

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 30th August, 1955.

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

QUESTIONS.

REDEX CAR TRIAL.

Speed Restrictions and Closure of Roads.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Is he aware that it has been reported that cars in the Redex trial are speeding beyond the speed limits in built-up areas to be at check points on time, in some cases up to 90 miles per hour?

(2) Will he give an assurance that he will notify the organisers of this stupid destruction of cars and material, that speeding will not be tolerated in built-up areas in Western Australia, and the law will be carried out to the letter in this respect?

(3) Will he also give an assurance that if roads are wet the usual practice will be followed and roads closed until fit to carry traffic?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The policing of speed limits and other traffic regulations is the responsibility of the Commissioner of Police in the metropolitan traffic area and of local authorities outside the metropolitan area. I understand the commissioner intends to ensure that drivers in the trial comply with the regulations while passing through the metropolitan area. I am not aware of the attitude of country local authorities in the matter.

(3) The closing of roads to traffic during wet weather in the northern portion of the State is the prerogative of those local authorities to which authority has been granted to take such action. The local authorities authorised to close roads to traffic during wet weather are:—

Wyndham, West Kimberley, Hall's Creek, Broome, Marble Bar, Port Hedland, Roebourne, Ashburton, Tableland, Nullagine, Gascoyne-Manilya,

Upper Gascoyne, Shark Bay, Murchison, Meekatharra, Wiluna, Northampton, Leonora, Yalgoo, Mt. Magnet, Cue, Black Range.

BETTING.

Conditions of Licences.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM asked the Chief Secretary:

What are the conditions attached to a licence issued under—

(a) Betting Control regulation No. 31;

(b) Betting Control regulation No. 92?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(a) The conditions attached to a licence issued under Betting Control regulation No. 31 are the whole of the provisions of the Betting Control Act, 1954 and the Betting Control Regulations, 1955. No separate conditions have been inserted in any licence issued to date.

(b) No licence is issued under regulation No. 92. That regulation relates to certificates of registration of premises for betting issued under regulation No. 67 et seq. The conditions included in certificates of registration under regulation No. 92 are as shown in printed slips, copies of which I have laid on the Table of the House, the first being in respect of premises within a radius of 11 miles of the Perth Town Hall; the second, within the remainder of the metropolitan area—that is, beyond the 11 mile radius and within 30 miles of the Perth Town Hall; and the third, throughout the State beyond the metropolitan area. As from tomorrow, the 31st August, betting premises throughout the State will also be open for business on every Wednesday.

POISON 1080.

Methods of Use, etc.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) What methods are employed by the Agriculture Protection Board in the use of the poison 1080 for the destruction of rabbits in Western Australia?

(2) How many men are employed on this work?

(3) How many vehicles are used?

(4) What is the cost per week?

(5) What areas in Western Australia have already been poisoned with 1080?

(6) What areas will be poisoned in the next 12 months?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Control units are hired to land-holders on a contract basis. Each unit consists of two men with a Landrover, laying 1080-treated bait in furrows already made and free-fed by the contracting farmer. Bait is prepared from oats or apples.

(2) Nine, including the officer organising the work.

(3) To date, four. A further six are on order.

(4) Operating costs (most of which are met by payments from farmers hiring the units) vary from week to week.

(5) The vermin districts of Manjimup, Bridgetown, Nannup, Greenbushes, Dowerin, Kellerberrin, Cunderdin, Goomalling and portions of Preston, Wongan-Ballidu and Victoria Plains.

(6) A scheme has been prepared for the treatment of 24 vermin districts, covering almost the entire South-West and Great Southern Divisions of the State.

MOTION—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT.

To Disallow Petrol Pumps By-laws.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [4.39]: Mr. President, does this motion take precedence over the Address-in-reply?

The PRESIDENT: Yes, it is a motion to disallow by-laws.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I move—

That amendments to Road Districts (Petrol Pumps) By-laws, 1934, made by the Department of Local Government under the Road Districts Act, 1919-1951, published in the "Government Gazette" on the 27th May, 1955, and laid on the Table of the House on the 9th August, 1955, be and are hereby disallowed.

I do so because, for a start, the principle of government by regulation on a matter such as this, in my opinion goes too far. Such a principle can be resolved only by Parliament itself. It seems to me as though the Government has taken too much on itself in seeking to bring about this state of affairs by way of regulation. I also object to the passing of by-laws in this form because, if the Government gets away with these, it can quite easily make similar regulations to apply to all other types of businesses, such as those of grocers, bakers, hairdressers, tobacconists, fish shops—to mention only a few—and the matter could be carried to extremes and a regulation be introduced to provide that no sitting member of Parliament could be opposed.

These by-laws contain a stipulation that, except where the Minister approves in writing, a licence shall not be issued for the installation of a petrol pump if there are premises where petrol is sold to the

public within a radius of half a mile. A radius of half a mile is a fair distance. What is more, we have a Government that professes to be opposed to monopolies; and yet, under these by-laws, we shall be creating a monopoly. The Government cannot have it both ways; it either believes in monopolies or vice versa. The Minister may reply that he has the power to decide whether a service station shall be permitted or not, but that is too much power to place in the hands of any one man. I know that an attempt was made to frame a regulation; but because there was some doubt about its legality, it was altered to provide for the approval of the Minister. The portion of the by-laws to which I object reads—

Except where the Minister approves in writing, a licence shall not be issued for the installation or use of a petrol pump, tank, cistern, pipe or installations for the supply of petrol to the public if there are premises where petrol is sold to the public within a radius of a half-mile from the location or proposed location of the petrol pump, tank, cistern, pipe or installation.

The rest of the by-laws hinge on that particular point. I consider that the Minister is taking upon himself a big responsibility.

The Chief Secretary: You want to give the public some protection.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Quite so; but what about those already in business?

The Chief Secretary: Pick on those who are responsible! The Government is not responsible.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I do not agree with the Chief Secretary. Who is responsible if the Government is not? The Government has laid these amendments on the Table of the House; they have been framed by the Government and gazetted by the Government. So who is responsible if not the Government?

The Chief Secretary: The local authorities.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The Government has laid these amendments on the Table of the House, and therefore they are the responsibility of the Government. Surely the Minister cannot escape from that position! He is the Minister for Local Government, and if he approves of amendments and lays them on the Table of the House, he is responsible for them.

The Chief Secretary: There are 30 members in this House responsible for approving them.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: One might go so far as to say that the intention is not a bad one; but let us examine the facts. If we get down to figures, we can the better

appreciate the facts. I cannot see where protection for the public comes in. From 1948 to 1954, a period of six years, the increase in the resale of petrol has been 24 per cent., but the increase in the number of vehicle registrations has been 87 per cent. The increase in the petrol retailed, however, has been 105 per cent., and I have not heard of any of the people in this business going broke.

The Chief Secretary: Then you do not know anything about it.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: You have a lot to learn.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Then where are those people? I have not seen any reports to that effect. There has been an increase of 21 per cent. in the population, and there has been an increase of 50 per cent. in the vehicle registrations and also an increase in the consumption per vehicle. I know that a lot can be said about the manner in which the companies are controlling the petrol stations, but that has nothing to do with this matter. I am objecting on principle that these men should have the right to resell at service stations.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Why do you take the year 1948 as a basis?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Petrol may now be obtained freely by the public, but for quite a long period there were restrictions. It seems to me that the attitude being adopted at present is tantamount to closing the stable door after the horse has bolted. I do not think there is a road district where a petrol pump will not be found within half a mile of another. However, we are told that the Government does not approve of monopolies, but it is going to encourage a monopoly under these by-laws.

The Minister for the North-West: Anyone would have to go only a quarter of a mile.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The by-law stipulates a radius of half a mile.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: But a person would need to go only a quarter of a mile one way or the other.

The Chief Secretary: A quarter of a mile is the furthest you would have to go.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Irrespective of what the distance is—

The Chief Secretary: That is a good way out of it.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The by-laws state that it is a half-mile radius: but irrespective of the distance, I say that does not affect my attitude towards the fact that these by-laws have been brought down in regard to a contentious subject.

Hon. E. M. Davies: The by-laws have been laid on the Table of the House.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: For six months these by-laws have been law in spite of the fact that this is a question that should have been decided by Parliament and not by regulation. It is difficult to alter a law which has been in operation for six months; and I say again that matters such as this should not be dealt with when the House is not sitting. I object to these by-laws having been framed as they have, and I oppose the principle of the monopoly that they are creating. As I said earlier, the same principle could be applied to any other business; and if the Government got away with this, it could go on and stifle all sorts of businesses, just as it is trying to do in this case. To take it a step further, a regulation could be brought down dealing with members of Parliament—

The Chief Secretary: You would support that, would you not?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I would not. Let us be dinkum about this. I have a principle, and I believe in sticking to it. The figures I have given showing the increase in vehicle registrations and petrol consumption are sufficient to prove that there is no necessity to hamstring these service stations.

The Chief Secretary: Taking into consideration our beer consumption, would you advocate a free go for the pubs?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I think we would be better off if we gave the pubs a free go.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: There would be more competition.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Yes, I think we could do with some more hotels.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I must remind the hon. member that we are dealing with petrol pumps.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I trust I have answered the Minister's interjection satisfactorily and I do not think there is need to stress further my objections to these by-laws.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Eighth Day.

Debate resumed from the 25th August.

HON. W. R. HALL (North-East) [4.53]: In rising to support the Address-in-reply I wish first to take this opportunity of congratulating you, Mr. President, and the House Committee, on the excellent work that has been done in the renovating of this Chamber, which is now more in keeping with the dignity of this Legislative Council. Since the completion of this work it has been a pleasure to bring visitors here. The seating is superb, and the work done by the upholsterers and other workmen is first class. The lighting has been vastly improved and the

whole atmosphere of the Chamber is now, to my way of thinking, such as to raise the prestige of this House.

I noticed in His Excellency's Speech reference to goldmining. In this regard His Excellency said—

Goldmining activity has been well maintained. The Big Bell mine has closed, but operations at Bullfinch are extending and Norseman continues to show impressive results. A new State battery is operating successfully at Menzies.

It is unfortunate that the Big Bell mine had to close down, but apparently the ore being won was of such low grade that the mine simply could not keep going. It has been closed down, at all events for the time being, and most of the plant has been sold up; but it is to be hoped that at least certain portions of the mine will be able to be worked by others so that in the future it may become, to some degree, a gold producer again. The Speech continued—

The Government drilling programme is being extended, six diamond drills operating in various areas.

These Government drilling plants are able to save the expenditure of a great deal of money and effort in the search for gold. They are capable of drilling to great depths and show, from foot to foot, the composition and values, if any, of the strata penetrated.

It is pleasing to note that the goldmining industry generally is in a healthy, if not prosperous state at present. Efforts have been made over a period of years to increase the price of gold, and I think it should be increased further; but it is pleasing to know that the main mines on the Golden Mile are in a position where they can profitably mine low-grade ore to the extent that during 1954 those mines affiliated with the Chamber of Mines—that covers most of the large companies—produced gold to the value of £13,500,000. That is the highest return ever won from gold in the industry in one year, as far back as the records I have go, and they extend back to 1903. Some of the figures related to gold and its production should be illuminating to members, particularly having regard to the fact that the yield from gold for 1954 was, as I have stated, the highest ever.

In the production of that £13,500,000 worth of gold there were employed 6,099 men, and that is the lowest number of men ever employed on the Golden Mile by those mines that are affiliated with the Chamber of Mines. In 1903, when an average number of 27,716 men was employed, the value of the yield in Australian currency was £9,900,000; and yet, in 1954, when the employment figures had decreased, the value of the yield in Australian currency was approximately

£13,500,000. Through the use of modern machinery, the industry has now been enabled to treat a record number of tons of ore compared with the tonnage treated in 1903 and in the subsequent years. As against that, of course, the average yield in dwts. per ton has decreased: in 1903 it was 21.62 dwts. per ton; and in 1954 it was only 5.32 dwts. per ton. In the years in between the industry had its ups and downs; and of course, during the last war, production was lowered because men left the industry to serve in the armed forces.

Nevertheless, it is pleasing to note that the goldmines earned more in Australian currency in 1954 than in any other year since the inception of goldmining in Western Australia. However, it must be recognised that some of this extra revenue was obtained from the gold premium. A gold producers' association was formed, and it was successful in obtaining permission from the Commonwealth authorities to sell gold on the open dollar market, which gave its members some extra shillings per ounce of gold. Unfortunately, that system is now in abeyance because the practice of selling gold on the open market has ceased. I understand that during the time that the gold was sold on the open market, the gold producers' association sold its product to Switzerland and other countries. Since the industry obtained an increase in the price of gold from about £4 an ounce, many efforts have been made for a further increase, but unfortunately they have not met with a large measure of success.

To obtain the value of £13,500,000 the tonnage of ore treated has been stepped up to a high degree, last year's figures being 3,250,000 tons of ore treated for 862,000 ounces of gold. The cost of production has been lowered, to the advantage, of course, of the companies; otherwise they would have been unable to continue their operations. The installation of modern machinery and implements has been a great factor towards reducing costs. One of these is called "air legs," and the other is a modern tungsten drill. These two new devices have been responsible for much labour saving. Whereas previously it took two men one shift to rig up a machine with the aid of these "air legs" a machine can be rigged by one man without any trouble.

In regard to the modern drill which has been adopted, I would point out that previously all mines had to employ tool-sharpeners during the whole three shifts worked, who did nothing else but sharpen drills and other mining tools. The old-type drill that was used became blunt very quickly, especially when used in hard ore. The new modern tungsten drill must be a great innovation; I have been told that it will last longer than the old type. This must be a great help towards

lowering the cost of production; and it has enabled the large mines on the Golden Mile to treat a phenomenal tonnage of low-value ore for the extraction of 5.32 dwts. to the ton.

Another step taken by the companies to assist in lowering the cost of production has been the amalgamation of several large mines, and much has been said for and against this latest move. The companies have stated that, by combining, they are able to decrease their overheads, which gives them more money for development and enables them to embark on new ventures on a larger scale. However, an argument against the amalgamation of these mines is that it is said to have brought about the unemployment of some men. I have noticed, however, that the Chamber of Mines has refuted this statement and said that amalgamation has increased the overall possibilities and enabled a greater effort to be made, to the advantage of everyone concerned.

Some members may recall that many years ago the goldmining industry was fortunate in getting the services of a man by the name of Joe Thorn. I remember when he took over Lake View & Star Gold Mines Ltd., which was known on the Golden Mile as "The Group." Mr. Thorn's up-to-date knowledge of mining and his introduction of modern methods of extraction gave new life to goldmining. There is no doubt that the industry owes a great deal to Mr. Thorn and several of his American colleagues. Unfortunately, Mr. Thorn has now retired, and is living in the metropolitan area. When these American managers came into the industry, they did a particularly good job and they have left their mark behind. As a result of their efforts, I am sure that the mines on the Golden Mile will continue to prosper for many years to come. I only hope that goldmining throughout the State will continue to prosper, because we know what a great asset the industry is to this State and to the Commonwealth in general.

On several occasions in the past, prices for wheat and wool have dropped, which has resulted in some hard years for the people of this State; and it was during those periods that it was often said that the goldmining industry kept the State going. I hope the prices for wheat and wool will remain buoyant, and that the price of gold will stay at its present figure, or even increase, because it has been held down long enough. In spite of what the companies stated, I consider that the introduction of modern machinery on the goldmines has brought about a reduction in employment, which, of course, we do not want.

As a result of many years of experience of ventilation, the ventures that are now used on the mines have improved the conditions of the men who work in them. A few years ago the health of miners was

greatly endangered by the inhalation of dust; and hundreds contracted silicosis, tuberculosis and related mining diseases. I think we are all aware that goldmining is a very unhealthy and hazardous occupation. If a man remains in the industry, he knows that by doing so he is hastening his way towards the cemetery. I know that if I had continued working on the mines I would probably have been in the cemetery by now. I could see the writing on the wall and that is the reason I left the industry.

Unfortunately, there are not many avenues of employment for young men on the Goldfields and, in the main, they have no recourse but to work on the mines. Also, it is a strange thing, but once a man becomes employed in goldmining he is loth to relinquish the work. However, today, the life of goldminers has been lengthened to some degree by the introduction of modern ventilation methods which enable the men, when working underground, to breath air much purer than they did many years ago.

I read in the Governor's Speech that the Government intends to introduce a Bill to deal with workers' compensation. I consider that everything possible should be done for men who work underground in the mines. I know that members of this Chamber have paid a good deal of attention to workers' compensation on previous occasions, and much thought has been given to the matter by Dr. Hislop, and others before him. However, if members understood the unhealthiness of this occupation and the diseases that can be contracted in mines, they would realise that nothing is too good for the men who work there. Unfortunately at present—as in the past—men who have been turned down do not get sufficient recompense in the way of cash. Such men are very sick. I have seen some with 13 dust tickets, and I think there are others who have had more. Men engaged in the mining industry have to go to the laboratory every 12 months for an x-ray.

It would be all right if those who had to leave the industry had the wherewithal to set them on their feet. But what else are they good for? Such men have advanced silicosis, and if they remain in the industry long enough, they are liable to contract active t.b. When miners are told that they have silicosis to a certain degree, they should be compensated sufficiently to enable them and their families to live in reasonable comfort when they leave the industry.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Are they not found employment on the surface?

Hon. W. R. HALL: No. Once a man has been turned down, he cannot get back into the industry, although one or two have done so. When a man has been told he has silicosis, he should say, "I had better get out"; but where is he to go? Once

a man has spent a number of years on the mines, he is not much good for anything else. The days have passed when he would have been successful in business, even if he had the means, upon leaving the mining industry, to undertake business life. Nor is it possible for such a man to learn a trade. All that faces him is the life of a labourer.

As the hon. member knows, it is not long ago that times were even more difficult for such men and it was very hard for them to get work once they left the mining industry. You, Mr. President, will remember that the Government put a lot of them on farms at Southern Cross. But some of them were too far dusted to do the work. A farmer's job is not an easy one. It might provide a man with a lot of fresh air, but much of the work is laborious. Furthermore, there are the elements to contend with, and climatic conditions would have some effect on those suffering from advanced silicosis. Adequate compensation should be provided for such men, and the widows of those who die from tuberculosis should receive increased payments. There is one widow I know who is getting only 7s. or 8s. a week from the Mine Workers' Relief Fund. Efforts have been made over a number of years to have payments to such people increased, but there has always seemed to be some stumbling block.

I do not know that there is anything else I can say that would make the position plainer. I feel that the men who have to leave the mining industry should live in reasonable comfort for the remainder of their days, and assistance should be given to them—and subsequently to their widows—to enable them to do so. I had a brother-in-law who was in the industry and who ultimately died of tuberculosis. When I was a boy, the late Mr Scaddan introduced a measure here which became known as the Scaddan Act, and which provided for widows to receive £2 a week for life if they did not remarry. A very small proportion of those widows is alive today.

The other day I rang the Mines Department and discovered that down through the years it has been necessary for such women to submit a declaration, signed before a justice of the peace, that they have not remarried. That used to be necessary every six months, and it is now required every three months. I asked the officials, "Do you not get sick and tired of sending these forms out and making the widows sign them?" In the majority of cases, these folk are over 60 years of age. After all, there is a law that if they remarry and accept the money, they will be doing something illegal and laying themselves open to prosecution. People in this situation do not seem to receive much care once they are given a pension of some description.

While on the subject of mining, I wish to touch on prospecting. If it had not been for prospectors, our large mines would

never have been discovered. Now, on account of the fact that more lucrative employment is available, and because of the hardships which have to be endured by prospectors, there are not so many engaged in this work as formerly. Every facility should be provided for these men to carry on. There are only 60 operating under the prospecting scheme administered by the Mines Department. There is always an urge in some men to chase the elusive weight; it is in their blood, and as long as they exist they will endeavour to make a find.

Such men suffer untold privations, especially when they have to travel for many miles outback, like the Wright brothers, who went 43 miles north-east of Leonora. The prospector has to find transport to take him from the towns; has to live in heat, rain and dust; has inadequate stores, and often has not the wherewithal to purchase any at all. Taking it by and large, the prospector's life is an unhappy one when he is looking for what he hopes will be payable dirt.

The amount of subsidy granted to prospectors by the Mines Department is not large and is hardly sufficient to exist on. If they have not backers, theirs is just an existence, and that is all. If they are unlucky enough not to find anything, all their work and the privations they have endured go for naught. The men who blazed the trail from Southern Cross to Kalgoorlie had hearts of steel. They were men—every inch of them. Imagine many of the younger generation putting a billy-can and swag on their backs and walking from Southern Cross to Kalgoorlie!

The Minister for the North-West: Or from Derby to Hall's Creek.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Yes. Or fancy them going to Leonora or Laverton and into the Murchison and the ranges where Lasser is supposed to have gone! Nowadays, men go into such country, but they travel by other means. The men of old had hearts of steel which are not found generally amongst those of the present generation. But that is what we need if any more Golden Miles are to be found. We need men of the calibre of those of the early days, who were always nice to meet and were real gentlemen.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I doubt whether the men of the present are as good as those of the past.

Hon. W. R. HALL: So far as prospecting is concerned, I am inclined to agree with the hon. member. One has only to look at the pictures of these pioneers in the municipal chambers and the mayor's parlour at Kalgoorlie to realise what sort of men they were.

The Chief Secretary: One generally expresses an opinion on that subject according to one's age.

Hon. W. R. HALL: What does the Chief Secretary mean?

The Chief Secretary: If one is old one expresses the opinion that the present generation does not come up to the old one. Those of the present generation hold that the reverse is the case.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I am inclined to agree with the Chief Secretary. But we know the calibre of the men who went prospecting in the early days. I have not the slightest doubt that if the same circumstances prevailed today, we would find the same sort of men; but the situation does not present itself. Motorcars and utilities are now being used for transport purposes, and people have even gone prospecting and surveying from the air. They do no loaming by which the ground has to be turned over and the dirt panned off in order to see if it contains any values. I sincerely hope that the Government will endeavour to give every assistance to these men.

I want to bring before the notice of the House one or two cases of men who have recently gone prospecting and have been fortunate. The Wright brothers, who have been prospecting for over 20 years, just recently prospected a show 43 miles east of Leonora, and their first crushing of 2 cwt. returned 361 oz. Only three or four weeks ago, their second find of 5 cwt. returned 226 oz. for £17,000 worth of gold. Out of the 7 cwt. that they have crushed, these brothers—and good luck to them—have won over £20,000 worth of dollied gold from the one lease, which is called the Beau Don lease.

Luck plays a big part in prospecting, but knowledge is necessary, too. Members may recall the strike at the Camel Paddock about 15 miles from Kalgoorlie, towards Coolgardie. Some two years ago the prospectors of that area produced £30,000 worth of gold, which is remarkable. Given the opportunity and the incentive, and the right men with the tools, the wherewithal and the payment, there is no reason why another Golden Mile should not be found. We do not know what is in front of us in goldmining, and it is that uncertainty which gives the fever to the men who go out looking for gold. Just recently four different prospectors, men working small shows, treated four separate parcels of ore totalling 77 tons in all at the Kalgoorlie State battery, and these parcels produced over 500 oz. of gold. That is another contribution to the State's gold output. That amounted to about 7 oz. to the ton, which is very nice.

The figures I quoted earlier are those of mines and shows associated with the Chamber of Mines, but there are other small mines and shows of which the owners are not affiliated with the Chamber. The instances I have given are mostly in the Golden Mile. The figures I have mentioned would include the Sons of

Gwalia mine and also Hill 50 at Mt. Magnet which is another wonderful mine with an extraordinary gold output. The Sons of Gwalia mine has been twice assisted by State Governments over the years. The mine borrowed £100,000 at one stage to do some development work. It again became a gold producer and paid the money back, and recently another loan was granted by the Government to assist the mine to do development work.

Many people talk about Kalgoorlie and the goldfields, and some of them seem to think that the goldfields are more or less on the down grade. Well, the figures I have given today are illuminating. The goldfields are quite all right. They will be there for all time as far as I can see. The only point is that the number employed in the industry is not as great today as when the population was over 40,000. Today I think it is in the vicinity of 20,000. Members can see that the goldfields and the goldmining towns are getting down to what is called a static population. That is because of the modern machinery and implements which the mines have had to install to ensure a low cost of production and to keep the mines going, and so provide for the future.

It is unfortunate that the goldfields people have not the spending power they should have. The basic wage hit them the same as it did everyone else in the State. If the Arbitration Court had not ceased to grant the quarterly adjustments, the people I am referring to would, over a period, have been something like 30s. a week better off. I only hope that, in the times ahead, the industry will continue to be in a healthy state; and I have no doubt that it will at the same time continue to prosper.

I note in the Governor's Speech that the Government intends to introduce a Bill to deal with price control. I have never liked controls of any description; but for the second or third time in my life, I find myself of the opinion that the time is opportune and overdue to bring in price control on some commodities at least. Just recently I had occasion to do a little buying myself because my wife was out of the State.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: They saw you coming!

Hon. W. R. HALL: They saw me going and they heard me while I was there. To my way of thinking, the price of meat is far beyond what it should be.

Hon. L. Craig: What should it be?

Hon. W. R. HALL: I cannot answer that question; and I would not be particularly concerned if the price included a reasonable margin. But the butchers all have different prices. While my wife was away I bought bullock hearts galore—bigger

than those which would come from the hon. member's scrub bulls. I was charged 9s. for a bullock's heart. Was I robbed!

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You got a big one for that.

Hon. L. Craig: You didn't have to buy it.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I had to have the hearts; otherwise my dogs would have gone hungry. If that is not overdoing it, I will eat my hat.

The PRESIDENT: I suggest that the hon. member eat the heart, not the hat!

Hon. W. R. HALL: I possibly would eat that, too, if it would please members, and if it would convince them that what I am saying is the truth. Members can go to the various butchers' shops in the suburbs and see the different charges. In Perth they can see the cut prices; but the people in the suburbs have not got the transport to go into town to buy. The other day, it cost me 10d. to go from Nedlands to Perth; so by the time 10d. each way is added to the price of an article, it is pretty expensive.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: What method would you use to fix prices?

Hon. W. R. HALL: I am really not in a position to answer that question straight out, but let us try to find some way. That is what we are here for. We are here to bring down reasonable legislation which will control prices. There would be no need for price control if some of these people would give the consumers a fair go. I come now to another point: namely, the feeding of fowls. This has all happened to me, so there is no argument about it, and there will be no contradiction either!

The Chief Secretary: You are getting very domesticated.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I have been domesticated many times previously, but not in Perth. I want to tell those members who come from wheat-farming districts that the farmers who sell their wheat know what they will ultimately get for it; but a shopkeeper in a certain suburb charged me £1 a bushel for wheat, and it was only second-grade stuff. I was on a farm when I was a bit of a lad, and I guarantee we would not have picked it up. It had husks, dust and dirt in it, and the grain itself was as small as a caraway seed. We paid £1 a bushel for a considerable time for that wheat—not just once. I did not know that this particular man, who was our grocer at the time, was charging that amount.

Hon. A. R. Jones: How many lb. do you buy at a time?

Hon. W. R. HALL: A bushel—60lb.—and I paid £1 for it. I said, "Do not buy any more of that wheat, I am not going to pay £1 a bushel for it." I made further

inquiries and finished up going to a distributor in James-st. This person supplies wheat, bran and pollard, shell-grit and so on. Now, as I provide my own bag, I get the wheat for 16s. a bushel. I have been paying that price for the last two or three months in order to feed my 20-odd fowls.

Hon. A. R. Jones: It would cost you 10s. extra to go and pick it up in your car.

Hon. W. R. HALL: If I had the hon. member's car that might be so, but it does not cost me that much. However, that is not the point. I am trying to illustrate the variation in prices.

Hon. A. R. Jones: It costs a good deal to deliver the wheat from one point to another.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Free delivery.

Hon. W. R. HALL: What are the farmers getting for their wheat?

Hon. A. R. Jones: We do not know.

Hon. W. R. HALL: They get 12s. 7d. Look at the margin of profit these people get—12s. 7d. as against £1!

Hon. L. Craig: The storekeeper does not pay 12s. 7d. for it.

Hon. W. R. HALL: The farmer is going to get 12s. 7d. for his wheat.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Fourteen shillings.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Irrespective of what it is, the hon. member cannot tell me that £1 a bushel is a fair thing; certainly not for second-grade wheat.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Obviously competition enabled you to buy it somewhere else for 4s. a bushel cheaper.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I do not like being robbed, and that is what was happening.

Hon. L. Craig: You did not have to buy it.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Not there anyhow.

Hon. W. R. HALL: No; but, if a person is getting an order from a grocer, he buys all his other commodities from that grocer at the same time, instead of going here, there and everywhere else. I am satisfied that if the housewife can get into town she can purchase her household commodities there much cheaper than in the suburbs.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Is not that an argument against price control?

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Of course it is!

Hon. W. R. HALL: Is it! It is not as far as I am concerned. I would have been satisfied to pay a reasonable price for the wheat, but I was not prepared to pay £1 a bushel for it. Let me refer to another commodity, which is manufactured outside the State. There is a certain brand of sauce, made in South

Australia, and sold in town at 2s. 5d., 2s. 6d. or 2s. 7d., but in the suburbs the same sauce costs 3s. 1½d.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: What sort of sauce is it?

Hon. W. R. HALL: "Rosella" brand, manufactured in Adelaide. I have seen the factory; and probably Geraldton tomatoes are sent to South Australia, manufactured into sauce and returned to Western Australia.

Hon. E. M. Davies: That was sauce for the gander.

Hon. W. R. HALL: The gander does not look too bad, either. But at the same time, I do not want any more sauce at a cost of 3s. 1½d. for a 13 oz. bottle. I will stick to the Western Australian product in the future.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Hear, hear!

Hon. W. R. HALL: There is a big difference in the price of many commodities; and, as I said, the price of sauce varies from 2s. 5d. in some shops to the phenomenal sum of 3s. 1½d. in others. One shop charges the exorbitant price of 3s. 2½d. All the city shops charge 2s. 5d. or 2s. 6d. and Freecorns charge 2s. 5d.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: You are making the best speech I have ever heard in favour of "No price control."

Hon. W. R. HALL: I do not think so; I think I am arguing in favour of price control. What is wrong with a fair charge?

Hon. E. M. Davies: You are merely pointing out where you have been robbed.

Hon. W. R. HALL: That is why I want price control. I think that the prices of some items need controlling; but not everything should be controlled. We should fix the price of essential commodities.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: If we had price control you could not get all these different prices.

Hon. W. R. HALL: All right. Let people sell their goods at a controlled price but with a reasonable margin of profit. Why should there be different prices all over the place? I went into town the other day and saw tomatoes for 1s. 3d. a lb. But in the suburbs they were 1s. 8d. a lb., and no member can tell me that its costs 5d. a lb. to transport tomatoes from the markets to the suburbs. I am satisfied that people in the suburbs pay a lot more for their goods than do those who go into the city.

Hon. L. Craig: It is a question of turnover.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I agree; but on the other hand, does not the hon. member think that a reasonable margin of profit is something which would be fair to all concerned? After all, the Arbitration Court

ceased to adjust the basic wage and more or less pegged workers' wages. But store-keepers' charges were not pegged.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The worker who gets £5 a day for working at the week-ends, after having completed a 40-hour week, is not pegged.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I am not out to cope with that; I am talking of the man who wants to work only eight hours a day. We cannot do anything about the other fellow. There are thousands of workers who do not want to work during the week-ends and they are the ones with whom I am concerned.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Tell us how to fix the price of tomatoes.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I do not know. But the hon. member must realise that we have had price control before. I do not say that every item should be controlled, but the prices of essential commodities should be fixed. Many of these shops must have a large turnover, particularly in essential items, although I would not argue the point about others. One member told us the other day about the dairy farmer who had to milk cows every day of the week. I do not quarrel about such people getting a fair return. But what is wrong with a person receiving the cost of his article plus a reasonable profit?

Hon. A. F. Griffith: How would you fix the price of tomatoes?

Hon. W. R. HALL: Has it not been done before? There would have to be an army of inspectors.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: It has been tried before and has not worked.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I know the pitfalls connected with price fixing. I am not that dumb. I know what it will cost. But, after all, we are not legislating for only a certain section of the community,

Hon. A. R. Jones: What would it cost?

Hon. W. R. HALL: I could not tell the hon. member.

Hon. A. R. Jones: You said that you knew.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I said that I know what the cost will be. It will cost a lot of money, but I could not say how much.

Hon. A. R. Jones: About £100,000?

Hon. W. R. HALL: I have no idea. I would not say that the hon. member's figure is wrong.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: What has that to do with tomatoes?

Hon. W. R. HALL: I am covering several different subjects.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: But you were going to tell us how to fix the price of tomatoes.

Hon. W. R. HALL: If I had a case of tomatoes I would give them to the hon. member.

Hon. L. Craig: And throw them at him.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I would give him a packet of seeds if I had one. I would help him plant them and give him some idea of what it costs.

The Chief Secretary: He has a one-track mind.

Hon. W. R. HALL: The hon. member cannot put me off the track. This variation in charges is worrying me. As I say, no one should want more than a reasonable profit. Take motorcars. Look at the phenomenal profit that is made with them and the discount that one can get if one knows someone who knows somebody who knows someone who knows someone else!

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Obviously you have had some discount.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I have not received more than anyone else.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Where do you go?

Hon. W. R. HALL: I will tell the hon. member afterwards. I do not want to give the firm a boost; but if the hon. member wants anything, I will introduce him to this firm and I will guarantee that he, like a lot of other members who have gone there, will get a discount. There is really no need to introduce him, because it seems that anybody can get it. But there are other firms that charge high prices for their motorcar parts, and I know something about it.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: But you do not buy that make.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Tyres, batteries, and other motor-vehicle parts all cost large sums of money to buy. There is also a heavy cost with labour, and the firms charge a margin on that as well. In many cases they charge £1 an hour for labour. I do not like controls; I have never liked them, because I do not like being controlled by anybody. But I do think that essential commodities should be controlled by a price-fixing authority.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I think the hon. member is anticipating legislation that will be introduced and he should not do that under our Standing Orders.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I am only discussing a few of the items in the Governor's Speech. I am allowed to do that.

The Chief Secretary: The hon. member is speaking only in general terms.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member is quite in order.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I am sure I am in order. I am only discussing a few of the items in the Governor's Speech. I have done that before.

Hon. A. R. Jones: The Governor did not mention tomatoes.

Hon. W. R. HALL: The Governor in his Speech said —

Bills will be placed before you to provide for price control and the automatic quarterly adjustment of the basic wage. Amending rents and tenancies legislation will also be introduced.

The Chief Secretary: I hope the hon. member who interjected can follow what he said in that interjection.

Hon. W. R. HALL: So much for price control. When the Government introduces the Bill, I hope at least that something will be done about controlling essential commodities. I do not believe that anybody should be penalised, but some control in this direction is necessary. Let me mention fish. One member—he is not here at the moment—said that the fishermen at Shark Bay receive only a little over 1s. a lb. for their schnapper. Yet members know the price that fish brings in the metropolitan area.

Hon. A. R. Jones: There is the wages cost.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Take Elder Smiths. I understand that firm sells all the farmers' sheep and never even sees them. But it gets a cop out of it. It is one of the wealthiest firms in this State.

Hon. A. R. Jones: They get a set commission.

Hon. L. C. Diver: What Mr. Hall has said is hardly true.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I am sorry if it is wrong.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Their representatives see the sheep.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I thought one farmer could sell to another, but that Elder Smiths would still get the commission. But the point is that, according to a member in this Chamber, fishermen at Shark Bay are receiving only a small return for their product, yet the charges in the local shops are phenomenal.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: When the Government introduces the Bill I would like you to get the Minister to describe in detail what method will be used to fix the price.

Hon. W. R. HALL: When and if the Government introduces the Bill, I have no doubt that the Minister will explain everything in connection with it.

The Chief Secretary: He would not understand it if I did.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Do not worry about that.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I would not say that.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: And neither would the Minister.

Hon. W. R. HALL: There is one other subject I wish to discuss, and that concerns medical and health benefits, and

is something of which I have had a good deal of experience. I daresay members have heard it mentioned frequently over the wireless—I have heard it not once but scores of times—that a particular health benefit fund gives a refund of 90 per cent. on the cost of treatment. There is only one question I would like to ask the people concerned and that is how much one would have to pay to receive that figure of 90 per cent. refund about which they speak. I have had considerable dealings with certain benefit funds, and I know that members in this House have also had dealings with them. If a person could get half the amount, I think he would be doing well.

According to the prospectus when it was published, a man, his wife and family were entitled under ordinary circumstances to certain benefits on a payment of 3s. 6d. per week. Not many people who join the funds know what they will get back by way of benefits when making claims. Certain amounts are, of course, truthfully set aside for the purpose of covering specified ailments, operations, anaesthetics and other things, but I have yet to see the person who receives a refund of 90 per cent.

I would like to quote my own example. Recently I have had occasion to pay accounts; one is supposed to pay the medico before one can make a claim for a refund. Not so long ago I received an account for £1 11s. 6d. each three months. That was not much, of course, and my return from the fund at that time was £1 5s. That is, however, far short of 90 per cent. These visits to the medico still continue, and there have been a number of them. There was an occasion within the last three or four months when the specialist concerned itemised his account. Before that was done, I had been paying accounts of £1 11s. 6d., but suddenly the amount was raised to £2 2s.

I rang up the office of the person concerned and inquired what the position was. I was told quietly that the doctor had put up his fees. That was all right in itself—there was nothing wrong with it—but on this particular occasion when he itemised his account there was listed on it an item of a cardiograph examination—they call it an E.G.C. Naturally, I paid the account; and for the first time I received back £1 18s., which was not far short of being 90 per cent. Accordingly I asked the particular person in my family whether any examination had taken place during the last six visits which had varied from that made on the first occasion. I was told that none had. I was told that she had had what is called an E.G.C.; that is, a cardiograph examination. The doctor, however, had not itemised his account until the third or fourth payment.

After I had paid this itemised account for £2 2s. and received £1 18s. by way of a refund, I considered that I was getting

about 90 per cent. return at last. After three months' time however, when I submitted another account, after having paid the medico £2 2s., I received the old figure of £1 5s. Accordingly I made inquiries from the benefit fund concerned. I explained to the secretary that in the past the accounts had been itemised; and that although the same examination had taken place every time, whereas previously, I had received £1 18s., on a subsequent occasion I had received £1 5s. which was a long way off being 90 per cent.

The secretary directed me by telephone to have it listed on the statement each time the cardiograph examination took place. I think there were six occasions in all; and, eventually, I was told that a mistake had been made, and the secretary informed me that a refund would be forwarded. However, after going to the trouble of getting a statement from the doctor of every cardiograph examination that took place, and after submitting the account again to the benefit fund, I was told that the amount of £1 18s. should have been given on only one occasion; that this should have been done a long time previously, and would have been had the doctor itemised his account.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: That is to get you in.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I do not think it is to get me in, but I think the general public has a lot to learn about the constitution of the hospital benefits fund. The other day some amendment was made; and unless a person had the necessary Act covering social services, he would not know what the amendment involved. At the same time, it goes to show that the refund is a long way below the 90 per cent. which it is claimed is paid. By paying 4s. 6d. a week a married man will get a 12-guinea bed in a hospital, but the rate of 3s. 6d. only gives a man, his wife and his family the ordinary medical fund repayments. So, as I said before, if a person had an operation and paid his medico's bill, he would be doing well if he got half by way of a refund.

I was talking to a member in this House—he is not here at the moment—and he informed me that he got nowhere near half the amount. He is only one of a number of people in the same position. It has been said that some organisations make a refund a short time after an account is submitted. But there is generally a fair lapse of time with the fund about which I am speaking. It is about time the Government reviewed the whole position of the present hospital and medical funds contribution scheme; and, if possible, the public should be enlightened about all its ramifications. The public is entitled to that. A man pays 3s. 6d. a week for his wife and family and thinks that he will get a refund of 90 per cent. by way of benefits.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: It is free in Queensland.

Hon. W. R. HALL: This comes under social services and is a Federal matter; but I would like to know how much one would have to contribute to be able to receive the 90 per cent. about which we have heard.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Only 4s. a day is a Federal responsibility.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I have a card in my office which shows what the medical health scheme pays towards this particular E.G.C.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: You are talking about the medical fund.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Yes.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: It is free in Queensland.

Hon. W. R. HALL: The public should be enlightened on these matters, and even if they have to pay a little extra, they should know the amount for which they will be covered, so that when they get their doctor's bill they will know what they are up for. The medical profession should not have any bad debts. Although I believe that in certain cases it is not necessary, one generally has to pay the doctor's account before one is able to obtain a refund. Accordingly I feel that the doctors have never been better off than they are now.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Before tea I was referring to payments for medical attention, and refunds from the hospital benefits fund. The same would apply to chemists. This social service scheme is also very good for them. The public should be given more information regarding the amount which patients obtain in respect of various complaints and illnesses when they have to seek medical attention and make application for refunds. There is one sore point about the medical fund. In order to get the full benefits, a person who is contributing to the fund is expected first of all to go to a general practitioner, and if the latter sends the contributor to a specialist, the fund will then bear the extra expense pro rata. If the person goes to a specialist in the first instance on his own account he is penalised to some extent in that he does not receive so much by way of a refund.

Hon. L. Craig: A person would not know the specialist to go to. He would not be aware of the nature of his complaint.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I can only answer that by asking the hon. member what a specialist is. He is a medical practitioner who specialises in certain complaints and diseases. His brass plate outside his surgery identifies the complaint in which he specialises. There are ear, nose and throat specialists, eye specialists, and specialists who treat kidney complaints, and so on.

The point is this: Why should not a contributor to a medical fund be given the right to choose in the first place which specialist he should consult? He cannot do that at present and is thus penalised.

Many people today, through their knowledge of disease, are able to assess what is wrong with them; and judging by the region where the pain lies, and its nature, they have a fair idea of the type of disease from which they are suffering. This knowledge has a psychological effect on them. If I had something wrong with my ears, I would go to an ear, nose and throat specialist before I would think of going to a general practitioner. Why should I not be given the choice of specialists? The psychological effect is very great on a patient if he knows that he has the right specialist to deal with his complaint. Although a person can approach a specialist, he is penalised under the fund if he does not go to a general practitioner first.

If times were different from what they are today, and a person went along to a general practitioner for a diagnosis of his complaint, in many cases he might not be advised to go to a specialist. There are wheels within wheels in the medical profession, just as there are in any type of business. I have the greatest respect and admiration for medical practitioners. I know they are overworked, and that is borne out by the fact that appointments have to be made a long time ahead, unlike the years gone by when a doctor on the Goldfields would answer a summons within 10 minutes of being called. Even today the doctors on the Goldfields pay great attention to persons calling on their services. In some cases in the metropolitan area people requiring medical attention find it difficult to obtain at times. Often when a person visits a medical practitioner for treatment of a complaint he has to make an appointment a long way ahead and bide his time if the complaint is not a serious one.

I would like to quote an article published in the "Sunday Times" of last week concerning the Hospital Benefits Fund. It reads—

The Hospital Benefits Fund was approaching a stage where its payments to the public would equal revenue from subscriptions, acting secretary W. Carson said yesterday.

Most of the fund's 300,000 members had completed their initial qualifying terms and were now eligible to claim payments he said.

As a result, the annual amount paid in benefits was increasing more quickly than revenue from subscriptions.

The qualifying period under this scheme is eight weeks. I believe that under this fund a person, after subscribing for two years will be covered for any complaint which might have been evident prior to his

joining the fund. In my opinion, under such schemes the healthy people pay for the sick. People who do not have to draw on the benefit fund are indeed fortunate. I was talking to a friend the other day who told me he had been paying to a benefit lodge for 30 years, but he had not drawn a penny out of it. In my view he was very lucky. He paid into the fund, and he was very happy to do so. The weak point in some of the schemes is that the sick pay for their medical attention in both ways, and very dearly at that.

Hon. L. A. Logan: These funds must be actuarially sound.

Hon. W. R. HALL: That is so. Payments are based on actuarial figures. At the same time it must be remembered that actuarial figures do not always ring true. Take, for instance, a superannuation fund. The accumulation is assessed at a certain amount, and there is an actuary on that. With some funds this does not ring true. I understand that in life assurance today, payments are based on actuarial figures, as are the premiums.

After all, these benefits funds are subsidised by the Federal Government; and from my observation of the figures in regard to one payment made by me, the Federal Government pays a very fair percentage. In some instances the Government pays a fairly large proportion of an account, as compared with the amount paid by the benefit societies. But for all that, the time is not far distant when stock will have to be taken of these funds. The time limit of eight weeks is always on the cards. If a person under such a fund had a complaint, and it was diagnosed that the complaint had been in existence three or four months prior to his joining the fund, there is a doubt as to whether he would be paid. I experienced such an instance with one member of my family and I had to straighten the matter out.

I should like to see some arrangement, if possible, made with the B.M.A. because I cannot for the life of me understand how it can differentiate between the general practitioner and the specialist in regard to these funds. I do not know why the patient should not have a choice of doctors. One would think that the doctors would fight for their rights in order to allow patients to consult any doctor. They should have this right without being penalised to some extent under the benefit fund. I hope that after my remarks about the medical benefit funds generally, the Government or the Minister for Health will endeavour to make the position clear for the general public, who are more or less in the dark as to the full maximum benefits to which patients are entitled under this social health scheme.

For some years I have been attending the Traffic Office in James-st., not for the purpose of getting out of trouble, but in order to pay my driver's and car licences,

and the same old set-up still prevails. Every time I have been there, there has been a queue; and this has continued over a long period, notwithstanding the staggering of licences. It was thought by the Traffic Office and the local authorities that the staggering of licences would be the means of alleviating the congestion, but the improvement has not been noticeable at the Traffic Office in James-st.

This is a Government department; yet the building is a shambles in need of reorganisation; and while the officers are very efficient, the requisite accommodation is not available, and one needs a good deal of time in order to license a car. This should not happen. Of course, one may wait until the notice arrives at one's home and then pay by cash or cheque, but it is not right that those who have to attend the office should be delayed as I have explained. The congestion should be eliminated, and a motorist should be able to license his vehicle without all this queuing-up and waiting. Often the time occupied by a person wishing to license his vehicle is as valuable to him as is time to anyone else, so I hope that the Government will endeavour to rectify this complaint.

Hon. A. R. Jones: What would you do?

Hon. W. R. HALL: I do not think I would do what the hon. member does. There may be times when I have a couple of hours to spare, but they may not be the appropriate times for licensing my car. Perhaps the hon. member has a better story to tell than I have.

There is another traffic matter to which I wish to refer. When I was chairman of a road board, I knew the Act almost by heart, though I would not make such a claim now. A motorist is required to keep his number plates in good order and condition. Under present-day parking conditions, I find—and so do other people—that when another man is backing out, the number plate may be struck, with the result that some of the enamel is chipped off, and away goes part of the number. I had an experience of this sort a couple of weeks ago, and I ordered a plate to take the place of the one that had been damaged. When a new plate is required, a form must be filled in.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Only one form?

Hon. W. R. HALL: Yes. One has to pay 7s. for two plates, even if only one is required. The plates are merely hired from the department or from the local authority. I consider that 7s. is a fairly high sum to pay for number plates. I have had two sets of plates within six or eight months and they were old sets re-enamelled and reissued. This was obvious because they were buckled like a dog's hind leg and required to be placed in a frame. The plates had evidently been used on some other car, taken to the firm that re-enamels them and returned to the

department. I have been told that when the auditor arrives at the department, it is necessary to get rid of these plates. I cannot see why a motorist should be penalised to the extent of having to pay for two plates when he needs only one.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Why not take the two?

Hon. W. R. HALL: What is the use of two if only one is needed? Is not the motorist sufficient of a sucking-pig for the whole of Australia at present without this further impost?

As to prosecutions for traffic offences, people are constantly being apprehended for offences in regard to lights, parking, licences, failure to stop at "stop" signs, and what not. Often they know that they are going to be summonsed for an offence, but it is months before the summons is served. That is not right. After a motorist has been apprehended for an offence, there should be a limited period within which the summons must be served. Very few escape a penalty when they are summonsed for an offence, and often people plead guilty to avoid going to the court.

I consider that one should not have to appear before the court to answer to a traffic offence. I do not know what happens in Adelaide, but I understand that the shire councils in South Australia control the traffic in their districts; and, if a motorist commits an offence, he receives a notification from and pays the fine to the shire council. Is not that a far better system than ours? Surely it is far better for a motorist than having to appear in court before a magistrate for a mere parking offence or for this offence or that! Here, if a motorist wishes to plead not guilty, he has to attend the court, and that entails the loss of a day's wages.

Hon. L. Craig: He does not have to attend the court.

Hon. W. R. HALL: He does unless he endorses the summons "guilty." I notice by "The West Australian" and other papers that magistrates appear to have adopted uniform penalties of so much for this offence and so much for that.

Hon. A. R. Jones: You do not think there should be price fixing there?

Hon. W. R. HALL: There are some borderline cases, and the motorist generally is being penalised so severely that he is hardly game to do anything with his car nowadays. If a person charged with some minor breach of the Traffic Act considered he was not guilty, he might desire to defend the action, particularly if he had witnesses; but if two or three months elapsed before the case was heard, those witnesses might be anywhere—

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You have a good Press gallery tonight.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I am glad my attention has been drawn to that, because it so seldom happens. It is difficult to get out of any traffic charge once it has been laid; but I repeat that if the hearing of a case is held up for a matter of months, the witnesses may be difficult to locate. Of course, on a drunken driving charge it would not be long before the case was dealt with in the court; but in lesser charges there is often a considerable lapse of time, which might mean that the person charged would be involved in unnecessary expense locating witnesses and so on. The authorities should remember that no matter how trivial a traffic charge may be, it always involves a certain amount of worry to the individual concerned, and the unfortunate motorist should not have that worry hanging over his head any longer than necessary.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: There is no need to wait for the magistrates; there are plenty of justices of the peace who would be keen to do the job.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I will not debate that point with the hon. member, but I would prefer a magistrate.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Yes, but they are not available today.

Hon. W. R. HALL: That is true; but I repeat that the courts should be so constituted as to ensure a minimum of delay. I would like to see the South Australian procedure adopted here if possible. It might be difficult, but I think it could be done by the local authority; and I do not think a motorist should be brought before a magistrate for a minor breach such as not having a tail-light, or something of that sort.

Hon. H. K. Watson: I think we have more traffic prosecutions in Perth than the whole of the United Kingdom has.

Hon. W. R. HALL: That may be so. As members know, most English cars in the last two years have been fitted with trafficators. To begin with, they were illegal here; but they are legal now, which shows that the authorities must have awakened to the fact that they were worth something.

The Chief Secretary: Perhaps you have got a good Minister.

Hon. W. R. HALL: That could be; and I have no doubt that the Chief Secretary may have been responsible for some improvement in the position. Just as happened with the trafficators, the blinking lights now fitted to some English and continental vehicles are illegal here. I have seen vehicles recently with blinking lights both front and rear, and I think they could be of great value under certain circumstances. The other evening I saw a magnificent car—I think a Mercedes Benz—with blinking lights front and rear.

This device is fitted on modern cars by English, American, German and other continental manufacturers who have been dealing with traffic problems for a great many years and know much more about them than we do. The blinking lights are of about only 3 candle power and blink about once a second; and I am convinced that on a dark night in some circumstances they could mean the saving of life.

Hon. H. K. Watson: They are much more effective than an arm poked out of a window on a dark night.

Hon. W. R. HALL: That is true. How many people put an arm out on a wet night to indicate that they are going to stop or turn? There are now so many stop signs in the metropolitan area that one does not know whether he is stopping or starting or coming or going. If one approaches a stop sign, but can see clearly that there is no other vehicle in sight for a considerable distance either to right or left, it is ridiculous that one should have to stop. Today in the metropolitan area one drives a vehicle on the clutch and brakes, both of which are expensive items to repair or renew; yet the vehicle owner is forced to wear them out unnecessarily and must foot the bill. He is the greatest sucker I know of. He keeps the largest industry in the Commonwealth going, and he is the greatest taxpayer in Australia. In addition, he pays for the roads although many of them are not fit to drive on; and to look at the list of traffic fines, he pays half the cost of the Police Force.

Hon. H. K. Watson: I did not realise that you and I had so much in common.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Many of the stop signs are in places where they are of almost no value. To my mind one of the greatest essentials in the prevention of accidents is courtesy between motorists.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Can you tell me why the stop signs are on the left-hand side of the road?

Hon. W. R. HALL: I have not finished with them yet. We all got used to giving way to the man on the right under the rule dealing with major roads; and I think that was much better than the present haphazard system of stop signs all over the metropolitan area, many of them in places where they are not wanted. To enforce the regulations about stopping at these signs, we need a policeman alongside every stop sign, because every day one sees how few motorists bother to stop at a sign when they see a clear road to both right and left; and I agree that it is stupid to have to stop in such circumstances. I repeat that the old rule about giving way to the vehicle on the right worked very well.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: It is effective in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I think the vehicle owner is entitled to a bit more consideration than he receives today—

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Who issues the instructions about the stop signs?

Hon. W. R. HALL: I do not know; but it is obvious that if one has a car with low clearance from the ground, and it is fitted with a sun visor, one might easily not be able to see the stop signs. The traffic lights so far installed in Perth are doing a wonderful job, and it is a pity that we cannot have them wherever there are stop signs, though of course that is out of the question on the score of cost.

It is noticeable in the metropolitan area that the motorists are learning to recognise the red and green lights. There are many pedestrians, however, who take no notice of them. Their lack of observance of the traffic lights is quite noticeable. After all is said and done, the motorist has not much time, from when the green light appears until the red light flashes, to proceed on his way, especially if he desires to turn to the right; and if pedestrians refuse to observe the traffic lights they make the motorist's lot a most unenviable one. Only last Friday I noticed that several pedestrians moved across the crosswalk against the red light, and I am sure that if a policeman had been present at the corner they would have been charged. Is it not right that those pedestrians should observe the traffic lights in order to avoid accidents and any trouble in the same way as they are observed by the motorists?

Pedestrians are becoming very lackadaisical when crossing our city streets. The people of Melbourne and Sydney would not attempt to do what some people in Perth are doing from day to day. In those cities the pedestrians realise that if they do not get out of the way they will be knocked down; and, for the motorist, driving in those cities is vastly different from driving in Perth. The lackadaisical manner of Perth's pedestrians tends towards a greater number of accidents. In the capital cities of the Eastern States the traffic is so heavy that one could not help but do the right thing or he would be in trouble. Also, many accidents in the city could be avoided if drivers of motor-vehicles would be more courteous to each other. The motorist who speeds does not go very far before he gets into bother, but the negligent driver is the greatest menace on the road.

The Chief Secretary: No, the reckless driver.

Hon. W. R. HALL: A negligent driver is practically the same as a reckless driver, because he does not do what he knows he should do. I now wish to refer to vehicle number plates. I have always said that Western Australia, instead of being first with the latest, is always last. That should not be so. Most members will probably have noticed that the number plates on

the vehicles that come from South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales are different from ours. Also, the plates are uniform in those three States, in that they all have three-inch lettering and numbers. Our plates have four-inch lettering and numbers, and are made of enamel and, overall, are a poor type.

The number plates in the Eastern States are of a better quality and are in keeping with the cars to which they are attached. Furthermore, the size of the lettering and the numbering is quite sufficient, and there is no need for the large numbers and letters which we have on our enamel plates. So I hope that some consideration will be given by the traffic authorities to improving our number plates or to at least bringing them into line with those of the Eastern States. There are many restrictions imposed by local and traffic authorities in regard to number plates. At one time a motorist was not allowed to have a band around the number plate, but I understand that this restriction has now been lifted.

Although I sympathise with the Minister for Local Government in this matter, I trust that a stop will soon be put to the chopping and changing of the sites and the times for parking. A motorist does not know from one month to the next where he is allowed to park, or the period of time he may leave his vehicle in the street. In fact, we have practically reached the stage where a motorist is required to be continually in touch with the Traffic Department in order that he may keep pace with the changing traffic regulations.

I hope the motorist will receive some consideration in regard to the matters I have raised so that he may be able to proceed on his way with an easier mind than he does today. Members must be well aware that the number of people who own cars has increased tremendously over the past few years; and to my way of thinking, from the time he purchases his vehicle, buys his spare parts, pays his petrol tax, and for repairs and replacements and all other running expenses, a motorist is never out of trouble until he disposes of the vehicle. In my opinion, the owner of a motor-vehicle is instrumental in keeping a larger number of people employed than any other industry. Therefore, he is a great asset to any State and he should be given greater consideration and attention.

I now wish to refer to parking areas set aside for bus stops and I hope the Minister will take particular notice of what I am about to say. At the bus stop opposite Winterbottoms at the foot of Mill-st., the trolley-buses are allotted a parking area of about 100 yards or so to allow for the length of one bus which, by the way, does not stop there too frequently. Why in the name of fortune such a lengthy strip must be allotted to

allow one bus to stop there from time to time, I do not know! After all is said and done, the bone of contention in the traffic problem today is the lack of parking space. Another instance I would quote is a section of Murray-st where a large area is set aside behind a taxi stand, while, on the other side of the street, directly opposite, parking is prohibited. I cannot see any reason why such a large space should be set aside to the detriment of ordinary motorists.

Another feature of the parking problem to which I would like to draw attention is that which relates to the Royal Show. I am sure that the time is not far distant when members of the Royal Agricultural Society who own cars, and also members of the motoring public generally, will be unable to park in the vicinity of the Royal Showgrounds altogether because there will be no space available in which to do so. It has been suggested by those people who know, and who are authorities on parking problems, that some consideration should be given to removing the new Royal Show railway station from its present site.

Hon. L. Craig: It has only just been placed there.

Hon. W. R. HALL: That is so; but in my opinion it could be moved to a more suitable site. If there were a railway platform for Royal Show patrons between Melville-st. and Chancellor-st., which site I think is on a hill and overlooks the whole of the showgrounds, it would then be possible for the people attending the show to enter the ground at the top gate or to go through the subway in order to gain admission at the main entrance. If this step were taken, it would be a decided improvement on the present railway station site. This problem has only occurred as a result of parking space being practically denied to all motorists who attend the showgrounds. Nothing can be done perhaps for this year's Royal show; but after the powers that be have a chance to see what transpires next October with the parking facilities available, perhaps they will be able to give some favourable consideration to the moving of the Royal Show station platform to that site which is practically between Melville-st. and Chancellor-st. If this were done, it would mean that the railways would be able to give a better service to those people both coming from and going to the Show. In view of the fact that motor transport cannot cope with such a large number of patrons, it would be possible for the new diesel suburban trains to carry these people without a great deal of trouble. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

On motion by Hon. E. M. Davies, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.30 p.m.