up the work of the construction and maintenance of opened lines in Queensland, and it was thought that when Mr. Bell went to the Commonwealth an excellent opportunity offered to carry out the views of the Railway

*Hon. W. T. Paget.*]

Commissioner in that direction. The minute the Commissioner made at the time was as follows:—

"With reference to the appointment of Mr. Norris G. Bell as Engineer in Chief of the Commonwealth Railways, which appointment creates vacant the position of Chief Engineer of the Queensland Railways, I am firmly of opinion that the time has now arrived when a division should be made of the duties pertaining to the office of Chief Engineer. Our railways now total 4,730 miles of open line, and in addition there are twelve new railways under construction, and seven lines authorised but not yet started, and these mean a total mileage of 1,839 miles; besides these we have several large station works in hand, and duplications being made. I do not consider that one officer can efficiently control both the maintenance and construction works, and therefore have decided not to appoint a chief engineer for railways, but to divide the duties as follows, viz. :—

*"Construction of Railways.*

"Mr. R. E. Sexton, Deputy Chief Engineer, to be appointed Engineer in Charge of Construction Works at a salary of £900 per annum.

*"Maintenance of Open Lines.*

"Two Maintenance Engineers to be appointed, one in charge of the Maintenance of the Southern and Central Division, embracing all lines south of Mackay; the other in charge of all railways in the Northern Division, i.e., Mackay Railway and lines north thereof, with office in Townsville.

"Mr. A. C. Raff, District Engineer, Brisbane, to be appointed Engineer in Charge of Maintenance, Southern and Central Division, at a salary of £750 per annum.

"Mr. C. E. Quinlan, Maintenance Engineer, Townsville, to be Engineer in Charge of Maintenance, Northern Division, at a salary of £700 per annum with quarters.

"Both these officers will communicate direct with the Commissioner, and all district engineers in their respective divisions will be under their control.

"The title of Maintenance Engineer, Central Division, to be altered to that of District Engineer.

"These appointments to date from 1st April, 1914."

Certainly section 48 of the Act of 1888 provided that the Commissioner should appoint and employ such chief and other engineers, officers, clerks, and employees to assist in the execution of the Act as he thought necessary, while subclause (2) of clause 17 read—

"The Commissioner shall appoint and employ such officers, clerks, and other employees to assist in the execution of this Act as he thinks necessary."

The reason that that wording was put in the Bill was to simplify matters.

Mr. FOLEY: Does that provide for the appointment of a chief engineer?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The wording in subclause (2) of clause 17

[*Hon. W. T. Paget.*

could embrace a chief engineer and any other officer, but the Parliamentary Draftsman thought it advisable to have the clause worded as in the Bill in order to simplify the working of the department. It was the Commissioner's desire right along the line to separate the work of construction from that of maintenance, as he thought it would lead to more efficient supervision. That was the sole reason for the alteration, and he must say that personally he was rather disappointed that one of the blue ribbons of the service was practically taken away, but, of course, he did not desire to interfere with the Commissioner's decision. The Commissioner at present was out of the State, and it was rather difficult to make any alteration until his return, and it might be advisable to leave the matter as it was, and when the Commissioner returned to the State he (Mr. Paget) would lay the views of the Committee before him.

Mr. E. B. C. CORSER: Last year, when the Bill was before the Committee, there was no reference made to the clause, because no member had the slightest idea that there was any intention of doing away with the Chief Engineer. From his knowledge of the railway service, and from information he had gained from railway men with vast experience, he considered it would be a fatal error to do away with the position of Chief Engineer. If they had two people in charge of the same job, the result would not be satisfactory. If they had a Chief Engineer in charge of construction and maintenance he would get the work done in such a way that there would be little maintenance required for many years to come, and that would be much more in the interests of the man on the land, who had to foot the bill under the guarantee. The position of Chief Engineer was the blue ribbon of the service, and was an incentive for the men, and yet it was proposed to take it away after they had had it for thirty or forty years. Just because the Commissioner found fault with the system, they wanted to take it away, but he thought Parliament should say whether the methods of the past should be changed or not. He supported the amendment because it was in the interests of the community as a whole.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Hon. members had referred to the divided control of the Construction Engineer and Maintenance Engineer, and it had been stated that the Construction Engineer might leave the line in not quite the perfect manner that he should, and the Maintenance Engineer would have to put it right. He pointed out that, after handing a line over for traffic, the Construction Engineer had to maintain the line for four months. That was carrying on the system that prevailed when railways were built by contract, when the contractor had to maintain the lines for six months before handing it over. For some reason the period was altered to four months.

Mr. FORSYTH (*Murrumba*): This was a very important question. They all felt that in Mr. Bell they had a most excellent officer. He was a man whom everyone admired, and he did his work well and to the satisfaction of the whole service. Now that a change had been made, it should be left to the experts of the department to say what was the best thing to do to carry on the work. Now that the railways of Queensland had increased to such an extent, if they had one

man in charge of the maintenance and construction work, together with supervision over the various railways, it would be a very big thing. It would be far better to spread the work amongst two or three officers. At present they had Messrs. Sexton and Raff as engineers in the South and Mr. Quinlan in the North, and they were all very good men. It would be much better to divide the work up so that each man could become an expert in his own particular department. When a man devoted his whole time to maintenance work, he would become a much better man than one who had to do other work besides the maintenance. It was just the same in a private business. A business man would start in a small way at first with one man in charge, but, as his business increased, he would have to break it up into different departments, with a man in charge of each. They knew that Mr. Bell was drawing £1,000 a year and was increased to £1,250 a year. There was no reason why Messrs. Sexton, Raff, and Quinlan should remain at £900, £750, and £700, because, if their responsibilities increased, their salaries should be increased accordingly. If the Commissioner for Railways thought it was better to divide the work so as to get more satisfactory conditions, then they should agree with his recommendation.

Mr. MURPHY: We want to know who is the head.

Mr. FORSYTH: Mr. Sexton was the head man.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. FORSYTH: When Mr. Bell was Chief Engineer he had to consult the Railway Commissioner, and he presumed that Messrs. Sexton, Raff, and Quinlan would also consult the Railway Commissioner on any matters connected with their departments, so what was the difference? They all consulted the Commissioner and were guided by his advice. Looking at it from a business point of view, it was better to have a man at the head of each department. That was the sole reason why he approved of the policy of having the department split up. They had always been talking of decentralisation, but some people seemed to think they should not decentralise in connection with a matter of this sort. He believed it was better to go on as they had been doing, so long as the heads of the department believed that by so doing they were likely to get better results than under one head.

Mr. ARCHER: The Minister informed them that the difference between the present system and that which formerly prevailed was that the Maintenance Engineer had now to report to the Commissioner instead of to a chief engineer. That was the very point where he thought the system was bad. The Commissioner was a most able man, but, although he reported that he considered there were too many railways for a chief engineer to look after, he himself had the whole of the railways of Queensland to look after. It was true that the present Deputy Commissioner was an engineer, but that might not always be the case; and, instead of the engineer in charge of maintenance reporting to an engineer who thoroughly understood all the technical details of the work, he would have to report to a Commissioner who, in most cases, was purely a traffic man. They were going to thrust more

responsibility on to the Commissioner in order to take a little off the Chief Engineer, whose particular work was engineering, and who knew every railway in Queensland. The hon. member for Murrumba spoke of heads of departments. It was quite true that they decentralised in a big business by having heads of departments. In the Engineering Branch they did decentralise, as they had district engineers; and he was sure that in the hon. member's own business he had a manager, and probably a managing director as well; so that, while he might decentralise in detail, he always had one head, and no business could be worked satisfactorily unless it was under one head. The arguments brought forward against having a chief engineer in charge of all railways did not appeal to him at all. So sure as that system was carried further, it would destroy the morale of the engineering department—one of the finest departments they had got. It was removing the blue ribbon of the service and cutting down its status altogether. Already it was felt by the best men that the service was not worth bothering about, and they were going elsewhere; and able young fellows who might otherwise go in for railway engineering with a view to working their way up in the service were not going to bother about entering a department when the blue ribbon of the service was removed, and when professional men could not rise, apparently, above £900 a year.

Mr. BOWMAN thought that the arguments advanced by the hon. member for Wide Bay and the hon. member for Normanby were on the right lines. Mr. Bell, the late Chief Engineer, bore the reputation of being one of the best engineers they had had, and earlier in the history of the department they had Mr. Stanley, who was practically drummed out of the department, and to-day was receiving a pension of £800 a year. Some of the officials of the Railway Department had told him that the system formerly carried out in Queensland had been admired in the Southern States, and Queensland ought to be proud that the Commonwealth had taken Mr. Bell from the Queensland service. It was a tribute to this State. He understood Mr. Sexton was a most capable engineer, and, when a man had striven to rise to the position of chief engineer, it was not fair that he should be deprived of the opportunity of doing so. The Minister read a minute left by the Commissioner, in which that officer stated that he thought it would be wise, after Mr. Bell left, to adopt the present system. He thought that was a reflection upon past chief engineers, because it was practically saying that the work could not be done as effectively by a chief engineer as under the system now prevailing. They should be guided by the experience of the past, and there had not been very much trouble in the engineering department in Queensland. Mr. Pagan was a competent engineer, and so was Mr. Bell, and Mr. Sexton naturally thought that he was going to step into the position of chief engineer. It was a grand idea that a man could start on the lower rungs of the ladder and work his way to the top. The present Commissioner started as a porter and had worked his way up to his present position; and what was good for the Commissioner should be good for other branches of the service. If it was a good thing to have a chief mechanical engineer at Ipswich in connection with the manufacture of rolling-stock, it was

an equally good thing to have a chief engineer in connection with the construction of their railways. He would support the amendment if it went to a vote.

Mr. ALLAN (*Kurilpa*) intended to support the amendment upon general principles. Anything he said had no personal reference to the present officers of the department, who, he believed, were men of the highest ability; but he thought it was a great mistake to centralise all the power in the hands of one individual. The Commissioner was a man who must have great administrative powers. He need not necessarily be an engineer. If he knew something of engineering it would be sufficient. But, as a general rule, the Railway Commissioner should be a great administrator, and if the final word in engineering work was to be had by a man who was not an expert, and who had to depend on the recommendation of subordinate engineers, who, if they were capable at all, would not be satisfied with such small salaries as the State would offer them, and would go elsewhere where their abilities were better understood, then they were following the policy which, in dealing with a capital of over £50,000,000, yearly increasing, was penny wise and pound foolish. He believed in appointing as chief engineer a man of the highest ability. He believed that the late engineer was underpaid, and that it would pay the State to get the highest possible ability and experience in its chief engineer, and put a certain amount of responsibility on him and not hang so much on one peg as they proposed to hang on the Commissioner.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN (*Kennedy*) was going to support the amendment. He thought it was only right to have a competent engineer at the head of the different engineering branches throughout the service. He was not giving his own opinion only, but that of a man with whom he was conversing recently, who understood railway construction and engineering, and a man in whom he had every confidence, who assured him that it was very foolish on the part of the Government to insist on the abolition of the position of chief engineer. He thought that by having one engineer over the whole of the engineering branches they would be practically ensuring their position. The Commissioner was a very able man in his position, but it was not to be expected that he should have the qualities that would enable him to do without a chief engineer. He thought it was a good idea that the Maintenance Branch should be kept separate from the Construction Branch, because then there was an assurance on the part of the maintenance officers that the construction would not be scamped in any way, and an assurance on the part of those who were going to take the railways over to run them that everything that was necessary for the proper building of the line had been done beforehand.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He listened very carefully to the expression of the views of members of the Committee, and, personally, he had no objection to the amendment at all. But, of course, it must be taken for granted that no appointment would be made until the Commissioner returned.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

[*Mr. Bowman.*]

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Commissioner made the arrangement immediately before he left, and he would not like it disturbed until he returned. He would also like to make it perfectly clear, that even if an appointment were made, if the amendment were carried, he could not vouch for their being any increases in salary this year.

Amendment agreed to; and clause, as amended, put and passed.

On clause 17—"Secretary and other employees"—

Mr. BOOKER moved an amendment to add, on line 7, the words "A chief engineer and," after the word "employ." The clause would then read—

"The Commissioner shall appoint and employ a chief engineer and such other officers and other employees to assist in the execution of this Act as he thinks necessary."

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. HUXHAM moved an amendment to add, after line 19, on page 6, the following words:—

"Provided that the salaries and wages paid shall be not less than those respectively paid in the district for work entailing similar duties and labour:

"Provided further that, in computing the value of salaries and wages for the purpose of the foregoing proviso, the equivalent value of the gratuities and privileges enjoyed by the employees shall be assessed and reckoned together with such salaries and wages."

He had very much pleasure in moving the amendment, and he thought the sting of the objection taken to it when moved last year would be taken out by the second proviso. It had been claimed in the past that the railway employees had received such privileges and advantages as were equivalent to a large sum of money, but there were similar advantages in private employment, and considering that they had awards by the Arbitration Court and decisions by the wages boards, which fixed wages in private employment, he thought that the same rates should apply to Government servants, including those in the Railway Department. He thought there could be no hesitation on the Minister's part to accept the amendment. It was only a fair thing. They were not asking from the Minister other than what was reasonable and fair for the men working under him, and if he wanted a contented service, it would be obtained by giving these wages, so that men would not look outside to get jobs at a higher rate. He thought the Railway Department, as well as other Government departments, should have the cream of our mechanics and other employees. Then, on the other hand, there were some disadvantages in the railway service. The casual men in the goods-sheds were paid for the time they worked, hour for hour, and in the service generally the men had to work their ninety-six hours a fortnight, and if they did not work ninety-six hours, they did not get the pay for ninety-six hours. All that was asked was that the men employed in the railway service should be put on a basis of equality, as far as pay was concerned, with those people who worked at the same kind of employment outside the department. A provision

of that kind would help to maintain a contented service, and he hoped the Minister would accept the amendment.

Mr. THEODORE: Surely the Minister was not going to allow this amendment to go without saying a word about it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No; I was looking up some information.

Mr. THEODORE: A somewhat similar amendment was moved by the same hon. member last year, and the chief argument used against it then was that the department could not be regarded as being on the same plane as a private employer, because the department gave certain privileges and rights to their employees which were not given by private employers. That objection was met by the second paragraph in the amendment, which provided that in computing the value of salaries and wages, gratuities and privileges should be taken into account, so that if in a particular district the current rate paid by private employers was, say, 10s. a day, and the Railway Department was paying something approaching 10s. a day, and the privileges enjoyed by the employees would bring the amount up to 10s., there could be no cause for complaint. Hon. members on both sides of the House had always claimed that the Government should be the model employer. It must be remembered that railway servants were deprived of access to the Industrial Court or a wages board if they had any grievance, no matter how definite or serious that grievance might be. Their salaries or wages depended solely upon the classification, which was arranged for them by the heads of the departments, with the approval of the Commissioner or Minister, and they simply had to take those salaries or leave the service. It was a large service, and to properly safeguard the men employed in the service as well as the interests of the community, it was right that Parliament should limit in the way suggested in the amendment the powers of the Commissioner. Unless such limitation was imposed on the Commissioner's powers, he could pay lower wages than were paid for the same class of work in any other industry, and there was no appeal allowed the employees. All they could do was to kick up a row and possibly be blackballed, or leave the service. He contended that this limit should be placed upon the power of the Commissioner, unless they gave the employees the right of appeal from classification. He challenged anyone to say that there were no cases in which men in the railway service were not receiving less than men performing similar duties outside the service. The amendment was eminently fair, and would not in any way interfere with the management of the Commissioner; he would still have power to make his classifications and promotions, but there would be a limit fixed beyond which he could not go—exactly the same sort of limit as was imposed on private employers when they authorised the fixing of a minimum wage.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: This amendment was discussed last year, and the Committee disapproved of it. He did not accept it last year, and he did not propose to accept the amendment this year. The conditions of employment by the Government were quite different from the conditions of employment by private individuals. With

the Commissioner for Railways all the employees worked under regulations which stipulated rates of wages which were approved of by the Governor in Council.

Mr. THEODORE: Those rates are sometimes below what are paid outside.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: As a matter of fact, in most districts the Railway Commissioner was the largest employer in that particular class of work, and, therefore, the rate that he paid was practically the ruling rate of wages.

Mr. FOLEY: And therefore he should show a good example.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He did show a good example, the proof of which was that there was never any lack of people who wished to get into the railway service. The question was, whether the department was to fix the wages and salaries in the Railway Department, or whether Parliament was to fix them. There should be no differentiation at all. At the beginning of the year there was a question of increasing the wages generally throughout the Railway Department, but particularly in connection with the railway workshops at Ipswich. Of course, it would apply all through the service, if any increases had been granted. Certain statements were made respecting the rates of wages paid in the department as against the rates of wages paid in outside shops, and the greatest difficulty was to find out what the wages of the outside shops were for the same class of work, as there were practically no industrial boards in that trade. The information which they gathered at that time showed that the Government were paying wages quite equal, at any rate, without privileges, to what were being paid outside. The Mechanical Engineers' Board for the South-Eastern Division had now awarded rates which were to come into operation on the 24th August. He could not vouch for the figures being correct, as they were only taken from a Press report of the award. He had had the following comparison made. The rate in the Ipswich workshops for fitters was 10s. 9d. The privileges were computed by the Chief Mechanical Engineer, who went into the question very fully, at 7.19d. per day to all employees in the Ipswich workshops. That made a total, for a forty-eight hours' week, of 11s. 4d. per day, or 1s. 5d. per hour. He found two reports of this award in the Press. One report said that 11s. a day was to be paid for a week of forty-four hours, and the other report—it seemed to him to be the official report—said that it was 11s. a day for a week of forty-eight hours. The turners were paid 10s. 9d., total 11s. 4d.; and the award was 11s. Millers were paid 10s. 9d., total 11s. 4d.; and the award was 11s. Blacksmiths 10s. 9d., total 11s. 4d.; and the award was 11s. Copper-smiths 10s. 9d., total 11s. 4d.; and the award was 11s. Grinders 9s., total 9s. 7d.; and the award was 11s.

Mr. HUXHAM: That is a difference of 1s. 6d.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: In that instance it was lower. He did not notice that hon. members had said anything about the great number of artisans and mechanics he had mentioned whose wages

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were higher than the award. Brassfinishers were paid 10s. 9d., total 11s. 4d.; and the award was 11s. Drillers 8s. 6d., total 9s. 1d.; and the award was 8s. 4d. in one report, and 10s. in the other. For apprentices, the minimum in the Ipswich workshops was 7s. 6d. per week, and the maximum £1 19s. per week, while under the award the minimum was 5s. 6d. per week and the maximum £1 13s. per week. The hon. member for Chillagoe said that he had taken the highest one in every case.

Mr. THEODORE: I did not say that.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: An exact comparison had been made which he had furnished to the Committee. In the Central district their men got 6d. a day more, and in the Northern division 1s. a day extra, and the Western allowances were 3d. to 1s. a day extra. Under the award, fitters on repairs got 1½d. per hour additional, and in the shops no additional payment. Under the award there was overtime on each day at time and a-half, and double time after midnight. Under the regulations, there was overtime after ninety-six hours per fortnight, at the rate of time and a-quarter, and time and a-half on Sundays. He did not think it would be advisable to embody in an Act of Parliament an amendment such as this, as the rates paid to employees were always subject to criticism of members of the House, if the particular Minister or the Governor in Council in whose hands it eventually went did not do what the House considered to be a fair thing.

Mr. McCORMACK said that the Minister had stated that certain concessions were given that made up for the difference in wages that were paid in some districts by private employers as compared with the Railway Department. If the amendment were accepted, the Commissioner for Railways would not have the difficulty that he had in

[9 p.m.] connection with railway construction. On several occasions when he was connected with the Australian Workers' Union he had trouble with the Commissioner for Railways, not because the Commissioner did not agree that an increased wage should be given in a certain district, but, as the Commissioner said, because he had no power to give a different rate of wage. In the Cloncurry district the Commissioner admitted that 11s. a day was a fair and reasonable wage for that district. Private employers were paying 11s. 6d. a day for similar work, but the Commissioner said he could not differentiate on account of the district system that the Railway Department provided. On that occasion the Commissioner gave 11s., and he really had to go behind an Act of Parliament to give a wage which he admitted was reasonable. The same thing occurred in the Mulligan district. The rate in North Queensland was 9s. a day.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We paid 10s.

Mr. McCORMACK: The department were breaking the regulations in paying 10s. The concessions referred to by the Minister were of very small account when looked into. In North Queensland a concession to travel over the railways was almost worthless, as it cost an employee £10 16s. to get to Gladstone before he could utilise the pass on the railway systems in Queensland and the Common-

wealth with the exception of that in North Queensland. No railway employee in Townsville or Cairns desired to go to Chillagoe for a holiday, and consequently the concession was of no importance to them. In the workshops an employee had to serve ten years before he was entitled to an interstate pass. Did the Minister consider that was a concession? Yet that employee was asked to accept less wages than private employers were paying in the district because of that concession. To argue that the railway employees, especially in North Queensland, should receive less wages because of these concessions, was ridiculous. There were other cases, too, in which railway employees were at a disadvantage as compared to private employees; for instance, carpenters in North Queensland had to find their own tools, while in the South most of the carpentering work was done in the shops and the tools provided. Then again, the carpenters in the Railway Department in North Queensland received less wages than the carpenters working for private employers. As to the question of holidays, the Minister would not allow holidays to accumulate. In the ninth year he might allow a few holidays to accumulate till the tenth year to enable an employee to take advantage of the concession, but during the first years of his service the holidays were not allowed to accumulate, and if an employee took advantage of the pass and travelled only 10 miles, he was not allowed to use the pass again for twelve months. The concessions should be done away with, and the department made to pay the same rate of wage as everybody else had to pay. If the Government did that, the railway employees would be on the same footing as every other State employee and there was no reason why they should not be on the same footing. They should get a fair rate of wage for the work they do, and should not be "diddled" out of extra wages for concessions that did not amount to any value at all. If the amendment were carried, it would certainly go a long way towards giving more justice to the railway employees in the back portions of the State. No doubt the employees of the department in the cities did make some use of their concessions, as they were able to travel to the sea-coast during their holidays, but that was not so in the case of employees in North Queensland. In New South Wales there was contract work in connection with railway construction, and an award was set out for contractors, and the State undertook to pay the same rate of wage fixed by the award for contractors. That could be done in Queensland, and that was all that was desired by the amendment—that the rate of wage paid by the State should be the rate ruling in the district. If that were done, it would do away with a certain amount of industrial trouble, especially in connection with construction work, because when a railway was started the men would know the rate of wage ruling in the district, and would not have the Minister continually evading the issue by saying he had no power to give the extra rate of wage.

Mr. LARCOMBE intended to support the amendment, as very good reasons had been advanced in favour of it. The Minister, in reply to the hon. member for Chillagoe, said that the proof that there was no necessity for the amendment was to be found in the fact that there was always plenty of men apply-

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ing for work in the service. That was no proof at all, because in all departments of life, both public and private, there was always an abundance of labour offering, notwithstanding the period of material progress that the State had been enjoying during the last decade. The other States had adopted a similar proposal, and he thought they could with advantage follow it in Queensland. It would do away with a good deal of the friction and industrial unrest which they had experienced in the past, and would lead to much happier and contented service than the department had known previously. They knew that the question of wages and conditions had been a prolific cause of trouble in the service previously, even when it had not culminated in a strike. The trouble in Townsville, for instance, had proved the necessity of some different method of dealing with the department's employees. He hoped the amendment would be accepted.

Mr. FIELLY supported the amendment, and referred hon. members to the speech he made earlier in the session in regard to the Northern railway strike. Railway men went out on strike labouring under grievances, and their bonâ fides were proven by the fact that the Minister promised to improve their conditions on the Estimates, which were now due. They had no reason given for the delay in the presentation of the Estimates this year. There were three factors in connection with the Railway Department that he would bring before the notice of the Committee. The first was that a railway was built not to open up country but to placate a politician, or body of politicians like the corner party, who held a big mallet over the Government. The second was a desire amongst the well-paid officials at the top of the department to make the railways pay from 3½ to 4 per cent. on the capital invested—the £33,000,000 which the Minister for Railways spoke so eloquently about at every function. The last thing thought of in connection with the railways was to give the working men a decent rate of wages. That question never came into the consideration of the people who governed this State. They certainly placated politicians and the men at the top of the tree in the service. The Deputy Commissioner was given a seven years' tenure of office, but the working man was not considered for one moment. What did the Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner care about a labourer getting 8s. or 9s. a day? The Commissioner was on a £2,000 a year job, with hours from 9 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., and he had no time for the working man. He simply wanted to make the railways pay from 3½ to 4 per cent. The Commissioner was prepared, and the Government was also prepared, to interfere with freights for the sake of the politicians. The politician not only got his railway under certain conditions which he wished afterwards to repudiate—he was referring now to the guaranteed line—but he also pulled the department in such a way as to get particular freights. The freights on the railway scarcely went up at all, whilst the shipping companies were sending up their freights from 10 to 50 per cent. That was a proof of the attitude of the department, the attitude of the Minister, and the attitude of the Commissioner. There were hundreds of railway workers in the Paddington electorate who simply eked out a bare existence. They paid the rent, the grocer, and the butcher. He was glad to see the

hon. member for Enoggera present, because he could tell him that, after these men had paid the butcher, there was nothing left for them. He did not know how the average railway working man lived on the wages the department gave him. The Minister said, "Let him leave if he is not satisfied." Men who were up in years, over thirty years of age, could not start out and carve out something fresh for themselves, because they had family responsibilities. He certainly could not understand why the young unmarried men remained in such a sweated department. The Minister contented himself merely with the policy of the department. The Minister had never busied himself with the welfare of the individuals. The Minister had under consideration the grievances of the men in the Mechanical Engineer's Branch in the North for the last two and a-half or three years, and he had not attempted to put them on the same terms as the private employer had placed his men in a similar district. They would not have gone out on strike in the North if the Minister had done that for the men. The State should be a model employer, and should set an example to the private employer. The State should not haggle and be cheese-paring over the men's wages. The Minister should not argue about giving the few pounds to the men. Why not give the men the right to refuse the concessions and take their equivalent in money? The butchers in Queensland said they could not sell their hides because there was no market for them, and they charged the consumer for it. Well, let the butchers give the hides to the consumers if there was no market for them. He would compare the position of the Queensland station-master with those in other States and with the officials at the head of the department. The aspirations and ideals of the men at the head of the Railway Department were looking out for £20 to £50 increases. These were the men that the hon. member for Townsville complained about. A country station-master in Queensland had to be a competent telegraphist. He had to do postal work. He had to work block instruments, do shunting work, look after the electric staff, work a single line, and remain on duty for twelve to eighteen hours. Could they expect good work from a man who had to work eighteen hours? The country station-master in Queensland started on a salary of £11 a month, or £132 a year. What a munificent wage for a man with a family! In Queensland there were five classes of station-masters, whose salaries ranged from £132 to £250 a year. Fifty-nine per cent. of these were on the lower scale, getting £132. That was a scandal. Only 16 per cent. received the highest wages. These figures were eloquent enough without him saying any more. In New South Wales the scale submitted by the wages board provided for six classes, beginning with £180 and rising to £435, and there were only 45 per cent. on the lowest rate. In Victoria there were eight classes, ranging from £150 to £350. In South Australia the salaries ranged from £150 to £325, and in Western Australia from £180 to £400. Twenty years ago a junior station-master in Queensland started at £110, and while the shipping freights had increased approximately 50 per cent. and the cost of meat had gone up 100 per cent., the wages of the station-masters had only gone up to the extent of £22 per annum. Right throughout the world they had examples of the big employers looking after

*Mr. Fihelly.]*

the interests and conditions of their employees. The Cadburys, the Rowntrees, and Lever Brothers, and all employers on a big scale improved the conditions of their employees, and made their lot happier and brighter by letting them have some of the sunshine of life. The Minister should busy himself with these things, and see that the State was a model employer, instead of turning first sods and opening new railway lines. The railway employees should get a fair deal, and be put in such positions that they could raise their families decently and honourably and give them a fair start afterwards in life.

Mr. FOLEY did not need to say that he was going to support the amendment, because it was what they had been looking for for a long time. The Railway Department should pay its employees the same wages that were paid to men doing the same class of work in the same locality. It was not long since he presented the Minister with a petition signed by over 1,200 railway employees who demanded higher wages. He had said in that Chamber before to-day that the department was a seething mass of discontent because of the fact that their wages were not equal to the wages paid to other men doing similar work in private employment. The Minister knew that the question had been brought up in that Chamber from time to time, but very little had been done by the authorities to remedy the grievances of the railway employees. The amendment was a reasonable one. Of course, the Minister met it with the old argument that the employees of the department got certain privileges in addition to their wages, but the men were prepared to do without those privileges, provided they could get the same wages as men in private employment. To men working on the railways in North Queensland or out West, the chance of a run on the railways after ten years' service was not very much of a privilege. The members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers working in the Railway Department in Townsville were on strike at the present time for similar wages to those paid to members of the society who were employed in outside shops. In some cases they had been getting 3s. a day less than was being paid to private employees. If they had the extra 3s. a day, how long would it take them to pay for any privileges they might get in the shape of a run on the railways? The men who signed the petition to which he had referred were determined to strike, and to remain on strike until they got some satisfaction from the Government; but, unfortunately, the war in Europe broke out about a week after the petition was presented, and the men, out of a feeling of patriotism, decided to waive their claims until the war was over; but he could assure the Minister that, had it not been for the war, a very different tale would have been told. Not only would there have been the danger that there was now through the engineers being out of work of a breakdown of the engines that were being sent out of the shops in Townsville, but there would have been a danger of the railways being unable to carry on at all. To avoid that kind of thing, the men in the department should have the satisfaction of knowing that they were getting the ruling rates of wages, and then there would be no necessity for

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strikes. While the present system continued, there was always a danger of strikes and of discontent in the service. Of course, the Minister had said that there were always plenty of men looking for work; but was it a fair thing that the Government should take advantage of a man's necessity?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I said men were always ready to enter the Government service.

Mr. FOLEY: The department could not get the best men, because a good man would not accept 9s. 6d. or 9s. 9d. when he could get 15s. a day from a private employer.

Mr. KESSELL: They have a lot of first-class men.

Mr. FOLEY: The first-class men in the Government service were men who had served their time there, but they could not get the wages they could get in a private shop.

Mr. MORGAN: Are not the other men first class?

Mr. FOLEY: There were any number of men who were working for the Railway Department who would leave the department if they could get a job in a private shop. It was only when they could not get work outside that they were glad to get into the Railway Department for a time, but immediately they got a chance of the bigger wage, they would take it. Every man was after the big penny. It would be to the credit of the Government, as the largest employer in the State, to show a good example to other employers. When the Industrial Peace Bill was going through, the Opposition pointed out that, if it was a good thing to have a tribunal to settle disputes without strikes, it would be a good thing for the railway employees; but the Minister said that the railway employees had the Minister or the Commissioner to look to. They had looked to them in times past, but they had never got satisfaction yet. The Minister should see the wisdom of accepting the amendment, and pay the railway men the wages that were paid by private employers in the various districts throughout the State.

Mr. GILLIES had pleasure in rising to support the amendment because he believed it was a fair thing to place the obligation on the Commissioner. It was fair that the men should expect it, and, secondly, it was a desirable amendment, because the work of the department would be carried on much more cheaply by paying the ruling rate of wage, than by paying something less. In his experience cheap wages on no occasion meant good value, because the good men were always attracted where the good wages were. He was very doubtful whether the railway construction now going on in the North, at a reduction of 6d. a day from the ruling rate of 10s., would be carried on any more cheaply than if the men got the full rate. He was doubtful if any overseer could compel the men to do more work, but if they were paid 10s. they would probably get good results. He thought the Minister should accept the amendment because he and his Government had refused to allow the men the right to go before the Industrial Court. He was also firmly of opinion that good wages were in the interests of the community. It had been pointed out that nearly

everything produced in the State had been going up by leaps and bounds, and if men had been getting 5s. or 6s. per day as in the old days, would it be possible for them to pay the prices which they were paying for butter, fruit, and meat, and everything else produced on the farm to-day? Where men were receiving good wages, they spent the money in the country, and thus put it into circulation. The cost of living was going up and the men were compelled to demand more wages, although their opponents were prone to make the position appear the other way about—that because the men were asking for decent wages the cost of living was going up. It was only fair that decent wages should be paid considering the conditions under which the men had to work. There were some districts in Queensland where it was very difficult to get men to undertake the work, and in those districts wages were necessarily high. In his district it had rained for seven months, and men could not possibly get in full time without working in the rain, and if they worked in the rain, it was a fair thing to pay them a higher wage than men working under cover. The amendment was a very reasonable proposal, and he would like members of the corner party who had been interjecting to show some reason why it should not be placed in the Bill.

Mr. HARDACRE: He was going to support the amendment, but he did not altogether like the second proviso in it. He thought that the privileges which were given in the Government service were of very little value at all. In some cases they were of some value to those who could take advantage of them, but in many cases the men could not take advantage of them. For instance, a man on the lengths in his district might get seven or eight or nine or ten days holiday, but the time was so short that he simply could not go anywhere. Most of the time was spent in travelling. All that they could do was to go to Rockhampton, and, as a matter of fact, because the holidays were practically useless the men did not take advantage of them, and of the opportunity of using the railways. It would take a man practically a day to go from Emerald to Rockhampton, and a day to get back again, and he had only a few days left, and the men found that the advantages were so small that very often they did not go at all. It consequently did not seem a desirable thing that such advantages or privileges should discount the rate of pay, because they were of a very doubtful value in many cases, and in others of no value at all. He understood that the proviso had been put in merely in the endeavour to meet the views of the Minister, but he thought the department ought to pay practically the same wage as was paid outside. He would like to see the department paying full wages without deduction for any privileges, because after all private employers did give some kind of privileges similar to those given by the Railway Department. He thought it was up to the Railway Department to be, at any rate, sufficiently good employers to pay the full rate of wages, plus the value of any privileges. So far as the gangers were concerned in his district, they had practically two different rates of wages for the same kind of men. There were first and second class gangers, and nobody knew the respective qualifications, and although they were doing

the same kind of work they were getting different wages, with the result that there was no end of dissatisfaction. He wanted to vote for the amendment with the idea that the second proviso had been moved for form's sake, and should be taken to mean that the men should get practically the same rate inside the department as others got outside.

Mr. KIRWAN supported the amendment, and regretted very much that the Secretary for Railways had seen fit to oppose it. A great deal had been said about the privileges enjoyed by men in the railway service, but he would point out that men in the higher branches of the service who were paid large salaries also received privileges, which were not taken into account in estimating the amount of their salaries. With regard to the wages paid in the Ipswich workshops, he understood that the Chief Mechanical Engineer quite recently introduced what was called the bonus system, as he considered that the men were not earning the wages paid, and he fixed certain prices for certain articles, but as soon as he discovered that the men could make more by the piecework system than by the wages system he reduced the prices. On three different occasions the prices were reduced. That was most unfair. If the authorities were of opinion that those men were not earning their money on the old system, and they introduced the piecework system, then they should stand by the change which they effected, and not reduce prices repeatedly. In the lower grades, as in the higher grades of the service, they could only get good men by paying fair wages, and he contended that the men in the lower grades were not amply paid for the work they did. Many of those men rendered far greater service to the State than the majority of those occupying higher positions. If one of them went away for a holiday or was sick, someone had to be appointed to take his place, but that was not the case with the higher officials, as was shown by the fact that when the strike inquiry was on, some of those officials were away from their ordinary duties for a fortnight, and their work went on just the same. It was a notorious fact that the men in the Queensland service were as efficient as men in the Southern States, if not more efficient, and that they were the worst paid men in the Commonwealth. Everyone, from a station-master down to a night officer, and from a first-class driver down to a cleaner, was paid less than men doing similar work in the other States. He believed the Commissioner was proud of his staff, and that, if he had his way and could get the ear of the Treasurer, the men in the lower grades of the service would be better paid. The Commissioner had worked in the lower grades, and knew the work which the men had to perform, and was, he believed, fully alive to the fact that it was a good thing for the department to have a contented service. That contented service could only be secured by paying the men a living wage, and he contended that a number of men in the department, in view of the cost of living at the present time, were not receiving a living wage. He knew that a night porter at the Central Station in Sydney got more than the man who was charged with the administration of a station like the Central in Brisbane. That was not as it should be. He hoped that, when the present crisis was over, the Government would see their way to do

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something for the men in the lower branches of the service in regard to the rates of wages paid.

Mr. RYAN said he had great pleasure in supporting the amendment. He was surprised, unless there was a tacit understanding that the amendment was to be passed, that some members opposite had not said something with regard to their attitude towards the amendment. As the hon. member for Chillagoe said, the long-hours' party, whoever they might be, should give some explanation of their attitude. The issue before the Committee was, "Are you for or against paying salaries and wages which are not less than those respectively paid in the district for work entailing similar duties and labour?" One need only state the issue to make it clear that there was only one way to vote if members were prepared to give a fair deal to the public service, and that was to vote for the amendment. If members were not prepared to do that, then they should vote against the amendment. He trusted that the amendment would be carried.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: Members of the Opposition were looking after the rank and file of the service—the men who were responsible for carrying on the railways. When they were discussing the position of the Chief Engineer, members on the Government side of the House were interested in that matter and gave expression to their views on it, but they had very little to say on the amendment now before the Committee. There was a lot of dissatisfaction in his electorate among men who worked on railway lengths, who had to leave home early in the morning, and who could only get back to their homes once or twice a week. Those conditions should not prevail in the railway service. The best conditions possible should be given to the men. The only thing they could get out of the department was that, if the men chose to go and live in another place, they would be able to get homes, but those men were living in places where their children were going to school, and they would probably not be able to get good school facilities in the outside places which the department insisted on making their headquarters. The State should be a model employer. The so-called "privileges" could not be availed of by the men in many instances, and it would be better to give more wages to the men and do away with the privileges altogether. There were mechanics who shunned the railway service because the conditions there were not as good as they were outside. In many places in the North the difference between the wages paid by private employers and those paid by the Government ran up as far as 2s. or 3s. a day, and it would take a lot of "privileges" in a year to make up that amount. He trusted that the amendment would be carried.

Mr. ADAMSON: He had expected that some hon. members opposite who had been taking a prominent part in the discussion earlier in the afternoon would have shown some sympathy with the lower-paid men in the railway service as well as the higher-paid officials. He had always held that the men in the railway should be on the same footing and be paid the same rate of wages as those outside, and have the same advantages with regard to wages boards, the arbitration court, and everything else. If that had been the case, the disastrous strike in the North would not

have taken place. It was caused because a number of men, particularly the engineers—one of the largest organisations in the world—were working for wages below those usually paid, but the department had not listened to their demand. The railway men in this State were not paid the same as those in the other States, and it was time the Minister saw that the men in the different grades were paid as well as they were in the other States. He desired to give some figures, some of which had been given before, but which were well worth giving again. Locomotive engine-drivers in New South Wales got from 72s. to 96s. a week; in Melbourne, 69s. to 87s.; in Queensland, 58s. 6d. to 81s.; in Adelaide, 72s. to 90s.; and in Hobart, 60s. to 75s. In little Tasmania it was 60s. to 75s. Queensland was the lowest of any of the States. Taking firemen—in Sydney they got from 57s. to 66s.; in Melbourne, 51s. to 57s.; in Brisbane, 45s. to 54s.; in Adelaide, 54s. to 66s.; in Perth, 57s. to 66s.; and in Hobart, 45s. to 54s. Porters in Sydney got from 43s. to 54s.; in Melbourne, from 45s. to 57s.; in Brisbane, 45s.; in Adelaide, 48s. and 51s.; in Perth, 54s.; and in Hobart, 42s. to 51s. Shunters in Sydney got from 54s. to 78s.; in Melbourne, from 51s. to 63s.; in Brisbane, from 48s. to 78s.; in Adelaide, from 51s. to 57s.; in Perth, 57s.; and in Hobart, 48s. to 57s. The same thing was true in regard to signalmen. In Sydney they got from 66s. to 78s.; in Melbourne, from 54s. to 75s.; in Brisbane, from 48s. to 65s.; in Adelaide, from 51s. to 66s.; in Perth, from 54s. to 69s.; and in Hobart, from 45s. to 57s. These figures showed that in the other States the workers were paid better wages than they were paid in Queensland. There was a railway regulation in Queensland which said that unless a railway servant paid his just debts, he should be suspended or discharged from the service, and that was a very drastic regulation. Of course, it was desirable that everybody should pay their just debts, but it was also desirable that those who employed them should pay them wages which would enable them to pay their just debts. In many cases the railway men—taking into consideration the high rents and cost of living—were not getting the wages that they ought to get. The amendment provided that the railway men should be treated equally with men who were outside the railway service. In regard to "privileges," there were some men who valued them, and there were some men who would rather do without them. If the privileges had been accumulating for a few years, and they were due to long absence leave, it often interfered with the independence of the men. It made them afraid to do certain things, lest they should lose the privileges that had accrued to them. An additional 1s. or 2s. a week paid to the men would be more than equal to the privileges they got, and in some cases they were getting more than 3s. to 5s. a week less than the men in the South. If the accumulation of holidays interfered with the independence of the men, in that it made them feel afraid that they would lose the privileges, and they did not stand up for their rights and the rights of their mates as they should do, then the privilege system was rotten altogether and not worth

[10 p.m.] having. In this amendment they were only asking that the railway employees should be put on the same footing as men outside the department, that they should stand equal with their fellow-men, and be able to go to the Arbitration Court, so that the railway service, instead of being

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one of the lowest paid services in the State, should be one of the best. They held that the State should be a model employer, and he hoped the Minister for Railways would echo that sentiment. They had received certain concessions in connection with other matters, and if members on the other side really believed that the working man should be cared for—if they were the farmers' friends—they should be also the working man's friend, and if they were that, they would vote for the amendment.

Mr. FIELLY wished to say a few words on the policy of Liberalism as represented in the Chamber on the question of wages. On one occasion, the president of the Liberal party advocated the low wage of 3s. 9d. a day.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Who was that?

Mr. FIELLY: The hon. member for Normanby. That happened a few years ago, and the policy followed then was the policy followed by the Liberals to-day. What was meant then by endeavouring to make the caneworker toil for 3s. 9d. a day was meant for the railway employees to-day. The Minister would not, under any circumstances, agree to give the railway employees justice; he would not agree to place them on the same footing as the employees of private firms in the same district.

Mr. KESSELL: Who advocated that low wage?

Mr. FIELLY: The hon. member always advocated low wages.

Mr. KESSELL rose to a point of order. The hon. member had no right to make an absolute mis-statement about what wages he (Mr. Kessell) paid. The hon. member knew nothing about the wages he paid.

The CHAIRMAN: There is no point of order.

Mr. FIELLY said those interruptions were intolerable.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! If the hon. member addressed himself to the amendment, he would not be interrupted by interjections.

Mr. FIELLY: The amendment dealt with wages, and the hon. member made an interjection in regard to wages, and he (Mr. Fihelly) replied. The hon. member interjected five times, and he (Mr. Fihelly) ignored the interjections, but as the Chairman did not call the hon. member to order, he replied to him.

The PREMIER: Order! You are reflecting on the Chairman, and Opposition dissent.

Mr. FIELLY pointed out that an American employer, named Henry Ford, a motor-car builder, paid a wage of £6 a week to the lowest employee in his shop. The very floor sweeper received £6 a week in Henry Ford's establishment. That was his idea of giving every worker a fair wage. That should be the ideal of the Commissioner for Railways, and should be the ideal of the Minister—give every employee a better deal than the private employer was giving. It was nothing wonderful in the way of a concession to give a man a living, and to give him a better living was simply human. Instead of listening to the agricultural party and their intrigues for little branch railways, if the Minister would

look for a moment after the welfare of the employees and put them in a position to make better citizens of their children, he would be doing a good thing for the State.

Mr. BEBBINGTON (amid disorder): In reply to the charge made by the hon. member for Paddington in reference to the wages paid by the hon. member for Port Curtis, he would give the wages as paid by that hon. member, as shown in the books of the hon. member's firm. The men worked from 7.30 till 4.30, they had one meal, an hour off, and two smoke-ohs, and the average wage for five months was £9 2s. 6d. a week. That was the wage paid by the hon. member for Port Curtis, and yet the hon. member for Paddington said it was a low wage. He (Mr. Bebbington) would leave it to the Committee to judge whether it was a low wage.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: During the discussion, it had been frequently stated that the Government did not care to look after the lower paid men in the railway service. The facts were that increases to the staff in 1910-11 amounted to £51,253; in 1911-12, to £132,814; in 1912-13, to £60,623; and in 1913-14, to £52,980. There had been reclassifications in 1910-11 to the extent of £21,000; in 1911-12, £94,526; in 1912-13, £15,000. And in reply to the statements, or the desires, that the lower paid men in the service should be raised, he was at liberty to make this statement: That all arrangements had been made to raise the classification practically of every employee in the department for the current financial year, and by quite a substantial amount. Hon. members would be rather surprised if they learned what the amount was, and he extremely regretted—and so did every member of the Government, and he was certain every member of the Committee also—that the exigencies of the present situation compelled them to see that no increases were made. They were trying to keep the finances of the State in something like a sound condition. They were not proposing, like some other Governments were proposing, to retrench the public servants to the extent of 10 per cent.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. PAYNE thought that the system adopted in the Railway Department was a lopsided one. They had men working at a certain place for 9s. a day, and another body of men at exactly the same class of work not half a mile away for private individuals or a company, were getting 1s. a day more. The Minister for Railways said he was giving the Committee some facts, but what were the facts? The facts were that the railways of Queensland contributed more than 50 per cent. towards the consolidated revenue of the State, and yet the Queensland Government paid the lower branches of the railway service less than any other State in the Commonwealth. The Committee should see that the railway workers in Queensland were getting a living wage, or at least a wage equal to that paid by private individuals.

The PREMIER: It appeared to him that in a Bill of this description every advantage was taken to make political capital. Hon. members on the other side had been making all manner of allegations about the Liberal party being "the low-wage party." The facts were all to the contrary.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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The PREMIER: They had only to refer to the last few years' Financial Statements and the Estimates to know that every branch of the service had received considerable increment—substantial increment. The Government were paying good wages, and wages which the State could afford to pay. Queensland was the only State which had not had occasion to increase taxation; and, at least, the financial proposals were honest.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: The other States, where Labour Governments were in power, were drifting into arrears and accumulated deficits. One Labour Government actually presented a statement last year which was the most unheard of in the annals of Australian finance—that they were not actually able to show how they could make ends meet.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: Yet these were the States which were pointed to by hon. members opposite as examples. The Minister for Railways had told them that the Government of Queensland, at least, were not singling out their public servants for a 10 per cent. reduction.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Opposition members dissenting.

The PREMIER: The Government of New South Wales is taxing public servants 10 per cent. on their wages. Not only that, but in that evening's Press they saw the following telegram:—

"In view of the difficult financial position, the State Cabinet yesterday decided that whilst the present conditions remained no holidays to workmen should be paid for."

(Opposition laughter.)

Mr. PAYNE: Where is that?

The PREMIER: In New South Wales. This telegram went on to say—

"On Monday next (Eight-hour Day), all Government works will be closed, but the workmen will get an opportunity of earning another day's wages in lieu of the holiday."

Mr. RYAN: They are never paid for holidays.

The PREMIER: It was all very well pointing to other States and saying they were doing the right thing. But at what cost? By piling up deficits, and the first time a real difficulty is met with the bubble is pricked.

Mr. RYAN: Don't you believe in the amendment?

The PREMIER: The amendment submitted was an old one. There had never been a railway proposal brought before the House that it had not been tried on. The Government resisted it, but not on the principle of low wages. They were not going to impose on the Commissioner conditions which would trammel him in his operations. The Commissioner would do what was a fair thing. The men knew what was a fair thing, and they were getting a fair thing. (Hear, hear! and Opposition dissent). Therefore, whilst the Committee chose to go on with the amendment till the ordinary time of adjournment—

Mr. THEODORE: When you make speeches like that we will not go on.

The PREMIER: He was not going to be dictated to by the deputy leader of the Opposition.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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The PREMIER: It seemed to him that hon. gentlemen opposite thought it was their privilege to make all kinds of statements of a disagreeable nature. One hon. member opposite made a statement about an hon. member on the Government side which he (the Premier) knew to be absolutely incorrect. It was a gross perversion of something that had transpired, for what purpose? Not to deal with the proposition which the Bill sought to deal with, but so that mud might be slung, in the hope that some of it might stick. That was a disreputable policy, and it was about time that that kind of thing was stopped. He did not think that the leader of the Opposition approved of that sort of thing, but some members of his party had no sense of decency, and no regard for the honour and integrity of this House.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. RYAN: He was sorry that the Chief Secretary had seen fit to pass a comment on him in his concluding remarks.

The PREMIER: It was quite necessary.

Mr. ARCHER: You have not got a crowd here to howl the speakers down.

Mr. RYAN: It was not a case of howling down at all. The Premier was listened to in comparative silence; there were only a few relevant interjections. He was saying that the Chief Secretary brought his name into his concluding remarks.

The PREMIER: I said that I don't think you approve of some of the tactics on your side.

Mr. RYAN: He quite approved of the tactics of members of the Opposition side.

The PREMIER: I am sorry to hear it.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Shame!

Mr. RYAN: Hon. members opposite could say what they liked. He was prepared to approve of the tactics of every member of his party. If a statement was made by the hon. member for Paddington, the hon. member for Normanby should have replied to it. Every member on the Opposition side would have listened to what the hon. member for Normanby had to say in reply.

Mr. ARCHER: I did not hear what was said. When I asked him to repeat it, he would not do so.

Mr. RYAN: The hon. member for Paddington made the statement openly, and he had no doubt the hon. member would repeat it.

Mr. FHELLY: I will repeat it. It is on record.

Mr. RYAN: I trust that members on both sides of the House will be cool, and keep their tempers. (Hear, hear!) Matters of this kind were far better dealt with when hon. members kept themselves cool. He was sure that the Premier would regret his reference to himself, because he was sitting fairly quiet and allowing the business to progress as rapidly as he could. The Premier infused some feeling into the debate by making an attack on Labour Governments in other States, but that was quite apart from the question at issue. The hon. gentleman also stated that the party opposite were at least honest.

The PREMIER: In State finance.

Mr. RYAN: It was not alleged that they were dishonest in State finance or privately.

All that was said by members on his side was that the policy of the other side was not the policy for the country.

The PREMIER: This is not the low-wage party.

Mr. RYAN: He said it was the low-wage party. The figures quoted by the hon. member for Rockhampton and the hon. member for Paddington showed that the wages paid here were lower than the wages prevailing in New South Wales, Victoria, and Western Australia. What he protested against was the hon. gentleman insinuating by saying that the Government were at least honest, that public men in the other States were dishonest, and inferentially that the Labour party were also dishonest because they advocated the same principles as the Governments in the States alluded to. The Premier referred to the reduction of 10 per cent. that was proposed to be made in certain salaries in the adjoining State, but he would point out that there was an exemption of £150 and that wages and salaries in Queensland had always been more than 10 per cent. lower than wages and salaries in the adjoining State, so that, even when salaries in that State were reduced by 10 per cent., they would still be higher than salaries in Queensland. The hon. gentleman also referred to the statement that it was proposed in New South Wales not to pay workmen when on holidays, but the hon. gentleman had apparently forgotten that holidays never had been paid for in Queensland in connection with railway construction work and public works generally.

The bell indicated that the hon. member's time had expired.

Mr. RYAN (continuing) said that, even if that were done in New South Wales, they would still be in a better position than in Queensland. But that was not the issue involved in the amendment. The issue was whether the Committee was in favour of paying railway employees as much as was paid by private employers. The amendment did not propose to fix any particular rate per day. If the present lamentable war brought down the prevailing rate of pay in any district, the Government would not be bound to pay more than the prevailing average rate in that district. He was sorry that the Premier—unlike himself—had seen fit to make an attack upon that side for having advocated a principle with which it was thoroughly in accord. With regard to any little differences there might be between hon. members, he was sure that, so long as an hon. member did not lose his temper, hon. members would be quite prepared to accept, for what it was worth, any explanation that appeared to be straightforward and honest.

Mr. ARCHER: Accept it here and repeat it outside—that is our experience.

Mr. RYAN: The hon. member should not say that.

Mr. ARCHER: That has been our experience.

Mr. RYAN: He left it to the people outside to say whether the Premier or he had approached the matter in the right spirit.

The PREMIER thought it would be recognised that he was not making any charge against the integrity or honesty of the leader of the Opposition and his party. What he objected to was that on an amendment of this sort should be made an attack, hung on a loose statement by the hon. member for Paddington, that the Government were a low-wage party. He objected to that because

it was not true, and he proceeded to show that in the region of finance they were at least honest in providing such sums as could be paid without piling up a deficit, which was not the case in two States where they had been increasing wages, and, in order to make those payments to railway servants, had increased rates and fares. The Government had always endeavoured so to fix wages that the State could pay without increasing the public debt.

Mr. THEODORE: You pay the lowest wages to navvies of any State in Australia, except Tasmania.

The PREMIER: That statement had been dealt with by the Secretary for Railways, and he did not propose to go over it again. They could readily have boomed wages up and paid them in the same way as the two States to which he alluded by piling up a deficit, but that was not honest finance, and it was a policy that he would never subscribe to.

Mr. FIELLY: Some exception seemed to have been taken to his statement that the party opposite were the low-wages party, and he would endeavour to substantiate his statement. It would be within the recollection of every hon. member that in 1912 the Treasurer proceeded to Melbourne and endeavoured to get Mr. Tudor to give a lower rate of wages than 8s. a day to cancutters. He said at the time that the hon. gentleman went to Melbourne as the advocate of low wages. Judge McNaughton afterwards actually gave the cancutters a higher rate. Again, in 1911, the Works Department were employing painters doing Commonwealth work at 1s. a day less than the Commonwealth rate. The Commonwealth authorities asked the State Government to pay the men the Commonwealth rate, but the Treasurer refused because he was paying his own men the lower rate. Surely these two facts practically settled the matter of the low-wage party. The party opposite was the low-wage party and the dear meat party. Again, the men on the Mount Mulligan line were on strike for six weeks before they could get the wages ruling in the district. The employees in the Government sugar-mills three years ago were getting lower wages than those paid by private millowners. The party on the other side stood for low wages all the time, and to-day they were not prepared to give workers in the Government service twenty-one years of age the minimum pay of £110 per annum. The Premier, in his usual hysterical way—the soul of honour; the man who had belonged to every party in the House and had sold every one of them; the Simon Pure of politics—told them that employees in the Government Printing Office could not have a living wage because the department would not pay. Was that an argument—that a grown person from whom they expected a family should not be paid enough to keep body and soul together? They should establish some sort of a standard. They should not get back to child labour. They got from the same hysterical gentleman a statement with regard to wages paid in New South Wales—a deliberate fabrication, a deliberate misrepresentation—that holidays were not paid for. No railway man in Queensland who was on wages was paid for a day that he was off work. The New South Wales Government were so

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humane and generous that they paid for holidays, and in Queensland they [10.30 p.m.] had not got that far. They did not pay for holidays and never had. He had also referred to the 10 per cent. reductions. It was within the recollection of everybody that the hon. member for Townsville, then at the head of the Government, imposed a poll-tax of 10s. a head on every man in the State, irrespective of salary. But the statement in regard to the 10 per cent. reduction was also a misstatement, because there was first of all a clear exemption of £150. The Premier knew that, yet he deliberately misrepresented the position, so that the Press would state that the Labour Government of New South Wales were doing something exceptionally wrong. As to deficits, they had the fine spectacle of the Cook or the Deakin Government going out of office and leaving the Fisher Government to make up leeway to the extent of some £2,000,000. The party opposite were the low-wage party, they were the dear meat party, and they were the party who were buttressing up the squatters, the party who had practically instructed their Price Board not to interfere with the squatters' profits and the price of meat, whilst the Premier, when he was asked a straight question about meat and flour, refused to give information.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): The hon. member's statement in reference to the Treasurer was at variance with fact. Speaking with some knowledge of the incident to which the hon. member referred, he would like to point out that what the Treasurer went to Melbourne for was to protest against interference on the part of the Commonwealth with a Queensland industry. (Opposition dissent.) In the same connection, he might point out that the men engaged in that industry in Queensland were receiving through a court appointed under an Act passed by the Liberal Government in Queensland higher wages than those to which Mr. Barnes was supposed to have objected. And so far no objection had been made on that side of the House to those higher wages.

Mr. McCORMACK: The Premier rather hysterically accused members of the Opposition of doing what members of his own party frequently did. He had been looking through the records in "Hansard" of the withdrawals of statements by hon. members of last session, and he could assure the Premier that the majority were by members on his side, including some members who had been objecting to interjections to-night. He referred to the hon. member for Port Curtis, who had to withdraw fourteen or fifteen interjections, and some of the more rather contemptible interjections. The hon. member who had just sat down tried to make out that the Treasurer did not favour low wages. The hon. member, when the men in the Plane Creek Mill struck for £1 2s. 6d. a week and keep, for twelve hours a day, took that action in order that men might work for low wages, so that his profits as a shareholder in the mill might not be lessened. He did not see that the Premier had any reason to complain of the statement of the hon. member for Paddington. It was a statement of fact that had been proved by his last speech. Everyone of the statements was official. It mattered not that the Premier might say that they were irresponsible. It was for the people who could refer to them

[*Mr. Fihelly.*

to judge between him and the hon. member for Paddington. In connection with the reference to the hon. member for Normanby, surely it had had sufficient publicity. It was a subject of comment at a Federal election; every newspaper in Australia had it.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I think that this matter has gone far enough.

Mr. McCORMACK: Hon. members opposite asked that it be repeated. He did not desire to go on, but he was sorry that the Chairman continued to pick him out and sit him down.

Mr. THEODORE: It is because you are on the wrong side of the House.

The PREMIER: Order!

Mr. McCORMACK: The Premier attributed motives to that party, always to that party, whereas some of his own supporters got out of hand on at least every opportunity. They had an instance only a few minutes ago of one hon. member trying to explain away the attitude of the hon. member for Port Curtis—about the wages he gave. He did not know anything of the hon. member's private affairs, and he was not going to make any statement about them. He would just deal with the statement of the Premier that the Labour party had no control over its supporters.

The PREMIER: I did not say that. I said "some members."

Mr. McCORMACK: It is a pity you do not give us the names of some of the members.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must address himself to the Chair. I have already asked him to keep himself to the amendment, and it is, I think, only fair that he should. He has had quite as much latitude as any other hon. member.

Mr. McCORMACK: The Chairman allowed the Premier to make two policy speeches as to whether the Government were a high-wage party or a low-wage party, and if he could show that the amendment had anything to do with that, he would resume his seat. When the talk wandered away from the matter before the Chair, it seemed unfortunate that he should always fall out with the Chair when using the same line of argument.

Mr. SWAYNE: He would like to refer to another misstatement, made by the hon. member who had just resumed his seat. He referred to certain actions of his in connection with the sugar strike. It was only fair to point out—

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. SWAYNE: Have I not the right to make a personal explanation? (Laughter.)

The CHAIRMAN: If the hon. member desires to make a personal explanation, he must state that he rises to do so, and keep strictly to it.

Mr. SWAYNE: With reference to the action taken by him on the occasion referred to, he should like to point out that the dispute was not so much over a matter of wages as about the procedure adopted. At that time a wages board could have been created to deal with the questions in dispute, and he held that it was only right and proper that the case should be taken before that tribunal. Another matter involved was that of the contract system of cutting cane, which it was proposed should be done away with. The trouble was that the employees resorted



to force when they could have got a wages board to settle the dispute. The farmers, of whom he was one, contended that that was the proper course. It was not a matter of wages at all; wages had risen much higher since then, and there had been no complaint on the part of the employers.

Mr. THEODORE: The leader of the Government had been to some trouble to ferret out something which he might use to the disparagement of the Labour Government in New South Wales, and the hon. gentleman said one result of the war was that the Government of that State deprived persons employed on public works of the right to payment for holidays. The position was that—

“After continuous service in the employ of the Public Works Department in New South Wales, the men are entitled to six days' leave of absence. Such leave is granted if the service is not continuous, provided the breaks therein (whether by reason of accident or any other cause) do not exceed in the aggregate two months. Where the twelve months have not been served, the leave may be calculated at the rate of half a day for each month's service. The Christmas holidays, etc., are not counted in the leave granted.”

In Queensland the men were not paid for any holidays; they got the usual Christmas and New Year's holidays, but they were not paid for them, while in New South Wales the men were paid for those holidays. The Premier was, therefore, most unfortunate in his choice of an item on which to make a comparison between New South Wales and Queensland, as the comparison was most unfavourable to Queensland. It was well known that the men employed on railway construction works in Queensland were paid the lowest wage in the Commonwealth, except that which was paid in the small State of Tasmania. In New South Wales the minimum wage was 9s. per day, and that was only paid in the metropolitan area; in other places it was considerably higher. In Southern Queensland the wage was 8s. per day.

Mr. GUNN: They get full time here, and in New South Wales they get week on and week off.

Mr. THEODORE: The hon. member was wrong, for they got full time in New South Wales.

Mr. GUNN: I saw it stated by Mr. Holman.

Mr. THEODORE: The hon. member was only going on something whispered in his ear by one of his colleagues who could not be relied upon. (Laughter.) The Premier himself admitted that the sharing of employment, when that employment was limited, among the men who were available was a reasonable policy to follow in this time of distress.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That condition of things always prevails in the Traffic Branch of the Railway Department.

Mr. THEODORE: Private employers in the city were doing that, at the suggestion of employees, in order to relieve the hardship which would result from unemployment. But, as he had said, the men employed on railway construction works in New South Wales were much more favourably placed as far as wages were concerned than the men employed on such works in Queensland.

Mr. KESSELL (*Port Curtis*) rose to make a personal explanation. He had been accused

of being a low-wage man, and he should like to say that the Gladstone Meatworks, with which he was connected as a shareholder, paid the biggest wages paid in any part of Queensland. He was a shipping agent, and his men earned £1 15s. a day when they were working. He was also a shareholder in lineworks, and the men engaged in those works received good remuneration; and working men all through the district were always ready to accept employment in any of the industries with which he (Mr. Kessell) was connected. Hon. members opposite did not pay wages; the only thing they had to do with wages was to collect them from hard-working men who earned them.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member has permission to make a personal explanation, and he must confine himself to that explanation.

Mr. KESSELL: I have made it.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported progress, and the Committee obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

#### PURE SEEDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

RETURNED FROM COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Council returning this Bill without amendment.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER: I beg to move that the House do now adjourn. It is private members' day to-morrow, and I understand that members in whose names motions at the head of the paper stand have agreed to have the considerations of those motions deferred in order to allow the motion standing in the name of the hon. member for Rockhampton to be discussed. I indicate that because I understand that other members desire to speak on that matter, and that a division on the question is desired. After that, the business of private members will come in the order in which it appears on the paper. After 7 o'clock, the first business will be the second reading of the Printers and Newspapers Bill, and then the consideration in Committee of the Brands Acts Amendment Bill and the Factories and Shops Acts Amendment Bill.

Mr. MORGAN: I would just like to ask the Chief Secretary whether his notice has been drawn to a telegram appearing in the "Brisbane Courier" of Thursday last, with regard to the statement that the Federal Executive has issued a prohibition in connection with the export of maize. This is a very important matter, and I would like to ask the Chief Secretary if he will ascertain from the Federal Government exactly what their intentions are in connection with the prohibition of the export of maize from Australia, and allow the public to get the information through the Press.

The SPEAKER: Order! The question of the hon. member would be more properly asked at the usual time for questions. I have allowed him to ask his question in order to ascertain the nature of it, but he cannot proceed further. The only questions which may be asked on the motion for adjournment are questions concerning the business of the House.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at nine minutes to 11 o'clock.

*Hon. W. D. Armstrong.]*