

"such" in line 10 and after the word "such" in line 14.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 17 to 21—agreed to.

Clause 22—Custodian trustee:

Hon. N. KEENAN: Subclause 2 begins—

Upon such appointment, if the public trustee consents to act—

The right of the public trustee to refuse to act has been retained in an earlier portion of the Bill, but here he can have no right to refuse. Under Subclause 1 he has been appointed and the manner of appointment is therein set out. Upon such appointment the trust property shall be transferred to him, and he cannot at that stage not consent to act because he has been appointed. I move an amendment—

That in lines 1 and 2 of Subclause 2 the words "if the Public Trustee consents to act" be struck out.

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

Clause 23 to 32—agreed to.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.40 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 1st October, 1941.

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

OBITUARY.

The Late Hon. John Nicholson, M.L.C.

The PRESIDENT: The family of the late Hon. John Nicholson have sent their sincere thanks to the President, members, and officers of the Legislative Council for their kind expression of sympathy.

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and *passed*.

BILLS (4)—REPORT.

- 1, Distress for Rent Abolition Act Amendment.
 - 2, Government Stock Saleyards.
 - 3, Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act Amendment.
 - 4, Inspection of Machinery Act Amendment.
- Adopted.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West) [4.39]: The effects of this Bill will be of considerable importance to many local authorities. Notwithstanding the number of representative bodies referred to by the Chief Secretary who, in the interests of motorists, approached the Minister for Works, considerable conflict of opinion prevails, and with this we have to deal. I have had over 20 years' experience as a motorist and also as a member of a road board, and I do not find it very difficult to make up my mind. When petrol rationing was first introduced there was an outcry on the part of many motorists and a few local authorities for an immediate reduction in the motor vehicle license fees. Although it was not really a matter for the Government, the Minister for Works took up the question and ascertained from representatives of the various bodies what was required. The Minister is to be commended for his prompt action in obtaining that information. I feel sure, however, that many motorists and even a few members of road boards do not fully realise what effect a 25 per cent. cut in license fees would have on the finances of a road board. I think that some boards have changed their opinion since giving mature consideration to the question. The saving of £1 or £2 to a motorist who can afford—

Hon. C. B. Williams: Sixpence a week in some cases.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: —an up to date car is not very much but when we consider that

this cut will mean a reduction in the revenue of some local authorities to the extent of £1,000, it is quite a different matter.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Vote against the Bill!

The PRESIDENT: Order! Mr. Tuckey is addressing the House.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: There are boards in my province that will experience considerable difficulty as a result of this all-round cut of 25 per cent. Take the Harvey Road Board, for instance. Its revenue will be reduced by £1,600 under this measure. That amount includes fees lost on account of cars not being re-licensed owing to petrol rationing. That board is very progressive and has considerable liabilities in connection with roads and other projects but, in spite of all the revenue it receives today, it has not £1 to spare. The Murray Road Board has also urgent works requiring to be undertaken in a portion of its district, but they cannot be put in hand through lack of funds. The current license fees of that board have already been spent and it would need an overdraft of £500 at the bank to pay the board's accounts. At least, that was the position a week ago. The Chief Secretary referred to the low rating in some districts, but I know that the boards to which I have referred have increased their land values and their rates in recent years. They have been raised either in accordance with taxation values or on the recommendation of independent valuers, and I should say that the present rates are quite fair. There is no doubt some justification for consideration in the case of private cars, but I do not think, in all the circumstances, that any other vehicle should have been included. Farmers' trucks already have a 50 per cent. reduction under the Traffic Act, and I do not think it could be said that farmers are demanding another 25 per cent. off that reasonable charge. What the farmer needs is a good road to his farm. There are some roads that serve only one or two farmers, but they have to be maintained in some cases at considerable expense.

Another point is that farmers get 85 per cent. of their full petrol requirements, which is a greater percentage than is received by any other motorist. I feel sure that if a proper reflection of the feelings of the farmers could be obtained on this question, we would find that they viewed the proposal as unwarranted. They cannot expect roads

to be maintained and various works to be carried out in their districts unless they are willing to contribute a fair proportion of the cost. In my district—which I know better than most others—there are over 400 bridges and culverts to be protected from fire every year, and if our revenue is to be cut by something like £1,000, we shall have to see if we cannot persuade the Almighty to ensure that there are fewer fires likely to burn our property. This work has to be carried out, and that is only one instance. Local authorities have their obligations and in some instances are doing wonderful work. I do not know of any road board or municipal council which has more money than it knows how to spend. In most districts there are urgent works waiting to be carried out all the time. I approve of a quarterly license as provided for in the Bill, but I do not approve of the monthly license suggested for trailers. Surely granting a monthly license is not giving authorities due consideration.

Regarding drivers' licenses, I do not like any further restriction in the case of learners. In South Australia it is possible to obtain a driver's license for the cost of a twopenny stamp, and I am informed there are fewer accidents in that State than in Western Australia. If a licensed driver is sitting beside a learner, no permit for the learner should be necessary, although this is already provided for. The licensed driver ought to be responsible for any accident. The permit is purely formal. It protects no one and is a nuisance to some licensed drivers when they desire to teach someone to drive.

Number plates cause confusion under existing regulations. A charge is made for these plates at the rate of 4s. a set and they must be returned to the licensing authorities within 14 days after the expiration of the license when a refund may, or may not, be made. The Traffic Branch will refund the amount, provided the plates are not damaged and are returned within the prescribed 14 days, but not otherwise. I know local authorities that do not follow this practice. A person may make a set of number plates provided they are approved by the licensing authority but they must be returned at the expiration of the license. When a vehicle is re-licensed, it is necessary to pay another 4s. for number plates. I consider it would be better, once a car is

licensed, for it to retain the same number until it is either destroyed or the car has to be licensed in another district. The details of a license include the make of car, horsepower, engine number and identification number, and no alteration should be made while the vehicle is within the licensing district. The plates are paid for and could easily be kept in store by the licensing authorities until the vehicle was re-licensed. I know of one case in which the secretary of the road board will pay for plates according to their condition. One man will receive 3s. and another only 2s., and that causes a good deal of dissatisfaction. Some people who return plates for a short period have to buy new ones when they re-license the car, and something on the lines I suggest would overcome that difficulty. It would provide a better record of cars and would obviate the necessity for changing numbers every time a car was licensed.

It is proposed that the Act shall take effect from the 1st January, 1942. That means that local authorities will have to refund portion of the fees they have received for a full year's license. Admittedly most licenses will expire on the 31st December next, but many have been taken out for the full year. If the date were altered to the 1st July, 1942, it would cut both ways, as motorists would have the advantage of a cheap license for about 18 months when petrol rationing ceases.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Do not you think people were foolish to license their cars for 12 months in view of what was mooted at the time?

Hon. H. TUCKEY: Perhaps so, but generally people take out their licenses at the beginning of July, at which time they did not know what would happen.

Hon. G. B. Wood: There was a lot of talk at the time, and they should have known.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: Many people think it better to take out the full license and have done with it. I am one who adopts that attitude. I do not look for a refund, and I know how difficult it is for some road boards to raise the money with which to carry on. I am sure that at the end of the rationing period I will secure an advantage, because it will take quite 18 months for the new conditions to operate. Should petrol rationing cease on the 1st January and Parliament should meet in the following August, those motorists whose licenses are good for

the ensuing year will have the benefit of the extra petrol supplies for 18 months before they will have to renew their licenses. I think it only fair for the Bill to operate as from the 1st July, 1942.

When the Minister for Works convened a conference of representatives of various authorities early in the piece, the South-West Road Board Association circularised all the local governing bodies in that part of the State, and from the replies received it was astounding to note the conflict of opinion. Of the 16 boards that replied, two suggested there should be a reduction of 50 per cent., but most of them favoured no reduction at all. Some of them were strongly opposed to any further reduction in respect of farmers' licenses. In some instances the replies came from boards largely representative of the farming community. Should the farmers take exception to the attitude adopted by the boards, members of the local governing authorities may lose their seats, but I do not think they are afraid of that eventuality. This will make a considerable difference to the revenue of the local authorities, because there are hundreds of farmers in many of the road board districts.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Have they all got motor cars?

Hon. H. TUCKEY: Most of them.

Hon. C. B. Williams: I thought they were all broke.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: Most of the farmers cannot be educated to the necessity for getting back to the horse. They maintain that they require their utility trucks. There are several clauses in the Bill that I shall discuss when we reach the Committee stage. I am in favour of some of the provisions and I certainly think that which exempts gas producers from a penalty is well advised. I do not think the weight of a gas producer should be taken into consideration when a truck is licensed. Every encouragement should be given to owners of trucks from that point of view. Any further criticism I have regarding the measure I shall offer in Committee, and in the meantime I support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [4.55]: Mr. Tuckey has indicated the widely divergent opinions regarding this legislation.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Then let us throw it out.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Mr. Williams will be able to express his opinion later on.

Hon. C. B. Williams: It would be the end of me if I did.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: There is no doubt that the local governing bodies will be greatly affected by the passage of this legislation, and it is hard to visualise what the financial position of both boards and individuals will be in the future. Nevertheless there is every justification for the introduction of the Bill. I do not regard it as perfect, and I intend to move amendments to it later on, but I still assert that there is every justification for its introduction. The licenses imposed under the Act in respect of various vehicles have been necessary in order to raise revenue to provide for the construction and maintenance of roads over which such vehicles travel. The time has now arrived when, owing to wartime conditions, motorists have to be restricted in the use of their vehicles. That restriction must continue until we have a surplus of liquid fuel, which is imperative lest a worse position should confront the Empire than it is faced with today. God forbid that such a position should arise. While the present state of emergency continues, restrictions upon the use of petrol should be imposed, irrespective of the fact that later on it may mean that local governing bodies will be forced to increase their rates. If they have to adopt that course, it will be unfortunate. While there are many influential people in the South-West who who could afford to pay higher rates—

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is the wealthy portion of the State.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: — the fact remains that there are many districts outside the metropolitan area where even a slight increase in rates would represent a heavy burden. As the Bill now stands, the impost involved will bear heavily upon the boards adjacent to the metropolitan area. From that standpoint the use of their roads will be, generally speaking, more heavy than it was before the rationing system was applied. There are the heavy contract vehicles which carry tremendous loads and do three or four trips daily with consignments of wood, stone and so forth. One cannot help sympathising with boards such as those operating in the Wanneroo, Armadale-Kelmscott and other areas adjacent to

the metropolis. Those boards will suffer because of the extremely heavy traffic that traverses their roads. Often the vehicles are overloaded, and although the parent Act embodies power to enable control to be exercised over that phase, it is difficult for an inspector to be on the spot in order to catch those who are guilty of overloading.

One very pleasing feature of the Bill as it has reached this Chamber is that the retrospective clause has been deleted. It would have been very unwise for Parliament to agree to such a provision, and I certainly cannot imagine this House approving of it. Had that clause been allowed to remain in the Bill, many local governing authorities would have been forced into a difficult position. Many of them have already expended the money received from license fees, and others have become committed to various undertakings. Had the clause been retained in the Bill, those bodies would have had to borrow money to meet the new conditions. Fortunately the reduction can only apply as from the 1st January next. There are several clauses in the Bill that should receive close attention by members. Clause 7 (b) suggests another move similar to the proposal in the Bill rejected by this House last week to take out of the control and jurisdiction of the police, employees of the Government railways and tramways. I do not know why the Government should seek to do this. It would be a very bad policy to have two Government departments clashing with each other. We have reason to be proud of the manner in which the Transport Board and the police control traffic; it is all that can be desired. This being so, why should an employee of the Government railways or tramways be exempt from control by those bodies? Where shall we end if we allow exemptions of this kind? Surely all traffic should be controlled by the Transport Board and the Police Traffic Branch! I hope the House will agree to the deletion of the proposed new subsection.

Clause 8, in my opinion, is not required. The essence of the clause is contained in the words "or of an inspector." The proposed new section begins—

Any person who was present at the scene of any accident in which a vehicle was involved and who, in the opinion of a member of the police force or of an inspector, may be able to give information or evidence in relation to such accident—

This means that when an accident occurs and there are bystanders or passers-by, an ordinary inspector may take upon himself the rights of a policeman.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What sort of an inspector?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: An inspector under the Traffic Act. No matter whether those people were witnesses of the accident, he could demand their names, addresses and other particulars. If that power is retained in the Bill, I point out that when an inspector has done that much, he cannot go further. He has no power to take proceedings. What is the use of such a provision? Surely we are not going to give the powers of a policeman to an ordinary inspector! As for the rest of the clause, there is not the slightest necessity for it. The police have full power under the Police Act and the provisions of Clause 8 would add nothing to their powers.

Hon. W. R. Hall: At Kalgoorlie we have not only police but traffic inspectors of our own.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Are we to give these powers to inspectors of local governing bodies, some of them very vicious inspectors, too, and put them in the role of policemen? I do not think the House will agree to that.

Hon. G. B. Wood: In some of the towns those inspectors have greater powers than have the police.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I do not agree with that statement. A minor amendment is required in Clause 9. It begins—

Where any vehicle, which is in the course of being driven or ridden, is involved in any accident by reason whereof any person is injured—

I think the clause should provide "where any vehicle or animal" in the course of being driven or ridden is involved in any accident. If a horse is being ridden and is involved in an accident, the rider should be responsible for his actions.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Are not horsemen responsible under the existing law?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: But the Bill contains a special clause to deal with this matter. Clause 13 refers to the weight of a gas producer added to a car, and provision is made to ascertain the weight of the gas producer when registering the car. I approve of that, but difficulty will arise over the method of ascertaining the weight of a

gas producer. Nobody can guess the weight; nobody can be sure of it because even gas producers turned out by the same manufacturer vary in weight, sometimes considerably. The police will find this provision very difficult to administer. The owner of the vehicle may be put to the inconvenience and expense of dismantling the gas producer from his car, in order to ascertain the weight. Once a gas producer is fitted to a car, the risk of causing leaks by removing it has to be considered.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: The weight of the car would be known to the Police Department. The motorist has to disclose the weight.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I have discussed this matter with officials who agree that they cannot arrive at a decision.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Why not?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The car and the gas producer may be weighed together, but how could the weight of the gas producer alone be determined? As I have stated, gas producers turned out by the same manufacturer vary in weight.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I suggest that this discussion had better take place in Committee.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I assure members that it is not easy to arrive at the weight of a gas producer installed on a car. In Committee I shall move an amendment that a declaration from the manufacturer regarding the weight of the gas producer may be accepted. That will obviate much difficulty.

Hon. L. Craig: Why not accept the standard weight?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: There is no such thing as a standard weight.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: But there is in cars. You could take the car weight plus the weight of the gas producer.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Some members seem to know more about the matter than the police who are actively engaged in this work. I have discussed the point with men who have to administer the Act, and it is their opinion I am giving to the House. Further, I have handled many gas producer plants, and I contend that an amendment along the lines suggested is necessary. With all respect to the local governing bodies and the drawbacks they will experience as outlined by Mr. Tuckey, I consider the Bill reasonable and will support the second reading.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [5.10]: I do not think the House will refuse to pass the second reading of the Bill, but there is one portion which to my mind is most important and I hope members will not treat it lightly or wantonly.

Hon. G. Fraser: We never do that.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I hope the House will give that part most careful consideration. I refer to the main principle of the Bill, the proposed reduction of 25 per cent in the license fees. Mr. Tuckey mentioned a particular road board and the effect the reduction would have on its finances. The revenue of the Harvey Road Board is about £6,000, of which £4,000 is automatically earmarked for administration and loan charges, leaving £2,000 available for road work. This proposed reduction in license fees will involve that board in a loss of about £500 per annum. Thus 25 per cent. of its available revenue for road purposes will be gone, and the saving to the farmer will represent about £1 per head. Farmers' vehicles already receive a reduction of 50 per cent. in license fees; they are now paying only half rates. For a Ford V8 car the license is £8 a year, but for the same vehicle converted to a runabout the license fee is only £4.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Then it is a semi-business car used for certain purposes.

Hon. L. CRAIG: It is used for all purposes. The proposed reduction in license fees will mean £1 per farmer who has a runabout, so it is not a very substantial sum to the individual. I point out also that these same vehicles have suffered a petrol reduction of only 15 per cent. That is a very minor reduction and it does not affect them very much. I further point out that the same vehicles are used just as much for pleasure as is the ordinary motor car. It is the vehicle in common use in certain farming districts.

Hon. G. B. Wood: And they get more petrol.

Hon. L. CRAIG: That is a well-known fact. The farmer who has a car of the same make has to pay a license fee of £8 a year, whereas for the runabout it is £4.

Hon. W. J. Mann: The car-owner might pay even £9 or £10.

Hon. L. CRAIG: His reduction of petrol has been at least 85 per cent. and in some cases I know of, it has been considerably more. One shining example is the chairman of the little road board of which I am a

member. He has a car for which he receives a monthly allowance of five gallons of petrol, and close to him lives an unnaturalised Italian who has a farm of 40 acres and receives an allowance of 15 gallons a month.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: What sort of a vehicle has he?

Hon. L. CRAIG: A runabout, classed in the Bill as a farm vehicle, and under this measure we are proposing to give that man £1 off his license fee. He is already paying only £4 license fee, compared with the chairman's £9, the chairman receiving the princely allowance of five gallons of petrol per month. I intend to move an amendment that commercial farm vehicles be excluded from the provisions of the Bill. I am a member of a board composed entirely of farmers. When the position was explained to them, they unanimously agreed that the reduction should be made in respect of motor cars only and should not apply to farm vehicles. Some members might say that the saving is small. It is small to the farmer, but it represents a great deal to small boards receiving considerably more revenue from licenses than from rates. The reduction of 50 per cent. in license fees seriously affected such boards. Now it is proposed to reduce the license fee of farm vehicles to 62½ per cent., whereas the petrol reduction is only 15 per cent. A motor car in the country is used for exactly the same purposes as are runabouts. They carry a bag of flour, bran or oats in exactly the same way as a runabout does; in the back of the modern runabout there is only room for a pram or a bag of flour. Taking into account the real need of road boards for revenue, I hope members will not treat this matter as of no importance. It is important. I am sure that the farmers' representatives in this Chamber, if they are candid and unbiassed, will agree with me that the £1 which the farmer would save would be much better spent by the road board. When the Bill reaches the Committee stage I hope an amendment will be carried excluding farmers' vehicles from the operation of the measure. I support the second reading.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East) [5.18]: I think no member will oppose the second reading of the Bill. It is a good measure

and has been asked for, as the Minister said, by various local governing bodies. However, I consider one part of the Bill to be exceedingly crude. There has been a reduction in petrol allowances from 90 per cent. to 15 per cent., yet the measure provides for one flat rate of 25 per cent. reduction in license fees. In my opinion, the provision is an extraordinary one and something should be done to correlate the reduction in petrol allowances to the license fee. The measure includes other provisions which are desirable and which farmers and others have been trying to secure for many years past. There is, for instance, the provision for a quarterly license fee. This will prove beneficial to the farmer who desires to license his truck only during the wheat-carting season; he can now also obtain a license for a trailer for a month extra at the cost of 1s. It will also be possible to license a trailer for a month only. Mr. Craig and I very seldom agree.

Hon. L. Craig: Oh! Mr. Wood.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I am in agreement with him in regard to the licensing of farmers' trucks. I doubt whether anyone will question my sincerity in trying to obtain everything I can for the farmer, but no farmer to whom I have spoken on this matter expected to get a further reduction in the fee for what is known as the farmer's vehicle. In my opinion, the reduction will in this respect prove detrimental to the farmer. I have consulted road boards, two of whom have informed me that if this measure passes they will have to raise their general rate. The object of the Bill will be defeated, because the farmers will have to pay an increased general rate, and the lowest increase that may be made in such rate is one farthing. That increase would in some cases involve more than the £1 the farmer would save under this measure. Mr. Craig said that the license fee for the average truck is about £8, and I think that is near the mark. That fee has been reduced by 50 per cent. to £4. In the circumstances, I shall not be afraid to support an amendment excluding farmers' trucks from the Bill.

Hon. H. Tuekey: They should never have been included.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: That is so. Road boards with which I am associated will be unable to carry on if this provision becomes

law. The saving of £1 to a farmer is very little; but the total reduction in fees payable to some road boards, particularly in the eastern districts, will have disastrous effects. Last year I quoted figures on the debate that took place in connection with traffic fees in this Chamber. I showed that the Westonia Road Board collected about £890 in traffic fees, while its revenue from general rates was about £180. If this Bill became law, what would be the position of that board? It would have to go out of existence, because if it increased its general rate it would be unable to collect the additional amount.

I am also in agreement with Mr. Baxter as to the heavy commercial vehicles used not only at Wanneroo, but also at Gosnells, Kelmscott and Mundaring. I see no reason why the license fees for such vehicles should be subject to a further reduction of 25 per cent. The owners are getting almost as much petrol as they received before rationing took place. If Mr. Baxter moves an amendment dealing with that phase it will have my support. I mention these facts in order to illustrate how crude the measure is in parts. I would favour a motor car owner who is partially driven off the road, owing to the curtailment of his petrol supplies, enjoying a 50 per cent. reduction in his license fee.

Hon. L. Craig: A private car?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Yes. I think such owners come within Classification 2 as regards fuel supplies. These large trucks carry about 8 tons and will be subject to the same reduction as regards license fees as are the farmers' trucks. As someone has pointed out, these are not being used exclusively for the purpose for which they were intended. By the legislation introduced by the Mitchell-Latham Government, it was intended that they should be used to cart farm produce, but today these utilities and runabouts are being used also as motor cars. As a sop to the owners, gas producers have not been taken into consideration. Cars fitted with gas producers are, however, still being charged on the same basis as cars driven by petrol. Anyone acquainted with gas producers knows that the power, as against petrol, is reduced by about 50 per cent., and in some cases the reduction is greater. I would favour a man using a gas producer being entitled to a reduction in his license fee, because he is performing a

national service and his vehicle has definitely not the power which it had before. It cannot go as fast; it must go slower.

The suggestions I have put forward are made in the interests of road boards. The statement has been made that these boards will not be incurring as much expenditure as they did in the past because not so many cars are now on the roads. The average motor car, however, makes little difference to the upkeep of a road; the principal deterioration of roads is caused by water. Everyone will agree with me that that is particularly so in hilly districts. I do not wish the revenue of these small boards to suffer owing to the reduction in license fees. The Bill is essentially a Committee measure and I shall therefore not say anything further at this stage. I support the second reading.

HON. C. B. WILLIAMS (South) [5.25]: I am opposed to granting motorists any reduction whatever in license fees. Motor-ing is a luxury, yet this measure proposes to grant a reduction of 25 per cent. in the amount of license fees. I point out that these license fees represent the greater proportion of the revenue of some road boards. People in the metropolitan area, where the roads are excellent, must be made to realise the position in which country road boards, including those on the goldfields, will be placed if this measure passes. They will be unable to secure enough revenue for the upkeep of the roads in their districts. It would be unpatriotic of car-owners to accept a reduction of one-quarter of their license fees, particularly as the petrol allowance for a small car is only two gallons per month, and that is ample. We have still to maintain our police force; we have still to pay our coroners—and now and again juries—when some unfortunate soul is not quick enough to get out of the road of a motor car. We shall be impoverishing our small road boards by allowing motorists £1 per annum off their license fees—less than 6d. per week. From inquiries I have made, I understand that in South Australia the license fee has been decreased by 25 per cent. The amount of the fee in that State was 25 per cent. higher than the fee charged to road hogs in Western Australia. I desire to make myself clear: So far as I am concerned, the motorist will get no consideration from me. He has no right to own a

motor car if he cannot pay the full license fee. If he cannot afford to pay that he should take his car off the road and put it into dock.

Hon. G. B. Wood: But we do not want the cars put into dock.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: The owner of a small Ford car will receive by way of reduction one quarter of £3 17s. Would such a sum keep a person on the road? I have every sympathy for people residing in the country; they, as well as city people, have their lives to live. But I have no sympathy for the motor hog who is putting the State to extraordinary expense through killing people. He takes control of the roads of the State, and yet desires to have his license fee reduced by 25 per cent.! I notice that in my own province the Town Clerk of Kalgoorlie has made application for a 10,000 gallon increase in the petrol allowance for the road hogs of Kalgoorlie, who should receive no consideration whatever. I support those portions of the Bill which are necessary, but in no circumstances will I support a reduction for the motorists.

HON. W. R. HALL (North-East) [5.30]: A person who owns a private car and holds a Class 2 consumer's license from the Liquid Fuel Control Board is entitled to more than 25 per cent. reduction in his license fees. Notwithstanding what other members have said, I have come to the conclusion that a person who has a car costing £300 to £400 or more, and is only allowed five gallons per month, will, because of depreciation, be losing money. With a 20 h.p. car and an allowance of five gallons a month it is reasonable that he should get more than a 25 per cent. reduction of his license fees. I have taken into consideration the seriousness of the position respecting small road boards in this State. There are too many road boards with a very small revenue. Some scheme of amalgamation should be adopted to allow them to pool their revenue and so bring down administration costs. However, that is getting away from the point. This measure is brought before the House to give some relief to motorists, and I approve of it. A lot of motorists do not desire a reduction in their licenses. No doubt some of them are not entitled to a reduction of 25 per cent. If the Minister had considered that aspect and consulted the Liquid Fuel Con-

trol Board on those particular classes respecting petrol rationing—

Hon. G. Fraser: Whisky travellers, etc.

Hon. W. R. HALL:—provision need only have been made for those who really deserve a percentage reduction in their license fees. Five gallons per month is not equivalent to a 25 per cent. reduction in the use of the roads. It is out of all proportion. A 10-h.p. car, on two gallons a month, can only do a maximum of 80 miles per month. Owners of such cars have got a reduction of 25 per cent. That does not compensate them. Insurance rates should also be reduced to a far greater extent than at present.

I wish to deal with road board rating. After all, the motorist pays for the roads and is entitled to some sort of a road for the money paid in license fees. We cannot get away from traffic accidents; they will always happen. That is an unfortunate side of the issue. Regulations are brought in from time to time to try to minimise these particular occurrences. Another point raised by Mr. Baxter tonight dealt with proposed new Subsection 3 which appears in Clause 7 (b), the effect of which will be to give the Commissioner of Railways power to allow persons to drive, I take it, trolley buses.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: No, motor buses.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Well, motor buses. Under the provision the police will have no control over them. I am of the same opinion as Mr. Baxter. That proposed sub-section should be deleted. The traffic branch of the Police Department should have control over all traffic so far as mobile units are concerned.

Hon. C. B. Williams: On the goldfields also?

Hon. W. R. HALL: Yes. I have always advocated police control of traffic throughout the State. My board—the Kalgoorlie Road Board—has a traffic inspector, so have the Kalgoorlie Council and the Boulder Council. That does not, however, alter my opinion, which I have advocated on more than one occasion, that the police should control all traffic on the goldfields. I still say that, but unfortunately I cannot always get my own way. The police are the best people to control traffic. They have motor cycles and do a pretty fair job in the metropolitan area. No doubt some omnibuses in the metropolitan area travel at a very fast rate, and it is necessary to have police control. Under the Tramways

Act the Police Department has no control over trams. I drove a tram for about 16 years, and I still think the police should have control over such a system—the traffic part of it at any rate.

Hon. J. Cornell: For furious driving?

Hon. W. R. HALL: It is very hard to drive trams furiously. They take a lot of speeding up in the place from where I come.

Hon. J. Cornell: They jump hurdles between Kalgoorlie and Boulder.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Clause 8 refers to the Police Force and the inspector. That could easily be altered in Committee to cover "an inspector also appointed by a local authority." I assume that clause is intended to cover a traffic inspector appointed by a local authority, because many local authorities, where there is no police control, have traffic inspectors. If Clause 8 is amended in that way it should meet the position.

I do not wish to weary the House. The Bill does give the motorist some relief. After listening to Mr. Craig it seems to me that the farmers are on a somewhat similar basis to the prospectors on the goldfields, insofar as they license their vehicles for half fees, but they are not in quite the same category in seeking to be exempted from this Bill. After all, the prospectors are at a disadvantage at times in finding money for their license fees.

Hon. G. B. Wood: The farmers are, too.

Hon. W. R. HALL: At times approval has had to be obtained from the Minister to secure free licences for them. As the Bill only provides for a 25 per cent. reduction, it does not make much difference whether the farmers or prospectors are covered. Twenty-five per cent. will not mean much to anybody. I am sorry the Bill does not give a greater measure of relief to those justly entitled to it—those people suffering under a very severe petrol cut.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [5.40]: I would not have spoken but for the fact that I shall probably take this Bill in Committee as Chairman, and it is essentially a Committee measure. The necessity for it has been brought about by the exigencies of the war. Had there been no petrol rationing there would be very little need for the Bill. So far as it affects the metropolitan area it will

not inflict much hardship. I can speak for the South Province. Were it not for motor transport licenses, practically speaking, the Kalgoorlie, Yilgarn, Westonia, Esperance, Lake Grace and Philips River Road Boards would have to close up shop. That is where the hardship is going to be felt. A big portion of the Kalgoorlie Road Board district is in the South Province.

Hon. C. B. Williams: It is pretty wealthy.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Its main source of revenue is derived from within Kalgoorlie and Boulder. If Norseman were taken from the Dundas Road Board it would be in exactly the same position as the other boards mentioned. How will the reduction of license fees affect the road boards mentioned by Mr. Seddon, Mr. Hall and myself, and the East Province representatives, who have lots of similar boards in their country districts? The net result will be that the services previously rendered by the boards will have to be curtailed; or if it is intended to maintain them, the money will have to be derived from some other source.

Hon. G. B. Wood: From the general rates.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The only source is the rates. In only two of the boards I have mentioned will the general rate apply; they are the Kalgoorlie Road Board and the Dundas Road Board. It will mean that those ratepayers will practically have to carry the loss incurred by the reduction in motor licenses. The other road boards are affected by primary production—mining, pastoral or agriculture. The producer will have to find the difference. What is lost on the merry-go-round will have to be made up on the swing. Strange to say not one road board has communicated with me regarding the Bill. When the question was discussed as to whether or not a certain proportion of the revenue derived from the traffic fees of the metropolitan area should be paid into Consolidated Revenue and thereby stop that very vexed and controversial question, which this House debated during the two previous sessions, of whether or not the Grants Commission would give Western Australia more money or not, if such a course were adopted, there was not a solitary road board in the South Province that did not write to me asking me to oppose the Bill.

Hon. G. Fraser: They were not concerned with it.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Not one of them was interested or affected.

Hon. G. Fraser: Only when it hurt them.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Not one of them has written on this occasion. That is my position. In cases where they are not affected they have asked me to oppose the measure, and in cases where they are affected they have put this trust in me.

It is said that the traffic throughout this State is controlled by the police. There are other angles from which that question can be viewed. In the Eastern States the traffic is supervised by the police. Moreover, the Governments that appoint and control the police take all the traffic fees, but that is not so in this State. The fees in the metropolitan area are collected by the Government, but are not wholly kept by it in that a certain proportion is returned. The local authorities outside the metropolitan area collect their own fees. While they do that it is up to them to pay for their own policing. When it comes to a question of controlling the traffic throughout the State, something in the way of a quid pro quo is required. We cannot expect the Government to find the money for work that is really the prerogative of the local authorities that are receiving the money today. I know that anomalies do exist. At one time in a municipality in the South Province a traffic fee collector was appointed, but that officer was not empowered to institute prosecutions and had to report everything to the council. As members can imagine, at times a prosecution was instituted for some paltry offence, and at other times action for some glaring offence was not launched. Those inspectors should be given the right to prosecute in cases where they consider a branch of the traffic laws has occurred. I support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [5.48]: From the contacts I have been able to make in my province, I find a divergence of opinion amongst various sections of the community. Members of some road boards are concerned as to how they are going to get sufficient revenue to do what ratepayers demand. On the other hand, there are ratepayers who are not concerned about how the road boards are to finance their undertakings so long as rates are not raised. Members of boards here and there urge that there shall be no reduction in the licensing

fees, and those ratepayers I have been able to get into touch with demand that there shall be a reduction. I agree with the contentions of my colleague, Mr. Craig. I know how much a reduction of license fees will affect many of the smaller road boards. I also know the unfair position that exists in the case of private car owners. Some owners still have a comparatively generous ration for their vehicles, even if they have suffered a 50 per cent reduction, whilst others have a ration that is of no use to them.

Last week I came across a man who wished to make a hurried visit by car to the city. He was unable to do so, because he is getting only five gallons of petrol monthly. To make the 300-mile trip involved he needed three times that quantity, but owing to the lack of petrol he had to stay at home. The contention of the section to which that man belongs is that it is not particularly concerned about the reduction so long as sufficient petrol is forthcoming. Seeing that those people cannot get petrol, they feel they are being unduly disadvantaged through being called upon to pay the full license fee. Those who use their cars not altogether for business but to assist them in the conduct of their business would prefer to have the license fees reduced. People in the country are in a different position from those in the city. Those who wish to come to Perth from my home town by train find that the journey occupies nine hours, whereas by motor car they can do it comfortably in less than four hours. Persons who come to the city occasionally feel that they are being hit in more ways than one. I support the second reading of the Bill, and shall also support one or two of the suggested amendments when the measure is dealt with in Committee.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West—in reply) [5.52]: This Bill is one that can best be dealt with in Committee. I feel constrained to remark on the very varied opinions that have been expressed concerning the proposal to reduce license fees. My mind goes back to a month or two ago when there was a strong agitation throughout the Press, supported by representatives of almost every section of the community, on this question. People wanted to know why the Government was

not doing something to reduce license fees. This afternoon it seems—

Hon. J. J. Holmes: That we have done too much.

The CHIEF SECRETARY—at first that we have done too much. One or two representatives of country districts appear to be of opinion that we have been too generous in the past to farmers who, it has been suggested, are not really entitled to a 50 per cent. reduction in license fees. Having got that reduction and enjoyed it for some years, apparently some farmers now want to do a fair thing by saying that they are not entitled to any further reduction on account of the petrol rationing.

Hon. G. Fraser: Their consciences are pricking them!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Producers and the farming community generally are entitled to all the assistance we can give them, especially during the present period.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: To every bit of it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am inclined to think that even with the 50 per cent. reduction in license fees, the amount in question will not make much difference to those people in the long run. Their liabilities have reached such a high figure that their license fees cannot materially affect their financial position. When dealing with a matter of this kind we have to endeavour to be uniform.

Hon. L. Craig: And fair too!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That has been the difficulty with respect to deciding upon the percentage reduction that should be put into force in connection with license fees. Varied opinions have been expressed on the subject, as I pointed out when moving the second reading. Some local authorities have varied in their figures from 10 per cent. to 50 per cent. Now that the Bill has reached this Chamber providing for a 25 per cent. reduction, we can assume that that is considered reasonable in a general way. I point out, as did Mr. Cornell, that this is the only State in Australia in which the local authorities enjoy the right to collect their own fees for licenses issued in their districts.

Hon. J. Cornell: And to hold them too.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Not only have they the right to collect the fees, but to spend them. That has conferred a great benefit upon our local authorities. I said when introducing the Bill that most of the

local authorities are not rating their maximum, and I meant what I said. In very few instances are local authorities rating to anything like their maximum capacity.

Hon. L. Craig: Why should they rate to their maximum capacity?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The local authorities in other States of Australia are faced with that position, and it is necessary for them to secure from their rates the money with which to carry on. In some instances they receive a grant from the Government to assist them in dealing with roads etc., but they do not get anything like 50 per cent. of their revenue from that source. Local authorities are a great deal better off in this State than similar bodies are in the other States. I do not wish to criticise them, for I know they are doing good work. In some districts they have been severely hit by virtue of the fact that their rate-payers have decreased in number in recent years owing to the very bad seasons that have been experienced.

Hon. T. Moore: And because of bad seasons they cannot collect the rates that are levied.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In many instances that is so.

Hon. G. B. Wood: That is the case with respect to many clients of the Agricultural Bank.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not wish to be critical of the local authorities, but think they should take into consideration the advantageous position they occupy compared with local authorities in the other States. This reduction will not affect the Government to any extent, for it does not enjoy any proportion of the traffic fees other than that which is used by the police for the control of traffic in the metropolitan area. We are quite easy in this matter. The Government merely wishes to do the fair thing. It is anxious to meet the position as it knows it, and believes, after going into all the facts, that a 25 per cent. reduction is a fair thing. I would like to refer before concluding to a question raised by Mr. Baxter when he spoke of an inspector being given the powers of a policeman. An inspector, for the purposes of the Traffic Act, is a person who has been appointed under that Act to control traffic.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: I know that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If the hon. member is aware of that fact, he cannot complain of an inspector being given the powers proposed under this Bill in those districts where the local authorities have found it necessary to make such appointments. I do not think there is much in the hon. member's argument. With regard to the other matters referred to by members, I shall be only too pleased to give any information available to me so that they may be dealt with satisfactorily. The provisions of the Bill have in every instance been framed as a result of adequate representations made by local authorities and the Traffic Department, and are considered to be highly necessary and desirable. I hope when the Bill is dealt with in Committee members will adopt a reasonable attitude towards the various clauses contained in it.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 4:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The Bill was received for second reading only last night, and I have not been able to do more than casually read it. This has enabled me to put up certain amendments. I ask the Chief Secretary to postpone the further progress of the Committee stage until tomorrow, so that members may have an opportunity to examine the measure thoroughly.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am entirely in the hands of hon. members. The subject matter of the Bill has been before the country, if not before this Chamber, for many months.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The policy of the Bill is all right.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There may be two or three matters of which members have little knowledge. I am prepared to give them all the information in my possession. If any member should desire further discussion on a particular point, I shall not object to holding up the measure for a day, or for a few days if necessary.

The CHAIRMAN: The only amendments that I have before me have been handed in by Mr. Baxter. We must bear in mind what is apt to happen at the close of a session. Clauses can be postponed if necessary, as the Chief Secretary has indicated.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 9; Repeal and new Section; Periods for which licenses may be issued:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

That in lines 3 to 5 of paragraph (a) of proposed new Subsection 6 the words "which is new when purchased by the owner applying for the license and has never previously been licensed" be struck out and the words "and such vehicle has never previously been licensed by such owner" inserted in lieu.

I have not thoroughly digested the Bill. My amendment relates to a secondhand car purchased from some person who had licensed it, but had not continued to license it for some time. There have been many such cases. The subsection provides for new vehicles only. Apparently the difficulty arises as the result of an oversight by the draftsman. We should provide for a secondhand car that has not been licensed for a long period and has been sold to some other person. That other person should be entitled to come under this clause.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The next paragraph covers the position at which Mr. Baxter desires to arrive.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: No.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Paragraph (b) provides that when the license is granted in the second quarter, the rebate of the prescribed license fee shall be one-fourth; that when the license is granted in the third quarter, the rebate shall be one-half; and that when the license is granted in the fourth quarter, the rebate shall be three-fourths.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The carrying of my amendment would not alter the effect of the subsection as regards new cars.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: The secondhand car may be one that has been stored for quite 12 months, the license having been allowed to lapse. The original owner of that car says, "I get no use out of my car, and so it is for sale." The person purchasing the car has no license for it, neither has the original owner. The purchaser cannot get any petrol until he has obtained a license. If it were a new car, he could lodge his

application and obtain a license. but, the license having ceased to be held, it is doubtful whether a license could be obtained for the secondhand car.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I suggest that the new subsection should read:—

When at any time in the course of a financial year a full year's license is applied for in respect of a vehicle by the owner of the vehicle and such vehicle has never previously been licensed by such owner, the local authority may charge in respect of such license a fee assessed upon the basis of one-twelfth part of the prescribed license fee for such vehicle for and in respect of each and every month or part of a month of the then current financial year which is unexpired at the date when such license is granted.

The reason for the proposed alteration is to include all vehicles which had just been purchased and had not been previously licensed in the new purchaser's name. Say "A" buys a new vehicle on the 1st June, and "B" buys a practically new vehicle on the same date, the latter vehicle having been previously licensed in another owner's name but not for, say, some years past. Then "A" may be allowed one-twelfth, but "B" will have to pay one-quarter. Another instance would be where a vehicle had been previously licensed in another State of the Commonwealth. If my proposal were adopted, there would be no need for paragraph (b) of proposed new Subsection 6.

Amendment put and negatived.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—Amendment of Section 10:

Hon. L. CRAIG: I move an amendment—

That in line 8 of subparagraph (i) of paragraph (c) of proposed new Subsection 1a after the word "fee" the words "provided that this paragraph shall not apply to vehicles mentioned in the fourth proviso of Subsection 1 of Section 10 of the principal Act" be inserted.

In Subsection 1 of Section 10 are set out certain classes of vehicles exempt from the payment of the full license fee. They are vehicles in respect of which only half the license fee is required. There are four classes. The first class comprises a motor wagon, motor carrier, trailer or semi-trailer which is owned by a person carrying on the business of farming and/or grazing on any farm or other land, which will be used during the currency of the license solely or

mainly for the carriage of the products of, or requisites for, such business. That applies to farm vehicles used in the carriage of goods.

Hon. V. Hamersley: What about stations?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes, and those used on pastoral stations also. That is the first class of vehicle that I wish to be exempt under the Bill and in respect of which there is already a 50 per cent. reduction in license fees. I do not desire any further reduction to apply to them. The other three vehicles to which I do not wish the Bill to apply are those belonging to bona fide prospectors, sandalwood pullers, and kangaroo hunters. These also are referred to in Subsection 1 of Section 10.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: By this measure we have tried to secure a uniform reduction in license fees. As with most legislation of this type, anomalies will probably become apparent. Mr. Craig has pointed out one applying to primary producers. It may be that if the amendment were agreed to, it would make quite a material difference to the revenue of some of the road boards in areas where there is a large number of primary producers. It is perhaps a matter that concerns country local authorities rather than metropolitan local authorities. With regard to kangaroo hunters, prospectors and sandalwood pullers, I think we have a somewhat different set of circumstances. I have no knowledge of the number that would be involved, but I can imagine that there would be a considerable number of prospectors in mining areas who have to rely on a truck which may not be of any great value but which is of very great importance to them. I do not think it could be argued that they were getting a concession of the same value as that obtained by primary producers, say, in the South-West portions of the State.

Hon. C. B. Williams: The sandalwood pullers have no right to be exempt.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member can deal with that aspect if he wishes.

Hon. C. B. Williams: They derive considerable profit from their labour.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know how many would be affected by this amendment.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Not many.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There are a few, I suppose, but not many compared with a few years ago, whereas prospectors

will have increased in number in recent years. Kangaroo hunters, I imagine, would be confined mainly to the far North.

Hon. L. Craig: They have no reduction in petrol at all.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is so.

Hon. L. Craig: No restrictions whatever are imposed on them.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There again, there might be an argument in favour of the amendment. I am pointing out that we have tried to reach the stage of having a uniform reduction, and if the hon. member desires to make exceptions—

Hon. L. Craig: They are made in the principal Act.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Only to the extent of 50 per cent. There may be a logical argument in favour of the suggestion, but in view of the fact that we have endeavoured to make a uniform percentage reduction on all licenses, I cannot favour the proposal to grant exemptions.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I oppose the amendment. It may be all right for the majority of the producers in the South-West, especially those in Mr. Craig's district, who are doing so well, but it does not apply to other portions of the State and especially the wheat areas where every shilling counts. With regard to prospectors, every £1 makes a difference. We need to give them encouragement. That applies also to kangaroo hunters; especially in the interests of the North. The sandalwood cutters are hardly worth talking about. If the hon. member had introduced an amendment along these lines applying to metropolitan transport services, he would have my support. The Bill is an attempt to relieve the position occasioned by the shortage of petrol.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: I intend to oppose the amendment. With my knowledge of country districts I feel that in view of the retrospective clause that has been deleted in another place, everything possible that could have been done by the Government has been accomplished. I am sorry my two colleagues are not present tonight; I am sure they would vote against the amendment.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The amendment will safeguard the revenue of country road boards which at the present time find it difficult to make ends meet. For that reason I support it.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I support the amendment for two reasons. The effect will be to safeguard the revenue of road boards already confronted with difficulties and, secondly, the interests of farmers themselves will be conserved. I have been told definitely by representatives of road boards that if the reduction is agreed to an additional rate will have to be struck.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: With the Chief Secretary, I think the Committee would be unwise to accept the amendment, which will mean discrimination.

Hon. L. Craig: The Act already discriminates.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: In this instance the discrimination will be against a section that deserves every consideration. I have in mind the prospectors under the Government scheme for whom a truck or motor car is an integral part of their equipment. The amendment will impose a hardship upon them. From that point of view I hope the amendment will not be agreed to.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I oppose the amendment. If we agree to it we will have the farmers and country folk generally complaining that Parliament looks after the city dweller and excludes those residing in the outer areas from equal benefits. While it might make a little difference to the revenue of country road boards, maintenance of roads will be a little less because trucks, owing to the petrol restrictions, will not be so much as formerly.

Hon. T. MOORE: I oppose the amendment. I do not think Mr. Craig has been logical in the arguments he advanced. He said no restriction would be suffered by those outback, but the price of petrol in itself imposes restrictions upon the use of motor vehicles. As to the position of kangaroo shooters and sandalwood getters, they hardly ever see a main road and have to pay high prices for petrol supplies. As to the primary producers, Mr. Craig knows that they secured the benefit of the 50 per cent. cut because of their disabilities. I do not think Mr. Craig will argue that the farmers are in a better position today. Then again they have to pay heavily for their petrol supply. At Mullewa petrol costs 3s. a gallon.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Outback as much as 4s. 7d. a gallon has to be paid for petrol.

Hon. T. MOORE: If there is to be a reduction, let it apply all round.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I hope the Committee will agree to the amendment. With Mr. Wood I claim that money has to be forthcoming in order that local authorities may carry out their functions. If the money covered by the amendment is to be taken from them, the boards will have to increase their rates and the primary producers will have to pay more. It is a penny wise and £1 foolish policy to allow a cut of 25 per cent. on the licenses and then increase rates on properties.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: The discussion seems to centre round the point of who shall benefit—the individual or the road board. From that point of view, I feel that if we vote in the interests of the road board the individual will, in turn, derive the benefit. I shall support the amendment.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	9
Noes	..	..	..	..	13

Majority against 4

AYES.	
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. V. Hammersley	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. J. M. Macfarlane	(Teller.)
NOES.	
Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. J. J. Holmes
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. H. V. Pierson
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. T. Moore
Hon. W. R. Hall	(Teller.)

AYES.		PAIRS.		NOES.	
Hon. H. Tuckey				Hon. H. L. Roche	
Hon. G. B. Wood				Hon. A. Thomson	

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 5 to 6—agreed to.

Clause 7—Amendment of Section 24:

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I move an amendment—

That paragraph (b) be struck out.

The object of the paragraph is to exempt tramway employees from the necessity to qualify for a driver's license for which all other drivers have to qualify. The Commissioner of Police is the constituted authority under the Traffic Act, but if the paragraph be agreed to the control of the licensing of motor drivers will pass from the existing authority and a new authority will

be created in the person of the Commissioner of Railways. In another place the argument was advanced that the Commissioner of Railways would naturally see that his drivers were competent. The same argument could soundly be used by employers of all other motor drivers. The bus proprietor will be equally solicitous respecting his own welfare and that of his employees and passengers by seeing that only competent drivers are employed by him, but he is not to be the judge of the competency or otherwise of his drivers. I can see no reason why the Commissioner of Railways should be the judge of the competency or otherwise of his employees who may be called upon to drive buses. If it is necessary for the public to be protected from the dangers of careless driving by individuals employed in private concerns, surely we will not deny the public the same protection simply because the buses in question will be owned by the Crown and the drivers will be Government employees. The Government's proposal is clearly illogical, hence my amendment.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The issue is not the depriving of the public of protection afforded by the Traffic Act. No one knows better than Mr. Dimmitt that all employees of the Railway Department who are in charge of vehicles are subject to very severe examinations. I do not think he would suggest for one moment that drivers of locomotives should be subject to the provisions of the Traffic Act.

Hon. V. Hamersley: They give us pretty bad rides sometimes.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member may have his little joke, but that has nothing to do with the competency of drivers. Members know full well that all men in charge of locomotives, trams or any other vehicles controlled by the Commissioner of Railways, are subject to more severe tests than are applicants for licenses under the Traffic Act. What is more, they have to undergo tests periodically. Drivers of Government buses will be subjected to a test at least every two years. That does not happen to the driver employed by a private concern. I am informed that the test to which the Government drivers are subjected is more comprehensive and severe than that of the Police Traffic Branch.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Have not they to undergo a physical test also?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, and tests for eyesight and hearing.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Does that apply to omnibus drivers?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes. If the drivers were required to apply for a license there would probably be no hardship beyond the payment of the 5s. fee, but these men are employees of the Commissioner of Railways whose responsibility it is to ensure that all persons placed in charge of vehicles under his control are not only capable of driving them but are physically fit. Surely it will not be argued that the Commissioner would be more lenient to men driving omnibuses than to men in charge of other Government vehicles! In his own interests he must satisfy himself that the men are capable.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: The Minister seems to overlook the difference between the driver of a steam train, an electric tram, or a trolley bus, and the driver of a motor omnibus. The train and tram are definitely limited in their operation; they have no lateral movement. The trolley bus is restricted by the radius of the trolley poles. A different technique is required in the driving of an omnibus, and if that technique is demanded of a driver of a privately-owned bus, the same should apply to a Government-owned bus.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: Who is the better judge of the competency of a driver, a policeman who knows nothing about it or the mechanical man in charge of the railways?

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: The traffic officials know all about it.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: They do not. A boy of 16 may get a license from the police to drive a motor car. The largest concern in the State has trained men for this work, and yet some members would have them put under a policeman from whom in many instances a license may be obtained at the cost of a friendly smile.

Hon. W. R. HALL: This provision relates to the driver of any motor omnibus. Surely it is essential that the police have authority to supervise the movement of all mobile vehicles on the highways, especially passenger vehicles. The Government has omnibuses plying between Perth and Claremont. They may run all over the highway,

just as any other motor vehicle, and why should not they come under the police supervision? There is no reason why Government drivers should not pass the test that any other motorist has to undergo. I cannot see that the Commissioner of Railways is more competent to judge the ability of a man to drive a motor bus than are the officers of the Police Traffic Branch. Police control is also necessary to check the overloading of buses. I support the amendment.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I oppose the amendment. I cannot believe that the Commissioner of Railways would place in charge of an omnibus a driver who had not passed all the necessary tests.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: I agree to a large extent with Mr. W. R. Hall. Motor bus traffic is mobile and we should not have two authorities governing that section. While the Commissioner of Railways might have methods of testing the competence of drivers of trains and trams, he might be at a loss in dealing with drivers of road vehicles. I prefer to leave the matter in the hands of the police.

Hon. W. R. HALL: One point I omitted to mention is that omnibuses on Stirling Highway reach a speed of 45 miles an hour. They are heavy vehicles, and it would be unsatisfactory if the police could not check the drivers regarding their speed of travelling. They should be placed in the same category as drivers of other road vehicles.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Some members seem to be under a misapprehension. This provision will not remove Government drivers from the scope of the Traffic Act; they would merely be exempt from taking out licenses under the Traffic Act. They would still be subject to all the regulations and bylaws under the Traffic Act, just as are drivers of private buses. These men have to pass a very stiff examination, much more severe than that for a license to drive a private bus. The Commissioner has not overlooked the fact that motor buses are in a different category from trams or trolley buses. He is the man who can be sued in the event of an accident occurring. He carries that responsibility under the Act.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Who would be sued in the case of a private bus accident?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Drivers of private buses are supposed to be competent men.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Certified by the Traffic Department as being competent.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Commissioner of Railways will take care that his drivers are capable and fit for the position.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The Minister said that the Commissioner of Railways takes full responsibility in the event of an accident. With whose cash? His own? Of course not. It is the cash of the Railway Department. Are we going to agree to dual control in the matter of issuing licenses? The Commissioner of Railways is ruining trolley buses and has selected drivers from the tramway service, who might have been subjected to a test. If he were hard-pressed for a driver, any tramway man could be put on to a bus. That position is wrong. Parliament should direct that the control of traffic must remain under the one authority. The allusion to the Commissioner of Police being casual is nonsense; before a person can procure a license he must prove his competency in every respect. I point out that these drivers will not be driving ordinary vehicles, but omnibuses carrying passengers, and usually the buses will be overloaded. The Railway Department would be responsible for those passengers and that is another reason why the Committee should agree to the amendment.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: This appears to be another instance of one law for the Commissioner of Railways or the Government, and another law for private bus owners. If the Government enters into this business it should, in my opinion, trade under exactly the same conditions as does private enterprise. The Committee is really protecting the Commissioner of Railways by insisting on the deletion of this provision. I do not suggest that the Commissioner would employ incompetent drivers; but if the drivers were licensed in the same way as are drivers of private buses, the public would have protection to that extent. The Commissioner is merely the custodian of the people's property and the people should see that it is properly looked after. If, owing to the incompetency of a driver, a

bus is so damaged as to become useless, the cost will eventually fall upon the taxpayers. I support the amendment.

Amendment put and a division called for.

The CHAIRMAN: Before the tellers are appointed, I wish to state that I shall—although it will not make any difference—vote with the noes, for this reason: Two departments are administered by one Government. The Commissioner of Railways has power under the Railways Act to do these things; the Government can administer the Traffic Act.

Division resulted as follows:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	15
Noes	..	..	..	..	10
					—
Majority for	..	..	..	..	5
					—

AYES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. J. J. Holmes
Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. J. M. Macfarlane
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. J. A. Dinnitt	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. V. Hamerley	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. T. Moore
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. H. V. Plesse
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. W. H. Kitson	Hon. E. M. Keenan
	(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 8—agreed to.

Clause 9—Amendment of Section 28:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of proposed new Subsection 1 after the word "vehicle" the words "or animals" be inserted.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Is a cow driven along the road a vehicle?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: There might be an accident.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

That in lines 6 and 11 of proposed new Subsection 1 after the word "vehicle" the words "or animals" be inserted.

This is consequential upon the previous amendment.

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

Clauses 10 to 12—agreed to.

Clause 13—Amendment of Third Schedule:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

That the following words be added to paragraph (1) of the proviso to Clause 2 of the Third Schedule:—"The weight of such appliance shall be certified to by declaration made by the manufacturer of such appliance."

This will simplify the clause. The measure will be difficult for the police to administer. At times it may be necessary to remove the gas producer from a vehicle, although that should not be necessary if the weight of the attachment is verified by a statutory declaration.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Is there any real necessity for the amendment? The weight of a particular model of car can generally be ascertained without much trouble. Even if the weight of the car is not known, is not this a matter that could be mutually agreed upon by the licensing authority and the person applying for a license? If there is any argument between the two, they will find ways and means of overcoming the difficulty. If we have to call upon every person desirous of licensing his car with a gas producer unit attached, to obtain a declaration as to the weight of the unit, it will cause needless trouble. All gas producer units are not manufactured by manufacturers in the city. Quite a number have been made by car owners themselves, and they have been able to pass the test. Such a car owner would be put to needless trouble if he had to submit a declaration as to the weight of the gas producer unit.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The declaration may or may not be correct.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is so, but assuming it is correct, of what assistance will it be if the original weight of the car is known? I can understand what Mr. Baxter has in mind, but this amendment will not help. If I could see any real value in it I would support it.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I discussed this matter with the secretary of a road board last week. He said that they know what the license fee is on the various types of car and they experience no difficulty at all. He is satisfied himself and the owners are satisfied. I see no reason for the amendment.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The weight of the vehicle on the road affects the cost of registration. The greatest objection raised by

the Chief Secretary referred to the trouble to which people will be put. That trouble is for a manufacturer to prepare a document giving the weight of the unit and handing it to the purchaser of the plant.

The Chief Secretary: Will that be of any use?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The people who have to administer this Act have to know the weight. How will the amendment inflict injustice? It will simplify matters for the Government and a Government department. The matter will require to be dealt with either as I suggest by my amendment or else by a regulation.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Apart from simplifying the position it will add a lot of extra annoyance and difficulty.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: To whom?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: To the person applying for the license. The amendment will make it necessary for the person applying to obtain a declaration which, I suppose, means a statutory declaration which has to be prepared and sworn before a J.P.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I do not say "statutory declaration" in my amendment.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: It is not much good unless it is a statutory declaration.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Whilst I am inclined to agree with Mr. Baxter's amendment, in cases where the plant has been put on after the vehicle has been weighed, the weight of the gas producer can be easily obtained. At the same time, I am given to understand that gas producers vary in weight, from the ordinary sizes of 4 and 5 cwt. up to far greater weights for trucks and other heavy vehicles. That would affect the licensing value of the vehicle and would have to be taken into consideration. It is not necessary to go to the trouble of securing a declaration. If gas producers are made by firms the weights can be ascertained from the manufacturer.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The whole object of this clause is to prevent the weight of the gas producer unit being taken into consideration when fixing the license fee. I do not know the exact number, but something like 4,000 producers are in use at the present time in this State.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: That is very good for the State.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is something like that number. If the amendment is agreed to, every one of these 4,000

owners of motor vehicles with gas producers will have to obtain a sworn declaration as to the weight of the producer unit.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: No, they are already registered. This is only for new registrations.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: They are only licensed for this year, and some only for the half year. Application has to be made at the expiration of those periods, and when that application is made, if a gas producer unit is attached, each owner will have to produce a declaration.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: This does not affect re-licensing.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am informed that the various models of cars and trucks have recognised weights.

Hon. L. CRAIG: That is so.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Chevrolet, Fargo and other makes have recognised weights. Because of that, no difficulty is experienced by the licensing authorities. If they do not have to take more into consideration than that, they will take no notice whatever of the weight of the gas producer unit. I cannot see any real reason for the amendment.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: In every railway town there is a weigh-bridge. Mr. Baxter knows that when wheat is taken into the station, the weight is arrived at by taking the total weight of the loaded truck as it passes over the weigh-bridge and then weighing it again when it has discharged its load and taking the difference between the two weights.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Well, apply that to gas-producers on the truck.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The weight of the truck is known because it is specified.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: The point Mr. Holmes seems to miss is that we do not need to get the weight of the gas producer. Its weight is not taken into consideration.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Why worry about it?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: This amendment only applies to new vehicles.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I hope the Council will agree to the clause as it stands.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: A wheat truck with a gas producer has a different weight every minute of the day. In the old days the weight of the truck would not vary, and the tally clerks in the country did not re-weigh the truck for each load. These days they have to be re-weighed. If the truck is just

filled with 60 lbs. of charcoal it weights 60 lbs. more than towards the end of the day when that 60 lbs. has burnt down considerably.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 14, Title—agreed to

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East) [8.40]: After the debate of yesterday there seem to be very few points remaining for discussion. I wish to refer to only one or two. One point raised was that the measure will considerably increase the revenue of the State Government Insurance Office. I cannot see that there will be any corresponding benefit to the worker. It is on account of this aspect of the matter that I would like to see the Bill go no further. The measure seeks to bring under the Workers' Compensation Act certain higher paid workers. It has been contended that the effect will not be very great as far as they are concerned as they comprise the lower-rated risks. The main argument advanced is that the measure will protect the worker whose remuneration has increased as a result of arbitration awards. It is further claimed that it will benefit the worker who, because of overtime, is getting over the £400 mark. As Mr. Williams pointed out, it will also bring in certain mining employees at present on the staff, such as shift bosses and foremen who are outside the scope of the Act but are entitled to certain benefits under a special arrangement with the State Insurance Office.

The 1939 amendment undoubtedly should have brought in more revenue to the State Insurance Office. That amendment was designed to police the Workers' Compensation Act. I wish to deal with the matter of increased revenue. The rate charged for the mines at the present time is 8 per cent. Of that 8 per cent., £3 10s. is for the Third Schedule risk, and £4 10s. for the accident risk. A little while ago the position was reversed; £4 10s. was the rate for the Third

Schedule risk, but it was found that the accident risk was really being conducted at a loss. Where an employee, on account of a rise in his wages brought about by an Arbitration Court award, goes beyond the £400 mark, is the State Insurance Office going to collect the premium at the accident rate of 4½ per cent.? If it does, naturally it will make a nice thing out of it. If a man passes from the £400 to the £500 mark at the present time, his accident rate at 4½ per cent. on £400 would amount to £18. But for £500 it would be up to £22 10s. If he gets up to the £600 mark, the insurance company collects £27, an increase of £9 on the same risk. The man is no bigger risk because the Arbitration maximum has been raised to £600, than he was at £400. The conditions would be the same. I consider that the amount of premium in that case should not be altered, or else there should be a corresponding provision in the State Insurance Office Act that the State Insurance Office should not charge a higher sum as premium than previously. The State Insurance Office covers about 90 per cent. of workers' compensation insurance in Western Australia. At the present time the Government collects from that office £25,000 annually. That amount is drawn by the Government on the ground that it will reimburse the country for expenditure incurred under the Miners' Phthisis Act. I really wonder whether a hungry Treasurer might have the same idea and milk the accident fund?

Reference has been made to the relationship between industry and workers' compensation costs. It appears to me that the efforts of the Minister for Industrial Development in the direction of fostering secondary industries will be handicapped by the same Minister when operating in the field of industrial legislation. In that respect I think the suggested select committee might do effective work, especially by giving attention to the aspect of premiums which I have just mentioned. Where the worker has his wages increased as the result of overtime, the risk is definitely increased. Investigations have shown that in a great many industries the accident rate rises as the day advances. Where overtime is worked regularly the risks are higher, and in that case an increased premium would be justified. It may possibly occur that the degree of efficiency of a tired worker would prove to be uneconomical for

the employer. Then there is a case for a rise in premiums.

As regards the medical committee, I agree with the powers proposed to be given to the committee; but I consider a committee of five unnecessarily large. Personally I would support the idea of a judge or a stipendiary magistrate with two medical men, one of these representing the Government. Under those conditions there would be a committee that could check the activities of the few offenders, who would know that they would be up against two medical men whose opinions carried weight.

A question has been raised as to whether the travelling clause applies in the case of a man travelling from his home to a doctor or a hospital for attention. Undoubtedly where a man is in need of special attention, such as that of an eye specialist, the clause would be highly useful. I also support the idea of increased hospital charges, because costs have risen especially in the country and it is only right that payment should increase with the cost of the treatment administered. From that angle I intend to give my support to the Bill, but I consider that the points I have raised might well be dealt with by the Minister in the course of his reply. I rather support the idea of referring the Bill to a select committee as has been suggested, because there are things which a select committee might possibly bring out and which at present are rather obscure. I support the Bill.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [8.52]: I intend to support the Bill, hoping that it will be amended in Committee. For many years I have claimed that in this State we have approached workers' compensation from the wrong angle. I claimed then, and I claim now, that we should pay the injured worker a greater percentage of his wages. I think half-wages are paid as a rule. I suggest that two-thirds should be paid, the worker to pay his own doctor. That is a much more equitable arrangement than the existing one, because in those circumstances the issue is between the doctor and the patient who wants to recover as quickly as he can, whereas the third party, the insurance company, does not enter into the matter to the same extent as at present.

As regard the differences in payment of doctors in the respective States, I have not

been supplied with information from Queensland, but I have sufficient data from the other States. In South Australia there is no payment at all to the doctor. In New Zealand there is a payment of £1 to the doctor; in Victoria, £26 5s.; in New South Wales, £25 and another £25 to the hospital. In Western Australia the payment is £100 to the doctor, an amount which has been and is absurd and has caused most of the trouble in connection with workers' compensation here. If members cared to look up "Hansard" of 1924, 17 years ago, when important amendments were made in the Workers' Compensation Act, they would see that we had Dr. Saw in the House then. Dr. Saw used to be referred to by Sir Edward Wittenoom as an academic man, a bookish man who did not know anything about the world and its complexities. Dr. Saw did more to humanise that workers' compensation measure than any other member of the House; but when it came to payment of doctors he agreed with me that there were black sheep in the medical profession just as in every other profession. He agreed that some doctors made a welter of the £100 provision. They did, they have done so, and they will continue to do so under this Bill. Strange to say, in December of 1924, when the battle was raging in this House, I moved to reduce the amount of £100 to £50, and Dr. Saw supported me. A division resulted in nine for and nine against my amendment, and the decision was rightly given against me, according to parliamentary procedure. Only 18 members took part in that division. Two members were paired. The then President, Sir Edward Wittenoom, did not vote; and our President of today, Sir John Kirwan, was then Chairman of Committees. Eight members were absent—six of our members, and two of the Government supporters.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Is this not a non-party House?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: This is a House which supports decent legislation, equitable legislation. I shall never forget that 1924 session. I do not know what happened to this Chamber; I do not know whether it was a case of "Springtime in the Rockies" or what it was, but members could not be induced to attend. In most of the divisions during that session not more than 20 members were present, out of a House of

30. The £100 provision was adopted in opposition to what Dr. Saw and I said about the medical profession. I went so far as to point out that in connection with a life assurance company of which I was a director, New Zealand doctors had given first-class health certificates to men whom they had never seen. That is a pretty tough thing, doctors combining with go-getters against the life assurance companies. The matter was taken up by the B.M.A. Some of the doctors in question were fired out of the profession, and others had to compensate the companies for the insurance risks they had to shoulder as a result of the misconduct of the doctors. The allowance of £100 was given in the face of that.

I venture to suggest that that £100 provision in this State has cost an amount not calculable. It needs to be calculated from the standpoint that since 1924 every man and woman has come under the Workers' Compensation Act; every such person has had to be covered by the insurance companies to the extent of £50 extra. I point out that whether they paid the doctor the £100 or not, they had to provide cover for that amount, and the employer had to pay the premium on the £100. If members will work out what that increase, coupled with the increase in wages, has cost industry in this country, they will find it to be an alarming amount.

What is the position here compared with that in the Eastern States? In South Australia the farmer pays one-third of the amount for insurance that the farmer in Western Australia pays; in New Zealand he pays three-tenths of the amount; in Victoria one half, and in New South Wales, two-thirds. In South Australia the pastoralist pays three-eighths of the amount paid by the Western Australian pastoralist; in New Zealand, three-eighths; in Victoria, one-half, and in New South Wales, five-sixths. This is a country of primary products that have to be sold on the world's markets, and we are loaded to this extent under the Workers' Compensation Act! There is no reason why we should be.

The Bill only perpetuates the existing charges and leaves the doctors to work out that £100 amongst themselves as best they can. The raising of the amount from £400 to £600 a year will be another tax on industry, and a further tax will be inflicted by the appointment of a committee at a

remuneration yet to be fixed. The system of payment appears to be this: The Treasurer pays two doctors sitting on the committee and two laymen. I do not know whether the laymen will be friends of one party or whether their allegiance will be divided. In any event, they will be substantially remunerated and that will add to the cost of workers' compensation. How the committee suggestion will work out I do not know.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: There should not be any payment for the committee.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Ultimately the cost will have to be met by the insurance companies, including, I presume, the State Government Insurance Office, which will pay its quota. According to Mr. Seddon, the State Office will pay 90 per cent. of the amount. The fact remains that the cost will be a charge on industry and all the House knows is that it will be a charge fixed by the Government at a later date. I do not see why a man receiving from £8 to £10 a week should not take out a policy of his own. There is too much done for everybody now. Nobody appears to want to do anything for himself. I find that men in certain trades can obtain cover for accident amounting to £750 for about 9d. a week. They can have cover for individual parts of the body—such as arms, legs, or eyes, as the case may be—a comprehensive cover, for the payment of 2s. 6d. a week.

After a man has been insured for five years without accident, he is entitled to one year's free insurance. However, the doctor is kept out of this proposal, and that is the rub! The transaction is between the person insuring and the insurance company which deals with the matter. A policy covering accident and disease, with an amount of £500 payable, can be secured for premiums ranging from 1s. 9d. to 4s. 6d. per week according to the cover required. From 60 to 70 diseases, as well as accidents, are covered. For the loss of two limbs or two eyes £500 is payable. As much as £1,000 can be secured if the insured person cares to pay twice as much per week. If he loses one limb and one eye, £250 is payable, and in the event of accident or sickness £5 per week is payable for 52 weeks. Should not a man receiving a salary of from £10 to £12 a week do something in the way of insuring his own life? These

policies give cover 24 hours a day for 365 days a year. Must industry be made to pay for everything, especially in this country where we depend on primary products that have to be sold on the world's markets?

It is difficult to understand this Bill being introduced in another place by the Minister for Labour who has been making such a great fight for the establishment of secondary industries in this State. There is nothing logical about the business. Everybody expected that the Bill would put secondary industries on the same basis as similar industries in the Eastern States, but it is really designed—either knowingly or without proper consideration—to load industry to a greater extent than ever before.

I do not hold any brief for doctors. I keep as far away from them as I can. The best treatment I ever had was 40 years ago when they wanted to operate on me in Fremantle for a floating kidney. I went to Rotorua in New Zealand where they had a doctor who was paid a fixed sum by the New Zealand Government and anything paid over and above that by the patient went to New Zealand charities. I was there for six weeks and saw the doctor only once a fortnight, but he told me what to do. He said the trouble was not internal, but muscular. I saw him three times and it cost me half a guinea each fortnight, and one and a half guineas went to New Zealand charities. That is the place to go to be cured. I admit that there is a great percentage of good doctors in this State that would not visit an injured patient more often than necessary, but there are many who have been fleecing the industries of this country for the last 17 years. Unfortunately the Bill does not deal with that aspect. The proper way to deal with it would be to cut down the amount to be paid for medical expenses and to pay the patient a greater percentage and let him deal with the medical officer himself.

I am told that there has not been an important amendment of the Medical Act for 47 years. One or two minor amendments have been made. There was a paltry amendment last year to permit refugee doctors to practise and another was made dealing with cases to be tried by a coroner. But there has been no major amendment of the Medical Act for 47 years. The query has been put: What has the medical pro-

fession done to deal with practitioners guilty of misdemeanours? I am told that a doctor can be a drunkard, a drug fiend or a scoundrel of any kind, but unless he commits an indictable offence and is convicted, the medical fraternity cannot deal with him under the Act. If that is true—and one of our good doctors told me it is—it is time that the position was straightened out.

I proposed to have something to say about bringing contractors under the Act but I found when I analysed the provision that it was not as bad as it had appeared. Boiled down, I think the position is that if I engaged a contractor to erect a fence or clear land for me, I would be responsible for insuring him, but if he employed men to help him I would not be responsible either for him or for the men.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: You would be, under the Bill.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I am advised I would not be.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Yes, you would be responsible; there is no doubt about that.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: That matter was looked into closely today and I was advised I would not be. If I am wrong, I would like to point out the position with which farmers, agriculturists and pastoralists out-back will be faced. They will have no control over contractors. A contract may be made in Perth. A man may go out hundreds of miles to erect a fence. Nobody would know how many men he employed or whether, in the event of an accident, the trouble occurred while they were employed on the fence or kangaroo shooting. I speak with experience on this matter.

In 1916, when the timber workers were thrown out of employment, the late Mr. Peter O'Loughlin, a former member of the Legislative Assembly, came to me and said, "Can you find work for my men?" I told him I would, and the next morning 20 men arrived at my office. I told them I wanted 3,000 acres chopped and ringed 300 miles north of Perth. I said, "I cannot make a contract with 20 of you. Select three of your number and I will make a contract with them and you can carry out the contract amongst yourselves." All went well until one day a man turned up at the station with a spring cart in which was a mattress with a man laid out on it. They said he had been swinging an axe and they

thought that in doing so he had knocked his eye out. He went to Fremantle and never came back. What really happened was that one of three men, a chap called Clossy, was a prizefighter, and he tried to bully the team. The dispute ended in a free fight. The pugilist nearly killed the man who was brought back in the cart. If I, as the owner of the station, had been responsible for the insurance on those men and believed the story that the injuries resulted from an accident and not from the free fight, I would have had to pay. I am advised that my position today is not so, according to the provisions of the Bill. However, I would like that point cleared up.

I heard interjections to the effect that I am not right in the interpretation I have presented to the House. If I am wrong, let members imagine the position that would arise at Port Hedland, a thousand miles north of the city. There thousands of miles of fencing have been washed away. Some of it can be found; some is lost altogether. Presumably contracts will be let in Perth and men will be sent North to reconstruct the fence or to build a new one. If the station owner is to be responsible for the insurance of men he may never have seen and who have never come under his control, the position will be serious in the pastoral industry. I hope my interpretation, which I am assured is correct, will prove to be right. Otherwise we may be confronted with confusion worse confounded.

I return to the point that if we could only get rid of the doctors and the provision for £100 compensation, we would secure the benefit of much cheaper insurance. I do not care what percentage of a man's wages may be paid to him if he is injured. Even if he were to be paid two-thirds of his normal income, he would be only too anxious to revert to full pay as soon as possible. It is a certainty that he will not be allowed to return to work if the doctor can hang on to him and work off the £100. That is what we must avoid. I support the second reading of the Bill and am not inclined to favour its reference to a select committee. The measure is very simple and involves only three or four principles. They are such that this House can unravel and place on a proper basis without the necessity of a select committee. Workers' compensation has cost the industries of Western Australia an enormous amount during the

last 17 years and my principal objection to the Bill is that it perpetuates an existing evil, although it does suggest a way of putting some doctors in the place to which I respectfully suggest they should have been relegated many years ago.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East) [9.19]: I support the Bill and was glad to hear Mr. Holmes indicate his opposition to the suggestion that it should be referred to a select committee. The Bill deals with only four or five principles and the House is competent to deal with them without necessitating the trouble and delay involved in referring it to a select committee. The suggestion to extend the definition of "worker" to cover those who earn up to £600 is excellent and I hope that the House will at least agree to an extension to £525 which, I understand, is the highest rate prevailing in Australia.

Hon. J. M. Drew: No, the highest amount is £550.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I see no reason why we should not fall into line.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: And keep up our reputation for being the highest.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: This is a wonderfully good piece of legislation despite certain obvious weaknesses, and we should continue to improve the Act to the best of our ability.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Never mind what may be the effect upon industry.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: The more covered by insurance, the better it will be for the community generally in the long run. I hope the time will come before long when all workers, irrespective of what remuneration they receive, will be covered by a scheme of workers' compensation insurance. I hope the time will not be long deferred when all business people and others will establish some form of compulsory insurance covering their employees. There is merit in the argument that the man in receipt of £9 or £10 a week should be careful regarding his future and take out a policy to protect himself. Unfortunately, human nature is such that a large percentage of such individuals omits to adopt that safeguard, with the result that not only he but those depending upon him suffer. The legislation suggests one shortcoming that

impresses itself on me and that is that although men in receipt of £9 to £10 a week are to be covered, no provision is included in the Bill to increase the rate payable to such workers during their periods of incapacity. The maximum rate provided in the First Schedule for a man who is injured is £3 10s. per week. That rate was fixed years ago when on the goldfields the basic wage was about £4 a week, whereas now it is £5 5s. 7d. I contend that if years ago £3 10s. was an adequate rate to fix, present-day conditions require a review of that amount. Although we may ensure by the passing of the Bill that a miner or a munition worker who earns £9 or £10 a week will receive compensation in the event of injury, he will not be able to receive more than £3 10s. a week during incapacity. That point should receive attention.

I agree to a large extent with the remarks by Mr. Holmes regarding doctors and the high cost of workers' compensation insurance largely arising out of the provision for £100. I cannot see any better means of overcoming the trouble than by the appointment of the proposed committee. Though the great majority of doctors are honourable in their actions, every member of this House has knowledge of excessive charges in connection with workers' compensation cases. To me it has always seemed a strange point of view that if someone is injured, say, by the driver of a motor car, the first query raised is, "Is this man insured?" If the individual is insured, then every effort is made to secure the last penny it is possible to obtain. Quite a different attitude is adopted if those concerned find that the individual has to meet the liability himself. The attitude of some doctors seems to be: "This is an insurance case and we are sure of our money. Here is an opportunity to recoup ourselves for a lot of the honorary work we have to do." In my opinion the appointment of the suggested committee will have a disciplinary effect. As Mr. Holmes suggested, it may mean added expense but I am afraid that cannot be avoided. The change will not affect the good doctors who have nothing to be afraid of, but it will apply the brake to the activities of those who have abused the provisions of the Act in the past. I congratulate the Government upon the introduction of this legislation and

I hope the Minister will give some consideration to the point I have raised regarding weekly payments.

On motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [9.28]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday the 7th October.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.29 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 1st October, 1941.

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

QUESTION—BULK WHEAT.

Albany Terminals and Zone Rates.

Mr. WATTS asked the Premier: 1, Is it the intention of the Government to ensure that bulk wheat terminals are provided at Albany, as at other ports? 2, If not, is it intended to charge, as appears from a recent statement by him published in the Press, the higher grain rate on wheat grown in the Albany zone which has to be railed to other ports for shipment? 3, If the answer to question No. 2 is in the affirmative, how does the Government justify such a procedure as a fair one?