

Legislative Assembly.*Tuesday, 24th October, 1939.*

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

QUESTION—TRAFFIC ACT.*Cost of Collecting Fees.*

Hon. N. KEENAN asked the Minister representing the Minister for Police: 1, Is any part of the fees paid for licenses or transfer of licenses or registrations in the metropolitan area under the Traffic Act, 1919-1935, paid or credited to the Police Department under the head of costs of collection or otherwise? 2, If so, how much.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST replied: 1, Yes. 2, All license fees are paid into the Metropolitan Traffic Trust Account, from which 10 per cent. of the net collections is paid into revenue, which last financial year amounted to £22,691. The Police Department Vote is inclusive of this amount.

QUESTION—INVESTMENT COMPANIES SELECT COMMITTEE.

Mr. MARSHALL (without notice) asked the Leader of the Opposition as chairman of the select committee inquiring into investment companies: 1, Is it a fact that one, C. O. Barker, concerned in Litchfields (A/sia.) Ltd., was refused admission to the inquiry during its deliberations to-day? 2, If so, what was the reason?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM replied: I might have asked the hon. member to give notice of

his question, but the reply is: 1, Yes. 2, The committee did not think it would be advisable during the preliminary investigation to admit Mr. Barker.

PRIVILEGE—NATIVE ADMINISTRATION ACT.*Rev. J. R. B. Love and Regulations.*

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I rise on a question of privilege. During my speech on the motion to disallow regulations under the Native Administration Act, I made a statement that the Rev. J. R. B. Love was not in favour of the regulations. A telegram has since been forwarded to Mr. Love in the following terms:—

Last night the Minister for Native Affairs declared before Parliament you favoured regulations governing mission. He quoted your statement re Ernabella. Will you disclaim such statement? Tulloch.

The wire received from Mr. Love reads:—

I do not agree with proposed regulations for licensing missionaries.

BILLS (4)—THIRD READING

- 1, Financial Emergency Tax.
- 2, Financial Emergency Tax Assessment Act Amendment.
- 3, Noxious Weeds Act Amendment.
- 4, State Forest Access.

Transmitted to the Council.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).*Second Reading.*

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. H. Millington—Mt. Hawthorn) [4.38]: in moving the second reading said: This Bill is presented with a view to giving effect to the proposal announced by the Treasurer when introducing the Budget for the current financial year whereby the motor license fees, which at present are distributed amongst the local authorities in the metropolitan area, shall be paid into Consolidated Revenue. The only provision of the Traffic Act affected by the Bill is Subsection 2 (c) of Section 13. This provision which it is proposed to repeal reads as follows:—

(c) The remaining half of the net balance of the said fees shall, together with any moneys remaining unexpended out of the said

first-mentioned half of the net balance of the said fees, be annually paid to and divided amongst the local authorities of the districts and sub-districts comprised in the metropolitan area and the board controlling Reserve A1720 (the King's Park), in such shares and proportions as the Minister may determine.

The Bill proposes to substitute in lieu a new paragraph to give the Minister power to grant annually to the King's Park Board a sum not exceeding £2,000 and to provide that the proportion of the Metropolitan Traffic Trust Account now paid to the local authorities shall be paid into the revenue of the State. I may mention that in a Bill to be introduced later, provision will be made to amend the Main Roads Act so as to enable the Minister to make grants to the local authorities concerned from the Main Roads Trust Account equivalent in the aggregate to the proportion of the motor license fees they would have received under the Traffic Act as it now stands, subject to the production of certificates that they had expended at least that amount on the construction, reconstruction, maintenance or repair of roads in their districts during the year.

Mr. Sampson: Without respect to any particular road—main road or otherwise?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The story will be told if the hon. member will have patience. It may be of interest to point out that the provision under which the Metropolitan Traffic Trust Account was created was enacted in 1919. I understand that prior to that year several attempts had been made to induce Parliament to adopt the principle, but without success. The Traffic Act Amendment Bill of 1919, as originally introduced by the then Minister for Works, the late Hon. W. J. George, did not contain the Traffic Pool proposal; however, insistent demands from members of all parties resulted in the Minister's accepting an amendment giving effect to the establishment of a Metropolitan License Fees Pool.

The reason advanced for the establishment of the pooling system was the urgent need for the provision of funds for the repair and reconstruction of roads—main roads particularly—in the more sparsely settled metropolitan districts, which were being called upon to carry the heavy traffic radiating from the populous centres of Perth and Fremantle. Many members will

recollect the shocking condition of many of the roads in question. To give an idea of how things were then as compared with what they are now, the then Minister, Mr. George, speaking in the year 1919 on the proposed pooling system, referred to a proposal submitted a year or two previously and stated—

At that time the license fees collected amounted to something like £20,000 per year, and it was proposed by the Government to add a further £20,000, making a total of £40,000, which would have been a very respectable and sufficient sum, if properly handled, to deal with the reinstatement, making and maintenance of the main roads of the State.

That statement, in the light of present-day conditions indicates the enormous development in road requirements. Forty thousand pounds for the whole State! And last year governmental expenditure on roads totalled over £1,000,000! Another illustration of the development since the pool was created is given by the total amount of license fees collected in the metropolitan area. For the year ended 30th June, 1921, the total was £15,367, whereas for the year ended 30th June, 1939, the total was £197,951. So that in the short space of 18 years the increase was from £15,000 to nearly £200,000. In supporting the introduction of the pooling system in 1919 the then Minister said—

Pooling is the only equitable way to deal with the license fees and, in my opinion, the only honest way, in order that the money may be used in the districts where the work is done.

Although only paragraph (c) of Subsection (2) of Section 15 is involved in this Bill, it may be advisable for me briefly and clearly to set out the procedure defined in the whole of Section 13 of the Traffic Act, which, as amended by the Main Roads Act Amendment Act of 1932, deals with the Trust Account. The section provides that all traffic license fees shall be paid into the Trust Account. The cost of collection, as certified by the Minister, is then deducted. The next deduction is 22½ per cent. of the remainder, made in pursuance of Section 4 of the Main Roads Act Amendment Act of 1932 for defraying the cost of and incidental to the provision, construction, reconstruction, improvement, maintenance and supervision by the Commissioner of Main Roads of roads and bridges within the metropolitan traffic area. The remainder is

the "net balance" referred to in paragraph (b) of Subsection (2) of the section, and one-half of this net balance must be set aside for distribution to local authorities in accordance with paragraph (c) of Subsection (2). From the other half of the said net balance the Minister is authorised to deduct—(a) the cost of repairing the roads and bridges specified in paragraph (b) of Subsection (2), including Stirling-highway, Perth Causeway, and the North Fremantle bridge; (b) under Subsection (5) of Section 13 an amount sufficient to provide for interest and sinking fund on one-half of any money appropriated by Parliament for the construction, reconstruction, or widening of any main road within the metropolitan area, provided such sum shall not exceed one-fifth of the net amount available for distribution to local authorities.

Under paragraph (c) of Subsection (2) any moneys remaining unexpended by the Minister from his half of the net balance must be added to the half already set aside for the local authorities and be distributed to such local authorities. Here I may mention that the amounts of the unexpended departmental halves which have been handed over to local authorities during the past ten years have reached the huge total of £410,000. Members are aware that paragraph (c) of Subsection (2) places on the Minister the responsibility of determining the proportions and shares which shall be paid to each of the 25 local authorities comprised in the metropolitan traffic area. The Act does not prescribe any definite formula. During the past few years the basis of apportionment has, broadly speaking, been on population and on mileage of made roads. This basis has been accepted with very little criticism. Some authorities contended that they were subject to peculiar disabilities; but it was found that if allowance was made for all disabilities in each district, the final result would be about the same as that achieved by a strict adherence to the formula. Hon. members representing districts outside the metropolitan area will be interested in the following figures relating to departmental expenditure on roads during the past 10 years from Federal Aid Road Funds:—In 1929-30 the sum of £978,825 was spent; and of this sum only £103,464 was spent in the metropolitan area, whilst the sum of

£875,361 was spent in other areas. In 1930-31, of a total of £492,334, the sum of £66,094 was spent in the metropolitan area and £426,240 in other areas. In 1931-32—this was the lowest distribution from the Federal Aid Roads Grant—the amount available was £228,492, of which £208,732 was spent in country districts and £19,760 in the metropolitan area. And so the figures continue until we come to the year 1938-39, when the total available was £879,461, of which £106,295 was spent in the metropolitan area and £773,166 in other areas. It works out as follows:—Of a grand total of £5,650,189, the sum of £5,154,450 was spent outside the metropolitan area, and the sum of £495,739 in the metropolitan area. Less than half-a-million in the metropolitan area as against over five millions in the country! Over 91 per cent. of the fund was spent outside the metropolitan area and 9 per cent. inside the charmed circle.

Mr. Cross: It was not charmed by the money it got: it got a raw deal.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I hear much discussion about the country not getting a fair deal; but I point out that although it is estimated that vehicles using petrol and licensed in the metropolitan area would pay at least half the tax, yet over a period of 10 years 91 per cent. has been spent in the country and only 9 per cent. in the metropolitan area.

From General Loan Fund—excluding the sum of £356,297 which was paid in 1929-30 as the State's contribution to the Federal Aid Road Fund and which is included in the previous figures—I find that of a total of £962,747, for the four years 1929-30 to 1932-33 no money was spent in the metropolitan area. Of that amount of £962,747 expended over a period of 10 years, the sum of £931,607 was spent in the country, but only £31,140 in the metropolitan area. Of the grand total from Loan Funds for the 10 years country districts received approximately 97 per cent. and the metropolitan area 3 per cent.

Mr. Doney: Has the Minister any figures in regard to comparative mileages in the metropolitan area and country districts?

Mr. Cross: And the volume of traffic?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I simply give these figures so that those persons who think the metropolitan area has been fav-

oured may know how little, comparatively, has been spent in the metropolitan area. From other sources—State petrol tax, transport fees and Metropolitan Trust allocations (departmental)—for the same period of 10 years the sum of £595,583 was collected. Here we have a slight evening up, because of that total the sum of £454,850 was spent in the metropolitan area and the sum of £140,733 in other areas.

In order that we might learn what was the practice in the other States, the department wrote in 1937 to the licensing authorities there asking for information as to the collection and use of traffic license fees, and I will now read a resume of the replies received—

South Australia: Collected by one central authority. All credited to general revenue. No portion directly accrues to any local authority. Parliament from General Revenue votes funds for main and district roads.

	£
Amount collected 1936-37 ..	638,658
Amount voted from revenue ..	362,970
Amount voted from loan ..	324,653

Of the above, £164,764 comprised grants to local authorities under the provisions of the Highways Act.

The city of Adelaide does not come under this Act and no allocation was made to the city.

Mr. Patrick: Out of Loan Funds?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No. This is from traffic. The resume continues—

Under the Local Government Act the city of Adelaide receives approximately £1,370 per annum.

That is how South Australia is treated.

Mr. Sampson: The roads in Adelaide are very well constructed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The following is a resume of the Victorian practice—

All collected by the Police Department and paid to the Country Roads Board Fund in the Treasury. This fund is applied to—

- (a) payment of interest and sinking fund on the State's proportion of loan expenditure incurred under the Country Roads Act on the construction of roads;
- (b) maintenance and reconditioning of main roads, State highways, tourist roads and Murray River bridges.

Municipalities are responsible for main roads within their districts, but are assisted so far as the above fund will permit.

The following is the Tasmanian resume—

All collected by the Police Department, paid into Consolidated Revenue and appro-

priated each financial year to a trust account called the State Highways Trust Fund for expenditure on State highways proclaimed under the control of the State. No amount of the fund is allocated to any local authority nor is any expended in the city of Hobart.

In Queensland all license fees are collected by the Police Department, paid into the Main Roads Trust Fund and used for the maintenance and construction of roads under the Acts. No direct payments are made to any local authorities, but they benefit by the work undertaken. Out of a total of 145 local authorities, 143 benefited last year. Local authorities, presumably including Brisbane, contribute on a fixed percentage basis in regard to certain classes of roads. They do not contribute anything to State highways, mining access roads or tourist tracks. I want members to note that an amount of £250,000 is diverted annually from the fund to Consolidated Revenue, and the fund is relieved of interest and sinking fund on an equivalent amount of loan money.

In New South Wales registration and licensing is vested in the Commissioner for Road Transport and Tramways. Revenue is paid to the Road Transport and Traffic Fund; the County of Cumberland Main Roads Fund (metropolitan area)—which includes Sydney—(50 per cent. of the fees collected in the country); the Country Main Roads Fund, the Public Vehicles Fund and the State Transport Co-ordination Fund. The proceeds of the County of Cumberland and Country Main Roads Funds are paid to the Department of Main Roads, and spent on the construction and maintenance of proclaimed main and secondary roads, the County of Cumberland Fund being spent within that area which is broadly the metropolitan area within approximately 40 miles of Sydney. The country fund is spent outside that area. The distribution is on the authority of the department, either direct or through local authorities. The department bears the whole cost of the work in the County of Cumberland except that on secondary roads, where the contribution is one-half. In the country, for State highways the department pays in full; for trunk roads the department pays three-quarters; and for ordinary main roads, two-thirds. There are no secondary roads in the country. The Public Vehicles Fund, which is for registration of

motor buses, is distributed to shires and municipalities as nearly as possible on the mileage of various routes. It is used for the purpose of reconstruction and maintenance of roads used by omnibuses. The tax on public vehicles other than omnibuses is used for resuming or acquiring land or other expenditure for improvement of transport or relief of congestion or protection of pedestrians. Service license fees in connection with the operation of buses are appropriated, 50 per cent. to the Department of Main Roads and to municipalities and shires in the two transport districts in the same proportion as the motor buses registration fees. The proportion of bus and service license fees paid to Sydney for the year ended the 30th June, 1937, was £734 3s. 2d. The State Transport Co-ordination Fund fees are applied to meet the cost of administration and enforcement of the Act. Mileage charges are paid to the Railways Fund and to the Tramways General Fund calculated on the extent of competition with the particular service. Road transport and traffic fees are utilised for administration of the department, including the cost of collection of tax, the recouping of Consolidated Revenue for police services and the provision of traffic facilities. The balance at the end of the year is transferred to the Country Main Roads Fund. I have supplied this information to give members an idea of the practice in the Eastern States. It is very difficult to define areas. Modern traffic is vagabond and refuses to be confined within imaginary boundaries.

In considering matters affecting the Traffic Trust Account, we should remember that the income from license fees has reached huge totals that were never contemplated when the account was created in 1919. I have stated previously that the total fees collected in the metropolitan area for the first complete year of the pool amounted to a little over £15,000, whereas last year an amount of £197,951 was received. A perusal of the speeches made in 1919 clearly indicates that the chief purpose of the pool was to enable the main arteries of traffic to be properly maintained. It was never contemplated that the license fees should bear the whole or major portion of the expense of all subsidiary as well as main roads. For the ten years ended the 30th June, 1939, the sum distributed to the local authorities amounted to the huge total of £929,961.

This included an amount of £409,000 remaining unexpended from the departmental half of the net balance referred to in Subsection 2 (b) of Section 13.

In connection with the 22½ per cent. of the trust account made available under the Main Roads Act Amendment Act of 1932, hon. members might be interested to know how this contribution has been expended to the 30th June last. It was devoted to the following works:—

Name of Road.	Total expenditure to 30th June, 1939.		
	£	s.	d.
Perth Causeway	22,610	15	4
Perth-Midland Junction (via Belmont) road	14,009	10	8
Helena River Bridge and approaches	15,917	13	3
Swan River Bridge (Garratt-street)	22,730	6	9
Bassendean Bridge	11,760	14	0
Canning River Bridge	22,687	17	1
Stirling Highway	173,677	19	2
Total	£283,414	16	3

The reconstruction of Stirling-highway will result in a substantial saving in maintenance and consequently a decreased deduction under Subsection 2 (b) of Section 13 of the Traffic Act, thus increasing the amount available for local authorities. As an indication of the various uses to which it is suggested motor license fees might be put, hon. members will probably be aware that the Victorian Government is giving consideration to a suggestion that a special casualty hospital should be financed from the fees, or alternatively that the cost of maintaining 100 beds be met from the fees. The subject was raised recently in the Victorian Parliament on the discussion of the third-party motor vehicles insurance measure.

Mr. Patrick: Have they not got that in Victoria?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not sure whether it is included in the Act.

Mr. Seward: Have they a Lotteries Commission there?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Hon. members will note that the Bill proposes that the new provision shall operate as from the 1st July last. License fees are collected in advance in July and January of each year. To meet the requirements and financial convenience of the local authorities, it has been the practice of the department to

distribute all moneys available as soon as practicable after receipt. Distributions have therefore been made in August and February each year. Consequently an amount of £67,361 was paid to local authorities in August last, and to give effect to the Budget proposals it will be necessary to make adjustments between the Commissioner of Main Roads, the local authorities and the Treasury Department to return this amount to general revenue within the current financial year. The proposal in the Bill is reasonable and fair, and due consideration should be given to the following points:—The huge amount of £3,195,500 has been expended from general loan funds and from which State revenue receives no direct return. I inquired what would be the annual cost to the Treasury, and the reply is to be found on the summarised classification of loan assets. On page 10, under the heading of "Roads and Bridges," the annual cost to the Treasury for interest and sinking fund is set down at £142,967, or nearly £143,000 per annum which has to be found by the Treasury on money that has been expended in this State on roads and bridges and for which the Treasury receives no financial return in any one year. It must be remembered that interest payments must be met and there is no fund out of which to meet them. I presume, therefore, that the payments must be made out of general revenue. That sum has to be found to meet interest and sinking fund on this enormous expenditure incurred from loan funds on the roads and bridges of this State, in addition to the amount spent under the Federal Aid Roads Agreement.

The next point is the absolute necessity for balancing the State Budget. We are all interested in that. The member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) gave as his view that the only "excuse" for making this transfer was that the Treasurer needed the money. That is a pretty fair reason. I would not call it an excuse. It is the reason for taxation.

Mr. Sampson: The local authorities also need the money.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Treasurer has to see that the money is available for the services he is called upon to render the taxpayers. The Treasurer in introducing his Budget has shown by very careful estimates, based on the experience of preceding years and supplied by capable

Treasury officials, that the money will be required to assist in balancing the budget. People quote the Grants Commission's recommendations when it suits them to do so.

Mr. Doney: Evidently it suits you or you would not be quoting from that document.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I draw attention to the effect this measure would have on the presentation of Western Australia's case before the Grants Commission, and at the risk of wearying the House I will read what the Grants Commission has to say about this question.

Mr. Doney: To which page are you referring?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Commission commences on page 80 with recommendation 191. Attention is also drawn to paragraphs 108 to 119. The report goes on to say that in the fifth report attention was drawn to the large amounts of outstanding debts to the Crown in South Australia, and to unproductive loan expenditure in Western Australia. The Commission also sets out the advantageous position of Western Australia in respect to Federal Aid Roads grants. It is rather surprising to read that so far as Western Australia is concerned the Grants Commission takes notice of this question. The other States remind us of the matter too. I think they remind the Premier at Loan Council meetings of our advantageous position in regard to grants. Recommendation 192 points out that in South Australia the amounts collected in Federal taxation for the five-year period 1933-34 to 1937-38 amounted to approximately £1,500,000, and that South Australia received £1,656,692, or £156,623 more than it paid. It was pointed out to the advocate who appeared for Western Australia before the Commission, that in this State, under Federal taxation, £1,176,262 was collected, and we received in grants during that five-year period £2,811,184, or an excess of the amount collected of £1,634,922. We are under no disability there, and we certainly have had the best treatment of any State of the Commonwealth in that respect.

Mr. Sampson: This is a State of tremendous distances.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Recommendation 193, on page 81, says:—

Notwithstanding the substantial increases in the Federal Aid Roads Grants, the three claimant States are spending large sums from loan funds on roads. Most of this expendi-

ture is unproductive. Little or no attempt is made to recover even a portion of the annual debt charges from local authorities, and in Western Australia and Tasmania no part of motor taxation revenue is used to meet the annual debt charges on loan liability for roads.

To-day or to-morrow the Treasury officials have to put up the case of Western Australia. The document I am quoting from, the sixth report of the Grants Commission, will be the basis of the argument. We may think we can ignore the Grants Commission, but I say, when it makes recommendations such as these, it expects the claimant States to have some regard for them.

Mr. Doney: On how many occasions has that recommendation been put up?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is not the point.

Mr. Doney: It is the point on which I wish to be informed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The point is, is the Commission justified in making that deduction? I was in the Eastern States attending a conference dealing with country water supplies. We always put up the case for Western Australia's disabilities. Unless this State stands up to its obligations, the three other States will examine carefully the whole position and ask themselves why they should pay. That is what the whole thing amounts to. There are three claimant States, and there must be three paying States. They want to know whether we are standing up to our obligations. If we can show that we are doing so, they will be prepared to assist us with respect to any genuine disability. If we are disadvantaged, they will be prepared to pay. Western Australia must have regard to the findings of the Commission. They now seem to be part of the Constitution. We must give the Commission credit for examining carefully the taxation in Western Australia, our revenues, our administration, and the extent to which our claims are based on evidence. Everything is made subject to argument by competent officials before it is accepted. A grave responsibility falls upon the shoulders of the officials concerned. They actually have to make a redistribution of wealth between the States. They are advisers to the Commonwealth and are also advisers to the States. Apart from whether we agree with the Commission's findings or not, we must have regard for criticism and recommendations such as these. The Commission states

definitely that in Western Australia and Tasmania no part of the motor taxation revenue is used to meet the annual debt charges of loan liability for roads. It is known that we have incurred a liability of £3,190,000, that we have built roads for motorists and others, and that we have collected nothing directly from the taxpayer to meet the interest and sinking fund charges each year. According to the Treasury records these amount to £143,000 per annum.

Hon. N. Keenan: How much loan money have we spent on roads in the last five years?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: In the last three years we have spent something over £400,000, in addition to the money we have received under the Federal Aid Roads Grant, and also the traffic fees derived from the metropolitan area. The amounts of which I am speaking must be added, each year, to the £3,195,000. The Commission learns all these things and points to them as a weakness in our administration. If we have not the courage to stand up to our obligations, the Commission has the courage to tell us about them.

The Premier: Our grants will be reduced if we do not stand up to our obligations.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The expenditure on roads of £3,000,000 is a weakness. We are making no attempt to meet the interest and sinking fund from collections from motor taxation revenue. That is a definite weakness. I believe the member for Nedlands conducted the first case before the Grants Commission, although it failed to accept his basis in respect to our disabilities and invented one of its own. He would have very great difficulty in showing that the Grants Commission was not justified in the findings to which I have referred. That body is endeavouring to bring the States back to the right track in respect to meeting their just liabilities. In recommendation 198 the Commission says—

Now that positive action has been taken to deal with the transport problems of the State, it is felt that the time is opportune to divert a proportion of motor taxation revenue towards meeting a part of the very large annual debt charges on loan moneys spent on roads. The marked increase in Federal Aid Road Grants and in motor taxation should enable this to be done without much difficulty. A similar course is suggested for Western Australia. In other States a substantial proportion of motor taxation is applied in the manner above indicated,

and the budgets of those States are correspondingly relieved.

It is always a great advantage if we can show—especially in another place—that there is a precedent. In this instance the Eastern States have led the way. For some reason the country local authorities in Western Australia, whether municipal councils or road boards, desire to collect and spend their traffic fees as they please. That privilege has given them a concession that does not exist in any other part of Australia.

Mr. Doney: It has not been abused, has it?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The fact remains that we have a large number of traffic licensing authorities. The Eastern States have central licensing authorities, which in themselves are advantageous. Members will appreciate the advantage of having one controlling and collecting agency and one controlling policing authority in the metropolitan area. Since that concession has been granted and the practice has been established in Western Australia, we are not relieved of liability to accept our responsibilities with respect to utilising some of the funds to pay interest and sinking fund charges on money that has been expended on roads from which the motorists derive undeniable advantage. I find that motorists themselves are quite prepared to pay. I know of no one, more than the motorist, who appreciates the work that has been done in improving the roads throughout the State. The running of a motor car nowadays is far more economical than in years gone by when the licensing fees were considerably less. The fact remains that the Federal Grants Commission, when going through the public accounts of each State, discovered that Western Australia—a claimant State—had not done what nearly all the other States have carried out. The members of the Commission point out that, with the exception of Tasmania and Western Australia, the other States are using portion of the license fees for the payment of interest and sinking fund charges on the loan expenditure incurred in road work. That is a charge we have to answer. In requesting our officials to formulate a case to place before the Grants Commission, we must regard it as our duty to assist them to submit a good case. We must not expect them to be con-

fronted with the contention that we have refused to face responsibilities that are accepted by the Governments of the Eastern States. We must remember that the Federal Grants Commission deals with the States on a comparative basis.

Mr. Doney: You appreciate the fact that a lot of this money has been spent in the interests of the unemployed, which has been a big help to the Treasury.

The Premier: All the money has been spent on the roads.

Mr. Doney: And why not?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The Premier: It has all been spent on the roads.

Mr. Doney: And that has all helped the Treasury.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: On page 85 of the Grants Commission's report members will find recommendation No. 203 is set out. If members peruse it they will see that the Commission not only tells us what we should do, but definitely penalises us in the event of our disregarding its findings.

Mr. Doney: You ignored that last year without ill consequences.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: In the final recommendation members will see that the Grants Commission states:—

204. We think that, in view of the considerations mentioned in this chapter, we should make a general deduction from the grants of the three States. We therefore adjust the above figures by deducting £22,000 from South Australia, a similar amount from Western Australia, and £23,000 from Tasmania. The final grants then become—

	£
South Australia	995,000
Western Australia	595,000
Tasmania	430,000
	<hr/>
	£2,020,000

We recommend the payment of these amounts for the year 1939-40.

Members will see, therefore, that the Grants Commission is not only in a position to tell us what we must do, but it appears to me that our representatives will have great difficulty in demonstrating that the amount of £22,000 should not be deducted from our grant. If we can at this stage show that we are in earnest over the matter, assistance may be lent to the efforts of our representatives.

Mr. Watts: And even if you do that, they will advance some other excuse for curtailing the grant.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: At any rate, I have indicated what the Federal Grants Commission has had to say. That alone justifies the introduction of the Bill, even if there were no other reasons for so doing. What has to be taken into consideration is the tremendous increase in the amount available from the Metropolitan Traffic Trust Account. When that fund was inaugurated, only £15,000 was collected from traffic fees. To-day those receipts aggregate nearly £200,000. The time has certainly arrived for a review of such a substantial amount, which has attained proportions not contemplated by Parliament when the Act was passed. In those earlier days, the liabilities and responsibilities of the various local authorities within the metropolitan area were greater than they are to-day. The fact that the local authorities involved have spent their ordinary quota upon the construction, reconstruction, maintenance and repairs of roads, is acknowledged, but I must point out that they will be as well off under the new provisions as they are at the present time. A complementary Bill will be introduced immediately after the one under discussion has been placed before members. Whereas funds are taken from the Traffic Trust Account under the provisions of the Bill now before the House, a similar amount will be restored to the account by virtue of the second Bill that is to be introduced. Returns taken from the statistics for the road board year ended 30th June, 1938, and for the municipal year ended the 31st. October, 1938, as affecting the local authorities within the metropolitan traffic area, indicate that the total receipts from traffic license fees, Transport Board fees, and grants for road construction, amounted to £137,348. That is the amount distributed under the existing system. Moreover, the aggregate expenditure on the construction and maintenance of roads during that period was £143,104. Thus, the local authorities actually spent last year more than they received. The totals I mentioned are subject to certain adjustments, but even so, those figures indicate that, in the aggregate, the local authorities would not have been at a disadvantage under

the proposed new method, had it been operating during that period.

Mr. J. Hegney: Were all the amounts received under those headings spent on roads and footpaths?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Act provides that the local authorities shall receive the traffic fees, and, as I pointed out to the House, they received £137,000 last year, and spent £143,000 on roads. Thus they certainly spent the amount received from traffic fees.

Mr. J. Hegney: Have you instances of local authorities that have not spent those funds on roads in their districts?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There may be such instances, but I am not stressing that point. The 22½ per cent. allocation to the Main Roads Department for road works within the metropolitan area is not to be interfered with. That arrangement still stands. The question involved is that the revenue from the Trust Account was not intended to be used by the local authorities in such a manner as almost entirely to relieve the general and loan rates from the responsibility to contribute to road and traffic requirements. That is a point that has to be remembered, for such was never intended. Then again there is the inadvisability of the alternative of increasing taxation in view of the activities of the Federal Government in that sphere owing to war necessities. As the Premier pointed out, the alternative is to increase taxation. A further point to be considered is that the reduction from the petrol tax is relatively insignificant compared with the huge sums expended, mostly in the country districts, from funds provided from the petrol tax under the Federal Aid Roads Agreement. Then again there is the somewhat similar assistance received by Consolidated Revenue in some of the Eastern States, the financial methods of which are subject to comparative review by the Federal Grants Commission. Western Australia is the only State in which all license fees are not collected by a central government authority. That is the case for the proposed transfer of the license fees within the metropolitan area only. I have indicated the effect upon the Metropolitan Traffic Trust Account and upon general revenue, and have pointed to the definite right—not a promise—under the provisions of a Bill that will be introduced shortly, to dir-

ect that sums equal to the amounts they receive now shall be paid to local authorities under the new proposal. Thus, we are seeking to bring Western Australia into line with the other States where traffic fees are justifiably used to pay interest and sinking fund charges on loans secured for road construction.

There is one other factor that I shall deal with. The point has relation to our responsibilities respecting State finance generally. There are those who appear to be much concerned about the finances of the local authorities. Many members of this Chamber graduated through local governing bodies and experienced a fine training during that period. In their present capacities those members are brought closely into touch with local governing authorities who naturally expect their members of Parliament to have regard to their rights and to see that their interests are protected. I quite realise that phase, but I would remind members that local authorities have been delegated powers in respect of rating and loan flotations, and that it is a safe policy to pay interest and sinking fund charges on loans and to raise rates accordingly if necessary. Independent of the full load placed on those upon whom devolves the work of governing the State, a duty rests equally upon members themselves to conserve the finances of Western Australia. From time to time we speak of the stressful period through which we are passing and members opposite assert that we must not in any way interfere with the finances of the local governing authorities. They advance the suggestion that, in these days of war, we must have special regard for the needs of the Federal Government. For my part, I think we had better concern ourselves with the needs of the State. I remind the House that in this State we have an intimate knowledge of the goldmining industry and its requirements. The function of all State departments, including the Treasury and the Water Supply and Public Works Departments, has been to foster the industry, knowing what it has meant to the State. Consequently we have refrained from taxing the industry to any great extent. The only special tax imposed was one that was agreed to by those intimately associated with goldmining. Now we find that the Commonwealth Government, for the interests of which some mem-

bers have such a deep regard, has, although the right so to do is denied it by legislation, taxed the industry in one fell swoop to the tune of £1,000,000 per annum.

Mr. SPEAKER: Has that anything to do with traffic matters?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This is a taxation matter, and I am pointing out that, in the course of discussion, members have shown a very great regard for the needs of the local authorities and the Commonwealth, respectively. I am indicating that our business and responsibility are to be concerned with the finances of Western Australia. Even members sitting opposite find no comfort, I presume, in the knowledge that the finances of the State are in a bad way. I should say it is the business of every member to assist to improve the situation. Responsibility principally attaches to the Government, but every member has his responsibility as well. The Premier has shown what is necessary and in a very fair manner has also shown the necessity for this money to be paid to the Treasury to meet interest and sinking fund on loan liabilities. It is not proposed to take the money from the local authorities; that will be refunded under a Bill to be introduced later as a complementary measure to the one under discussion.

Mr. Doney: They would not get a million from it.

The Premier: Yes.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Speaker has already stopped me from discussing that interesting subject, and reminded me that we are now dealing with the proposed transfer which will undeniably assist the Government and will not prejudice or handicap the local authorities. I believe that when the local bodies understand the whole question, there will be no opposition to the Bill. In the past they have received a very fair deal in respect of the traffic fees, and they have been perfectly satisfied with the allocation of those fees. On one occasion when the local authorities complained, the Under Secretary suggested that he should hand the lot to them and they could do the dividing up. They were satisfied, however, to leave the matter to the Works Department—the Under Secretary and his assistants—and so far there has been no difficulty about the allocation. Neither will there be any difficulty under the new arrangement.

I have endeavoured to show the practice existing in the Eastern States and the needs of Western Australia. The fact that the Treasury will benefit, as it must do in some way, justifies the introduction of the Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Doney, debate adjourned.

BILL—DEATH DUTIES (TAXING) ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 19th October; Mr. Marshall in the Chair, the Premier in charge of the Bill.

New clause:

The PREMIER: On the second reading and in the Committee stage the Leader of the Opposition made an appeal with regard to the taxing of estates of deceased persons who enlisted and unfortunately lost their lives. The hon. member urged that their relatives should not suffer through the proposed new legislation. I discussed the matter fully with the Solicitor-General, who informed me that the amendment the Leader of the Opposition desired to have introduced regarding the estates of persons killed on active service should be introduced in the Administration Act and not in the Death Duties (Taxing) Bill. Thus, in accordance with the advice tendered to me, I have placed an amendment on the notice paper and it can be considered when the Administration Bill is called up for consideration.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I accept the explanation of the Premier and agree that the amendment should be made in the Administration Bill.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—ADMINISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 19th October; Mr. Marshall in the Chair, the Premier in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported on Clause 2, to which Hon. C. G.

Latham had moved an amendment as follows:—

That a proviso be added as follows:—“Provided further that nothing in this section shall apply to the estate of any person who shall be killed or die on active service in any war in which His Majesty is engaged, with any of the forces of the Crown.”

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: In view of the Premier's statement that we have just heard, I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

The PREMIER: The Leader of the Opposition desires to give effect to the principle that in the event of a person dying as the result of war activities, the estate of that person should not be penalised by having to pay the whole of the death duties. The hon. member hurriedly drafted an amendment but so that the matter should be put into proper form, I asked the Solicitor General to prepare an amendment to give effect to the hon. gentleman's wishes. That amendment appears on the notice paper and the Leader of the Opposition has withdrawn his amendment in favour of it. I move an amendment—

That the following further proviso be added:—“Provided also, that notwithstanding the next preceding proviso this section shall apply if and when the person from whom the property passes, whether under a will or a settlement or settlements, or a non-testamentary disposition, is at the time of his death a member of the Australian military forces engaged on active service either in an expeditionary force abroad or in home defence within the Commonwealth in connection with the war being waged between His Majesty the King and Germany at the time of the commencement of this proviso, and his death is the direct result of such person being engaged on such active service aforesaid.”

Hon. N. KEENAN: What the Leader of the Opposition asked to have included in the Bill is not embodied in the amendment. His desire was that any Australian who lost his life fighting for the Empire should not be deprived of the advantage of having the rebate applied to his estate. To-day we are aware that there are many young Australians who are serving in the British air forces. They happened at the time to be in another part of the Empire. We know also that in view of the extraordinary conditions under which the war is being conducted, a big effort is being made to expand the air force into an Empire air force, and that a large number of Australians and New Zealanders have been invited to join that force

and be trained, I believe, in Canada. A number of Australians will lose their lives in defending our interests, but will not be fighting in any Australian expeditionary force. I ask the Premier to further postpone this matter until a correct amendment can be drafted that will cover the whole principle, that all those offering up their lives for the Empire should secure the advantage the Leader of the Opposition desires they should have.

The PREMIER: There is no need to defer consideration. The Committee thoroughly understands what is desired. The amendment on the notice paper can easily be amended to cover the conditions set out by the member for Nedlands.

The CHAIRMAN: There is no amendment before the Chair at present. Does the Premier propose to move the amendment on the notice paper?

The PREMIER: Yes. Instead of stipulating "the Australian military forces," we could say "His Majesty's forces."

Hon. N. Keenan: May I make a suggestion?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Premier is addressing the Chair.

The PREMIER: The alteration suggested would cover any citizen of Western Australia, or anyone having an estate in Western Australia liable to be assessed for probate duty, provided he was a member of His Majesty's forces.

Hon. N. Keenan: I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out the words "a member of the Australian military forces engaged" and the words "either in an expeditionary force abroad or in home defence within the Commonwealth."

The amendment would then read—

Provided also that, notwithstanding the next preceding proviso, this section shall apply if and when the person from whom the property passes, whether under a will or a settlement or settlements, or a non-testamentary disposition, is at the time of his death on active service in connection with the war being waged between His Majesty the King and Germany at the time of the commencement of this proviso, and his death is the direct result of such person being engaged on such active service aforesaid.

Probably the words "on the side of the Allies" should be inserted after "active service." My desire is to cover any person fighting on behalf of the Empire and meeting his death while so fighting.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Regardless of whether he was an Australian or not?

Hon. N. Keenan: Is the hon. member himself an Australian?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: We need not go into that.

Hon. N. Keenan: Numbers of young men who have come here from the Old Country and acquired property are now fighting for the Empire. They were not born in Australia but are British subjects who were residing in Australia. Although I have been here 40 years, I cannot describe myself as an Australian.

The Premier: This deals only with estates in Western Australia.

Hon. N. Keenan: I ask the Premier to allow an opportunity to draft the amendment more concisely, or perhaps the desired amendment could be made in another place.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: To adopt the proposal of the member for Nedlands would be dangerous unless we know precisely how far it will go. Parliament should not legislate for people outside the State. We have to look after our own people, and we should not, at a time like the present, do something that we would not do at any other time. The Premier's amendment is distinct, but if it is extended as suggested by the member for Nedlands, it should first be subjected to careful examination by experts of the Treasury. The Premier's amendment is circumscribed in that one would have to join the Australian military forces engaged on active service.

Hon. N. Keenan: A man might join in New South Wales.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I am not concerned about that, but I am concerned about men in England, possibly not born in Western Australia, who, because they have property here and are on active service, will receive consideration which it is not our duty to give.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I know half a dozen men who belong to the British Army reserves. They settled in Western Australia, and two who have taken up land expect to be called to the colours. If they are called up, they will join their regiments in England and leave their wives and families here. They regard themselves as Australians, but according to the member for Guildford-Midland—

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I spoke of men who have never been in Western Australia.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We circumscribe the provision when we stipulate

the A.I.F. or the Australian army on active service.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: An Australian enlisting in England would not participate in benefits, such as repatriation, provided by the Commonwealth Government. Members of the British forces resident in Australia since the war of 1914-18 are on the British pension, which is not comparable with the Australian pension. The proposal is to extend the concession under probate to every soldier who has an estate in Western Australia. The Commonwealth would not grant a pension to an Australian who joined the British forces. English reservists living here, if called upon to serve again, would be bound by the conditions operating in Britain.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Premier sees the need for increased taxation. We all agree that use should not be made of the war to increase revenue, at all events so far as regards men who go away from here to defend this country. We must bear in mind that many Australians have gone abroad for military training and have enlisted in the Imperial Army. I personally know of some who went Home to learn civil aviation and who now have joined the Royal Air Force. I disagree with the member for Guildford-Midland when he says that this proviso should not apply to anyone who happens to own property here but is not a resident of the State. If such a person is killed on active service, he should receive the consideration proposed.

The Premier: Such a man should not be penalised.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No. If we start messing about with the amendment now, we shall probably do something that we do not intend. The word "Germany" should not stand by itself; the proviso should read "Germany or any other country." Time should be allowed for considering the amendment.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I desire information regarding the words "active service."

Hon. C. G. Latham: That is a legal term.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I believe there is nothing in the principal Act as to what is meant by "active service."

Hon. C. G. Latham: Those words are clearly defined.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I consider a man is on active service whether he serves in Australia or beyond its boundaries. It would be well to express exactly what is meant by "active service."

Hon. N. KEENAN: I propose to withdraw my amendment on the amendment, in view of the Premier's declaration that a suitable amendment will be made in another place; but I ask his permission to submit to him, for his approval, what would be a suitable amendment. The inquiry of the member for Perth is met by the fact that the words in the amendment are "killed on active service"—words which are well understood. On the conditions I have indicated, I ask leave to withdraw my amendment on the amendment.

The PREMIER: The amendment itself might be withdrawn, and then I will undertake to place an amendment to meet the position before another place. The Government's amendment to this clause has been moved at the request of the Leader of the Opposition, who I hope will agree to its withdrawal with a view to a suitable amendment being made in the Legislative Council.

Amendment on the amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

The PREMIER: I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 2, as previously amended, agreed to.

Clause 3, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—MAIN ROADS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. H. Millington—Mt. Hawthorn) [7.41] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is complementary to the Traffic Act Amendment Bill, the second reading of which I moved at an earlier stage of the sitting. That Bill, as hon. members are aware, seeks to pass to Consolidated Revenue that proportion of traffic fees hitherto collected and distributed amongst local authorities in the metropolitan area. This procedure is in keeping with the policy adopted throughout the Eastern States, whereby traffic fees

are credited to revenue. To that general rule Western Australia is the only exception. Notwithstanding such exception, the Bill does not propose to seek to deprive local authorities of the benefits they have hitherto received. That is the difference between Eastern States policy and what we propose.

Hon. C. G. Latham: But you do the one thing by Act of Parliament and the other by act of grace.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: It will not be a mere promise, but will be embodied in this Bill, which seeks to restore the traffic fees to local authorities from moneys paid into the Main Roads Trust Account. Those moneys, hitherto spent on roads under the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Main Roads, will continue to be spent on roads, although on roads under the control and jurisdiction of local authorities. For some years, as members know, loan funds have contributed to road expenditure; and, if needs be, this will continue. Thus the total expenditure on roads would be maintained. The proposal in the Bill is to repeal Section 31 of the present Act and substitute a new Section 31. Subsections 1, 2 and 3 are re-enactments of provisions in the existing Act. Subsection 4 is a new provision, and seeks to provide the funds necessary to replace the traffic fees. There will be no reduction of the amount available to local authorities. That is important. It will be observed that paragraph (a) sets out the institution of a formula for distribution of the funds to be made available. This is another important point. The formula will be determined by the Minister on the recommendation of the Commissioner of Main Roads; and it is intended that the formula shall follow, as closely as the altered conditions permit, the existing method of distribution.

There is another point. Paragraph (b) of Subsection 1 proposes that a proportion of the moneys made available to the State may be applied to works connected with transport. This refers to the amount collected through the additional halfpenny in respect of which greater discretion is given to the Commissioner of Main Roads. Already several applications have been received from local authorities to assist them in the provision of aerial landing grounds. Having dealt with the section which pro-

vides for refunds to local authorities, the Government seeks to amend the Main Roads Act in this other particular. These are works that are clearly connected with transport and recognised by the Federal authorities as such. The Federal Act unquestionably permits such application of the funds; but the State's Main Roads Act contains no such authority. It deals only with the provision, construction and maintenance of roads; and this subsection is designed to bring the State Act into line with the Federal Act.

Mr. J. Hegney: Would a road include a footpath?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: We are not dealing with that matter now. The Bill provides that the Commissioner may devote the moneys which he derives from the additional tax of a halfpenny to the provision of aerial landing grounds. Members are aware that this provision has been asked for on many occasions, and that already local authorities have been assisted to do such works. The authority sought by the amending Bill is what is actually now required.

Hon. N. Keenan: What clause of the amending Bill provides for the construction of landing places?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: That will be explained in Committee.

Mr. SPEAKER: I hope the Minister will not traverse the Bill clause by clause.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Clause 4 provides for the validation of payments hitherto made for the purposes indicated, that is to say, moneys applied by the Commissioner to works associated with transport. Subclauses (a) and (b) of Clause 4 are re-enactments of the existing provision. One subclause authorises the Commissioner to pay moneys to local authorities in lieu of the moneys that it is now proposed shall be paid into Consolidated Revenue. The other subclause authorises the Commissioner to make grants for landing grounds. Since certain moneys have already been devoted to that purpose, the measure will be retrospective to the extent that it will validate those payments.

There is only one other matter to which I desire to draw attention. The suggestion has been made that the Federal Government might, on account of war conditions, repudiate its agreement relating to the Fed-

eral Aid Roads Fund. Because of the additional tax of 1d. per gallon levied by the Commonwealth Government, bringing the total tax up to 8¼d., I cannot imagine the Commonwealth repudiating the agreement with the States. I cannot conceive of such an action being taken either by the present or any future Federal Government. The agreement was signed by the late Prime Minister, Mr. Lyons, and by our Premier on the 1st July, 1937. Its duration is 10 years, namely, to the 30th June, 1947. The agreement has the force of law: it has been ratified by the Federal Parliament and by this Parliament; and to suggest that this special tax, levied upon all users of petrol, should be applied to purposes other than those set out in the agreement is unthinkable. I cannot imagine any circumstances under which the Commonwealth Government would repudiate the agreement. That Government may be in dire need of funds; but rather than penalise a section of the community it would spread the tax over all the people of Australia. Such a course has already been followed by the Commonwealth Government. It was followed with regard to the sales tax. I understand that additional tariff duties will be levied and that there will be an increase in the income tax. I might mention that the only man in Australia who suggested repudiation did not get on too well. If I remember aright, Mr. Lang's reputation did not improve when he suggested repudiation.

Mr. SPEAKER: Does this Bill deal with Mr. Lang?

Mr. Doney: Not to any marked degree.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It has been suggested that the Commonwealth Government might repudiate the agreement. If that were done, the Commissioner would not have funds with which to pay the proposed grants. I wish to satisfy the House that the repudiation of the agreement is a contingency quite beyond our imagination, and so I crave your indulgence to pass that remark, Sir. The matter was raised in discussion. The measure is a simple one and is introduced for the two reasons I have already mentioned. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Doney, debate adjourned.

BILL—STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 28th September.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [7.54]: I shall not oppose the second reading of the Bill. At the same time, I will seek to amend it in Committee so that it will apply only to the insurance contemplated by the Traffic Act Amendment Bill which was recently passed by the House, that is to say, third-party insurance business in regard to motor vehicles as prescribed by that Bill, if it becomes an Act. I regret that the Minister has not seen fit in the intervening years since the State Insurance Office select committee sat to conduct the investigation which it was unanimously agreed by the members of that committee was desirable. Such an investigation would have had considerable bearing not only on workers' compensation insurance, but also on the type of insurance contemplated by the Bill now before the House. That select committee made reference to certain types of insurance which were all of a social nature, because of the quality of the risk itself, such as workers' compensation, or a risk in the same category. Compulsory insurance, such as is now proposed in regard to third-party risk, is what this Bill seeks to enable the State Insurance Office to contract for. There has been no such inquiry, and consequently members have not had the opportunity of examining and arriving at a conclusion upon the recommendations of the select committee in regard to the State Government Insurance Office and also in reference to this particular matter. The result will be that we shall have a Traffic Act of a somewhat cumbersome nature, followed by this measure in order to implement it to some extent and to give the State Office power to deal with this particular class of insurance. Presumably, however, this Bill intends to go a step further, because it refers to all classes of insurable risks, including third-party risks in connection with motor vehicles. I will endeavour to be consistent. I have already said that in my view the State office or some similar institution created by statute should have a large measure of control, if not complete control, of insurance of a compulsory or social nature. Beyond that I will not go. Consequently, so far as

I am concerned, this measure is acceptable at the second reading stage; but in Committee I shall certainly endeavour to amend it by ensuring that it shall apply to the compulsory type of third-party insurance in connection with motor vehicles which is expressed to be required by the Traffic Act Amendment Bill recently passed by this House. I have placed on the notice paper the amendments that I propose to move. With these few observations, I support the second reading.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [7.57]: I think it can be shown that the Government is going further than is justified in respect to the provisions of this Bill. The argument is that the Government should be permitted to carry on third-party insurance business because such insurance is to be compulsory. There are, however, many things that are compulsory but with which the Government does not interfere. For instance, motor cars must be provided with lights, yet the Government does not enter into that particular business. It is proposed that this measure shall apply to all classes of insurable risks, including third-party risk, in connection with the ownership and use of motor vehicles. Insurance against third-party risk is to be made compulsory. I realise that it should be compulsory, but surely there is no justification for the Government's intruding into this class of business. At present it is being conducted by the Royal Automobile Club, which does it well. The State Government Insurance Office Act was assented to as late as the 31st January this year. That Act was definitely limited to workers' compensation but the ink is hardly dry on the paper before the Government aims to extend its operations by means of this measure. There is no need for the Bill, which provides an indication that when approval to one step is given, other steps are taken. I realise the measure is introduced concurrently with the amendment to the Traffic Act. Clause 77 of the Traffic Act Amendment Bill makes special reference to the means by which the amounts to be charged as premiums shall be arrived at. It provides that—

Upon the recommendation of the Minister the Governor may from time to time appoint a committee (a) to inquire into and report upon the question whether the premiums charged for insurance are, or whether any term, warranty or condition contained in any

policy of insurance issued for the purposes of this part is fair and reasonable.

Then provision is made whereby the committee shall consist of six persons as follows:—The Auditor General as chairman, the State Government Actuary—

Mr. SPEAKER: Is the hon. member discussing the Traffic Act?

Mr. SAMPSON: No, Mr. Speaker. I am discussing the amendment to the State Government Insurance Office Act, but I am pointing out the course that is being taken in another Bill to ensure that the cost of securing a policy of protection under third-party insurance shall be fair and reasonable.

The Minister for Labour: What is the number of that clause?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. SAMPSON: I am surprised at the Minister. In addition to the people I have mentioned, it is provided that the committee shall include two persons appointed to represent the owners of motor vehicles and two to represent approved insurers. So the public is thoroughly protected and particularly, as I have said, is this the case in regard to the operations of the Royal Automobile Club. It would be wrong for the Government to encroach upon work that is so efficiently, thoroughly and economically carried out by that club and other insurers. The Traffic Bill is based on the South Australian measure and I could wish that—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is not in order in discussing the Traffic Bill.

Mr. SAMPSON: I desired to point out that, although there is provision in South Australia for third-party insurance, it was not considered necessary for the Government to embark upon insurance. State enterprises eventually embarrass members of the Government. There is no doubt about that. Successive Premiers and Ministers would have been far better off if their predecessors had not interfered with work that can well be carried out by concerns established for the purpose. I have expressed my disapproval of the Bill, for which there is no justification. The public is well protected because of the provision in the Traffic Act Amendment Bill for the appointment of a board. I hope the Bill will not be passed. If it is, the members of the Government will later regret the fact. I repeat that there is no justification for the Government to inter-

fere when work is being done efficiently by others.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [8.5]: This Bill is what is very often described to the House as a very little Bill that will not do much harm. It does, however, involve a principle. After a debate extending over many years, a Bill was passed, on the recommendation of a select committee, to legalise the State Government Insurance Office to transact workers' compensation insurance. There are certain people in the House and in the State who are not in favour of State trading, but the State Insurance Office had been carrying on illegally for many years. To inquire into the genesis of its business is not necessary but it had become a de facto organisation, and the House very properly, on the recommendation of the select committee, decided to accept the fact of the existence of the office and to legalise it for the work it had been doing, namely, the conducting of certain branches of workers' compensation insurance. The House agreed to accept an Act which would constitute on a legal basis this form of State trading confined to workers' compensation insurance. All members of the House agreed to that departure. After the lapse of a year this Bill is introduced, by means of which the Government—I will not say goes back on the bargain—seeks to extend the trading operations of the State Government Insurance Office beyond the limit that the House last year accepted as a fair compromise. The extension is not a big one and probably will not do much harm, but it represents a matter of principle. The reason for my saying that is that everybody in the House and in the State is anxious to extend the State's secondary industries. Very few people are likely to spend a great deal of capital in this State in initiating or extending secondary industries if they are liable to the competition of the State in that same department of industry. The State has advantages that could out-weigh any advantage outsiders could bring to bear in that competition. The Government has a good deal more money and a vast amount of patronage. It has trading concerns and governmental operations. It can place contracts and can buy supplies. It is able to feed its own trading concerns with orders, thus giving them a tremendous start in the race. Are we to say to the people who may come to this State, whom we invite to come here

to establish or extend secondary industries, "You are to accept the risk of the State's coming into competition with you, if not now then at some future date"? It is a view we have accepted on occasions in the past and a principle we have extended even so late as this year. If that is an honest and fair statement of governmental policy that we hold out to the world, is it likely to assist in the development of industry that we all recognise to be so desirable? I have said repeatedly in this House, and say it again, that if any section of the trading community is making unfair profits and exploiting the public, the State is justified in stepping in on a competitive basis until such time as the public is properly protected.

Mr. Lambert: That is what has always been done.

Mr. McDONALD: The Bill seeks to give the State Insurance Office power to insure for third-party risk, but under a Bill that has been passed by the House a special tribunal is to be appointed to settle the rates to be charged to the public for that service. In the Bill dealing with third-party insurance we have the machinery for the protection of the public. By that measure we ensure that people shall not be charged an unfair rate. That machinery can be developed in other directions. In England the Board of Trade, in reference to workers' compensation insurance, has laid down a certain ratio between the amount the insurance companies have to pay for claims and the amount they are entitled to charge to the public by way of premiums. It has ensured by that means, by a very simple ratio accepted by the insurance world and by the Government on behalf of the public, that the charges made for workers' compensation shall be on a fair basis. If we have here the machinery for ensuring that there shall be no exploitation of the public, there is no reason why the State Government Insurance Office should come into competition with outside industry. If we were to say to the people we want to induce to come here in order to promote secondary industries, "You will not suffer the disadvantage—it might be the fatal disadvantage—of State competition so long as you are making a fair and reasonable charge to the public," they would know where they stood. I am aware of what the Minister will say. He will declare we have not shown any great readiness to accept an anti-profiteering measure.

The Minister for Labour: You have certainly shown nothing of the kind.

Mr. McDONALD: I present the idea to the Minister; it is quite a good argument to use. But I would be quite prepared, apart from conditions created by the war, to support an anti-profiteering measure if occasion arose. One argument I have always used is that, unfortunately, in this State, in connection with our industries, and almost all our trading operations, it is not a question of too much profit but of too little profit being made, and that is the reason such difficulty is experienced in establishing new industries in competition with those in the Eastern States where the advantages are so much greater. That is the difficulty I see about this little Bill, and I commend the idea to the Minister. It is an extension of the principle of State trading in competition with private individuals who put their capital, energy and work into the establishment of trade or business within the State.

Mr. Lambert: There are only 44 insurance companies in Western Australia.

Mr. Doney: There are 76.

Mr. McDONALD: That does not matter in this case, where there is specific machinery for ensuring that the rate of premium charged shall be fair and reasonable.

Mr. Lambert: The trouble is they are not in competition.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes, they are.

Mr. McDONALD: To a degree they are.

Mr. Lambert: I do not think so.

Mr. McDONALD: I do not wish to be led astray. I would not object to telling prospective capitalists and owners of enterprises that we reserve the right to establish State trading concerns, and I have no serious objection to such concerns if we declare them as a matter of Government policy; but I do think that the people ought to be told.

The Minister for Labour: We reserve that right, whether we say so or not.

Mr. McDONALD: Yes, but we could give some idea of our general principles. It will not help in the campaign to have new industries started in this State if we tell prospective industrialists in no uncertain manner that we are still further enlarging the area of State trading operations.

Mr. Lambert: It would be a good idea if we did.

Mr. McDONALD: I do not mind if that is to be a feature of the Government's policy, but it must take into account that such a policy may be very discouraging to traders who feel that at any time when they have established an industry they may have to face State competition. They will not merely face the competition of a rival trader working on equal ground and subject to equal difficulties, but will face the competition of a competitor who is too strong to give them much chance of achieving a great deal of good. That is the difficulty I feel with regard to this Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam—in reply) [8.18]: I desire to express appreciation to the member for Katanning (Mr. Watts) for having drawn attention to the motion that was carried unanimously by a select committee. The committee some 12 months or so ago inquired into the question whether the State Insurance Office should be legalised for the transaction of any particular class or classes of insurance business. The inquiry recommended by that committee is one that should be held. I am sorry the hon. member mentions the matter only once a year. Had he mentioned it to me perhaps twice a year, some practical action could have been taken. It is safe to say that such an inquiry will be held. If an inquiry of that type were held, all classes of social insurance and all classes of compulsory insurance would be thoroughly investigated, and we would be assisted materially in ascertaining what degree of insurance business should be carried out by the State and what degree of insurance business should be left to private companies to handle. The member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) indicated his opposition to the Bill on the basis of principle. Those who listened carefully to him would have no difficulty in deciding that his opposition was based not on principle but on prejudice. He is opposed to the Government doing anything—

Mr. Sampson: That amounts to interference with trade or business.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR: —that amounts to interference with the absolute liberty of private individuals to do what they like at whatever cost they like to the people of the State.

Mr. Lambert: He started a newspaper in the Fremantle Gaol.

Mr. Sampson: How did you know that?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I am sure the hon. member is opposed to the Government printing, in the form of "Hansard," the proceedings of this Parliament.

Hon. P. Collier: I do not think so.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: He is not opposed to that on principle, but is opposed to it absolutely out of the deep-seated prejudice he has within him towards the Government doing anything to protect the public, when to protect it in that manner means some interference with the profits that private individuals might otherwise be able to make.

Mr. Sampson: We have passed the workers' compensation insurance, and now you want more.

Mr. Cross: Why not have fire insurance too?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The member for Swan and the member for West Perth (Mr. McDonald) suggested that the State office was legalised only early this year, that it was legalised to carry out in the main only insurance business under the Workers' Compensation Act. That is true. The Bill with which we are now dealing, and which proposes to give the State Insurance Office the right to do another class of insurance business, is dependent entirely upon the decision of Parliament with regard to another measure that proposes to set up not a new type of insurance but to make compulsory an existing type of insurance with which a large number of people in the State do not deal. I think most motorists in Western Australia are not insured against third-party risk. The Bill this House passed dealing with the subject proposes to make insurance against third-party risk compulsory upon every motorist. Therefore, the existing field of third-party insurance will be greatly extended. The Bill before us proposes to give the State Insurance Office the right not to a monopoly of that particular business but the right to accept insurance from persons who voluntarily prefer to give their business to the State Insurance Office.

Mr. Sampson: You are encouraging private enterprise in the next Bill.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: There is another important point. The Bill pro-

viding for compulsory insurance in connection with third-party risk will set up a committee, which will inquire into the whole question and will finally recommend what should be a fair rate of insurance to charge motorists. What will be the position if private companies refuse to write business at that rate?

Mr. Sampson: And if the State takes the business and loses money on it?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The position will be that people in the State who desire to obtain third-party cover at a reasonable price will be unable to get it, and, furthermore, the legislation that will have been passed by this Parliament will become inoperative. If the State Insurance Office be legalised, and if it considered that the rate recommended by the proposed committee was a fair rate, and it was willing to write insurance at that rate, it would be ridiculous for us not to provide motorists with the opportunity to get third-party cover under those conditions. The proposed third-party insurance will be compulsory. The people who are compelled to insure, no matter whether in connection with motor cars, workers' compensation or any other activity, should have the greatest possible choice in regard to the firm or office through which they are to obtain their insurance cover. What right has Parliament to pass a law compelling large numbers of people in the State to take out insurance in connection with one risk or another, and compel the same people to pay the price demanded of them by one firm or a group of firms joined together who may decide to charge one rate for the joint business to be done?

Mr. Sampson: What about the lights and lamps? Will the Government supply them?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: There is urgent need for lights and lamps for the hon. member in connection with this Bill. The member for West Perth (Mr. McDonald) gave me the impression that he was really in favour of the Bill. As the discussion proceeds, it is probable we shall find ourselves confirmed in that impression as he agrees to the passing of the various clauses contained in the measure. The only fear he expressed was that the passing of the Bill might set up in the minds of some people the idea that Western Australia as a State

might at any time in the future extend its existing activities and establish a new State trading concern. He feared that some persons who might be interested in expanding existing secondary industries in Western Australia, or in establishing new industries of that type in the State, might interpret this Bill to mean that the Government and Parliament, or some future Government and Parliament in this State, might establish a State confectionery, a State tobacco or a State biscuit factory, or some other State enterprise.

Mr. Sampson: Equally consistent.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: It is difficult to build up an argument of that description upon the contents of the Bill with which we are now dealing. This measure proposes to give the State Insurance Office the right to make motor car insurance available to the public only so long as insurance against third-party motor risk is made compulsory by Act of Parliament. If Parliament does make that type of insurance compulsory, and after three or six years' experience decides that the experiment has been a failure, and then Parliament repeals the legislation dealing with third-party risks, the right of the State Insurance Office to carry on motor car insurance business will automatically cease to exist. It will be seen, and seen very clearly, that this Bill is very greatly restricted in more than one way, and will not set up any of the dangers referred to by the member for Swan or the member for West Perth. I appeal to members to give the Bill their approval.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Labour in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 2.

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That in line 5 the words "all classes of insurable risks, including" be struck out.

The intention of the Bill is that third-party insurance, as proposed in the Traffic Act Amendment Bill, so long as the insurance is compulsory, shall be regarded as a section of the insurance business that the State

Insurance Office may participate in. The inclusion of the words I proposed to strike out would appear to afford an opportunity to the State office to engage in all classes of comprehensive motor car insurance business. I made my position quite clear during the second reading debate. I am prepared to allow the State office the opportunity to undertake motor car insurance that is made compulsory by way of legislation, but I do not favour extending that privilege to other forms of motor car insurance. The Minister may say that the person who desires to take out a third-party insurance policy to comply with the provisions of the Traffic Act Amendment Bill, should it become law, would desire at the same time to take out a comprehensive insurance policy covering his motor vehicle. Broadly speaking, such a person may be regarded as already insured, and the individual likely to require the services of the State Insurance Office will be the one that is compelled to take out a policy for third-party risk cover.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I do not propose to accept the amendment. It would be rather illogical to give the State Insurance Office the right to transact third-party insurance business and yet deny it the right to engage in other classes of insurance associated with the ownership and use of motor cars. If the member for Katanning availed himself of the services of the State office to cover third-party risks, he might desire to place his other motor car insurance with an outside office. Hundreds of others might not adopt that attitude. Surely it is logical to give the State office the right to transact all classes of motor car insurance. That is merely a business proposition.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Minister's argument seems to be wanting, particularly if one reads the whole of the clause.

Mr. Watts: Exactly.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If, after a policy had been taken out with the State Insurance Office, the law making it compulsory to insure against third-party risks was repealed, the policy would be null and void. So it is clear that the only policy that the Bill intends the State office to undertake, is that against the third-party risk. One might go further and say that the whole position depends upon the fact that many people

who drive motor vehicles do not insure them at all. We are now seeking to compel them to insure to a limited extent so as to cover third-party risks. We do not seek to compel people to insure against fire, theft or anything else covered by a comprehensive policy. The latter part of the clause shows that it has no meaning whatever unless the other legislation, to which reference has been made, is accepted.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I am afraid the member for Nedlands has not advanced any argument against the clause as it stands. True, if compulsory third-party insurance is not continued by Parliament, the right of the State office to conduct motor car insurance business will cease, but not in the manner suggested by the member for Nedlands. If the State Insurance Office has issued a policy to cover a property for 12 months, either from the standpoint of third-party risks or for any other form of motor car insurance, and Parliament should decide within three months to repeal the legislation dealing with compulsory third-party insurance, it is hardly likely that the State office or any private insurance office would hold on to the premiums for the period of 12 months, seeing that the risk operated for only three months.

Hon. N. Keenan: I did not suggest that, but rather the return of the premiums, with an intimation that the policy had ceased to exist.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I agree with that contention. If the office returned the portion of the premium applicable to third-party insurance, it would naturally do the same with regard to the portion of the premium applicable to the other classes of motor car insurance that had been written at the same time. Any such arrangement could be made quite as well regarding general motor car insurance as it could be with regard to the third-party risk.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—TRAMWAYS PURCHASE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 26th September.

MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco) [8.44]: I oppose the second reading of the Bill. I have been requested to do so by the Subiaco Municipal Council. When I received that request, I naturally read the Act and the Bill very carefully. I have come to the conclusion that, technically, the Government has every right to act as it has decided to act, but, morally, it has not a leg to stand on. In the expectation of continuing to receive the 3 per cent. of the gross earnings of the tramways, the municipalities have to a certain extent been able to reduce rates. In Subiaco alone, the municipality will lose over £500 per annum if the Bill becomes law. This will be bound to make a difference in the repairing of the roads where the tram tracks are. As everyone knows, the trams vibrate considerably, and naturally they reduce the roads very rapidly to a state of disrepair. Therefore I consider that a great injustice is being done to the municipalities by stopping this payment. Of course the Government may intend to remove the trams and replace them with trolley buses. In that case I do not suppose much harm would be done by taking the concession now given to the municipalities. However, I oppose the Bill. As I said Subiaco will lose over £500 per annum, which is quite a considerable sum for a small municipality to have to forego. Then with the taking away of the traffic fees and paying them into Consolidated Revenue, a still further loss will be sustained. It appears to me that the Premier is looking into every corner and cranny for the purpose of effecting economies or raising money. We are faced with a depression greater than any we have ever experienced before—

The Premier: Do you represent a municipality or the State?

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I am representing Subiaco at present.

The Minister for Labour: "Rockerby" road.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I should like to inform the Minister for Labour that the pronunciation is not "Rockerby" road. It

is "Rokeby" road, and in addition to representing Rokeby-road, Subiaco, I also represent the State. The Bill will do an injustice to the municipalities that have been spending the money they have been receiving from this source on the roads along which the trams run, and all good roads help the State. I shall oppose the Bill.

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [8.50]: At the time the agreement to be affected by the Bill was entered into, 3 per cent. of the gross revenue was to be paid over to the local authorities. Later the Government purchased the tramway system, and it was recognised that the local authorities had some equity in it. The City of Perth had undertaken to assume possession of the trams free of debt at the expiration of a certain period. When the agreement was entered into with the local authorities, it was decided that it should remain in force until 1939, and thereafter as long as Parliament permitted.

Mr. North: It was a long time.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It was the responsibility of the Government to maintain the roads where the tramway tracks were and as far as I know that has been done. I am not aware that we can offer any strong protest against the action now being taken by the Government. But I should have liked to see an amicable arrangement arrived at between the City Council and the Government on this question. However, I do not offer any opposition to the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—WHEAT PRODUCTS (PRICES FIXATION) ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 10th October.

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [8.56]: I expected that the Minister would have given us a little more information about the Bill, and that he would have stated the reasons for its introduction. If I interpret it correctly its object is to give power to control

a number of people who, although they do not prepare flour or wheat products, are at the same time engaged in the business of buying and selling. Nearly everyone deals with wheat products in some form or other. But the Minister did not tell us really what is behind his proposal. Under the Act power exists to examine the books of any farmer. Now the Minister is asking for what seems to me to be unlimited additional powers. He did not give the House any reason for the measure, and until I hear his reasons I shall vote against the Bill and recommend members to vote against it also. If there is a reason for the Bill, the Minister should tell the House what it is. We on this side always treat the Government fairly, and on this occasion we should know the manner in which the Bill will affect storekeepers. Under the profiteering measure that we passed recently, the Minister has all the power that he requires. Now he simply says, "I want an alteration made; here is the Bill; you can either agree to it or disagree to it." I intend to vote against it because no information has been given us as a reason for its introduction. Usually when the Minister introduces legislation he talks too much, but on this occasion he had very little to say. He never seems to be able to strike the happy mean, and so until he has something more to say about the Bill. I shall ask the House to vote against it.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam—in reply) [8.57]: If I remember rightly, a complaint similar to that levelled against me by the Leader of the Opposition to-night was levelled against him in this House on Wednesday of last week. The Profiteering Prevention Act specifically excludes from its provisions any commodity that comes within the purview of the Act we are now seeking to amend.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Outside that, you have all the power you want.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR: No, because Clause 18 of the Bill only gives power of investigation in respect of certain persons dealing with commodities that are under the principal Act that the Bill seeks to amend. We have power to carry out investigations into the operations of a restricted number of people in connection with the projects covered by the Act, but no power of investigation regarding quite a number of

other people operating under the provisions of the Act. The Leader of the Opposition and other members will know that the Wheat Products Prices Fixation Act established a committee which operates under the provisions of that Act. The committee, when carrying out investigations, has encountered difficulties in trying to ascertain whether its decisions are being observed, and the Bill now before us is here on the recommendation of members of the committee. They have found their operations hampered and their investigations restricted because their powers can be exercised only in connection with certain people and not in connection with other people.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Who are those other people? That is what I want to know.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Any person engaged in the business of buying or selling any flour.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That applies to all storekeepers.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: If the price of any wheat product is fixed under the Act, it would apply to any person handling that product, and I think it should so apply. Why should we police the activities of only a few of the people associated with wheat products and not those of other people? Why should we compel the miller to sell his flour to the baker at a certain price, have full power to investigate the miller's activities and no power at all to investigate the activities of a person who sells bread or flour in a shop?

Hon. C. G. Latham: We already have power to control bread.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: We have power to control the price of bread, but we have no power of investigation regarding the shopkeeper or baker who sells bread, unless the baker is a manufacturer. We tried to make investigations recently under one phase of the Act and could not do so effectively because there was no power of investigation to cover the person concerned. In the view of members of the committee operating under the Act, the proposed amendment is vital. They are the persons possessing the most complete knowledge of what is required and they have recommended the Government to introduce this amendment to assist them in their work. We recommend the amendment on those grounds, and believe that its acceptance will

have the effect of enabling the committee to work more smoothly and efficiently as a result of having these investigatory powers.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Labour in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 18:

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Section 18 provides—

(1) Any officer of the Public Service of the State authorised in writing by the Minister in that behalf may inspect any books, accounts, registers, records, documents or writings which are in the custody or control of any person carrying on the business of gristing, manufacturing or preparing any flour or any wheat product and which relate to such business, and may take notes, copies or extracts thereof or therefrom.

The proposal is to add after the word "preparing" the words "or of buying or of selling." That will extend the operations of the Act considerably and will do more than the Minister really desires.

The Minister for Labour: It will apply only to investigation.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The interpretation section—

The CHAIRMAN: The clause deals only with Section 18.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes, but reference must be made to the interpretation in order to understand the Minister's proposal. "Flour" is defined thus—

"Flour" means any substance produced—

(a) by gristing, crushing, grinding, milling, cutting, or otherwise processing wheat, or by any one or more of those processes applied to wheat combined with any other commodity;

(b) by the sifting or screening of or any mechanical operation applied to substances so produced; or

(c) by the combination of any of the operations specified in the last two preceding paragraphs.

The term includes—

(d) any mixture of any such substances; and

(e) self-raising flour.

So long as it affects only those articles, the Minister is entitled to ask for the power, but

persons who buy or sell are to be subjected to this inquisitorial process. I asked the Minister for the reason for seeking the additional power, and all he could tell us was that the committee had asked for it. We should be told in what way the committee has been handicapped. Has it been refused information that was sought? The committee can follow the bread from the mixing of the dough to the delivery of the loaf. If that is not sufficient, the Bread Act gives additional power. There is no justification for the Bill. I suggest that hardly any member understands the purpose of the Bill, and I am afraid the Minister does not understand it.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Section 18 empowers any authorised officer to inspect books, accounts or other documents in the custody of any person who carries on the business of gristing, manufacturing or preparing any flour or wheat product. Beyond that we have no power of investigation whatever. Many people are engaged in the distribution and sale of flour and other wheat products, apart from those occupied in the manufacturing of those products, and the committee must have power to carry its investigations further. Persons engaged in the manufacturing, gristing or preparing of the product might be only a small number of the total engaged in the business of ultimately getting those products to the consumer. Often the product must be followed right through before the committee can be assured of what has happened in the process from the commencement of manufacture until the product is sold. Shopkeepers have to be interrogated and investigations have to be made into the activities of people who have nothing to do with the manufacturing, gristing or preparing of a commodity. Some investigations have appeared to provide reasonable grounds for suspicion.

Hon. C. G. Latham: What of?

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR: That the prices fixed have not, in fact, been charged to the consumer because of practices adopted, not by the manufacturer, but by other people who handle the product at some stage or other between the manufacturer and the consumer. The committee cannot have the Act properly policed until the powers of investigation are provided. The amendment is designed merely

to give the committee or the Minister additional powers of investigation, and I know from experience that they are urgently needed. No storekeeper will be harassed; the powers will be used only when the committee is unable otherwise to secure the necessary information.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Commonwealth decided to impose an excise tax on flour, and the State had to pass complementary legislation to give effect to the wishes of the Commonwealth. I cannot see what other powers the Minister needs. Is the storekeeper charging too low a price? Is the law being evaded by failure to include the proper quantity of flour in returns? Is there gristing from cheaper wheat than should be used? I think the price of wheat was fixed at 4s. 8d. a bushel. If that is the case, the Minister should have this power; but I do not for a moment believe that the millers are not paying a fair and reasonable price for their wheat. Perhaps it is not possible to ascertain that millers are charging a fair price to bakers and storekeepers. However, after flour has gone into a storekeeper's establishment, what advantage is there in fixing the price of, say, self-raising flour? As the Minister appears to have reason to believe that there is evasion of the law, we should support him.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I think I have in effect told the Leader of the Opposition that which he has now suggested. Maybe I did not tell it to him as clearly as he would have wished. I assure the hon. gentleman and all other members that these powers are necessary for the purposes mentioned by him, as well as for those I mentioned previously. The committee fixes the price of bread; but whilst the committee possesses all necessary powers of investigation regarding a person who manufactures bread, it has no power of investigation regarding anyone else who may handle the bread before it is sold to the consumer. Its proposed powers are needed for that purpose and to ensure that the prices fixed by the committee are the prices charged to the consumer. This clause is the Bill.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

BILL—DENTISTS.*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 17th October.

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [9.20]: I have no objection to the measure. It deals with one of those matters which must come up for consideration from time to time. A considerable period has now elapsed since there was any amendment of legislation controlling the dental profession. However, the Bill introduces two or three innovations. To me it seems peculiar that we start off with legislation of a restrictive nature controlling industries or professions and that then before proceeding far we find that we have done an injustice to some people or that methods of evading our legislation have been discovered. Here is one of those cases. Certain people are engaged in dentistry, but under the existing law are not permitted to practise. Some of those persons are highly qualified, though it is difficult for them to pass the required examinations. A person who to-day is articled to a dentist should not be asked to pass examinations such as might be set for a student going through the College of Dentistry, since the latter would not have the practical qualifications although he might possess just as much learning as a man starting from scratch by the other route.

Another matter—and I hope the Minister will agree to alter the Bill in this respect—is that in Western Australia various dental companies have been operating. No new companies will be permitted to operate if the Bill passes into law. A man who has built up a business by his professional activities should have some security of tenure. The Bill as printed may give a company a permit to register to-day and revoke the permit tomorrow. That is making legislation ridiculous. Again, I believe that a company practising dentistry builds up a certain goodwill in the same way as a dentist. Frequently upon the death of a professional man that goodwill is the only asset he leaves to his dependants, and sometimes that asset is worth a considerable amount of money. If the Bill remains as drafted, I shall ask the Minister to provide that when the principal of a dental company ceases to be a dentist, or dies, the Minister shall in all fairness and reasonableness allow that busi-

ness to be transferred. If it is against the public interest that there should be any more dental companies, I have no objection to offer. Personally I consider very good service is obtained from some of those companies. I know of dental companies in the city and suburbs who give really good professional service. We ought to see that the interest in a business is retained for the beneficiaries if one of these men dies. I do not think there is anything else in the Bill to which I need take exception, but I hope the Minister will not enter upon the Committee stage to-night, as I have some amendments to propose.

The Minister for Health: I only want the second reading put through.

HON. C. G. LATHAM: The postponement of the Committee stage would probably save a good deal of time.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [9.25]: The Bill has my support. I have the advantage of representations made to me by the assistants, who pointed out the situation they were occupying to-day. It seems to me that the measure will meet the conditions under which they have been working, while at the same time ensuring that the public shall have qualified services. I have also had information from the Dental Board, which is charged with the administration of the Act, that the terms of the measure are supported by the board. I understand the Bill has been recommended to the Government by the statutory authority which is charged with the administration of the Act. It is unnecessary for me to say more, except that I have placed on the notice paper a few minor amendments dealing with matters of wording principally, which I shall ask the Committee at a later stage to accept.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—WAR FUNDS REGULATION.*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 10th October.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [9.27]: The Bill relates to the raising or collecting of money for war funds, and is taken from the South Australian Act. I support the second reading; but I observe that although the meas-

ure has been taken from the South Australian legislation, all the principles of that Act have not been included in the Bill. Only to an extent have the features of the South Australian measure been retained. That Act relates to the raising or collection of money for war funds. In this Bill it is for purposes connected with the present war and for a period thereafter. The measure sets out a definition of trustees, and the definition says "any person or persons in an association or society of persons whether corporate or unincorporate who in a fiduciary capacity either themselves or through their servants or agents receive or collect money for any war fund and engage in the control or administration of such war fund and the money therein." I consider that such trustees should be registered. I would suggest, further, that the credentials of persons seeking authorisation should be examined. They could then efficiently and with confidence control the funds. Reports could be submitted to the Chief Secretary or to Parliament from time to time, and accordingly the Chief Secretary's Department could be relieved of this additional and quite unnecessary burden.

The Minister for Health: What burden is that?

Mr. SAMPSON: The burden of supervising matters connected with the operations of the proposed funds, and so forth. The Bill makes provision for certain duties the performance of which will become the obligation of the Chief Secretary. If, as I stated, those duties were given to trustees or to a board, the Chief Secretary's Department would be relieved of the work, except, perhaps, the duties of receiving a report and submitting it in due course to Parliament. The work would be done in an honorary capacity. There are many people who could do the work efficiently and who would be pleased and proud to do it. In saying this, I am casting no reflection on the Chief Secretary's Department. One object in submitting the suggestion is to relieve the department of unnecessary work. Let us take the opportunity presented to us by this Bill to select some of our leading citizens to do the work. It would be done thoroughly.

Certain amendments appear on the notice paper. It was my intention to submit amendments providing that the

Chief Secretary should not be primarily in control, but should function only subsequently to the operations of trustees or a board. The amendments on the notice paper are, I think, desirable, and for the acceptance of which there is every justification. I emphasise that my suggestion casts no reflection on the Minister or on those associated with him. The Bill is a very necessary piece of legislation. Had such a measure been in force during the term of the previous war, it would have been a good thing for the control and allocation of war funds. I support the second reading, and will support the amendments proposed by the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson).

MR. WILSON (Collie) [9.33]: In presenting the information I desire to place before members, I am not reflecting unfairly on any person or on any organisation. It is right, however, that I should express my views upon the way in which war funds were expended. Some of the funds were not well administered. I congratulate the Government upon bringing this Bill forward and I want to correct an impression that seems to prevail that similar legislation is not in force elsewhere. Both New Zealand and South Australia have similar legislation. South Australia's legislation is in some respects identical with our proposed legislation. South Australia makes provision for a tribunal which is responsible for the correct application of funds. New Zealand's legislation has a somewhat similar provision. In giving notice of my amendment, I do not seek in any way to reflect upon the Chief Secretary or his department. My object is to prevent the Chief Secretary from being loaded up with work that it will be impossible for him to do. I shall give members some idea of the magnitude of the funds collected during the Great War and of the number of organisations that collected money. Members will be surprised to learn of the number of organisations that were, so to speak, "double-dinking" the job. Western Australia was very generous. The total amount collected in the State during the period of the Great War was £1,114,000. That is the amount of which we got knowledge. As low as £10 was contributed to one fund; and as high as £182,000 to another. The sum of £11 6s. 7d. was collected for the Belgian Children's

Fund. The central fund of the Red Cross Society collected £184,961. The Red Cross Society had several branches and the amounts collected by them were as follows:—

	£
British	8,095
Geraldton	3,988
Servian	819
Kalgoorlie	31,995
Boulder	10,419

The total collections for the Red Cross funds in this State amounted to £240,280. I am omitting shillings and pence. On going through the balance sheets of the society for a period of 18 months after the war, I discovered that it had still a balance in hand of nearly £40,000.

The Y.M.C.A. collected for war work the sum of £79,140. Further big collectors included the following:—

	£
War Patriotic Fund	126,973
Australia Day, Sick and Wounded Fund	75,078
Goldfields Patriotic Fund	36,000
Victoria League	100,810
Civil servants and Government employees	10,581
Soldiers' Welcome Committee	11,827
Ugly Men's Association	38,165

Those are very large sums of money. Inquiry into the way in which the money was dealt with makes one wonder at the carelessness of the people in control. Some of the money was sent out of the State. For example, according to evidence submitted, nearly £32,000 was sent to the Y.M.C.A. in Melbourne, which in turn remitted it to the Land of Dollars, America. The money eventually came back and was used for the benefit of the Y.M.C.A.

Mr. Patrick: Did not the Yanks want it?

Mr. WILSON: I do not know. I know that when various funds were examined, we found it difficult to ascertain what actually was done with the money. The Belgian Fund was sent to London; other money for the relief of Belgian children was sent to London. Money was also sent to Melbourne and Sydney for the French Red Cross Society, and so on.

Mr. Styants: Was any money sent to Scotland?

Mr. WILSON: The people were too well off there. Scottish people sent money to a field corps in Edinburgh. Much was said about the purpose for which the moneys were collected.

Questions were asked why £10,000 had been sent to America; and the reply received was that it was remitted to assist prisoners in Germany. Some of the people said that the money was given to the organisations for them to do as they wished with. Let me quote some of the evidence. I was always under the impression that these funds were collected for a specific purpose, yet the Y.M.C.A. stated that it had the right to do what it desired with the money. Either the Red Cross Society or the Y.M.C.A. told the Commission which inquired into war funds that it had no business to ask what the societies did with the funds. The Commission asked the then secretary of the Y.M.C.A.—

What amounts have you sent to the National Committee to the credit of W.A.?

He replied—

You have it on the statement. There are two amounts, £19,012 and £12,247; or a total of £31,260. I am leaving out shillings and pence.

The Commission questioned the Y.M.C.A.'s right to do that: and Mr. Greenberg, the secretary, said that he had consulted a K.C., who had advised him to tell the Commission that it had no business to ask such questions, that the money was given to the Y.M.C.A. for the association to use as it liked. Colonel Denton was the chairman of the Commission. He asked Mr. Greenberg—

What about the moneys collected for distribution to soldiers' dependants during the war?

Mr. Greenberg replied—

We never collected a penny for that purpose.

Yet the Y.M.C.A. collected £80,000! The secretary said, "I consulted a leading K.C. in the State, and his advice to me was, 'If you desire you can decline to answer any further questions, and my advice to you is to tell the Commission that none of your funds was collected for assisting soldiers and dependants.' " And that organisation collected £79,140! I always understood that the soldiers were under the impression that the money was raised to assist their dependants.

Mr. Warner: That is why soldiers got so little of the money.

Mr. WILSON: The chairman of that body said, "My own personal opinion is that the money was never raised to give to the Y.M.C.A. in order to give it back to the troops." And later, "We certainly charged

2d. for a cup of tea on occasions, but we had to make the extra penny in order to get the cup back." That extra penny was an insurance against the Diggers stealing the cup. My idea is that it is not fair to allow one man to administer these funds. As early as 1915 New Zealand passed an Act under which funds were administered by a National War Funds Council. Section 3 of the Act provided—

For the purpose of securing the efficient administration and control of war funds the Governor may by Order in Council establish a National War Funds Council (hereinafter referred to as the Council) consisting of the Minister for the time being administering this Act and of such other persons, being not less than three in number, as the Governor may, by the same or any subsequent Order in Council, appoint.

In South Australia under the War Funds Regulation Act, 1936-38, it is provided in Section 3 that—

The Governor may appoint a council to be known as the State War Council of South Australia, and to consist of such persons, not less than three in number, as he may think fit.

I suggest that the Chief Secretary has quite enough work to do already, and each organisation should have a man or woman to look after its interests and to see that the money raised is sent to the proper quarter. There should be a council comprising a member of the Chamber of Commerce or the Employers' Federation, a member of the Trades Hall, a member of the Returned Soldiers, Sailors' and Nurses' League, and a member of the School Teachers' Union. The school teachers have a big say regarding the collections of money by school children. Above all, I suggest that one representative should be drawn from the sporting bodies, because much more money is derived from that source than from any other. A committee of five should be appointed, though I am not wedded to that number; but certainly more than one man should have control. The appointment of one man would be a disaster. He would be a butt for the ridicule and contumely of all sections of the community. I would never agree to one man taking on a job like that. It would not be fair to allow him to do so. In the last war £1,114,000 was collected for the Diggers, but some of it never reached them. One organisation to which I take off my hat is the Salvation Army, the officers of which freely gave a cup of tea and a sandwich to

the man desiring it. I cannot understand, however, where the £79,000 raised by the Y.M.C.A. went to. Of course, the Y.M.C.A. gave the troops plenty of writing paper.

Nothing could be better for the protection of the public and the smooth running of organisations raising funds, than the appointment of a committee of from three to five members, who would supervise the collection of the money and ordain where it should be spent. We know that the Red Cross will send the money to the hospitals and look after the comfort of soldiers who are physically down and out; but there were some of the Diggers in the last war who received no attention or assistance at all. Furthermore, the cost of administration absorbed a large proportion of the money collected. In some cases the administrative costs amounted to 80 per cent. of the total raised. Some individuals did not return any data; they said they had collected nothing. Yet their names were on the membership list of organisations. The Government was well advised to introduce this measure. I am not wedded absolutely to the amendments I have suggested, but having had experience of gratuity bonds and patriotic funds, I do strenuously oppose giving any one man the right to say what shall be done in these matters. In going through the lists to-day, I observed that some persons were connected with two, three or four organisations. I could tell hon. members their names. If such a man were chairman of a certain fund, probably he could vote money to another organisation. That was done in the last war, and I want to prevent its recurrence. I commend the Bill, and hope that the few slight alterations I have suggested will be made.

MR. SHEARN (Maylands) [9.53]: After having listened to the Minister introducing the Bill and to the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson) one can do nothing but support the measure. I, and those associated with me on these cross benches, are happy to support the principle of the Bill and its machinery clauses. As the member for Collie pointed out, members will recall some unfortunate phases inseparable from human nature—of the administration of funds raised during the last war. The Government is to be commended for having at this stage seen fit to introduce legislation of a preventive character. From what the Minister has told

us and from a perusal of the clauses of the Bill, we can expect that there will be no recurrence of what happened during the last war in the collection and disbursement of patriotic funds. We can now look forward to the public receiving a measure of consideration and protection lacking in the last war and those for whom money is raised will have the satisfaction of knowing that a minimum of cost will be entailed and that there will be a maximum of investigation and supervision over the funds collected. I have pleasure in supporting the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville—in reply) [9.55]: The story told by the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson) is quite correct. That is the reason for the introduction of the Bill. It is designed to prevent a recurrence of what happened during the last war. Many of us know from bitter experience what occurred then. The member for Collie seems to be quite worried about the duties of the Chief Secretary, who will administer the Act.

Mr. Wilson: I am not worried about the Chief Secretary; I am worried about the money.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: If the hon. member will read the measure he will discover that there is no occasion to worry about what becomes of the money. What we are worrying about is who will collect it in the beginning. As the hon. member has stated, during the last war, anybody was able to start an organisation. There were a hundred and one organisations in existence and nobody knew what was happening to the money collected. It was nobody's business to care and certain money was—to put it mildly—badly distributed. We desire on this occasion to obtain control of the money collected right from the start and the Chief Secretary's duty will be to satisfy himself as to the applications made for permission to collect. He will require to know for what purpose such money is to be raised and will have the right to grant or withhold permission as he thinks fit.

As far as the Y.M.C.A. is concerned, that organisation has learned its lesson. It has no intention to engage in the business to any great extent on this occasion. At the request of the Defence Department the organisation undertook to do the social service work in the various camps both of the

militia and of the A.I.F. which is being formed. Anybody who has anything to do with military camps will realise that that work is essential. The Y.M.C.A., however, is not prepared to undertake work similar to that undertaken in the last war and subject itself to the same criticism received at that time. Consequently it invited several people to constitute a committee consisting of the business men of the State. After two meetings had been held it was decided to divide the committee into two. One of the bodies so formed is termed the Military Committee, and the other is the Citizens' Committee. Mr. Edmondson of the Electricity and Gas Department is chairman of the Military Committee, and for some unknown reason I was asked to become chairman of the other committee. The Citizens' Committee exists to raise funds, and the Military Committee is to expend the money on necessary equipment in the five camps that have already been established, and in the sixth camp that will begin at Northam next month. For those camps pianos, wireless sets and other equipment are being supplied to make the men comfortable and to cater for their entertainment. The Y.M.C.A. is not engaging in the work as the Y.M.C.A. at all. We are using its name as a Citizens' Committee.

Mr. Wilson: Who are "we"?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I said "We, the Citizens' Committee."

Mr. Wilson: But you did say "We."

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: That is the difficulty; you do not understand my Australian language.

Mr. Wilson: You are a dirty big—

MR. SPEAKER: Order!

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The Citizens' Committee met yesterday and meets every Monday. The Red Cross Society is handling its own work. There are only two necessary funds in existence at the moment, and one of these is the Red Cross Society. Soldiers see little or nothing of that organisation until they are wounded, and from that time until their discharge from hospital they come under the care of that society. The society is preparing for the time when casualties begin. The Y.M.C.A. is already busy in the camps and is raising money for equipment, etc.

Mr. J. Hegney: What about the Women's National Service Guild?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not know what it is doing except that it works for the Red Cross Society, which has organisations all over the State. Only a few organisations are at present necessary. There is no need for a trench comforts fund until the men get into the trenches, or until Australians leave Australia for the trenches. The member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) may say that already some Australians are at the front, but the Red Cross Society will deal with them. If the Empire air scheme is started in Canada many more Australians will go overseas, and they will be dealt with as they join up. There will be no necessity for a trench comforts fund, a unit comforts fund, and the scores of others that came into being during the last war. All the Bill asks is that someone shall have the authority to say who will collect funds for patriotic purposes. That will be the task of the Chief Secretary. Those who wish to raise funds will have to satisfy the Minister as to who the trustees are and who the chartered accountants are. If the Chief Secretary is not satisfied, he will arrange for the Auditor General to audit the accounts. In the event of mal-administration of funds, the Chief Secretary will have the right through the Governor-in-Council to call in the money at the end of the war. Some people said in the last war they had the right to do as they liked with the funds they raised. The Bill provides that for six months after this war funds can be called in and used in conjunction with the aftermath of war. There may be a big casualty list and the money may be required to assist widows and orphaned children. I hope the Bill will not be amended in Committee.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Mines in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Interpretation:

Mr. WILSON: I move an amendment—

That after the definition of "Chief Secretary," a new definition be inserted as follows:—"The council" means the War Funds Council of Western Australia constituted by this Act."

Mr. SAMPSON: The amendment should receive the approval of the Committee. It has been made clear that to a major extent this Bill is a reprint of the South Australian Act. Why not, then, adopt the whole of that Act? It may be said that the Chief Secretary can do the work, but we must not forget what happened in connection with the Youth Employment Appeal Fund.

The Minister for Mines: The Chief Secretary will not handle the money.

Mr. SAMPSON: When the Youth Employment Appeal Fund was in the hands of Government officers an unsatisfactory situation was created. The money was held for a long time, and I believe is still held notwithstanding the needs of the youth of Western Australia. Without unduly reflecting upon the office of the Chief Secretary, I hope the amendment will be agreed to.

Mr. McDONALD: I have some sympathy with the member for Collie, although I am not wedded to the personnel of the proposed council. I agree that a small but representative body of people might be formed to carry out the functions required of them by this measure, either in association with the Chief Secretary or otherwise.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I have already stated that the Bill is the outcome of a conference between the Premiers and the Prime Minister, and is not South Australian legislation. Applications will be coming in fairly frequently, and if there is to be a committee representative of the various bodies the question will be how to get that committee together. If the experience of the last war is to be repeated, everybody will be wanting to collect funds; and that is what we wish to prevent. The Chief Secretary already has a staff. The proposed council would need a staff for the purpose. Business men cannot be expected to drop all their affairs for the purpose of looking into these matters. Therefore the Government proposes to take the matter in hand, and the Premier has selected the Chief Secretary for the work. The suggested council would only mean a great deal of delay.

Mr. Sampson: Such a council would make for celerity.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Nothing of the kind. Members of the council would not be easy to get together, and the member for Swan knows it. Much fuss is being made over a simple, everyday proposition. The Chief Secretary would have a

senior officer to investigate applicants for permits to raise money for war funds. The Chief Secretary would have nothing to do with either the raising or the spending of the money.

Mr. SEWARD: I have every sympathy with the motion of the member for Collie, but I must wholly support the Minister. In my own electorate three different bodies are already requesting authority to collect for war purposes. However, moneys collected have to be paid over to some trustee; and as yet there is no trustee. Applications will be coming in almost daily. If the Bill suggested vesting the money in the Chief Secretary or in the proposed council, I would vigorously oppose it. Such a provision would defeat the object. Local people do desire the control of the money they raise in their various districts. During the war Pingelly collected over £800, and some years after the war the money was still being held by trustees, who utilised it, under strict rules, to assist returned soldiers. A certain Bill introduced here proposed to call that money into a central fund in Perth, and there was bitter feeling on that score in the Pingelly district. The amendment would not achieve the object of the member for Collie, namely the proper disbursement of the money.

Mr. WILSON: Some members have forgotten the amount of money collected during the last war. Many people helped in the collection and disbursement of those funds. The Minister says the Bill is the outcome of a meeting of Premiers and the Prime Minister. In another place Mr. Nicholson asked, "Why not take the South Australian Act?" and the Minister then in charge of the Bill said, "It is practically word for word with the South Australian Act." So it is, but with one clause omitted. The proposal is to make the chief executive officer a real Pooh Bah. In South Australia a tribunal has been appointed, and as far back as 1915 New Zealand adopted a similar course. There is nothing new in my proposal. If that provision has worked successfully in South Australia there is no reason why a similar arrangement should not operate satisfactorily here. If the tribunal did not work successfully in South Australia, the Premier of that State was lacking in his duty if he did not warn the Government here accordingly. If the Committee

cannot accept my amendment, it should at least agree to a provision along the lines of the South Australian Act. I go further than the South Australian legislation and set out that the chairman shall be the Chief Secretary. I am trying to honour him.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You are being very generous.

The Premier: And giving him a lot of work.

Mr. WILSON: We know the talk that will go on if he accepts the task, to which will be attached no stipend.

Amendment put and passed.

Progress reported.

BILL—TRANSFER OF LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. E. Nulsen—Kanowna) [10.25] in moving the second reading said: The object of the Bill, which is very short, is to place all Government departments on the same basis as nearly as possible. The Bill is introduced for the purpose of closing the Land Titles Office on Saturday mornings to bring that department into conformity with other branches of the Government service, which have been closed on Saturdays since August, 1938. The necessity for the amendment embodied in the Bill arises from the provisions of Section 239 of the Transfer of Land Act of 1893, which sets out that fees have to be paid for searches that are required. The register of books at the Titles Office has to be available at specified hours on certain days. It must be available between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. daily from Monday to Friday, and on Saturday mornings between 9 a.m. and 12 noon, subject to exceptions for certain specified holidays. If the Bill be agreed to, the Titles Office will be closed on Saturday mornings, but daily from Monday to Friday will be open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., thereby increasing the time available for the transaction of public business by one hour daily. Since the other Government departments were closed on Saturday mornings, the attendances at the Titles Office have been very restricted, and the receipts small. The average attendance has been about nine, and

the average collection in the vicinity of £12. To cope with what business is transacted, a skeleton staff of 16 officers has to be in attendance at the Titles Office because of the many sections concerned. I trust the measure will not be debated. Its passage is necessary, because under existing conditions great inconvenience is experienced by the employees of the Titles Office. The 16 officers in attendance on Saturday morning must be allowed time off during the week and that results in inconvenience to the department. In view of these circumstances, it behoves Parliament to pass the Bill without much discussion.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Was this one of your election sops?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I do not think so. The judges have approved of amendment of Supreme Court rules to enable the court offices to close on Saturday mornings, and the necessary action will be taken to effect the same result in connection with local courts.

Hon. C. G. Latham: If that applies to the police courts, drunks will have to wait till Monday before they can be dealt with.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I trust the Leader of the Opposition will not be placed in that unfortunate position, otherwise we shall have to bail him out! To secure uniformity throughout the Public Service is most desirable, and what is proposed will not inconvenience the public at all. The hours on week-days will be extended. There can, I think, be no objection to the Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Watts, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.31 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 25th October, 1939.

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

QUESTION—MINING.

Mines Medical Agreement.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS asked the Chief Secretary: 1, In the event of the mines medical agreement being cancelled and the mining companies being made liable for payment of hospital and medical fees in accident cases, what extra premiums would the companies have to pay? 2, What is the average number of days that patients on the doctors' lists, through the mines agreement, are kept in the Kalgoorlie Government Hospital? 3, What is the average number of days as regards members of friendly societies?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, The matter is one for an investigation. 2 and 3, An attempt is being made to obtain the information.

BILL—SUPREME COURT ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by Hon. H. S. W. Parker and read a first time.

BILL—LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT.

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

BILL—LOTTERIES (CONTROL) ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.