

**Legislative Assembly,***Tuesday, 30th September, 1930.*

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

**BILL—INSPECTION OF SCAFFOLDING ACT AMENDMENT.**

Report of Committee adopted.

**BILL—HIGH SCHOOL ACT AMENDMENT.**

Read a third time, and *passed*.

**BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.**

*In Committee.*

Mr. Richardson in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1, 2, 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—New section; Additional fees to be paid for certain vehicles used on roads in Fifth Schedule:

Mr. McCALLUM: The first subsection of the proposed new section is indeed a wide provision. Under it, any person using any vehicle for the carriage of goods of no matter what description must pay four times the present license fee. If a farmer comes to town with his truck and wants to take home clothing for his family, stores for the use of his household, or spare parts, he will have to pay the fourfold fee.

The Minister for Lands: Have you read the proviso?

Mr. McCALLUM: It does not stop there. If a person were going to Yallingup to camp, and took his outfit with him on his motor car, or carried goods on his back seat, then, in the event of his motoring over the roads indicated, he would have to pay four times the existing fee. If his fee were £12, he would have to pay £48 to carry a

tent and a billy for his week's camping. The effect on the farming districts will be material. There should be some limitation. I move an amendment—

That after the word "goods" in line 2 of proposed Subsection 1 there be inserted "except for his own use."

In the absence of this amendment farmers will be prevented from using their equipment in connection with their farms. The specific instance I have already given occurs every week, and is especially plentiful at Christmas and New Year. The roads mentioned in the Fifth Schedule are the chief arteries of traffic to the seaside and into the country.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The amendment is altogether too broad. It is not likely that a man carrying a tent, a billy, and some tucker would be regarded as carrying goods. The intention is to prevent motors from carrying goods in competition with the railways. A mere camping outfit would not be regarded as goods in that sense. In fact, the man would be simply carrying personal equipment. I have inserted a provision under which exemptions can be granted. I have had requests already, and have replied that exemptions will be granted. The member for Katanning has put up a case for exemption. No attempt would be made to fasten the extra charge on a man simply because he was carrying a couple of blankets on his car; but under the amendment a man would be able to carry any goods in competition with the railways, provided those goods were for his own use. So a farmer might want to carry a load of petrol for his own use on the farm. I would not exempt that. The Act is to stop that sort of thing. But it is not intended to deal with the man travelling once a year in order to camp somewhere or to go to the seaside. That is an extreme view to take. I cannot accept the amendment.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: While it may be correct for the Minister to say the proposed amendment is rather too comprehensive, at the same time the Minister must appreciate that we dare not pass the clause as printed. I agree with the Minister that if a farmer wants to take, in competition with the railways, a load of petrol along the roads he ought to pay. I am with the Minister in his desire to put the railways on a fair com-

petitive basis. I suggest to the Minister that he goes further into this clause with a view to inserting in it some protection. We cannot make legislation, and direct that it is to be administered sympathetically. The present Minister may adopt that attitude, but there are other Ministers to follow him. Indeed, if things go as they are going, it may be that the Public Works Department and the Railways Department will be combined. So, if this section were put under the control of the Minister for Railways, his sympathies probably would be different from those of the Minister for Works.

The Minister for Railways: How do you know that?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Well, I happen to know the Minister for Railways.

The Minister for Railways: But you are only assuming certain things.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I heard the speech of the Minister for Railways the other night, and according to that he might take a viewpoint very different from that of the Minister for Works. I suggest that the member for South Fremantle should not press his amendment, and that the Minister should go into the clause with a view to affording some protection that would meet the special circumstances stated by the member for South Fremantle, which are perfectly feasible.

Mr. McCALLUM: The Minister must admit that the clause as it stands is impossible. He said he would grant exemptions. I do not know where he gets the power to do so.

The Minister for Works: It will be found in the second proviso.

Mr. McCALLUM: Under that authority, the Minister may exempt some particular vehicle. That is not my point at all. My point is to protect a vehicle on a particular run, when the owner of the vehicle wishes to go out into the country camping, or to go to the seaside. If a party were to combine and take a truck loaded for a trip like that, I do not think the Minister would be entitled to grant exemption to that truck for all time, simply because the party I refer to proposed to take it out for that trip.

The Minister for Works: It could be exempted for that trip.

Mr. McCALLUM: No, the proviso does not say "for a trip." At all events, this

provision "any person using any vehicle for the carriage of goods" is altogether too wide.

The Attorney General: You want a definition of "carriage of goods."

Mr. McCALLUM: That might help. Everybody having a motor car occasionally loads it up for a holiday trip. I do not think that class of traffic is contemplated in this clause.

The Minister for Railways: You know how that sort of thing is abused already by the carrying of passengers and goods.

Mr. McCALLUM: But this clause is going to penalise everybody who owns a motor car.

The Minister for Railways: Your amendment is just as dangerous.

Mr. McCALLUM: I am not saying my amendment meets the whole situation. I suggest to the Minister that he postpone consideration of this clause until he has had time to look into the point raised.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The suggestion of the member for Guildford seems to me the more suitable. Even so, I am not satisfied, for this provision does not apply to a motor car at all. It deals with the carriage of goods. If the member for South Fremantle will withdraw his amendment, I will recommit the Bill with a view to having inserted an amendment to meet the point.

Mr. McCallum: But we cannot pass the clause as it stands. Let the Minister postpone it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I prefer to accept the suggestion made by the member for Guildford. Members should at least give the Minister a chance to control his own Bill. The member for Guildford has suggested that I look into the matter and at the conclusion of the Committee stage recommit the Bill in order to deal with this point. I have no intention of forcing the clause through, and I will have prepared a definition of "carriage of goods."

Mr. McCallum: You undertake to have this clause recommitted?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, I give the assurance that I will recommit the Bill in order to deal with this clause.

Mr. McCallum: Very well. With that assurance, I will withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. SAMPSON: I move an amendment—

That the following be added to paragraph (b) of subclause 1:—"and by way of back loading, agricultural, horticultural, or dairy requisites."

The amendment is quite clear, and I hope the Minister will accept it. The provision as it stands would inflict hardship on those carting perishable products, for on the return journey they would be deprived of back loading in the way of requisites.

The Minister for Works: I will accept the amendment.

Mr. McCALLUM: How does this square with the Minister's statement that he would not agree to a farmer carting back stuff for use on his farm? He said that a farmer might want to bring back a load of petrol for use on his farm, which would not be permitted.

The Attorney General: This will merely enable him to carry back-loading from the nearest market place.

Mr. McCALLUM: It does not seem consistent with the Minister's statement of a few minutes ago. The farmer will be taking back stores. If this relates only to the nearest market town, the farmer will not be able to go into the city to get his requisites. Take the farmer at Bruce Rock: which is his nearest market town?

The Minister for Lands: Usually he would go to York.

Mr. McCALLUM: Well, would he be able to go to York, get a load of petrol and take it back to Bruce Rock? And suppose his business brought him right down to the city, would he not be able to cart his own petrol between the city and York? Is that the idea?

The Attorney General: It would be the nearest town where he could sell his produce. Under the amendment, he would be able to take back-loading from that nearest market place.

Mr. McCALLUM: I want to understand clearly whether this back-loading is limited to his nearest market place.

The Minister for Works: Yes. His nearest market place is where he sells his goods.

Mr. McCALLUM: But he would sell his wheat and wool in the city, or at the port. He would buy machinery in the city. Could he cart that back?

The Minister for Works: Provided his nearest market place was the city.

The Attorney General: The paragraph refers to perishable agricultural products.

Mr. McCALLUM: It is not limited to perishable products.

The Attorney General: It would be back-loading only after carrying perishable products.

Mr. McCALLUM: That would give one section of producers an unfair advantage over others, because the wheat farmer and wool grower, whose produce is not perishable, would not have the same privilege.

The Minister for Works: Is the wheat grower likely to cart his wheat to Perth?

Mr. Munzie: Wool is being carted to Perth.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The railways provide a special rate for perishables.

Mr. McCALLUM: A wheat grower might use his truck to travel to the city in order to transact business, but he would not be permitted to cart back to his farm a case of groceries. The owner of a truck should be able to use it for his own domestic requirements.

Mr. SAMPSON: The policy of granting concessions to producers of perishables has long been observed by the railways. A similar policy should apply to motor trucks.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The back loading you suggest would be far more extensive.

Mr. SAMPSON: The amendment refers to agricultural, horticultural, or dairy requisites.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Petrol would be a requisite.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I agreed to accept the amendment because the whole of the perishable products, such as vegetables and milk, raised within 20 miles of the metropolitan area, are carted to Perth, which is the nearest market place. Under the Bill motor trucks so employed could not take back loading. The wheat farmer does not cart his wheat to Perth.

Mr. Wansbrough: Would you include super?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: He would not cart much super by motor, in view of the low freights charged by the railways.

Mr. McCallum: Why draw the distinction?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am prepared to include goods for domestic re-

quirements, but not goods for his own use. A producer at Byford would have to travel along a prescribed route. In order that he should not be placed at a disadvantage as compared with the producer at Osborne Park or Kalamunda, he should be permitted to cart requisites as back loading.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I think we are going beyond what the member for Swan desires. A producer should be able to use his own vehicle to take his products to market, and, when returning to his farm, to carry back his own requisites.

Mr. Marshall: This does not cover such a case.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is the point. Some men have their own vehicles and are running to Perth from places like Wickiepin, carrying goods. Some are carrying passengers and, while not charging fares to the passengers, they really attain the same result by charging ostensibly for their parcels. In trying to do justice to a few, we must not do injustice to the many. If we provide exemptions, we should be careful to ensure that they apply properly. I suggest that the amendment be made to read "back loading of his requisites for his own personal use." Otherwise he could take back requisites for a store.

Hon. M. F. Troy: He should be able to cart back goods for his neighbour.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Why should he?

Hon. M. F. Troy: Why not?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Who is his neighbour?

Mr. Marshall: The whole district.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Exactly, and such an exemption would permit a man to become a general carrier in competition with a man who is paying for the privilege of carrying goods over the roads. Thus the principle of the Bill would be destroyed. The Minister for Lands informs me that there are vegetable growers in the York district who carry vegetables to Perth as their nearest market.

Mr. Sampson: Is it the nearest market?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They make it their market. It might be difficult to prove that there is a nearer market. Consequently such growers would be able to carry back goods without paying the license fees charged to other carriers.

Mr. Wansbrough: They are doing it today.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We are trying to enforce the payment of additional fees by owners of motor trucks who are using roads maintained at the cost of and in competition with railways provided by the general community. If we allow an exemption to a man who grows a few vegetables, many people will start vegetable gardens simply to enable them to carry goods on their motor trucks.

Mr. Marshall: A bag of lettuces would be sufficient.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. We must guard against inserting an exemption that will be so wide as to permit the very thing we wish to prevent.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am amazed at the extent of the objections raised to this very innocent amendment. The principle has already been approved in a previous paragraph. This allows for requisites to be carried between the farm and the nearest railway station, and my amendment merely extends that principle. Unless these trucks are allowed to operate it will be impossible for gardeners, orchardists or dairymen to carry on their industry. What hope would a dairyman on the Peel Estate or an orchardist at Roleystone have of getting his products to the market if road transport were not available for him? If trucks are not permitted to carry back farm requisites a great injustice will be meted out to the industry and an unheard of economic position created.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I agree with the remarks of the Minister for Railways. The amendment conveys more than the member for Swan could possibly desire. It is out of step with the other paragraphs contained in the clause, which limits the goods to be carried to perishables.

Mr. SAMPSON: An epidemic to recommit the clauses of this Bill seems to have set in. The position will not have altered if the committee waits a week before dealing with this question again. No Parliament should prevent these people from taking back requisites for their own industry.

The Minister for Works: We want to help them, but the amendment must be altered.

Mr. SAMPSON: The Minister's suggestions will not carry us much further. It would not be legal for the driver to take

back the requirements of the ordinary citizen, but he should be allowed to take back the requisites for those engaged in the industry with which he himself is connected. Apparently a grower is to be prevented from using his motor truck to carry back requisites on the return trip.

Mr. McCallum: You are not dealing with the man who owns his own truck, but with the carrier.

Mr. SAMPSON: It would be impracticable for the truck owner to convey the produce of only one dairy or one garden.

The Minister for Railways: He is a general carrier and ought to pay.

Mr. SAMPSON: He is carrying in a co-operative way the produce of several growers.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The clause will certainly have to be amended to prevent an injustice being done to certain members of the community. It would be ridiculous that a man, after purchasing a truck in order to take his produce to market, should be unable to take back sugar, flour or other requisites. It would be equally ridiculous to suggest that such a man could not carry back similar requisites for his neighbours.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Do you suggest he would carry these goods for nothing?

Hon. M. F. TROY: He probably would do so.

The Minister for Railways: You are viewing the matter from the standpoint of the man who uses his own vehicle in which to carry his own produce.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I admit there is too much latitude allowed in the amendment, but some provision must be made for the man who owns his own truck.

Mr. THORN: In the interests of my electors in Wanneroo and the Swan district I must support the amendment. We rely entirely on motor trucks to take our produce to market.

The Minister for Railways: This does not apply to Wanneroo.

Mr. THORN: It applies to the Swan. We have no railway service. If a man cannot carry goods for his neighbour without paying an extra license fee he will have to pass that charge on to his neighbour.

The Minister for Works: The member for Swan should withdraw his amendment. The clause can then be dealt with at a later stage.

Mr. Sampson: I will withdraw the amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The Minister has already provided for the produce of farms, and it is only right that the produce of mines should also be provided for. There is one product only from the mines, and that is the ore. I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of paragraph (c) after "carrying" the words "the ore from mines and" be inserted.

The Chief Secretary: Will that cover concentrates?

Hon. M. F. TROY: That will not arise in this instance.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. McCallum: With regard to Sub-clause (2), I am under the impression that the Minister agreed, when he replied to the debate, to meet our objections to roads being brought under the measure by proclamation, and that it should be done by a regulation. Parliament would have no power if a proclamation were issued. Even the provision for roads being brought under the measure by way of a regulation is not satisfactory, because Parliament may not be sitting at the time. It may remain in force for six months before Parliament will have an opportunity to discuss it. I do not agree with the idea of doing it by way of regulation and would prefer a Bill to be introduced to give effect to the Government's decision. However, we must take what we can get. Incidentally, I do not know how such an amendment will square with the views of the Attorney General, who has on many occasions spoken against matters being done by way of regulation. In this instance it deals with an important question seeing that the individual's license fee may be quadrupled.

The Minister for Railways: There may be additional main roads declared under the Main Roads Act.

Mr. McCallum: There is one only that may yet have to be proclaimed, and I am not sure whether or not it has been proclaimed.

The Minister for Works: The Fremantle-Mandurah-road is not in the schedule.

Mr. McCallum: And is the Bruce-Rock-Merredin-road?

The Minister for Works: No.

Mr. McCALLUM: I think that practically all the roads intended are included under the Main Roads Act. That difficulty could be got over, of course, by the Minister declaring another road to be a main road under that Act, but that would be on the recommendation of the Main Roads Board. I move an amendment—

That in lines 1 and 3 of Subclause (2) "proclamation" be struck out and "regulation" inserted in lieu.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: What does the Attorney General say to the "regulation" proposal?

The Attorney General: "Regulation" is better than "proclamation," but all such legislation is bad. I still adhere to that view.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The reason why we included provision for the Governor adding roads by proclamation was really explained by the member for South Fremantle during his second reading speech when he referred to motor trucks running over subsidiary roads, so as not to use the main roads, which would involve the payment of the extra impost. I admit there is that difficulty and we must be able to deal with the trucks using by-roads or alternative routes. I have already given the Committee an assurance that the whole of the roads dealt with are outside the metropolitan area, and that no road in that area is likely to be included under this legislation. The power to declare additional roads is necessary, and I will accept the amendment.

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

Clause 5—Insertion of new schedule:

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I move an amendment—

That at the end of Part I. of the Fifth Schedule the words "as shown and more particularly described on M.R.B., W.A. 1030" be struck out, and the words "as more particularly described hereunder" inserted in lieu.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I thought the road to Wiluna via Leonora would be included, but I do not see it in the schedule.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Perth-Wiluna-road is included, but Leonora does not come under the schedule at all.

A doubt was raised as to what was actually meant regarding the roads affected, and I have had typewritten copies of the routes of the roads affected set out in detail and supplied to members. It is intended to print the details of those roads in the schedule, so that the position will be quite clear.

Mr. McCALLUM: I am glad the Minister has seen his way clear to provide definitions of the roads referred to. Without that precautionary measure the Bill, as it stands now, would lead to endless confusion. Farmers and others could not possibly know where they stood, or whether they were using roads that would necessitate the payment of the quadruple tax. At the same time, I do not think that the definition of the Geraldton-Northampton road, as set out in the copies supplied to members, is quite clear. The Minister should consider the position of farmers who may exchange commodities such as seed wheat, for instance, and who may have to run a mile or less between farms, and yet may be confronted with the necessity to pay four times their present license fees. It is a serious matter to increase a person's tax to that extent, and people should know exactly to what the tax will apply.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. McCALLUM: I move an amendment—

That the following proviso be added to the Schedule:—"Provided that for the purpose of this schedule any portions of any of the roads named in this Part, which are situate within the metropolitan area prescribed under this Act, shall not be included in such roads."

The Minister made a statement to a deputation and he repeated it again this afternoon that there is no intention of applying this to the metropolis. I think there would be chaos if it were attempted. The traffic pool area can be altered at any time. I raised the point on the second reading and showed that nobody could tell from the map on the wall of the Chamber where the roads started. But from the maps we have now, we can see that they start from the outer boundaries of the metropolitan pool. That may be altered or extended by the Minister. There has been an agitation to have the whole of the Wanneroo district included in the metropolitan pool, and during my time it was taken as far as Armadale. It is essential that there should be no overlap-

ping; there must be a clear line of demarcation at all times.

Amendment put and passed; the Schedule, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 6—agreed to.

Clause 7—Amendment to Section 13:

Mr. McCALLUM: I move—

That paragraphs (a) and (b) be struck out.

This is really an amendment consequential on that which we have just carried. The paragraphs provide for the insertion of words that make Clause 13 subject to Section 10 (a) which deals with license fees that are quadrupled. Therefore the paragraphs should be deleted; they will be superfluous because we have decided that the additional fees shall not be applied to that area. There is no necessity now to say that the pool fees shall be subject to Section 10 (a).

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think the hon. member is wrong. The paragraphs have been inserted for a special purpose.

Mr. McCallum: But you are not collecting the fees.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have never collected them and I am satisfied the paragraphs have nothing to do with the metropolitan fees. Section 10 (a) deals with the routes which are in the metropolitan area. Anyway, the clause can stand over and inquiries can be made.

Mr. McCallum: Will you undertake to recommit the Bill?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes.

Mr. McCallum: Then on that undertaking I shall withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. McCALLUM: Paragraph (c) is very important. Although it provides for the insertion of merely two words, it will have very serious effect upon local governing bodies within the metropolis. It will mean that the local bodies in the metropolitan area will be called on to subscribe up to 50 per cent. of their traffic fees for not only the maintenance but the improvements to the roads from Fremantle to Perth, Caning road, Armadale road, and the Midland road to Mundaring. At the moment, the Minister has power to deduct an amount for maintenance. The paragraph says he shall have power to deduct up to the limit,

which is 50 per cent., for improvements. There is almost unlimited scope there, and the Minister would not find it difficult to absorb the whole of that 50 per cent. If the paragraph is allowed to go through, the local bodies in the metropolitan area will be deprived of 50 per cent. of their traffic fees. That can be taken for granted.

The Minister for Works: The money will be spent in the metropolitan area.

Mr. McCALLUM: The point was taken the other evening that this is really an infringement of the agreement arrived at by the committee that reported to this House. All main roads now are maintained by the main roads fund which up to the present has been contributed to by the taxpayers, and to the capital charges on the whole of those main roads the people of the metropolitan area subscribe equally with those in the country. But for all main roads in the metropolitan area, half of the capital charge, interest and sinking fund, has to be borne solely by the people in the metropolitan area; 22½ per cent. of the traffic fees paid in the metropolitan area are devoted to the maintenance of roads in the country. The whole of the Federal road grant is spent in the country and still the people in the metropolitan area have to pay their per capita sum and in addition the metropolitan area has to maintain all roads in that area. Now the Minister wants to take from them up to 50 per cent. for the improvement of the roads. It will be seen what a tax this represents upon the people of the metropolitan area. Hitherto the Government have accepted responsibility for improving and maintaining these roads. They now wish to throw the responsibility on the local authorities. The present Minister for Works was a member of the select committee which inquired into the financing of main roads, and which arrived at the compromise that 22½ per cent. of the fees paid in the city should be applied to the needs of the country. Now comes the suggestion that the responsibility for improvements should be borne by the local authorities.

The Minister for Works: The proportion will not be increased.

Mr. McCALLUM: So far as I know, nothing like 50 per cent. has ever yet been used.

The Minister for Works: That is right.

Mr. McCALLUM: If this paragraph is inserted, 50 per cent. will always be used.

The Minister for Works: I guarantee the contrary.

Mr. McCALLUM: The metropolitan area has been extremely liberal regarding the disposal of its traffic fees, and the country districts should be well satisfied. This is the only Australian State in which local authorities retain traffic fees. In the past a wide interpretation has been given to "maintaining"; and if the word "improving" is inserted, there will be no limitation whatever. Local authorities have any amount of work ahead of them, and they look to the traffic fees as a material source of income. All the municipalities and road boards from Midland Junction to Fremantle have invariably been particular about the amount of traffic fees received by them. In the past municipalities and road boards have always been given the full facts as to disposal of traffic fees. There were some complaints about every distribution, but on the whole it was considered satisfactory. The fees do not belong to the Government, but to the local authorities. The Minister merely collects the fees, and the local authorities have a right to know how they are distributed. As to the policing of the Act, I made the Commissioner of Police state the cost of the work. I did not agree with the amount he fixed, but I did get an estimate from him. The deductions now made are exorbitant. From the £120,000, 10 per cent. is deducted for cost of collection, 22½ per cent. goes to main roads, and in addition there is cost of maintenance. On top of all those things the Government now want to put improvements.

Mr. SAMPSON: I hope the paragraph will be retained. A distinction has been drawn by the member for South Fremantle between repair and reconstruction of roads. When the Causeway, for instance, has been dealt with—and the Causeway can be repaired under the Act—there has more than once been reconstruction, or practical reconstruction. That has been made a charge on the traffic pool.

Mr. McCallum: The money has come from State funds, not from the pool.

Mr. SAMPSON: In the case of the Guildford bridge, improvement or reconstruction has been carried out. The position of the footway was altered so that instead of walking along the main bridge one

walked on supports provided by brackets. Surely such an improvement would not be made from State funds.

Mr. McCallum: Yes.

Mr. SAMPSON: In view of that assurance, I submit that the paragraph represents an excellent amendment.

Mr. H. W. MANN: The Perth City Council have been badly hit in the matter of traffic fees, and are greatly concerned about the insertion of the word "improving." I shall support the amendment of the member for South Fremantle.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Mr. H. W. MANN: It is necessary to oppose the Minister's proposal embodied in the Bill because the Act, in Section 13, outlines clearly the way the money is to be expended. If it is the intention of the Minister to go beyond repairing work, the improvements contemplated may be such as to convert a waterbound macadam road to a bituminous road, and the expense will be deducted from traffic fees. The local governing authorities in the metropolitan area have suffered severely in the allocation of the traffic fees. All country roads lead to the city, and trucks from various country centres travel over metropolitan roads without recompensing the local authorities for the damage done. In to-day's paper there is a report from Wickepin setting out that all the wool is being carted from that centre by truck direct to the warehouses at Fremantle. That indicates what is happening from many country centres, and those trucks tear through the city streets without any consideration for the damage done to the roads. On top of that, the metropolitan local governing authorities are asked to give up a further proportion of the fees they collect.

The Minister for Works: No.

Mr. H. W. MANN: Perhaps the Minister will tell us what he means by the word "improvement."

Mr. Kenneally: It is not what the Minister says it will mean, but what interpretation will be placed on the word by those who may follow him.

Mr. H. W. MANN: That is the difficulty. Once the word is included in the legislation, it will be for future Ministers to interpret it as they may deem fit. Metropolitan members should take a stand against the Minis-



ter's proposal in the interests of the local authorities in their several constituencies.

**Mr. KENNEALLY:** The clause embodies one of the most important amendments to the parent Act. Fees paid into the Metropolitan Traffic Trust account at present are used for certain purposes. After deducting 10 per cent. for the cost of collection, 22½ per cent. is paid for repairs and maintenance of the roads outside the metropolitan area and of the half net proceeds, a certain amount is paid to the road boards in the metropolitan area. Any improvements made to roads in the metropolitan area are paid for by the taxpayers generally. The amendment proposes to confine those responsible for the payment to the residents of the metropolitan area alone. If the amendment be agreed to, the local authorities in the metropolitan area will seldom get back anything in addition to the half net proceeds referred to in the first portion of the section affected. A select committee dealt with the question of traffic fees and agreed upon what was a fair and equitable method of distributing the traffic fees. The present Minister for Works was a member of that committee and agreed accordingly. What has happened to alter the Minister's opinion? He may advance the financial situation as the explanation.

The Minister for Works: So it is.

**Mr. KENNEALLY:** But that has not affected one part of the State only. In those circumstances, what was a fair system of distribution in better times must be equally fair to-day. I hope the amendment moved by the member for South Fremantle will be agreed to. The system of distribution proposed by the select committee was accepted by the local authorities.

The Minister for Railways: They did not agree to anything of the sort.

**Mr. H. W. Mann:** It was imposed upon them.

**Mr. KENNEALLY:** The position really was that they accepted the lesser of two evils.

The Minister for Railways: That is more like it.

**Mr. KENNEALLY:** In order to secure a united report from the members of the select committee, that alternative was agreed upon. It is up to the Minister to explain his change of attitude.

The **MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I am not keen on the proposal myself, but I shall explain why the provision is included in the Bill. The Perth-Fremantle-road requires widening. There is a dangerous corner that needs attention at an estimated cost of £7,000. No loan funds are available for the work and if the clause be agreed to as it stands in the Bill, I shall take the necessary funds out of the 50 per cent. If the clause be not agreed to, the road will not be widened and I will not then be held responsible. I have had deputations galore dealing with this question. As a matter of fact, we have not used more than 15 per cent. of the money from which the cost would be taken, in any one year. It is a peculiarity of the Act that there is nothing to say what shall be done with what is left of the 50 per cent., after repairing work is done.

The Minister for Railways: The Act says the money shall be paid back.

The **MINISTER FOR WORKS:** It is not in the Act.

**Mr. Kenneally:** Of course it is.

The Attorney General: Where does it say that?

The Minister for Railways: In paragraph (c) of Section 13, subsection 2.

The **MINISTER FOR WORKS:** It is my desire to give the metropolitan area a fair deal, and I will not discuss the matter from the standpoint of country versus town. When I assumed office the Fremantle Road Board approached me regarding their portion of the Fremantle-Mandurah-road. As Minister I declared that part a main road up to the Fremantle municipal boundary and now that road is maintained out of the Federal Aid Roads Fund. That is sufficient to indicate my attitude, and to show that I do not desire to be unfair. My predecessors found themselves in the same position. We have all had to do some work which cannot properly be described as maintenance. I have had deputations even about the Fremantle bridge and the tramway routes. In view of the difficulties of the local authorities, we simply had to find the money. The work could not be called maintenance, but still it was done. As another illustration, there are in the metropolitan area several roads for the maintenance of which £8 per chain was paid to the local authorities. I am going to ask the

committee to cut out the words "opposite the Karrakatta Cemetery." That road badly requires widening, and if those words are cut out I will be able to hand over to the Subiaco Municipal Council a sum representing £8 per chain, which they will be able to use on improvements. The provision under discussion is not vital. If the Committee wish to delete it they can. I inserted it merely in order that I should be able to take a little money out of the fund to widen that particularly bad bend on the Fremantle road.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I now wish to move an amendment in lines 13 and 14 by deleting the words "That portion of the road abutting on the Karakatta Cemetery."

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Is the amendment on the Notice Paper?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Why?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I did not receive it until this afternoon.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Why not report progress, and put the amendment on the Notice Paper?

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clause 8—Amendment of Section 20:

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Quite obviously I am not going to oppose the clause. But I wish to offer a word in explanation. In past years we have had some argument in the House as to whether it was right and proper for the Commissioner of Police arbitrarily to fix an age below which he would not grant a license. I expressed the opinion that there was no particular age below which a human being had not sufficient discretion to be able to drive a motor car or motor bicycle. However, the Commissioner of Police has steadfastly refused, without legal authority, to grant a license to any person under 18 years of age. Obviously it would be wrong for the Government to attempt to dictate to the Commissioner of Police in such a matter. But since I have been a member of the Government I have been twitted with not having done anything to carry out the views I previously expressed. In fact, only the other day I received an envelope addressed to me and containing a cutting from the "Daily

News" which challenged me, having become a member of the Government, to take some steps to carry out what I had previously said ought to be done. The communication was anonymous.

Mr. McCallum: You will have a big mail if all you have said in the past is to be posted on to you.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not know that in the past I have said very much which I do not feel entirely able to carry out now. But the point is that this clause proposes to carry out what I previously said on this matter. It provides for an appeal to a judicial body from the discretion of the Commissioner of Police. It will prevent the Commissioner forming any rules unappealable for the granting or refusing of licenses. Under the clause any person having been refused a license can appeal to a magistrate and have the matter thrashed out in judicial fashion and after evidence has been called.

Mr. Withers: What about the costs involved?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: They will be very small indeed. I do not imagine that members of my profession will gain any substantial sum by them.

Mr. McCALLUM: I quite approve of this clause. In the past it has not been exclusively the question of age on which the Commissioner has refused licenses. There have been a great many other reasons for his attitude, and in perhaps all of them it has been most desirable that someone should have discretion. Particularly when the application is for a license to ply for hire for the carriage of passengers, there are lots of reasons why somebody should have wide discretion in the issuing of the license. Just the same, I agree with the principle that anybody refused a license should have the right of appeal. Many appeals from the Commissioner's decision have been made to me, but invariably when one got the papers before him he found there was good reason behind the action of the Commissioner in refusing to issue the licenses.

The Minister for Railways: Did you not give him instructions?

Mr. McCALLUM: No.

The Minister for Railways: Then you missed a chance.

Mr. McCALLUM: I never attempted to instruct him on anything. In the past the Commissioner had the sole right to grant or refuse a license, but under the clause the aggrieved party will be able to appeal and have his case investigated. That is a perfectly sound principle.

Mr. H. W. Mann: Do you think the appeal should go to a magistrate who had previously cancelled the license of the appellant?

Mr. McCALLUM: Such a man would take up his license again after the cancellation had expired, and not until the license ran out would he have to apply for a renewal. I would sooner trust the Commissioner of Police than most magistrates in coming to a decision as to the issue of a license, especially to those people riding motor bikes. The traffic police, who report to the Commissioner, know much more about that sort of thing than does the average magistrate.

The Attorney General: But the magistrate has had no right to be heard. The Commissioner of Police has dealt with it.

Mr. McCALLUM: Yes, but under the Bill the appeal will go to the magistrate. If this clause were confined to the one point of age limit, I would certainly oppose it.

The Attorney General: Then you would leave that to the Commissioner to decide?

Mr. McCALLUM: He is in a better position to decide than is the magistrate.

The Attorney General: But Parliament has determined that there shall be no age limit.

Mr. McCALLUM: No, the decision here was to leave things as they were.

The Attorney General: Parliament refused to determine the age limit.

Mr. McCALLUM: It is not right to put it that way. The previous Bill provided that the age limit should be 21 years. Argument was heard as to whether it should be 21 years or 18 years, and eventually it was agreed to leave it, as before, in the hands of the Commissioner of Police.

The Attorney General: Do you think we ought to delegate our authority to the Commissioner?

Mr. McCALLUM: Discretion was left with him to refuse to issue licenses, and he decided not to issue a license to anybody under 18 years of age. In that I agree with him, and I hope he will not depart from it. He is far more competent to ar-

rive at a sound decision in that regard than is any magistrate; for he has the traffic police out on the roads watching the traffic, and they are in an excellent position to advise the Commissioner.

Mr. Marshall: And how will he be advised from Cue or Meekatharra?

Mr. McCALLUM: I do not think he issues licenses for those remote places.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, the police issue all licenses.

Mr. McCALLUM: I agree that there should be an appeal to the magistrate on the all-embracing question of the issue of a license. It is not confined to the age limit mentioned by the Attorney General. Quite a few who have been refused licenses for taxis running between Perth and Fremantle have come to me and said they knew no reason why they had been refused.

The Attorney General: They are entitled to have a statement and to challenge that statement.

Mr. McCALLUM: I think they are. The police have advised me that they always give the reason for refusing a license. Now the clause will afford all aggrieved persons an opportunity to appeal to a magistrate and call evidence. It is a sound principle and I quite approve of it.

Progress reported.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1930-31.

### *In Committee of Supply.*

Debate resumed from the 23rd September: on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates; Mr. Richardson in the Chair.

**HON. P. COLLIER** (Boulder) [8.0]: Although it is usual to say that government is finance and finance is government, I can scarcely agree, after many years' experience that Budgets contribute very materially to the solution of financial problems. I do not know whether it be because men who usually make up Governments are so perverse that they refuse to accept the wise advice always given by Oppositions to Governments, but certain it is that the general debate comes round, followed by a general debate on many departments, and that again followed by consideration of the items, and yet in all my long experience I do not remember one figure of the Estimates

ever being amended or altered after being introduced into the Chamber. Moreover, usually the ground traversed is much of that covered on the Address-in-reply. I do not propose to take up the time of the Committee at any great length this evening. Still, Budgets just now in Australia are of rather peculiar interest. It was an heroic decision for the whole of the members of the Loan Council, representing the seven Governments, which recently met in Melbourne, to resolve to balance their Budgets this year. It was a unique experience in the political life of Australia—seven Australian Governments all setting out with the determination to balance their Budgets. If they succeed—and I hope they will—I venture to say it will be the greatest development in modern Parliamentary history, at any rate in Australia. This, too, is certain, that if they all succeed, that if the seven Budgets are balanced by the end of June, the members of those seven Governments will be the most unpopular men in this or any other country of the world.

After all, the decision to balance this year was not of our own making. It meant either resolving to attempt to do that and accomplish it, or to meet a worse fate. We had no choice whatever in the matter. We are forced to do it by circumstances over which we have no control for the moment, but for which undoubtedly all the Governments in Australia are to a large extent responsible. The London market has been closed to us during the past year or so, and we have had to depend upon our own resources in Australia for loan money with which to carry on development work. Associated with the sudden cessation of loan money from overseas was the unfortunate circumstance of a considerable falling-off, not only in the volume of our staple products, but also a great reduction in the prices. Had those factors not coincided, the position would not have been nearly so difficult as it is, but I suppose it is really a question of cause and effect. It is the very considerable adverse trade balance that Australia has been experiencing for years past, associated with the failure of the seasons in the Eastern States and the fall in the prices of our primary products, that has brought the financial position to a head. We should have reached the present position in any event, but these factors have brought it to a head, and we now have to face the position as regards overseas borrowings.

We have to admit that we have all been heavy borrowers. A fair amount of the criticism levelled against Australia is not without some foundation. Certainly in the post-war years the whole continent has been borrowing very heavily—to the extent of something like £40,000,000 a year, and when our Budgets have failed to balance, we have been able to make up the deficiency by borrowing the money from the Old Country to pay the interest we owed. It has been most convenient finance for Australia, but of course it could not continue, and the bad seasons have brought about the crisis with which we are now faced. The effect of this sudden balancing of Budgets in all Australia is most severe to the country. There can be no question about that, especially if we apply our own small individual experience to the matter. If we are suddenly compelled to cut down our expenditure or to increase our income—in other words, to pay our way—and we have to do it all in one year, we find it very difficult indeed. In fact, a considerable number of people in private business would go under in attempting to do it. I think it is a pity that the cutting off of financial supplies from overseas was brought about so suddenly. If the Australian Governments had been given notice, as it were, to balance their Budgets over a period, even say in two years or three years, the process would not have been nearly so difficult as in trying to do it all in one year. Expenditure cannot be reduced all of a sudden, and while it is impossible for Governments to reduce expenditure very substantially and immediately, it is also impossible for Governments to increase their revenue suddenly. So I believe that if the position could be thoroughly understood in the Old Country, and if we were given two or three years in order to accomplish that which we have set out to do in one year, there would not be half the troubles and difficulties and depression in Australia that exist to-day. Of course we may be told that only drastic remedies will effect a cure, and that we would have only continued in the same way until we were brought up with a round turn. It is certain, however, that in the process of seven Governments squaring the ledger, seven Governments dealing with the same people, we are going to experience very serious difficulty indeed.

I am not saying that an attempt should not be made to square the ledger, but it will mean an intensification of the unemployed difficulty all over Australia. Works will have to be closed down if money is not available. They cannot be continued if the source of supplies open to us in the past is no longer available. So the people will have an experience unique to them, something that promises to be much more severe than the depression which followed the land boom and the closing of nearly the whole of the banks in Victoria in 1893. I can just remember that occasion and the experiences of the following years in Victoria. As a matter of fact, had it not been for the discovery of the Western Australian goldfields—Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie—in the year before the closing of the banks, that was in 1892, I do not know what would have happened to the people of the Eastern States, more especially to those of Victoria. There was no other outlet for that State's population, and her people, mostly young people, flocked here in tens of thousands, and it was the money they earned on the goldfields of Western Australia that was sent in large sums every fortnight or every month to maintain their parents and relatives that helped the Eastern States during those difficult years. I know of no likelihood of discovering a new goldfield to help us out of our difficulty, though something in the way of an oil discovery may come to the rescue.

It appears that Australia is going to have an extremely trying time during the next year or two. There is no doubt whatever that we shall pull through and will be the better for the experience, provided we are wise enough to profit by what has led us into our present position and try to live more within our means than we have been doing in the past. Whatever might be the measures taken by Governments in this extreme financial stringency, they are entitled to some consideration. A very large number of people in Australia do not subscribe to the methods that have been adopted by the Commonwealth Government, but something drastic had to be done in order to rectify the adverse trade balance. Nothing short of absolute prohibition of the importation of many lines of goods would meet the situation. There is no reason—and I am not now speaking of tariffs—why Australia should have been importing

such large quantities of goods as she has been doing. It has become a fad with the people of Australia that nothing was any good or worth buying or worth wearing unless it came from overseas. This is noticeable every day in every village and hamlet throughout Australia. Had we adopted a more patriotic attitude in years gone by, purchased the goods made in this country, and so kept the money in Australia, and kept the people of Australia employed, instead of making work for the people of other countries, we should not now be in the serious position in which we find ourselves. I am very glad to know the spirit has taken hold of the people of the State to buy local goods. This has been taken up seriously, and should have a very beneficial effect. It is not very creditable to ourselves that our manufacturers should still have to dispose of Western Australian products as coming from Eastern Australia or somewhere else. They actually have to cover up the place from which they have been produced. I imagine that position will be overcome as the years go by. I do not suppose the Treasurers in the Eastern States will hear anything that I may say, but I trust I am not saying anything to discourage them in their efforts to balance their Budgets, a balancing that is most necessary, when I remark that probably many of the figures contained in the Budgets will be found by the end of June next to be merely pious hopes.

The Premier: That may be so, but you cannot borrow and you cannot spend unless you can borrow.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Something will have to be done. When the Premiers or Treasurers who comprise the Loan Council came to a decision unanimously to square their ledgers this year, it cannot be imagined that they did so lightly, and without a good and just cause. It would have been infinitely easier, not only for Governments but for the people of Australia, to have gone on for another year or two and gradually squared the ledger than to do it by force, as it were, in one year.

The Premier: The facility to borrow is gone.

Hon. P. COLLIER: As a result of my several experiences, I have some idea of the financial position as it exists in London. We had reached the stage when we had exported

all the gold we could export. We had to keep a reserve against our note issue, and in the course of a few months we had to export something like £25,000,000 in gold in order to obtain credit in London. The position was certainly serious. It could not go on in that way, because no further gold was available for export. As no credit was available, there was nothing left for us but to live within our incomes. There was practically no credit in London, and Governments have been forced to make the attempt to live within their means. It is thought by some people that this position would not have arisen to the extent it has in this State had it not been for our entering into the Financial Agreement. I do not agree with that contention; nor do I believe that in the crisis which has come upon us the credit of any one State would stand out as something so much greater than that of any other State, or that of all the other States and the Commonwealth combined, as to enable that one State to secure money for itself. I think we should, whether we had come under the Financial Agreement or remained outside it, have found ourselves in exactly the position we are in now so far as credit in London is concerned. It is well to remember at this point that we now receive £473,000 a year as a fixed payment from the Commonwealth in lieu of the per capita payments that were formerly made. The time is opportune to remark, as I had occasion to remind the people a year or two ago, upon what would happen to Western Australia in the matter of per capita payments when a financial crisis should strike the Commonwealth. One need not draw upon one's imagination very much to come to the conclusion that had we not secured this annual payment of £473,000 for 58 years, and had this not been embodied in an agreement with the Federal Government, the financial difficulties of that Government during the past 12 months have been so great that the per capita payments would have altogether disappeared. There would have been no question about that. I would not have agreed at the Loan Council, when the matter was discussed and decided upon, to accept the £473,000 in lieu of the per capita payment but for the fact that I saw we had no security for the payment of the 25s. per head, that it could be cut off in a week or a

month by any Government that came into power, and that we were at the mercy of such Government from month to month.

The Premier: And of Parliaments, of course. There are advantages as well as disadvantages in the agreement.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We have to remember that for 12 or 15 years Federal Governments have been attacking the per capita payments, and the question of a reduction has been continually brought forward at Premiers' conferences. I think it was Mr. Watt who brought forward a proposal at a conference at which the Premier was present, for a 2s. 6d. reduction per annum until they got down to 10s. There was no guarantee about the payments. I thought it much better, therefore, to secure a fixed payment for a long period of years, such as we now have, than to take the risk of losing all, as we would have done. I do not say this of any particular Federal Government, but it is most likely some Federal Government would have cut off the payment. In their dilemmas Federal Governments have not given much consideration to the difficulties they create for State Governments in balancing their ledgers. They must increase taxation to do this, and they take action almost solely with that idea and desire, irrespective of the difficulties they may create for the States. They are not very much concerned as to the effect their actions may have in rendering the position more difficult for State Governments. I do not see how it is possible for State Governments to-day to increase their direct taxation to any extent, because of the great volume of increased taxation that has been proposed by the Commonwealth Parliament. There is, in fact, very little left for State Governments. I confess I am not able to see from the figures any likelihood of our Budget estimate being realised. I have had the unhappy experience myself, as most Treasurers have had, of finding figures going astray before the end of the financial year. Taking the total estimate of revenue, we find that the Treasurer has budgeted for £10,104,850, and we must bear in mind also that the total revenue last year was £9,750,000.

The Premier: There is £473,000 to be added this time.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, but other figures are affected. Even so, this is £354,000 less than the amount received last

year, plus the £400,000 odd because of the Financial Agreement.

The Premier: That was not included last year.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It seems a very great increase in the Estimates when we have regard for the general condition of things now abroad in the country. Last year I was short of my Estimates by £583,000, although that was offset to some extent by a saving in expenditure of £167,000. Still, there is a likelihood of the revenue continuing to fall. I think the Treasurer used the words in his statement that revenue was falling everywhere. That is to be expected under present conditions. We know that a very considerable indirect source of revenue is that which comes from the expenditure of loan money. Our loan moneys have been reduced by nearly half.

The Premier: We have not got any yet.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Even if we obtain all that has been allotted to us by the Loan Council, we shall have scarcely more than half what we had last year. We should have £2,100,000 as against £3,750,000 last year.

The Premier: Including the £350,000 we hold.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. Such a large cut in loan expenditure will affect every avenue of revenue concerned.

The Premier: We are not likely to spend anything like that amount.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The position will be affected considerably.

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Increases are expected in many directions, and I hope they will be realised. For instance, there is the Bunbury harbour. I suppose the prospective harbour is responsible for an estimated increase in revenue of £6,000. Then there is the goldfields water supply, £13,000, and electricity £26,000. I notice the increased expenditure on the power house is only £5,000, but the Treasurer expects to receive £26,000 additional revenue as against an increased expenditure of only £5,000. The power station has been expanding all the while, but I was under the impression that we were nearly up to the limit of our capacity there under existing conditions.

The Minister for Railways: A bit beyond it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Beyond the safe limit. During my time at the Treasury

every year for six years requests were made for extensions costing between £60,000 and £80,000.

The Premier: The power station is continually developing.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It has developed ever since it was established. It is in some way evidence of development and progress because the power has been used in many directions for factories, plant and machinery. Nevertheless it is difficult to find the money for these purposes. It will be the worry of the present Government to find the money necessary to keep adding units to the station as the demand increases.

Mr. Withers: That will be rationed as well.

Hon. P. COLLIER: To put it mildly, I should say the railway figures were most optimistic. Although we have the Minister for Railways back in the House, I must say the figures appear to me extremely optimistic. There is diminishing trade nearly everywhere, and it is most unusual to expect to receive from the railways £358,000 more than was received last year.

The Minister for Railways: There is a big carry-over from last year.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is a prospect of a record harvest this year. I should say from the prices that prevail now for farm products there is also likely to be a considerable carry-over from the coming harvest into the following year.

The Minister for Railways: They are not in a position to carry it over.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Many of the poor beggars of farmers will not be able to carry over, but will have to dispose of their products whatever the price may be. It is most unfortunate that just when there is such need for assistance to the primary producers because of the extraordinarily low prices of their products, our time of greatest financial difficulty should occur. In a normal season, such as the years we have experienced latterly, we should not look upon the matter so seriously, because we would be able to get money to carry the farmers over the bad period.

The Minister for Railways: With bad prices, South Australia has no wheat.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We have been fortunate in this respect, that our seasons have been consistently good. On the other hand South Australia has had complete failures, and New South Wales and Victoria have

had some bad seasons. In both the latter States, however, there is a considerable improvement; at least, good harvests appear to be assured. But even allowing for—in an original expression—a bountiful harvest, it does seem to me a great deal to expect that the railway revenue for this year will be £358,000 more than that for last year. There is a falling-off in trade in other directions. One of the most profitable trades of the railway department has been timber, carried in full train loads to the ports at high rates.

The Minister for Railways: There is no evidence of the export trade falling off.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I should say there is, because of so many mills closing down in the South-West.

The Premier: There are tremendous stocks of timber on hand.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Many of those mills are supplying local requirements. I notice that in the figures for the State Sawmills alone there is a big reduction in the total estimated revenue—not surplus revenue—as against last year.

The Premier: They have tremendous stocks.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They have been cutting up to the limit for many years, and so long as oversea markets can be found the Railway Department will get the traffic. However, I can scarcely imagine that, unless things improve, the timber trade will be able to maintain even its present output. Then again, it is expected that the railways will balance their internal budget within the small margin of £10,000. Last year's expenditure was £3,119,000, and this year's estimated expenditure is £3,020,000. An increase of £358,000 is expected in revenue with, in round figures, £110,000 less expenditure.

The Minister for Railways: That is based on the last figures.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Commissioner of Railways, when a Treasurer complains to him that from month to month the railway revenue is not coming in as expected, generally says that the expenditure is down too; that if the expected revenue was not received, there was a considerable reduction in expenditure. But here the forecast is £358,000 additional revenue this year with £100,000 less expenditure than last year. I do not know what is in the minds of the railway authorities, but something drastic

must be going to take place. Even with the good harvest, the increased traffic that is expected will cost money to handle. In ordinary circumstances, the increased traffic would mean increased expenditure. But in this case things are to go the opposite way—largely increased revenue with reduced expenditure. Hon. members know that last year the loss on the railways, not taking sinking fund into account, was about £440,000. That deficit is going to be wiped out this year. Last season was a good season, although large quantities of farm produce were not railed to the ports. This year there is to be a balance in the railway figures. I can only hope it will be accomplished. As indicating the general decline in revenue, the estimates for income tax and dividend duty are down; and these items are generally a barometer as to the condition of trade and commerce generally in the State. It is considered that the amounts will be down £65,000 on income tax and £80,000 on dividend duty as compared with last year. The total decline under the two items is about £150,000. That is a serious decline, and must be embarrassing to any Treasurer. I was indeed glad to see that the amount received from income tax in the year just closed exceeded pretty substantially the amount I estimated, although I had difficulty in persuading the Commissioner of Taxation to keep it up to that level. Here, however, we have a heavy fall in those two items. I can quite understand that for the next financial year income tax will be down, because it will be collected on the basis of the current financial year, which looks like the worst year in our experience. The whole of the last financial year was not bad, and therefore incomes generally were not affected throughout the year. Thus the amount should not be so much down this year, though I can easily understand its being down very considerably next year as the result of the general falling-off in incomes during the current financial year. That remark also applies to dividend duty. On the expenditure side one of the outstanding items is Outdoor Relief. Last year the amount was certainly larger than we have ever had before. In past years we have been able to get through on £10,000 or £12,000. Last year the amount rose to £65,000, and the estimated expenditure for the current year is £187,000, or an increase of more than £120,000 on the preced-



ing year. That increase is indicative of the position of affairs generally in the State, because the greatest part of that money, nearly all of it, goes in assistance to people who are out of work. The increase is certainly tremendous, and indicates how bad things are. Naturally I do not know what is in the Treasurer's mind regarding the items which show reductions. It may be that the reductions as compared with previous years are due to some proposed decrease in salaries. Unless that is responsible for the reduction of the Education Vote, I am unable to understand the matter. There is no reason why a reduction should not take place if it can be effected without inflicting hardship anywhere, but ever since we have had State education there has been an annual increase in the Vote. In many years there have been substantial increases due to the development and growth taking place in the country—new schools being established in outlying centres, and schools in older centres having to be enlarged and additional teaching staff provided. This year the Government estimate to get through with £11,000 less than last year.

The Premier: Education is an enormous vote.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It has been an enormous vote. For some years I kept the increase down to £10,000 as against the preceding year. But usually the department fight hard for increases of £40,000 or £50,000. Of course, all the departments fight for money. In the Education Department, however, over a number of years there were large increases—as much as £60,000 in one year. The vote for the Agricultural Department is down by £22,000. I hope the department will not be starved in any way. The expenditure, I observe, is practically on two items—experimental farms, and rabbit-proof fence and extermination of rabbits and other vermin. I do not know whether it is proposed to let the unfortunate farmer be overrun with rabbits. This cut of £11,000 might result in serious loss later to those who will be affected by it.

The Premier: It is practically all on the fence.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We know that there are differences of opinion as to the utility of the fence.

The Premier: It costs an enormous amount to keep the fence up.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Still, I believe the general consensus of opinion is that the fence is of considerable assistance. In the Works Department there is a reduction of £75,000, no doubt due largely to the diminished volume of work to be done consequent upon the reduction in loan moneys and other moneys available. The substantial portion of the Budget, really, is yet to come. It will be disclosed to us when we obtain the Bills which are going to enable the Government to secure increased revenue in some directions and reduced expenditure in others. I do not propose to discuss the contemplated taxes to-night, because there will be opportunity of doing that when the Bills are brought down. Every one of the proposals will require legislation, and any attempt to discuss them now would be impracticable, as we do not yet know the contents of the Bills. The discussion, in my opinion, can take place better when the measures are before us. The total is very considerable, and some of the proposed taxes are perhaps justified. I say that with a qualification; perhaps some of them are justified. Being a man who does not go to the races, I believe in the increased totalisator tax. We all advocate making the other fellow pay. However, those who enjoy sunny afternoons on the racecourse and the financial advantages of backing horses will not mind contributing an increased amount to the revenue. I do not know why the Treasurer does not take all the totalisator fractions. He proposes to take only eight per cent. of them.

The Minister for Railways: If he did what you suggest, he would have to take over the clubs.

The Premier: No.

The Minister for Railways: That is what you would have to do if you took the whole of the fractions.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Perhaps that is the reason for this movement. It is like all other forms of taxation; you are liable to defeat your own object altogether. That is a point one has to bear in mind regarding taxation. Any slap-dash way of suggesting that it is merely necessary to make a calculation based on the supposition that taxation will be increased doubly if the tax rate is doubled, is altogether wrong. It

must be obvious that a point may be reached in regard to increased taxation at which it is possible to receive less than formerly under a reduced rate.

The Premier: You kill the golden goose.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That has to be borne in mind. As to the tax on sweep tickets, I suppose the difficult financial position of the State is the justification for taking money from an illegal source. I hope it will not be regarded as an encouragement to the community to indulge further in this form of illegality. It is proposed to tax sweep tickets sold within the State for 2s. 6d. or less, to the extent of 3d. per ticket. I hope it will not be regarded as encouragement to the Commissioner of Police relative to this phase. I know, of course, that the present Minister does not give the Commissioner instructions, but the question of sweeps and betting has been in the hands of the Commissioner for some time, more or less.

The Minister for Railways: Mostly less.

Hon. P. COLLIER: During the past 12 months he has obtained a pretty good grip of the situation. There has been a considerable reduction in the number of sweeps permitted. I hope that our position will not become so bad that the State will endeavour to profit by these means and commence running sweeps and lotteries. I do not know how we shall get on regarding the tax on tickets sold in connection with sweeps outside Western Australia. I suppose the extra 6d. will not make any difference to those who take a risk in Tattersall's sweep or in the Golden Casket which is run in Queensland. Then there is the position of the poor punter! I do not know how the member for Hannans (Mr. Munsie) will get on, because he is a regular and frequent winner at the races.

Mr. Munsie: A frequent visitor, but not a frequent winner.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The tax is to be imposed on winnings, and it is the punter who will pay. The member for Hannans will contribute most of this taxation because he is one of the most consistent winners in this State.

The Minister for Agriculture: This is to catch him!

Hon. P. COLLIER: I can imagine the difficulties that will confront the Taxation Department and the Treasury officials in trying to thwart the ingenuity of the men

who attend races, and to find out exactly what the winnings were.

Mr. McCallum: Will the punters get a rebate on losses?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No. The rule is that you pay every day at the races, and there will be no off-set regarding losses. But, of course, that will not affect the member for Hannans!

Mr. Munsie: I wish I could make you prove your words.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I can quite understand that the estimated revenue from these sources is merely a guess. There are no means of properly estimating what the income will be. It is suggested, however, that £20,000 will be received under these headings. I should imagine it would be more. Someone who pretended to know all about racing told me that by increasing the tax on totalisator receipts or even on the fractions alone, the return should run into about £38,000 a year.

The Premier: They represented £23,000.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course, the hon. member can ascertain that. Still, 8 per cent. will return a fair amount. Then there is the entertainments tax. So far all these taxes have related to amusements. I do not know that those who back horses and lose or take tickets in sweeps and fail to win, can be altogether described as indulging in amusement.

Mr. McCallum: It is a hobby with most of them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not think that those who wish to get rich quickly by that road are imbued with a desire for amusement. Rather are they imbued with a hope that financial gain may come their way as a result of their participation. The hospital tax proposed is a very substantial one, and I do not know that I shall be able to go far with regard to that impost. It must be apparent that £156,000 is a lot of money to take from people in these days, by means of increased taxation. I know the desperate plight the hospitals have been in for years. We have heard threats about closing up wards, and we know that those in charge of the hospitals have had to seek further assistance from the Treasurer almost continuously. We also know that the Treasurer for the time being, much against his wish and desire, has not been able to assist those institutions. However, we shall be better able to understand the position when we

have the provisions of the Bill before us and know exactly what is proposed. I am not speaking with authority, but I do not think a hospital tax has been imposed in any of the Eastern States. In Queensland they maintain their hospitals by means of the Golden Casket sweep, and there is a handsome surplus as well.

Mr. Munsie: There has been a considerable contribution to Consolidated Revenue in Queensland as a result.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. They go much further than we do with regard to hospitals. It has been the practice in Victoria, ever since I was a lad there, to collect large sums annually by means of voluntary giving. It seems that in this State that system has been exhausted, and the appeals have resolved themselves into the same people responding every time. There is another matter that I hesitate to refer to altogether. I am leaving it to the last because I am afraid I shall not be able to speak much when we come to deal with it, and that is the proposal to reduce the allowances of members of Parliament.

Mr. Withers: A sob in your voice, please!

Hon. P. COLLIER: We have been left in doubt as to the exact amount of the percentage reduction.

The Minister for Railways: Perhaps we should leave it to your discretion.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The distressing worry and anxiety has been left to continue as long as possible. We are living in dread that the percentage reduction may be upwards of 50 per cent.

Mr. Marshall: It cannot be more than 8 per cent., which they have taken on account of the totalisator tax.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But that represents an increase from 6 per cent. to 8 per cent.

The Premier: Yes, a  $33\frac{1}{3}$  per cent. increase.

Member: That sounds ominous!

Hon. P. COLLIER: The proposed salary deduction represents a substantial amount, seeing that it is estimated that the reduction in members' allowances and civil servants' salaries will save £105,000. That is an enormous amount to take away from a small number of people, especially, to use a hackneyed phrase, at a time like the present.

The Premier: We paid away £5,600,000 in wages and salaries.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But that covers the whole of the Government employees. This proposal applies only to members of Parliament and the civil service. I presume it includes also the teachers. It does not include the large wages section upon whom the larger amount the Premier refers to has been expended.

The Premier: The amount paid to salaried officers was £2,200,000.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That includes civil servants and teachers.

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It would not include the wages section.

The Premier: No.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not propose to offer any opinion on that proposal now; I shall wait until the Bill is placed before us when we shall be able to discuss it while fresh. At any rate, we will then know just what this proposal represents. I do not think we can satisfactorily discuss, nor is it desirable to do so at this stage, the proposed forms of taxation until the necessary Bills are before us and we appreciate what they contain. I do not wish to deal with another question at length again, but I shall merely refer to the position regarding unemployment. The position not only at present but for the future is becoming desperate. It will be relieved in a month or two by the harvest, but that will provide for a number of men for merely a month or two, and then we shall be back where we are at present.

The Minister for Railways: I am concerned as to where the farmers will get their cash to do the work.

Hon. P. COLLIER: You mean for harvesting operations?

The Minister for Railways: Yes.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is a phase that has to be borne in mind. I should say there will be considerably less employment of men by farmers this year than formerly. In past seasons many farmers have been content to pay wages and to have work done for them, but in view of the present difficulties, those men will have to take their coats off and do the harvesting themselves, together with other work associated with it. Certainly the position regarding unemployment is most desperate.

The Minister for Railways: Of course, a few of the farmers who come to Parliament

to attend to their duties here will have to employ labour!

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But even so, with the cut proposed in our salaries, we may have to do that work ourselves, too.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not see any prospect of the position improving during the rest of the financial year. I take it the Government are spending all the loan money available on public works, or in production likely to employ men. I take it all funds available are being used for that purpose. There are no prospects of starting new public works or railways, and the problem will be, with the allotted amount of loan funds, to continue works already started and not in operation.

The Premier: We cannot get any more loan funds.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And we are not sure we shall be able to get the amount of loan funds allotted to us. It is a matter of supposition only that we shall be able to borrow £15,000,000 in Australia. Should the position get worse and that money not be obtainable, the circumstances confronting the Government will be more difficult than ever. Before the session closes, I think we shall have to see whether we cannot arrive at some arrangement whereby we shall be able to reduce the volume of unemployment and find work for the men somewhere. The enormous sum allotted for outdoor relief, £187,000, affords an indication of what the position is to-day. There are large numbers of men unemployed, many of them skilled tradesmen who have never before been out of work throughout their lives. Those men are now forced to accept sustenance from the Government. It is most humiliating for them to be forced into such a position, particularly people who have been accustomed to receiving good wages. The great problem confronting those men is how they can meet their obligations to their landlords. The money received for sustenance does not help in that direction. We will have to do something to assist those who are out of work to meet the difficulty regarding their obligations besides mere food supplies, covered by the outdoor relief vote. It seems to me that this is the time when we should not—I do not see how it is possible for us to do so—embark upon the settlement of new areas or open up new land settlement schemes.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Hear, hear!

Hon. P. COLLIER: What we should concentrate upon for the present, and for some years to come, unless there should be a very rapid improvement in the general position, is the further development of areas already settled.

The Premier: And served by railways.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes; by railways, roads, schools and all other facilities required for settlement. It would be much better for us to concentrate upon securing those people and enabling them to make good and continue production, rather than squander our resources and substance on new areas and new settlers. In fact, it cannot be done. We have at present pretty heavy expenditure, as I think the Loan Estimates will show, under group settlement. Although some of those settlers have been there for eight years and varying periods of less than that, many of them are still dependent on Government sustenance. I offer a warning to the Government that before embarking upon the proposed new settlement at Nornalup, which is not going to be immediately reproductive, not in fact for many years—and one of the conditions of the loan money available is that it shall be expended in a direction which will be immediately reproductive—I remind the Government that while the settlement of our South-Western lands with consequent increase in dairy production is very desirable, nevertheless this is not a time when we can undertake new obligations in new areas of heavily timbered country the most remote of all the South-West from our markets. We shall require all the money that we have. Let us use it in existing districts that are settled, where the position can be consolidated, rather than dissipate our energies by spreading the money over a larger area, so getting ourselves further into trouble and difficulty. There are still in the possession of the Crown very large areas of land which will be productive in the future. Much of the land that has been under investigation by the Development and Migration Commission during the last year or two will be settled in due time.

The Premier: There is no chance of settling it now, not under that scheme.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, for the present those things will have to remain until we get over our difficulties. But let us concentrate

and make good the areas now under settlement, rather than embark upon things that are unknown. I can only say I look forward to the introduction of those Bills, and that when they come down I will deal with the position. I have a full realisation of the extremely difficult task with which all Governments in Australia are faced, namely, to balance their Budgets. It seems to me almost hopeless. But as I have already remarked, if all the Governments in Australia should succeed in doing that, if they should achieve the apparently impossible in one year, then our credit standing as security in London, overseas and everywhere else should be good for all time.

Progress reported.

## BILL—MAIN ROADS.

*In Committee.*

Mr. Panton in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 6—agreed to.

Clause 7—Commissioner of Main Roads:

Mr. McCALLUM: I move an amendment—

That the following paragraph be inserted in Subclause 3:—“(e) If as Commissioner he effects any purchase or enters into any contract for the purposes of this Act with any firm or company in which he is a partner or shareholder or otherwise financially interested, as the case may be.”

This increases the control of the Governor over the Commissioner. The Bill proposes to give the Commissioner very extensive powers, practically sole control of the expenditure of all this money, which last year aggregated more than a million pounds. It is not likely to reach that sum again, but it will be a very substantial sum each year, and it is necessary that the powers given to the Commissioner should be hedged about with as much security as possible. An officer paid a substantial salary, and having control of huge expenditure should not be mixed up with firms or companies with whom officially he enters into any contracts.

Mr. Parker: Does not paragraph (d) cover that?

Mr. McCALLUM: No, that prescribes that he shall not be personally concerned or interested in any contract made by him as

Commissioner. The Crown Law Department has advised me that my amendment is not covered by anything in the Bill. Apart altogether from contracts, the requirements of the board involve huge purchases.

The Attorney General: A contract is the same thing as an agreement to purchase.

Mr. McCALLUM: The amendment does not ask anything that is not usual in cases where a public servant is given such wide power and discretion as the Commissioner will have. It is only right that we should take every precaution. I am advised that the word “contract” as appearing in the Bill relates to contracts the Commissioner may let for the construction of roads. Apart from that, he will be a very big purchaser of raw materials.

The Attorney General: That will be done by contract.

Mr. McCALLUM: I do not want any subsequent quibble that it is not provided in the law, or that the Commissioner in his private capacity is free to invest his money in concerns with which, as Commissioner, he is doing business. The Crown Law Department advises me that the point is not covered in the Bill. We should take every possible precaution in this regard. There can be no harm done, even if the case is overstated in the law.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am inclined to think that paragraph (d) covers the question as far as it is necessary to go. As I mentioned previously, the Main Roads Board cannot enter into a contract for over £1,000 without the approval of the Minister or of the Governor in Council. The Commissioner, in the course of his private business, may have shares in a cement company or a coal mine, as I or any other member might have. I do not think it right that because of that we should be deprived of getting material at reasonable prices.

Mr. McCallum: He should not have shares in any such enterprise. Of course we are not talking of individuals; we do not know who may be the Commissioner.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The amendment would be more reasonable if it prescribed that the Commissioner should not do anything of the sort, except with the approval of the Minister or the Government Tender Board. Most of the contracts for material are made by the Government Ten-

der Board. The Commissioner has nothing to do with that, although the Minister has.

Mr. PARKER: Paragraph (d) is almost identical with a paragraph in the Government Railways Act, and really covers what the member for South Fremantle desires. To insert the amendment might be construed to mean that "contract" in paragraph (d) was intended to cover something different.

Mr. Raphael: It did not cover much with the State Sawmills and their motor trucks.

Mr. McCALLUM: The provision in paragraph (d) is not wide enough. The word "contract" would cover the usual contracts made by the Commissioner, but would not cover purchases. The Minister's suggestion to require the approval of the Minister or of the Government Tender Board would not meet the position. The practice is to refer tenders to the board for their recommendation, which is sent to the Government Tender Board.

The Minister for Works: I think paragraph (d) covers everything.

Mr. McCALLUM: No harm would be done by including the safeguard. If the Bill be passed, no public servant will have so free a hand in the expenditure of public funds as the Commissioner.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No one desires that any loophole should be left to enable the Commissioner to make a profit out of his position. The hon. member is misconceiving the meaning of "contract." A contract need not necessarily have to do with building. Every bargain made and enforceable by law is a contract. To purchase goods is a contract, an executed contract. To agree to buy goods is a contract, an executory contract. "Contract" in paragraph (d) is not confined to a contract for the building of a road; it applies to any agreement made between the Commissioner, whether an executory or executed contract. If the hon. member will agree to the clause being passed, I will discuss the matter with him and with the Crown Law officer, and if I am satisfied that something further is necessary, I will use my influence to have the clause recommitted and amended. For the moment I see no need to add the paragraph.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. McCALLUM: I move an amendment—

That the following subclause be added:—  
“(f) The Commissioner shall at all times be subject to and under the control of the Minister.”

The Minister told us that this was the position. If his statement expresses his full view, he will not raise any objection to the amendment. The Main Roads Board is a corporate body, acting independently and beyond control. Only as regards provision for finance does the Minister enter into the business. When a contract for an amount exceeding £1,000 is to be let, the Minister's approval is required, but that is a formal matter to ensure that the money is available in the Treasury to meet the contract. If a Commissioner be established as a body corporate he will be an independent entity capable of doing many things without interference by the Minister or the Government.

Mr. Parker: Clause 9 says he shall exercise all such acts and powers as may, in the opinion of the Minister, be necessary or convenient for carrying into effect any of the purposes or objects of this Act.

The Minister for Works: It is for the Minister to decide.

Mr. McCALLUM: The only thing the Minister decides is whether the money is available or not. The year's programme is approved by the Minister, and that is the end of it, except that he is consulted as to whether the money is available for contracts exceeding £1,000. If the Minister will have absolute control of the Commissioner's activities, he should not object to the amendment. I disagree with anyone, except a Minister, exercising such wide powers.

The Attorney General: In that respect there is no departure from the measure you sponsored.

Mr. McCALLUM: The powers are to be given to one man as against a board of three.

The Attorney General: Had you any greater control over the board?

Mr. McCALLUM: In moving the second reading of my measure, I said I disagreed with the proposal to create a board, but it was the only means by which we could get a roads policy for this State. We had to do it in order to get the Bill. We had our arrangement with the Commonwealth, and the money was available, but we had no machinery or organisation established to

carry out the work. Although we disagreed with the policy we accepted it in order to make a start. I am sorry I was ever weak enough to accept the dictates of another portion of Parliament.

The Attorney General: You are showing great confidence in your successor when you are trying to give him power he does not want.

Mr. McCALLUM: Power he says he already has. Parliament never intended to give that power, and it has never been exercised. The Main Roads Board have always done the work themselves, and the only reference ever made to me was on money questions. All the arguments in another place were against the Minister having the power, and everything referring to him was struck out.

Mr. Wansbrough: The word "Minister" was the bugbear.

Mr. McCALLUM: I was held up as a person who could not be trusted, although every confidence was shown in the board. People who argued that way when things did not go as they thought they should, afterwards criticised me for what they alleged had gone wrong. They put the responsibility upon me although by their own statements and doings I had no say in the matter. They had their "fake" committee of inquiry, but did not go very far with it. Parliament intended that the Bill should operate independently, and that the Government should not enter into the administration except with respect to the finding of the money. The board has never had the slightest interference at the hands of the Minister. The scheme of things is now to be changed, and one man is to take the place of three. I disagree entirely with the idea of giving one individual so much power.

The Minister for Works: Only one has been responsible all the time.

Mr. McCALLUM: I think one man has dominated the Board. If the Minister is to be the controlling authority there should be no objection to making that clear in the Bill. If anything goes wrong he can then be held responsible.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Since I have been the Minister in charge there has never been any question about the control. The Act gives the Minister all the necessary power. Money cannot be spent on developmental or main roads without approval.

Furthermore, the Board cannot spend more than £1,000 without the consent of the Minister, and there is scarcely a work which does not involve more than that. I must at all times take the full responsibility for the actions of the board. One cannot see every job carried out properly; that is the function of the Commissioner. When it comes to the expenditure of money the Minister must have control. I cannot agree to the amendment.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 8, 9—agreed to.

Clause 10—Officers and Employees:

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I move an amendment—

That a subclause be added as follows:—“(3) No officer or servant of the Commissioner shall—(a) engage in any employment outside the duties of his office, except with the approval of the Commissioner; or (b) in any way participate, or claim to be entitled to participate, in the profits of or in any benefit or emolument arising from any contract or agreement made by or on behalf of the Commissioner; or (c) acquire any Crown lands without the approval of the Minister.”

Mr. KENNEDY: I cannot understand the reason for inserting paragraph (c) in this amendment, nor can I understand how a similar provision ever found its way into the Government Railways Act. Any person should have the right to acquire Crown lands without seeking the approval of the Minister. If such a paragraph as this appeared in the terms of engagement as between a private firm and an employee, members of this committee would certainly raise an objection if it came under their notice. I move an amendment on the amendment—

That paragraph (c) be struck out.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I hope the amendment on the amendment will not be carried. Officers in the service have an opportunity to get inside information that is not open to outsiders. The provision in question has been in force for many years, and yet I do not know of a single case in which the Executive Council has ever refused an application for Crown land. We do know of instances where people have obtained inside information and have been able to secure land to the detriment of the

Crown and outside individuals. It is a wise precaution to embody this provision in the Bill. There is no need to fear that if someone wishes to take up a block of land he will be denied the right to do so. The provision gives the department the right to find out whether a man is using his official position to the disadvantage of the general community. Nearly every week we give authority to civil servants and others to take up Crown lands.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I am not convinced by the Minister's reply. He is in just as awkward a position as the Commissioner would be. There has been more than one case for suspicion in the past that it has been made worth the while of the Commissioner to give his approval.

The Attorney General: This must be done with the approval of the Minister.

Mr. KENNEALLY: There is a tendency to place this provision in any Bill that is brought down for the appointment of a Commissioner. Because it is proposed to appoint someone to such a position we find this extract from the Government Railways Act embodied in the measure providing for that appointment. A railway employee must first get the permission of the Commissioner of Railways before taking up Crown land. It is quite unnecessary for such a stipulation to be made in the Act in question.

The Minister for Lands: A Government employee has only to apply to the Minister to get his authority.

Mr. KENNEALLY: There is no reason why he should have to do it. I can understand the principle applying to officers of the Lands Department, but I fail to understand the need for applying the principle to other officers. In fact, I regard the principle as bad elsewhere.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: An official might know that it was proposed to lay out certain main roads which would materially increase the value of Crown land available for selection, and he might acquire the land. The Commissioner for Railways does not give approval as suggested by the member for East Perth; approval is given by the Minister for Railways through the Executive Council. If the provision is necessary in any part of the Public Service, it should be necessary in those parts which

are concerned with the construction of railways and main roads.

Amendment on the amendment put and negatived.

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

Clauses 11, 12—agreed to.

Clause 13—Main roads may be proclaimed:

On motion by the Minister for Works, in Subclause 3 the words "the Surveyor General and" inserted after "shall serve on," and the same words inserted after "will be considered by."

(Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 14, 15—agreed to.

Clause 16—Powers of Commissioner:

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 3, after the words "as the case may be, shall" there be inserted "subject to the conditions (if any) stated in such request or contract."

The object is to clear up the position as regards local governing bodies which have taken contracts from the Main Roads Board. Some legal doubts exist as to the matter. Various local governing bodies have taken contracts from the Main Roads Board and have lost money on them, and there is some question as to whether under the Road Districts Act the members of such boards are not personally liable.

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

Clauses 17 to 34, Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

## BILL—ANATOMY.

### *In Committee.*

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

*House adjourned at 10.2 p.m.*