

mentation has been made to the Government to permit the Oddfellows to sell the home, and conditionally earmark the money received from the sale for benevolent purposes, and to assist in the keeping of orphans and widows of members of the Oddfellows. The land has been valued recently at about £1,600. The report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies is such that he wholeheartedly endorses the proposal that as the present system of supporting the orphans is uneconomical, it would be better to invest the money as indicated in the Bill. It will be noticed that 75 per cent. of the proceeds of the sale will be devoted to assisting orphans, or part orphans, of members of the society, and that the remaining 25 per cent. shall be paid into a fund for the Grand Lodge to assist aged members. In this clause will be found not only provision to enable the society to sell the property, but conditions are set out dealing with the manner in which the money shall be invested and the proceeds handled. There is nothing contentious in the Bill. All of the reserves dealt with have been throughout the year inquired into so that we have reached the stage where Parliamentary sanction is needed to make further action possible in the interests of those for whom the reserves are being excised, or in connection with which they shall revert to the Crown for other purposes.

On motion by Mr. Thorn, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 10.37 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Tuesday, 28th November, 1939.*

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

### BILL—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by the Chief Secretary and read a first time.

### BILLS (3)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Traffic Act Amendment (No. 1).
- 2, State Government Insurance Office Act Amendment.

Returned to the Assembly with amendments.

- 3, Road Districts Act Amendment (No. 2).  
Transmitted to the Assembly.

### BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

#### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 23rd November.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West—in reply) [4.43]: There is no need for me to spend a great deal of time replying to the debate on this Bill. A few questions were asked, however, and to the more important of them I should like to reply, and particularly to those asked by Mr. Thomson. The hon. members raised the question of private surveyors being employed to carry out certain surveys which might be necessary to enable portions of land to be excised. I think I replied to him by interjection that the department does employ private surveyors from time to time. I

understand that the actual provision is that the department engages contract surveyors when it is not economical to send staff surveyors to do the work. The surveyors so employed must be licensed. Mr. Thomson also raised the question of pastoral leases being limited to 1,000,000 acres. He suggested that the penalty provided by the Act was rather severe, and would create hardship for certain people. The whole matter is covered by Section 139 of the Act, which provides that that penalty shall not apply to an executor, administrator or trustee in respect of any pastoral land held in that capacity except to such extent as such executor, administrator or trustee is beneficially interested. The next section provides that twelve months shall be granted and a longer period if the Minister so desires, to allow a person coming within that category an opportunity to put the matter right. The points raised by the hon. member are already covered by the Act or by general practice.

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.

Clauses 1 to 11—agreed to.

Clause 12—Amendment of Section 101A:

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That after the word "drought" in line 2 of paragraph (a) of Subsection 1 of proposed new Section 101A, the words "cyclone or flood" be inserted.

When I introduced the Bill, I advised the House that there was a possibility of one or two amendments being introduced as the result of discussions that were taking place with the Pastoralists' Association, and the amendments appearing on the notice paper are the outcome of those discussions. The purpose of this is to provide that pastoralists who may suffer as a result of cyclones or floods shall be entitled to consideration in the same way as those suffering losses through drought.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Do you think a provision in respect of fire should be included?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The question of fire is purely a local matter. I do not know whether there is likely to be any fire of a far-reaching character.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: I had in mind the fires in Victoria last year.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The timber country here is far removed from the pastoral leases.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Your amendments are quite all right.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have no doubt the representatives of the pastoralists in this State have given consideration to matters of that kind. Another amendment on the notice paper covers a point which it was thought was covered previously, but was not so covered. From the point of view of those concerned, I think that amendment will put the matter right.

Hon. G. W. Miles: I thank the department for framing these amendments and the Chief Secretary for bringing them down. The pastoralists will appreciate the action taken, and I trust the amendments will be agreed to.

Amendment put and passed.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That after the word "drought" in paragraph (c) the words "cyclone or flood" be inserted.

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

Clauses 13 to 16—agreed to.

Clause 17—Amendment of Section 113:

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That the following be inserted to stand as paragraph (f):—"By adding at the end of the section a new subsection as follows:—

(11) (a) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in this section, any person, who at the commencement of this subsection has, consistently with the provisions of this Act as in force prior to the commencement of this subsection, already acquired, or become beneficially interested in (either one or the other or both) an aggregate area of pastoral land in excess of one million acres, may continue to hold or be beneficially interested in such area of pastoral land, but shall not be entitled to acquire or become beneficially interested in any other pastoral land until his holdings of and beneficial interest in pastoral land as at the commencement of this subsection have been so reduced as to entitle him in accordance with subsection (2a) of this section to acquire or become beneficially interested in other pastoral land.

(b) Where any person referred to in paragraph (a) hereof, acquires or becomes beneficially interested in pastoral land contrary

to the provisions of the said paragraph (a), such person shall forfeit and pay to the Crown a sum of five pounds for every day or part of a day during which he continues so to contravene the provisions of paragraph (a) hereof."

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

Clauses 18 to 20, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments, and the report adopted.

## **BILL—BREAD ACT AMENDMENT.**

*In Committee—Progress arrested.*

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill:

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Repeal and new sections: Bakehouses to be licensed:

Hon. A. THOMSON: I should like to hear from the Honorary Minister why the proposal that bakehouses shall be licensed has been brought down. Since the House last met I have made inquiries and cannot find that anybody wants that sort of thing enforced. The effect of the clause will be to make the baking trade a close preserve, and put it on a par with the liquor trade.

Hon. H. Seddon: And the newsagents, who have close districts.

Hon. A. THOMSON: But they are controlled by the newspapers. I should be glad of an explanation from the Honorary Minister.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am surprised at Mr. Thomson's remarks. Bakers have been licensed ever since this class of legislation was passed. Far from doing what the hon. member suggests, the Bill will benefit the consumers as well as the bakers.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Which bakers?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Waste must be avoided. The price of bread is fixed by the board, and the price is to a large extent determined by costs. Every small baker who unnecessarily takes part in the trade does something to increase the cost of bread.

Hon. H. Seddon: How can that increase the price of bread?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Suppose that in some country towns three bakers are operating and each is making a respectable living—

Hon. H. Seddon: The price of bread is fixed from time to time.

The HONORARY MINISTER: If master bakers can show that for one reason or another their costs have risen, the board may permit an increase in the price of bread. Suppose there are three bakers and another man blows in, then we can assume that while three men can get a decent living according to the Australian standard, four men can not. This will be more marked in a small place that may now be served by one baker. When an application is made to a magistrate, evidence will be taken and the whole position will be investigated. As things are, it does not pay a journeyman baker to try to establish himself as a master baker.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: If the Bill passes he never will.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I pointed out in the course of my second reading speech that here we have one baker to 1,555 people, while Adelaide has one to every 2,800, and Melbourne one to 4,310.

Hon. V. Hamersley: This Bill will create a monopoly.

The HONORARY MINISTER: There will not be any fear of that because the matter will be in the hands of a magistrate, who will determine the position on the evidence brought forward. If there is no opposition the license will be granted.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Do we protect all business people in this way?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am not worrying about other businesses. What we aim at can only be done by restricting the number of licenses.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I recognise what an abortion this Bill is.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member is the only one who does so. The request contained in the clause is reasonable and will not involve anyone in hardship. The stipendiary magistrate will have full control.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: You will be giving the magistrates a lot of work.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Not at all. We must insist on bread of a high standard, and its being made in hygienic factories.

Hon. J. Nicholson: The existing law provides for all that.

The HONORARY MINISTER: But the trade is threatened at present by foreigners.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: Then the foreigner is the nigger in the woodpile.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Foreigners do not observe our high standard of morals. The amendment is important and all over Australia it has been considered an opportune time to take this step.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Seeing that the price of bread is fixed in a particular town, I cannot see anything in the argument that the starting of another bakery will affect the price to the public. If the number of bakers in proportion to the population is restricted, those bakers will have a reasonable standard of living. The Labour Party has always been against monopolies. Here is a Bill seeking to establish a monopoly in the baking trade, and as Mr. Hall said, if it is a good thing, why not extend the principle to the butcher and the grocer. If a man wants to start a bakery in a town he will have to apply to the magistrate, and the magistrate will advise those interested. The first thing that will happen will be that an objection will be lodged against anyone wanting to start a bakery in competition with any that may be existing. If, on the other hand, it is found that owing to the unholy alliance between employer and employee an application can be made for an increase in the price of bread, that application can be made and there will then be room for the public to be fleeced.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Minister's desire is to eliminate waste. I have not quoted from the Bible for a long time, but I know there is something in it about taking the beam out of your own eye before you look for the mote in the other person's eye. If the Government paid attention to the waste that is going on in the departments and left the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker alone, some progress would be made. The bread business seems to be everlastingly cropping up here. It may be because the Minister knows something about the trade. In this State everything delivered at the door is weighed, but when it comes to bread we are not entitled to have that weighed. We are told that the Eastern States have followed our example. I do not know whether that is so or not, but the one commodity that is delivered at the house and about the weight of which, no one knows anything, is bread. The Minister also talked about eliminating

competition. Is that not a joke? Did his Government not introduce trolley buses to compete against the railways? Does he call that eliminating competition? The whole thing is absurd. I have already indicated that the day is not far distant when a receiver will be put in by the Commonwealth. Indeed, if we ask for any more loan money, that will soon happen. We have the stand taken by the Minister that men do not want to start bakers' shops, that they would prefer to work for an employer. What is going to happen? The community will awake to the fact that all will be employees and that there will be no employers. That really amounts to what the Minister said. When we have reached the stage that all will be employees and no one will control the baking industry, there will be very dear bread, and bad bread too. I hope that before long someone will move you, Mr. Chairman, out of the Chair.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I should like to know from the Minister whether bakers are licensed at the present time. I believe they are. If the clause becomes law, however, licenses will automatically be cancelled. Is not that so?

The Honorary Minister: No.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I cannot understand what this paragraph in the clause means—

No baker (as defined in relation to employers) shall use or occupy any bakehouse as a bakehouse unless and until such bakehouse is licensed under the provisions of this or the next succeeding section.

That paragraph deals with bakehouses already licensed. What arrangements are being made for renewals? Here is the most extraordinary thing I have ever found in a Bill brought before Parliament. Subsection (2) of proposed new Section 3C reads—

Upon receipt by the Chief Inspector of any objection or objections, the matter shall forthwith be referred to the nearest stipendiary magistrate who, after having heard the evidence from such parties as may desire to appear, and having regard to the requirements of the district, and with the advice of the Wheat Products Prices Committee constituted under the Wheat Products (Prices Fixation) Act, 1938, or such other person as the magistrate may consider competent to give necessary information or advice . . . . .

After the magistrate has heard evidence, he may say, "Now I will see my friend down the street and get his advice."

The Honorary Minister: That is not the correct interpretation.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: But the subsection says "or such other person as the magistrate may consider competent to give necessary information or advice."

The Honorary Minister: Evidence.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The Bill does not use the word "evidence".

The Chief Secretary: Should not the magistrate have an opportunity to inform himself on a technical matter?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The magistrate must give a decision. It was laid down by a former Attorney-General that a magistrate has no right in any circumstances even to consult the Crown Law officials before giving a decision on a matter raised before him. The magistrate is entirely independent. He cannot go around and ask every Tom, Dick and Harry for advice.

The Honorary Minister: He would not do that.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Then why put it in the Bill? Let the Bill be drawn properly and then let us consider it.

The HONORARY MINISTER: In connection with every Bill brought forward this session we have had a wordy battle by the legal authorities in this Chamber. On numerous occasions Bills have been adjourned so that we might obtain legal advice: and such advice has always proved the hon. member to be wrong. I think he is wrong on this occasion.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: His opinion receives much consideration.

The HONORARY MINISTER: He is very seldom right in this Chamber. He seems to take a delight in criticising the Parliamentary Draftsman, which from a trade union point of view is very bad form. I would not do anything like that.

Members: No!

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: This is the last Bill that I will criticise.

The HONORARY MINISTER: If the hon. member were always right I would follow him; but my experience this session is that he has always been wrong. I advise members to ignore his opinions. The expert witness would be Dr. Sutton, if the magistrate required expert assistance. The hon. member knows he is leading the Committee off the trail. I am not going to enter into a legal argument with him. The object

of this paragraph is to give every opportunity for witnesses to give evidence for or against the granting of a license.

Hon. L. Craig: Dr. Sutton may be an expert on wheat products, but not necessarily on bread.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Dr. Sutton has expert knowledge of wheat, flour and bread.

Hon. L. Craig: The making of bread, not selling it.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Suppose a baker started business in a town where two bakers were already carrying on business, that would mean increasing the overhead costs by one-third. It would then be competent for a person to make application to the Wheat Products Prices Committee. The more bakers we have, the more duplication there is, and that is reflected in the increased cost of bread.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: When competition is eliminated, quality is reduced. That is what happened in the milk business.

The HONORARY MINISTER: This Bill does not grant a monopoly. It is designed to avoid unnecessary overlapping and cost of distribution, and that must be to the benefit of the consumer, the baker and the worker.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You did not protect the Metro. buses.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That matter has nothing to do with bread.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The Honorary Minister went out of his way to attack me as to my attitude in this House on various measures; but his memory is extremely short or he is entirely untruthful. I went out of my way to assist him in connection with the Traffic Act. I prepared four pages of foolscap matter which I discussed with the Solicitor General. The Honorary Minister not only accepted it, but put it on the notice paper in his own name. The majority of my suggestions were adopted by the House.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! That is giving away State secrets.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The Honorary Minister should not attack a member who is doing his duty by assisting him. What the Minister is contending cannot be read into the Bill. I move—

That the Chairman do now leave the Chair.

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

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

**AYES.**

Hon. E. H. Angelo  
Hon. C. F. Baxter  
Hon. L. B. Bolton  
Hon. L. Craig  
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt  
Hon. E. H. H. Hall  
Hon. V. Hamersley  
Hon. J. J. Holmes

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane  
Hon. W. J. Mann  
Hon. J. Nicholson  
Hon. H. S. W. Parker  
Hon. A. Thomson  
Hon. H. Tuckey  
Hon. G. W. Miles  
(Teller.)

**NOES**

Hon. J. M. Drew  
Hon. G. Fraser  
Hon. E. H. Gray  
Hon. E. M. Heenan  
Hon. W. H. Kitson

Hon. T. Moore  
Hon. H. Seddon  
Hon. C. H. Wittenoom  
Hon. G. B. Wood  
Hon. W. R. Hall  
(Teller.)

Motion thus passed.

The Chairman accordingly left the Chair and the Bill lapsed.

## RESOLUTION—STATE FORESTS.

### *To Revoke Dedication.*

Message from the Assembly received requesting concurrence in the following resolution:—

That the proposal for the partial revocation of State Forests Nos. 4, 14, 22, 23, 24, 29, 37, 38 and 51, laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly by command of His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor on the twenty-third day of November, 1939, be carried out.

## BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Bills of Sales Act Amendment (Hon. E. M. Heenan in charge).
- 2, Plant Diseases (Registration Fees) (No. 2).

Received from the Assembly.

- 3, Police Benefit Fund Abolition.

## BILLS (2)—ASSEMBLY'S MESSAGES.

Messages from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to the amendments made by the Council in the following Bills:—

- 1, Builders' Registration.
- 2, Income Tax (Rates for Deduction).

## BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

### *Second Reading—Defeated.*

Debate resumed from the 16th November.

**HON. C. F. BAXTER** (East) [5.36]:

This Bill seeks to divert into Government revenue the proceeds of a tax that is now imposed upon motorists and motor vehicles to improve the roadways. The excuse is that so much money has been spent out of loan funds that the Government must be recouped by taking into Consolidated Revenue the proceeds of a special fund contributed by motorists for a special purpose. Were it not for this special fund, the fact remains that a similar amount of money would have been spent on main roads, not alone to provide better roads but also to provide work for the unemployed. Road construction is really the chief avenue of work for the unemployed. This proposal is alarming. The Government intends to take these funds into revenue, and thus create a new Government tax on all motorists.

If members carry their minds back to 1937, they will recall that I dealt with this question and pointed out that more money was accruing from the traffic fees than could be used in the metropolitan area. I proceeded to say that in two or three years an adjustment would have to be made, and I suggested an adjustment in the direction of using a portion of the fees for main roads in the country, of which city people make far more use than do the residents of the country. The Chief Secretary and the Commissioner of Main Roads put up a case to show that the whole of the funds for many years would be needed for the metropolitan area. Only two years have elapsed since I made that suggestion, and yet today we have the Government proposing to take these funds into revenue, provided Parliament approves. After all, there are only 150 miles of main roads in the metropolitan area.

An interesting point is the statement by the Government that if Parliament agrees to the transfer of the traffic fees to Consolidated Revenue, the local authorities will not suffer, but will receive a like amount. If that is so, what is the justification for taking this money into revenue? The Government has not made out a case in favour of the Bill. This House must protect the local governing authorities—those honorary bodies that are doing their utmost year in and year out for

the ratepayers of their districts. If Parliament agrees to the transfer of these traffic fees, as proposed, the local authorities must suffer in the near future.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Unless they go, cap in hand, to the Government for a subsidy.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: That is so; but judging by the way the finances are drifting, the Government will not be in a position to grant a subsidy. In face of the present rate of Government expenditure. I am not prepared to permit the Government to reach out for revenue in all possible directions, taking it without parliamentary authority where that can be done, and seeking approval where it thinks Parliament might be influenced. We should object to action of this kind, especially until we get reasonable administration from the Government. The cost of government is terrific. The figures for the first four months of the current financial year show an increase of £2,000,000 compared with the same period six years ago, at which time Labour, as at present, was in office. A few weeks ago we were told, in answer to a question, that there are 553 motor vehicles belonging to the Government. If a proper inquiry were instituted into the Government motor service and telephone service, it would be found that Government motors are used for private purposes and that this is one direction in which a saving could be made. The use of Government vehicles for private purposes has been carried to the limit.

The Government has no case at all to justify the transfer of these fees to revenue in order to meet road expenditure from loan funds. I shall certainly not assist the Government in a matter of this kind until it shows signs of settling down to sound and reasonable financing, and at present it certainly falls far short of that. The present rate of expenditure by the Government cannot continue much longer, but it might be continued a little longer if we approve of the transfer of these funds. I shall therefore oppose the second reading.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [5.43]: My remarks on this Bill will be brief. I shall not enter into the merits of the measure, though it has some. I wish to point out that the object of the Bill has not been sufficiently promulgated throughout the State to enable local authorities to form a proper

judgment. The road boards, other than those in the metropolitan area, are not sufficiently conversant with the objects of the Bill to enable them to arrive at a sound decision. I am opposing the Bill because every road board in the South Province has written requesting me to do so—Phillips River, Westonia, Coolgardie, Esperance and Yilgarn-Coolgardie. The Conference of Goldfields Local Governing Bodies has also written me to the same effect. That conference comprised the Kalgoorlie Road Board, the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council, the Boulder Municipal Council, the Coolgardie Road Board and, I believe, the Dundas Road Board. Further, the Local Government Association of Western Australia has written to me in the same sense, as have also the Perth City Council and the York Municipal Council. I personally am not much concerned otherwise than on behalf of the local bodies that have their centres of gravity in the South Province. Numerous letters against the Bill have reached me from these various bodies; but if I put on record the views expressed by the Conference of Goldfields Local Governing Bodies, that will suffice for all bodies of that nature in the South Province. I understand a similar letter has been addressed to all representatives of the North-East and South Provinces. The letter I have received reads:—

Conference of Goldfields Local Bodies.  
Town Hall, Kalgoorlie,  
24th November, 1939.

Hon. James Cornell, M.L.C..  
Parliament House, Perth.

Sir,

Traffic Fees.

At a meeting of the Conference of Goldfields Local Governing Bodies held on the 22nd instant, strong protests were entered in connection with the Bill now before Parliament, which proposes an amendment of the Traffic Act to provide that the money now allocated to local authorities should be paid into revenue, and that metropolitan local authorities shall receive an equivalent grant from the Petrol Tax Fund, to be expended on roads only.

Whilst the provisions of the Bill so far only affect metropolitan local authorities, my Conference view with alarm the passing of this Bill, whereby local authorities will lose their freedom in spending their own money.

The suggestion has been advanced that the provisions of the Bill may be extended to embrace local authorities who now collect their own traffic fees.

I am directed to inform you that the several bodies comprising this Conference are greatly alarmed at any suggestion of encroaching on its present traffic fees, which are spent in a general direction within the limits of the several Acts under which it functions.

Should the suggested action of the Government be brought into operation and an equivalent amount of money to the traffic fees be provided for road expenditure only, there is a grave possibility that the general rate would have to be increased to meet the several items of expenditure now met by traffic contributions.

My Conference is totally against the proposed Bill, and has directed me to request that you vote against the suggested changes becoming law, and thus protect local authorities from any interference in the freedom and liberty to spend its traffic fees as desired and within the limits of its own Acts.

It is also suggested that to ensure protection for local authorities to collect their own traffic fees, a proviso be made in the present Bill to definitely exclude those authorities from the provisions contained therein.

Your attention to this matter would be much appreciated by the Conference.

Yours faithfully,

H. A. Kingsbury,  
Secretary.

The proviso mentioned in the last paragraph but one applies, I presume, if the Bill goes into Committee. I should not regard it as flying in the face of Providence if you, Mr. President, and I supported the Bill; but there can be no question that the Conference of Goldfields Local Governing Bodies has clearly expressed what numerous local bodies throughout the State have at the back of their minds. In view of all the circumstances, I consider that we should subordinate our own views to those expressed by the local bodies. I shall vote against the second reading; and I hope that in the interim between this session and the next ensuing session of Parliament adequate steps will be taken to promulgate the prominent good features of the proposed change-over throughout the State, so that an effort may be made to disarm that very large number of local authorities at present violently opposed to the measure. You, Mr. President, and I know that with the probable exception of the Kalgoorlie Road Board out of the six road boards comprised in the South Province, had it not been for traffic fees and motor registration fees the other road boards would have had to close their doors.

Hon. A. Thomson: That applies to all country road boards.

Hon. J. CORNELL: It applies especially on the goldfields. Numerous farmers who were in the South Province have gone. Yilgarn has 26 local batteries within a radius of 70 miles of Southern Cross, and hon. members will be able to judge the number of motor vehicles carting to those batteries. We can also understand how afraid the local boards are of being deprived of their main sources of revenue. I vote against the Bill with considerable reluctance, because I realise that its passage would not affect the people of the South Province. However, those people have asked me to oppose the measure.

**HON. C. H. WITTENOOM** (South-East) [5.53]: Without any hesitation I oppose the second reading of the Bill. Like every other member, I have received a deal of correspondence from road boards within and without my Province. Every one of those communications takes the strongest exception to the Bill and urges opposition to it. Accordingly I shall oppose the second reading. No information whatever has been given as to whether local governing bodies in the country are to be affected by the measure. They fear the future. They are all right now, but are alarmed as to what may be in prospect. Western Australia's country road boards are doing excellent work throughout the State. No matter whether main roads are inspected all over Western Australia, or merely the more important of them are examined, they invariably prove to be excellent, as they ought to be, in view of the scattered nature of our good farming country and the long distances between areas of settlement. Very large sums of money indeed have been spent by various road boards, and they do not want the source of that money taken from them to be—as I may say—wasted. In time to come no doubt smaller amounts of money would do what is needed on the roads. At present country road boards collect the traffic fees, and when framing their estimates have a good idea what they will receive from that source. Those boards are perfectly satisfied with present conditions. The Government states that metropolitan local governing bodies will not be losers by the Bill. Those bodies are told that any



money they spend on roads will be recouped to them. If that is so, I do not know what is the object of the Bill. Quite unblushingly the Government tells us that the traffic fees are to be paid into Consolidated Revenue with a view to balancing the Budget, and also for the purpose of appeasing the Federal Grants Commission. That Commission has made various complaints that the expenditure of money in Western Australia is not quite correct, and has threatened to decrease our grant; so there is some force in that argument. There is no force whatever, though, in the argument that we should adopt this course because the Eastern States have done so. I shall oppose the measure, as urged by the country road boards. Many members of this Chamber have been road board members, and know the real position. They will agree with me. I believe, that any interference with those bodies is absolutely undesirable.

**HON. W. R. HALL** (North-East) [5.57]: I have an open mind regarding this Bill, and I wish to know definitely whether the Government, in the event of the measure being passed, will extend its operation outside the metropolitan area.

Hon. A. Thomson: That cannot be done under this Bill.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I am aware of that, but small road boards throughout Western Australia are worried whether the Government will want to extend the provisions of the measure at some future time. The small road boards mentioned by Mr. Cornell would not, in that case, be able to carry on. They could not administer their affairs unless the traffic fees were collected by them. I am convinced that the Kalgoorlie Road Board is the largest road board outside the metropolitan area, deriving as it does £8,000 annually from traffic fees and having a revenue of £23,000 all told. Without the £8,000 collected partly in January and February and partly in June and July of each year through traffic fees, that board would not be able to continue its work, nor could it frame estimates for future administration. The worrying part of the business as regards the metropolitan area is the periodical allocation of traffic fees. If some set amount were to be given to the road boards, that would get over the difficulty; but without such an allocation

the boards will not be able to continue their work. Let me also point out that only a proportion of the board's revenue is forthcoming from rates. We all realise the good work done by road boards throughout Western Australia, and therefore it is wrong to attempt to deprive them of such revenue as traffic fees at this stage. Still, I have an open mind on the subject, and desire to hear further debate on the Bill before deciding to vote either way. Members will agree that those who have a knowledge of the Government's intention regarding the allocation of the requisite funds, should make that information available. Then again, if the Government deprives the road boards of their proportion of the traffic fees and is not able to provide a like amount from other sources, the local authorities will be in a sorry plight, the effects of which will be felt throughout the State. No one wishes them to be placed in that position. The time is not opportune for action such as the Government proposes. I shall await the views of other members and further information from the Minister before I commit myself either to support or to vote against the second reading of the Bill.

**HON. A. THOMSON** (South-East) [6.1]: As an old road board member, I contend the move on the part of the Government to assume control of traffic fees that normally would be at the disposal of local authorities, amounts to the revival of an issue that has been fought at conferences of local governing authorities for many years past. When the late Mr. Alec McCallum was Minister for Works and the Federal Aid Roads Agreement was inaugurated, he suggested that the Government should take the traffic fees, and in support of his suggestion referred to the practice in the Eastern States. He promised the local authorities that the Government would treat them fairly and justly. As I understand the position, one of the reasons why the Government seeks to take the traffic fees from the local authorities in the metropolitan area, is that a large amount has been spent on the construction of roads from which no interest return has been received. Interest and sinking fund charges amounting to £143,000 have to be found on the loan expenditure on

road construction. If I may say so without being offensive, the Government has approached the problem in a very clumsy manner. If it is deemed necessary to comply with the wishes of the members of the Commonwealth Grants Commission, then the members of that body have assumed a great responsibility in causing the Government to endeavour to impose additional taxation upon the people. A statement has been made that Western Australia has lost £22,000 because the Government has not diverted the traffic fees to revenue as has been done in the other States. The Main Roads Act defines the proportional financial responsibilities in connection with the expenditure of loan funds on main roads. Practically the whole of the roads that have been constructed in the metropolitan area have been paid for by the motorists through the traffic fees imposed upon them. While the Government has to accept a certain liability regarding road construction throughout the country districts, it should be fair enough to realise that otherwise it would have been in sore straits to provide work for the unemployed. What is troubling the country road boards is that if Parliament passes legislation empowering the Government to take the traffic fees collected in the metropolitan area from the local authorities there, they cannot reasonably expect that they will not be similarly treated in due course. They fear that at some future date the Government will also take their traffic fees and not rest content with taking the metropolitan traffic fees only.

Hon. G. Fraser: You are afraid the disease will spread?

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes, I am afraid so.

The Chief Secretary: Would you go so far as to say it will spread?

Hon. A. THOMSON: No, not under the Bill now before the House. The fact remains that the Government, at some future date, may find another excuse for asking Parliament for an extension of the legislation, saying, "We are still not wholly complying with the requests of the Commonwealth Grants Commission, and we must secure more money." In that event, the Government might seek to deprive the country road boards of their traffic fees.

Hon. L. Craig: The Premier said it might be necessary at some future date.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That is so. I have 22 local authorities in my electorate.

Hon. H. Tuckey: And they look upon this as the thin end of the wedge.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Exactly, and they have asked me to oppose the Bill. If the Government had approached the local authorities and pointed out that, in view of the fact that it had expended so much loan money on road construction throughout the State, £143,000 had to be found to meet interest and sinking fund charges on the expenditure, and had suggested amending the Act to enable it to collect that money while making good the loss to the local authorities from other sources, I for one would have considered the request fairly reasonable. On the other hand, calmly to legislate to take away the traffic fees from the local authorities and absorb the funds into revenue, and then to seek to amend the Main Roads Act to provide that if a local authority spent £150 or £10,000 in its district, the Government could recoup that body by a like amount, is a totally different proposition. I do not think there is a road board in Western Australia that could administer its affairs under such conditions, because it would not know where it stood. Mr. W. R. Hall said he had an open mind regarding the Bill but wanted to know the intention of the Government. I believe I can tell him that the Government's intention is not to interfere with country road boards under the provisions of the Bill now before members, which applies solely to the traffic fees collected in the metropolitan area. The expenditure of the money in question has been put to excellent use. Not only has a large amount of work been provided for the unemployed, but it has made available to the public such thoroughfares as Stirling Highway, which is a credit to the State and to the ability of the constructional engineers. I believe the new Fremantle bridge is also being erected out of funds derived from the same source. Other roads and bridges are to be similarly dealt with. This goes to prove that despite the fact that the Government has to find £143,000 to meet interest and sinking fund charges, the traffic fees imposed upon motorists have, in effect, provided for

practically the whole of the road construction undertaken throughout the State.

The Chief Secretary: Not the whole of it.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I said "practically the whole" of it. If the statement that appeared in "Hansard" is correct, I do not think the Government has spent an undue amount, when we take into consideration that had not that road construction work been undertaken, the Government would have experienced difficulty in finding so much employment for so many men. The people in the country districts feel that if the metropolitan traffic fees are taken as the Government desires, there is a danger that they will suffer similarly in the future, and any refund will be an act of charity or good will. There is a saying that kissing goes by favour. Should the Minister be in control, he is only human. Possibly the member that is most persistent or most friendly will receive preferential treatment.

The Chief Secretary: Why make a statement like that? Surely an Act of Parliament is not an act of charity or goodwill.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes it is, in that the authority is vested in the Minister to say to a local authority, "You have expended a large amount of money, and I have the right to query that expenditure. In the opinion of the department it was not necessary." In earlier days when the Government provided grants to local authorities, conditions were laid down stipulating how the money was to be expended. There was every justification for that course because the State provided the funds. I fear a similar position may arise if the Bill be agreed to in its present form. I shall vote against the second reading of the Bill and also against another measure that is complementary. Like Mr. Cornell, I would be flying in the face of Providence if I voted in favour of the Bill, against the wishes of 22 local governing authorities in my electorate.

The Honorary Minister: Then they are your masters!

Hon. A. THOMSON: Just as some of your people are your masters.

The Honorary Minister: No fear, they are not!

Hon. J. Nicholson: Do the road boards you mention represent the major part of your province?

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes.

Hon. J. Nicholson: So they are able to gauge local feeling?

Hon. A. THOMSON: That is so. The 22 road boards are not necessarily my masters, for if, in the light of my many years of experience in the work of local government, I thought they were wrong, I should not hesitate to act accordingly. On the other hand, being acquainted with the conditions under which the local authorities work and with the results of their voluntary service in the rural areas, I would be a traitor to their interests if I did not support their wishes when I felt that they were right.

Hon. J. Nicholson: You are simply carrying out the wishes of your electors.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes, of the local authorities, and I make no apology in so doing. In my opinion the Minister has approached the matter from the wrong angle. If the local authorities had been informed that the Government, because of the expenditure of so much loan funds on road construction, had to find the necessary money to cover interest and sinking fund charges, and had been asked to agree to the deduction of a proportion of their traffic fees sufficient to cover those charges, I do not think they would have withheld assent. All the Government says is that it will take the traffic fees, and provided the local authorities undertake certain work, it will refund them the expenditure. I cannot see anything equitable in the proposal, and I oppose the second reading of the Bill.

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

HON. L. B. BOLTON (Metropolitan) [7.30]: Most of the previous speakers have explained how in their opinion this measure will apply to country road boards. Mr. Thomson, claimed that he represented 22 road boards. I am in the fortunate position of representing only one governing body in the city of Perth.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Also the Perth Road Board.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: Yes, perhaps I should stand corrected. I represent also just a little part of the Perth Road Board's area which comes within my province.

The Chief Secretary: And it has a good representative.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: Thank you; whether I am a good representative or not I will leave the other fellow to judge. One thing I claim is that I do what I consider to be the best for the people I repre-

sent and for the State as a whole. I want briefly to explain what effect the passing of this measure would have upon the Perth City Council. It would be very serious indeed for this reason: it is proposed that the local authorities should be entitled to receive grants from the petrol tax, representing an equivalent of their share of the motor license fees, on the production of certificates indicating that they had spent at least that amount on the maintenance and construction of roads in their district during the year. Over a period of years the Perth City Council has borrowed and spent an enormous sum of money with a view to putting the roads in its area in the wonderful condition they are in to-day. The council has to find the principal and interest on the money so borrowed and expended, and if this source of revenue—the traffic fees—is removed, it will be a serious matter for that body.

Prior to 1919 the City Council licensed all vehicles that were owned and used in the municipality. The whole of the fees received were paid into the City Council's account. Since the passing of the 1919 Traffic Act, all vehicles in the metropolitan area have been licensed by the Police Department and the license fees have been paid into the Metropolitan Traffic Trust Account. This revenue is charged with the cost of collection, as certified by the Minister, and 22½ per cent. of the balance is paid to the Main Roads Board for expenditure on works in the metropolitan area. The cost of carrying out certain works in the metropolitan area—which are set out in the Act—is charged against one-half of the net revenue. The other half, and the balance of the first half, are divided amongst the local authorities in the metropolitan area and the King's Park Board in such shares and proportions as the Minister shall determine. During the year ended the 30th June, 1938, £197,436 was the total amount received, including the balance from the previous year. Out of this sum £116,085 was paid to the local authorities, of which £26,830 went to the City of Perth.

The Perth City Council is apprehensive of the effect of the State Treasurer's proposal upon the finances of the city, as it would appear that in lieu of a definite statutory provision that the local authorities in the metropolitan area shall receive the balance of motor license fees collected in that

area, we may only expect to receive certain payments from petrol tax revenue paid to the State Government by the Federal authorities, which may or may not be equal to the sums formerly received, and so far there appears to be no guarantee of the permanency of such payments. In fact, under the Federal Act the payment of this revenue expires in 1947. What is likely to happen after that date? Further, if the war continues, may not the Federal authorities cease the payments before 1947? Why should the local authorities be asked to take this risk?

The Premier explained that he proposed to make grants from the petrol tax to the local authorities on the production of certificates that they had spent at least that amount on maintenance and construction of the roads in their districts during the year. The Perth City Council has borrowed large sums in the past for road construction and maintenance, with the result that all the roads of the city at the present time are in first-class condition. It would seem, however, that under the Treasurer's scheme the council would not receive any grant from petrol tax in respect of this expenditure, notwithstanding the fact that interest and sinking fund on these loans will be payable annually by the council for many years to come. This would be most unfair to the City Council. It should be pointed out that the amount of £26,830 received by the City of Perth in respect of traffic revenue last year is equal to a city rate of 4½d. in the pound. So that if as a result of the State Treasurer's proposal the city did not receive this amount of revenue, the city rates would have to be increased accordingly.

Hon. L. Craig: Subject to no repayment.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: Yes, but what I am attempting to demonstrate to the House is that the City Council may not be able to get something in place of the fees, because the Minister would require a certificate that the money had been spent on the maintenance of existing roads or the construction of new roads, and that, under present conditions, would be a difficult requirement for the City Council to meet. It will also be understood that for any reduction of £6,000 in the amount received the rates would have to be increased by one penny. I have no desire to delay the House. There is no doubt that if, as the representatives of

country road boards have indicated, the application of this measure will have a serious effect on those boards, the position of the City Council and other local governing authorities in the metropolitan area will be far more serious. All hon. members will agree that we have had excellent value for the money spent by the local authorities, including the Perth City Council, in the construction and maintenance of roads. Furthermore, the work that has been done by the Main Roads Board with the money from the petrol tax is something of which all of us should be extremely proud. As one who uses country roads frequently, I am more than satisfied with what has been done. I sincerely hope the Government will not in any way interfere with present conditions. I shall vote against the second reading of the Bill.

**HON. G. B. WOOD (East) [7.42]:** I represent, in the East Province, together with my colleagues, 35 local governing bodies, and I think I can say that at least two-thirds of them have sent me a letter protesting against the Bill. Of the 35 road boards, there are four or five in the metropolitan area that directly come under the measure. Those 35 local authorities represent a large body of public opinion in the country and the metropolitan area. As a member of a local governing body I view the proposed amendment to the Traffic Act with great alarm. The whole of our financial structure—I mean by that the financial structure of the local governing bodies—is wrapped up not only in rates, but in traffic fees also. Mr. W. R. Hall has mentioned the importance of those fees to the Kalgoorlie Road Board. In some of our country areas, particularly in the wheat lands, a still greater proportion of the income of the road boards is derived from the traffic fees and I do not know what would happen to those boards if the Government saw fit to deprive them of the traffic fees, either now or next year. There is not the slightest doubt that the petrol tax must be reduced in the near future.

**Hon. H. Seddon:** You mean the receipts?

**Hon. G. B. WOOD:** Yes, the receipts from the petrol tax must be reduced. The main points that have been stressed in support of this class of legislation is that

certain unproductive loan works have been permitted by the Government, that the Disabilities Commission has drawn attention to the expenditure of the traffic fees by this State, and that it is essential for the Government to balance its budget. I would like to see the Government balance its budget but not by this method. I can assure the House that the local governing bodies in my Province view this legislation with the greatest alarm and have been unanimous in canvassing the members representing them in Parliament to oppose the Bill. Whether or not these people are my masters—I think that was suggested during the debate—I intend to take some notice of the opinion expressed, and to oppose the Bill.

**Hon. G. Fraser:** Very often such opinions are expressed before Bills are sighted.

**Hon. G. B. WOOD:** I cannot think these people who have written to me know nothing about the Bill.

**Hon. A. Thomson:** They know what the results may be.

**Hon. G. B. WOOD:** I will not read extracts from more than two of the letters in my possession. The local authorities think this proposal is an indirect way of getting money that the Government should not have. Portion of the first letter reads as follows:—

At first glance, this appears to be a matter that does not affect country local authorities. However, further consideration shows that it is an infringement of the rights of some authorities, to which they are definitely opposed, and therefore it behoves all the local authorities to support them in that opposition. Again, it can quite easily be imagined that this proposed diversion of fees is a first step towards the central collection of all traffic fees and their absorption in Treasury funds. Paralysis of the general activities of country authorities would immediately follow, for there would be no freedom of action in the expenditure of these allegedly compensating grants. In fact, the very existence of many authorities would be in jeopardy, more especially those in the struggling districts where the collection of road rates is a very uncertain item.

I know that in some of the outback wheat areas the local authorities depend for their very existence on the traffic fees. Many farmers are not in a position to pay ordinary road rates.

Again, what an undignified spectacle it would be to have all local authorities applying for grants, vying with each other in the pressing of their respective claims with the

certain dissatisfaction with the results obtained. Such a state of affairs would be absolutely intolerable to men with any independence of mind, and more than likely would result in the deterioration and gradual extinction of all local authorities.

I have another letter, and though I do not agree with everything it contains, I will read it, to show the state of mind of people in the country. It is as follows:—

My board notes with alarm that the Government proposes to amend the Traffic Act to enable it to grab the fees collected in the metropolitan area, and reimburse the local authorities from the Federal Aid Roads Grant. This is clever, but unscrupulous, and while my board is not financially interested in this shady transaction, they fear that it points the way to the next step, the confiscation of the country local authorities' fees.

I do not hold with that, but that is as the letter came to me.

Hon. T. Moore: It shows how little these people know.

The Honorary Minister: From whom did that letter come?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I do not wish to mention names, but have no objection to laying the paper on the Table of the House. The communication continues—

I am directed to point out that the traffic fees form the largest part of our revenue, and any cut in them will spell disaster to us. It only needs one more step to place the Government in charge of the whole of the fees, and God help the country road boards when that takes place.

The fear is that this practice will be extended, as the Premier hinted it might be. My anxiety is lest this should be extended to the rural areas. I imagine there will be less petrol tax proceeds in the future, and how do we know that it will not be abolished when the agreement terminates in 1947? What is to prevent any Government that is hard up from increasing the traffic fees? This legislation will retard the efforts of country local authorities, who have been doing such a jolly good job at no expense to their ratepayers. I ask myself why they should be worried about these things? They are having a hard enough time already in handling their affairs on their existing means. I oppose the second reading.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I ask that the hon. member place the last letter he read on the Table of the House.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member will perhaps be good enough to comply with the request of the Chief Secretary.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I said I was prepared to lay the paper on the Table of the House.

The PRESIDENT: Perhaps the hon. member would hand the letter to the Clerk.

HON G. FRASER (West) [7.58]: This is one of the few occasions when I have my doubts about following my leader. I also am not in a position to say how I shall cast my vote.

Hon. L. Craig: What about the whip?

Hon. G. FRASER: There is no whip about it, unless it has been cracked over some of my friends opposite. If the Chief Secretary will give me an assurance on one or two points I shall, as usual, cast my vote on his side; but if he cannot satisfactorily answer my query, I shall record my vote against the Bill. The matters that are exercising my mind are these. The Chief Secretary stated that local governing bodies that have spent money on roads can be reimbursed for that expenditure. That is all right so far as the amounts that have been spent during the current year are concerned. Unfortunately there are local authorities that are not spending money this year, and, if this is the only way in which they can be reimbursed, they will have no reimbursement. Some members have said, "Quite right: if they do not spend the money they should not get it." A number of boards, instead of building roads and maintaining them out of current income, have raised a loan, and have gradually extended the roads and footpaths in their districts many years ahead of the ordinary procedure, and thus have refrained from keeping their districts back. There are one or two districts in my Province that come under that heading.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Does not the Government set them a bad example in that respect by spending loan moneys?

Hon. G. FRASER: This expenditure of loan moneys has given ratepayers facilities far ahead of the time when they would ordinarily expect to get them. Local authorities that have adopted this procedure would have spent the money and will not be entitled to reimbursement. Such people are due for consideration because they have been so progressive.

Hon. H. Seddon: Are the charges paid out of a loan rate or out of the traffic fees?

Hon. G. FRASER: Up to now I suppose the moneys received for traffic fees have been paid into ordinary revenue and have gone towards financing these special efforts.

Hon. H. Seddon: Is not a special rate struck to pay for the loan?

Hon. G. FRASER: Certain commitments have to be met on account of the loans, but how they are met I do not know.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: A rate has to be struck for every loan raised.

Hon. G. FRASER: Whether that is so or not, the fact remains that the local authority will not be reimbursed from traffic fees if the money has already been expended—as I understand it—or the ratepayers will have to pay higher rates in order to foot the bill. By means of the traffic fees, local authorities have been able to finance their undertakings in many directions on a low rate, whereas in future the ratepayers will have to meet the expenditure themselves. In the districts to which I have referred it seems there must be an increase in the rates if they are deprived of this money. I want to hear from the Chief Secretary that consideration will be given to the districts I have mentioned. One local authority raised £10,000 and completed all its road construction. It has had a reimbursement from traffic fees all down the years, but if this Bill is passed, it will get nothing.

The Honorary Minister: It will get maintenance.

Hon. G. FRASER: Very little maintenance is required in the case of bitumen roads. The people I speak of will undoubtedly be penalised unless some provision is made to cover their case. I refer particularly to two districts in my Province, and to Peppermint Grove in Mr. Parker's province. In the latter case, all the roads have been completed, and no further roads are required for the improvement of the district. The same thing may be said of districts in my province. One local authority has erected its own cement plant, by means of which it is making cement kerbing and slabs for the improvement of footpaths. I assume that the interpretation of "roads" includes footpaths, but I am not sure. If that is so, the local authority which has completed its roads by means of loan moneys

is now concentrating on concrete footpaths and kerbing. Unless such items are included in "roads" local authorities will be penalised. If I cannot get a satisfactory answer from the Chief Secretary on these points, I intend to vote against the second reading. Otherwise I will vote for the Bill.

**HON. W. J. MANN** (South-West) [7.58]: If ever public opinion has been unanimously expressed in regard to a Government proposal, it has been expressed in connection with this Bill. Successive members have stated that they are in receipt of shoals of letters from local authorities covering practically the whole State. I have in my drawer between 20 and 30 similar letters. In spite of the Minister's assertion, those most vitally concerned—the local authorities—are definitely alarmed by the proposal. They realise that they are being asked to give up the substance for the shadow. I think there is a good deal in their contention. The Bill proposes that some recompense shall be afforded from the proceeds of the petrol tax. But who can say what those proceeds will be in the years to come? I believe that the proceeds of that tax will steadily diminish, not only because of the crisis through which we are passing, which will be one factor, but there will be the exploitation of other means of propulsion, such as producer gas, and that before very long, we will have this cheaper form of, shall I say, fuel, particularly for the bigger and heavier class of vehicles. If that comes about, there is nothing surer than that the fund from which the Government proposes to assist the local bodies in the future, will slowly decline. I do not propose to follow all the different phases that have been mentioned by members; the Bill has been broadly discussed and very little has been left unsaid. But I feel I would be lacking in my duty if I did not take into consideration the views of the people in that part of the State that I represent. One thing more, and that is, regarding the proposal to subsidise, shall I say, the local governing bodies with an amount of money that they themselves will spend on road work. That might work out fairly well for the boards that can raise money, but it seems to me that the boards that may be described as less fortunate, or the poorer boards, will be left lamenting. It seems very much like the Biblical quotation,

"To him that hath shall be given and from him that hath not, shall be taken away." I shall oppose the second reading of the Bill.

**HON. H. TUCKEY** (South-West) [8.4]: In the earlier part of the evening I heard the Chief Secretary say that if he were given assistance from members he thought it would be possible to finish the session this week. I am afraid, however, that the debate on this Bill alone will rather put that idea out of court. If we are going on as we are doing, we shall be here, not only this week, but next week as well. When there are so many people who are opposed to the Bill, a vote cannot be taken at once. But it would be better if those who are opposed to the measure spoke against it instead of leaving what they had to say to the last minute. I am opposed to the Bill, and although I have received as many letters as possibly other members on the subject of the traffic fees, I would say that even if I had not received a single letter against the Government's proposals, I would still vote against the second reading of the Bill. From my experience of local government affairs I can say that never at any time does a local authority find itself in the position that it has more money than is necessary to meet all requirements. It has been said that even if this Bill passes, the local authorities will receive the same amount of money. If that be the case, why take away the traffic fees for the sole purpose of reimbursing the various local bodies in some other way at some future time? It cannot be said that any local authority in the metropolitan area is receiving more money than it is necessary that that authority should have to enable it to carry out its obligations. This we are sure of, that if the traffic fees are taken away, or even any portion of them, the result will be higher rating or else the cutting down of employment. The local authorities in the metropolitan area have done a lot to assist the Government by way of finding employment for many people. Take the City Council alone. To the 30th June last it had an overdraft of £12,000, and if the municipality is to do the same amount of work next year it will mean that it will have to increase its rates by approximately 5d. in the pound, that is, if it loses the traffic fees. A local body such as that employs a considerable number of men and therefore it should receive every possible assistance from the Government.

Moreover, the members of local bodies carry out their duties in an honorary capacity and therefore should receive every possible assistance from the State. Regarding district road boards, I know the Bill will not affect them, but it is reasonable to say that if the House agrees to the measure, then if the Government on a future occasion makes a similar request affecting country local authorities it will expect the House to give it some consideration. Many of the country boards could not function but for the traffic fees. Although many local bodies have the benefit of the traffic fees, they are not, shall I say, making unfair use of that money, that is to say, they are not sitting down and not rating land owners. In my road board district something like £6,000 has been spent on roads and the traffic fees that were received enabled that authority to provide employment and relieve the department of a number of sustenance workers. Even so, the local board ended the financial year with an overdraft of £800. So it will be seen that in addition to rating the people, the local authority was prepared to borrow money to assist in finding employment. So I say that the authorities who are responsible for carrying out undertakings of the type I have mentioned, should receive every encouragement and assistance. I can quite understand the feeling of the people or of the municipalities in the metropolitan area, and I was surprised to hear one member say that if he were assured the Bill would not be extended beyond the metropolitan area, he would be inclined to support it. That may be considered a selfish attitude to adopt. If what it is intended to do is not good for my district, it cannot be any good for the metropolitan area. One requires to know just all the circumstances before expressing an opinion. I would say that where a small local body has completed most of its work it has very little left for large expenditure, and difficulties are continually arising. In such instances there would be justification for allowing that local body sufficient traffic fees. Generally speaking however, the time has not arrived when these fees should be taken away from the metropolitan area. Last year the sum of £197,436 was collected in the metropolitan area by way of traffic fees and £116,085 was paid to the local



authorities. Of that amount the Perth City Council received £26,930. Knowing to within a few pounds what it was getting from the fees, the City Council carried out its programme accordingly. If, however, the local bodies had to depend on the Government they would not be in the same position. Furthermore, under the Federal Act, payment of the petrol tax revenue will cease in 1947. We know that the war has hardly commenced. Who can say therefore what the position will be in 1947? Will the Government be in a position to assist the local authorities if the petrol tax is taken away? It is reasonable to believe that the Federal Government will have to spend considerable sums of money in connection with the war and that it will cut down, if not entirely cease, the payment of the petrol tax. So I contend that for the time being at any rate the local authorities should be permitted to retain the traffic fees to enable them to carry on in the future the work that they have been doing in the past. Mr. Fraser remarked that country members were taking too much notice of their masters. I assure the hon. member that that is not so, as far as I am concerned. As I said at the beginning, even if I had not received a single letter of protest from my constituents, I would still oppose the Bill.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I move—

That the House do now divide.

Motion put and negatived.

**HON. E. H. ANGELO** (North) [8.13]: The question that arises in my mind in connection with the Bill is, who provides the money and who is entitled to spend it. We know that the motorists provide the money and that at the present time local authorities are spending it in those areas in which the motorists live, and therefore the money is being expended for the benefit of the motorists. The Perth City Council and other local bodies have been making and improving the roads in the metropolitan area for the use of the motorists. What will happen if they do not receive the traffic fees? We are told that additional rates will be imposed. Who will pay those rates? Not the motorists only but all ratepayers. As has already been pointed out, we are not quite certain that the refunds will be paid. I would much prefer the position to remain

as it is, namely, that the local authorities should continue to get the benefit of the traffic fees and should be permitted to spend that money in their different localities as they have been doing. Why has the Bill been brought down? Because the Federal Government is short of money the State Government, through the Disabilities Commission, is told that it must balance its budget. The Government in its hard-up state says, "We will go after the smaller animal; we will chase the smaller dog and try to get the money out of the local authorities." If the local authorities must pay, what then will they do? They will chase the still smaller animal and make the ratepayer pay a greater amount than he is paying at the present time. It reminds me of a picture I saw in a comic paper over the caption—"One darned thing after another." It appears to me that the Federal Government is after the State Government, the State Government is after the local authorities, and the local authorities will be after the ratepayers if we agree to this Bill. We have had no complaints about the position up to the present time. The local authorities have given satisfaction to the motorists and to the ratepayers. Why not leave well alone?

**HON. T. MOORE** (Central) [8.16]: I do not wish to record a silent vote on this Bill, as there are so many country local authorities worried about it; but I believe, with Mr. Cornell, that the local authorities were not in possession of all the facts. There is not the slightest doubt about that. When an hon. member rises in this House and states that no one can gauge the opinion of the country people better than can the local authorities, I say that that is not so, for they were not supplied with the necessary information. I am certain that those people who think they know all about the matter do not understand both sides of the proposal. As a matter of fact, there is no doubt why the Government has taken this step.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: It is hard up.

**HON. T. MOORE**: Nothing of the kind. At least, I admit the Government is hard-pressed for money, but I also assert that every member of this Chamber is requesting the Government for this, that and the other in every part of the State.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: And they do not get it.

Hon. T. MOORE: I say candidly that so far as this department is concerned, we have had a very fine deal, a splendid deal. The Public Works Department of the State in particular has given us an excellent deal. Quite apart from the assistance we get in this direction, we have been helped in many other ways, as hon. members are aware.

Hon. A. Thomson interjected.

Hon. T. MOORE: Give the Government no credit! Mr. Thomson will give neither this Government nor any other Government credit for what it has done; but I am prepared to give credit where credit is due.

Hon. A. Thomson: I am giving the Government credit.

Hon. T. MOORE: The Grants Commission has told us in no uncertain voice that we can get £22,000 more if we agree to this change. That amount means a great deal to us. We can get from the Commonwealth Government, or at all events from the powers-that-be in the East, the sum of £22,000. There is no question about that; nobody can deny that fact. This is what the Grants Commission said when dealing with the question—

We think that in view of the considerations mentioned in this chapter, we should make a deduction from the amounts of the grants to the States. We therefore adjust the above figures by taking £22,000 from South Australia and Western Australia, and £23,000 from Tasmania.

That is what we stand to lose if this Bill is defeated. The local authorities are protected by another Bill that is to be brought down.

Hon. A. Thomson interjected.

Hon. T. MOORE: The hon. member may joke and think that is the way out; but he knows the intention of the Government is to bring down the other Bill to which I have referred. It is already on the stocks.

The Chief Secretary: It has been introduced.

Hon. T. MOORE: Yes, it is in this House now.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: What does the City Council get out of it?

Hon. T. MOORE: As hon. members know, the City Council will get what it spends on roads. There is no doubt that the City Council will get a return of the

amount it expends upon roads. I appeal to members from country districts to assist the Government to pass this measure. Country local authorities make many requests to the Government and receive assistance. Only the other night this House agreed to the City Council still obtaining the 3 per cent. of the earnings of the tramways that it has been receiving for so many years past, and to which it is not entitled at all. I am surprised that country members voted for its continuance. It should have been handed over many years ago. That was a present to the Perth City Council. I tell Mr. Bolton that it was a substantial present to which the City Council is not entitled. I am greatly surprised at country members greasing the fat pig by their vote on that Bill. The City Council has always been able to look after itself. I do not know how country members will justify their vote when they return to their constituencies.

Hon. A. Thomson: We will take that risk. We are responsible to our electors in the same way as you are to yours.

Hon. T. MOORE: I do not know how hon. members will stand up to the charge that they gave to the Perth City Council, after all these years, the 3 per cent. it has been drawing for so many years past, when it was understood that the time had arrived for the termination of the agreement. I do not mind the city representatives voting in favour of such a proposal; naturally, they will do the best they can for those whom they represent. I have received letters similar to those that other members have received. I have replied stating that in my opinion if the local authorities knew the other side of the case, they would not have asked me to vote against this measure. I say that advisedly, honestly, and believing it to be true. As a matter of fact, hon. members know that the letter that was sent out by the authorities in Perth did not mention the Government's desire in this respect. Did the letter mention that the State was to receive an additional £22,000?

Hon. A. Thomson: Did it mention that the road boards might get less?

Hon. T. MOORE: The hon. member has had his say. Of course he is trying to put me off the track, because what I say does not suit him.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

**Hon. T. MOORE:** The point is that the letter did not indicate to country people that the State would receive £22,000 more through the Grants Commission. The local authorities should allow this plan to be adopted.

**Hon. A. Thomson:** They read it in the Press.

**Hon. T. MOORE:** They also read in the Press that the Government was introducing this measure and then sent out their one-sided circular letter. These poor chaps in the country did that with the best of intentions. I take my hat off to them for the work they have done; but they seized on this one-sided argument and wrote to members to vote accordingly. I will justify my vote when I return to the country. I will tell the people that the State stood to gain £22,000 by adopting this procedure. I am satisfied I would be doing an injury to the country districts generally and to the State as a whole if I did not vote for the measure. On those grounds, I support the second reading.

**HON. L. CRAIG** (South-West) [8.23]:

Mr. Moore has put up a good case. He stated some true facts which some hon. members have not recognised. The Bill is not all bad. I am not going to support it, yet I say it is not all bad. Had conditions been normal it would have received my support. Road boards are not always well informed; very often they are ill-informed. One road board perhaps sends out a letter to all the boards in a certain district. The other boards follow the advice contained in the letter, which usually includes a request as follows:—"Will you write to your member and ask him to vote against the Bill?" I have received letters recently from road boards and have replied stating that they are ill-informed, and that had they information which I had I was sure they would not have written the letter. This Bill has many good points, but it contains dangerous clauses. That is the point. If times and trade conditions were normal, I would, as I have said, be inclined to support the measure. Traffic fees in the metropolitan area have risen to an amount beyond the most avaricious dreams of any council. The figures are becoming colossal. A provision in the measure I do not like is that which deals with money to be spent by local authorities on roads. That money will be refunded to the local authorities. Certainly,

I do think local authorities may not be able to spend money on the maintenance or construction of roads. One of the first commodities to be restricted during the war will be bitumen. Bitumen supplies may be cut off altogether; almost certainly they will be considerably curtailed, and without bitumen it will be almost impossible for local authorities to spend any money on the construction or maintenance of roads. Unless the money is spent, the local authorities will not receive anything from the traffic fees. That is my main reason for opposing the Bill. There are one or two minor points upon which I do not wish to delay the House. The debate on this Bill has been proceeding for a long time, and to me it is obvious which way it is going. I do not know which window it is going out of, but it will go out of one. I oppose the Bill.

**HON. H. SEDDON** (North-East) [8.26]:

I think it a great pity that two things were not done before this Bill was introduced. It is a pity that country road boards did not have explained to them the Government's intentions regarding this measure, because I am satisfied that if such a course had been followed much of the opposition from those boards would certainly not have been advanced.

**Hon. C. F. Baxter:** It certainly did not influence me.

**Hon. H. SEDDON:** The other point I make is that there are provisions in the amendment to the Main Roads Act which I think clarify the position materially with regard to what is advanced in support of this Bill. Certain information has been placed before the House by the Chief Secretary with regard to the administration of the Traffic Trust Account. Factors are also operating in the metropolitan area which I think justify the Government's introduction of this measure. I am inclined to think that had the Bill been drafted differently, so that people could readily understand that the Government's intention is not so much to take the money into Consolidated Revenue as to make use of it in carrying out what is after all the Government's true intention—to extend the mileage of roads throughout the State—

**Hon. A. Thomson:** The Government is expending 97 per cent. of the money in the country.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Undoubtedly a tremendous sum is being expended in the country. What Mr. Moore pointed out is perfectly correct. Every member must realise the enormous amount of money that is being spent by the Main Roads Board in outlying road districts. There are boards in my district that could not possibly have coped with the mileage of main roads in their districts had it not been for the great amount of work done by the Main Roads Board. We have to realise that the Federal money is coming from the petrol tax. That tax, as has been pointed out by hon. members, will be materially affected in the immediate future. First of all, rationing will obviously affect the receipts from the tax. The use of producer gas is also likely to affect the position and there is no doubt that in the endeavour to provide money for the construction of main roads, the Commonwealth Government has pushed the petrol tax to a figure that is encouraging research work for the employment of producer gas. I think the possibilities of producer gas are being much over-rated at present. There is not only much work to be done, but there does not seem to be an appreciation of the important fact that the calorific value of producer gas is nothing like the calorific value of petrol. The calorific value of petrol is in the vicinity of 24,000 B.T.U. and that of producer gas from charcoal is only 14,500. Members will realise that a great loss occurs there. When producer gas is produced from wood, it drops down to 6,700 B.T.U., so that the ratio of petrol is something like four times that of producer gas in driving power. While the Federal tax has undoubtedly had the effect of stimulating research into producer gas, clearly the people are not going to get the value from producer gas that they obtain from petrol. Further, if producer gas comes largely into use, the Federal Government will obviously have to extend its taxing powers to cover this product.

I regret that the Government did not take an opportunity to educate the country road boards on the provisions of this Bill, because I am quite satisfied the measure would have been given a much better reception. One point causes me great difficulty in the matter of extending support to the Bill, and that is the precise effect of the measure on the local authorities. I can see the object of the Government in taking the money and then

offering to return to the local authorities all the money expended by them on roads. Members have pointed out that whereas some districts have practically completed their road programmes, others have still much road work to do. I think the intention of the Government is that this enormous sum of money should be distributed to assist those boards that have a big programme of road work still to carry out, and the road boards that have completed their work will not get so much. While the rationing of petrol will affect not only receipts from the petrol tax but also the amount from motor license fees, it will not affect the proceeds from the license fees as much as it will the proceeds of the petrol tax. Obviously if producer gas is adopted, there will still be a large number of vehicles on the roads that otherwise would have been prevented from running by the application of rationing. I am inclined to think that the reduced amount available to local authorities will be adjusted so that the local authorities will lose on the transfer, while the Government will still get a fair amount of money. Undoubtedly the country road boards feel seriously concerned about what they regard as the effect of this Bill. Consequently I am afraid I shall have to vote against the second reading, although I can see some very solid arguments in favour of the Bill. I trust that next session the Government will embark on a programme of educating country road boards and show that the object of the measure is different from what they have assumed.

**HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [8.35]:**

I should not like to cast a silent vote on the Bill. This measure has caused consternation in the country districts. Although the country road boards realise that the Bill deals only with metropolitan traffic fees, they bear in mind the old saying that coming events cast their shadows before. They are not waiting for the cyclone to arrive. They have been getting into touch with their members to ascertain what protection will be afforded them. They fear that if the measure is passed, they will fall into the trouble now being experienced by their friends, the metropolitan local authorities. The money in question is actually the property of the local authorities under the Act and this ownership is not affected by the method of collection.

The Government has intimated that it proposes to amend the Act to provide that the money now allocated to local authorities shall be paid into Consolidated Revenue, and that the metropolitan local authorities shall receive equivalent grants from the petrol tax to spend on roads only. This simply means that the Government cannot spend the petrol tax funds as ordinary revenue or, in other words, as it pleases. This money must be spent on roads. Therefore, to secure money to spend as it pleases, the Government proposes to take the local authorities' traffic fees. In return—and I think this is what was suggested by Mr. Moore—the local authorities are to receive grants to be spent, not as the local authorities please, which is what they do at present with the traffic fees, but on roads only. The Government simply wants to get the same freedom to spend by taking the fees belonging to the local authorities and to tie them up, as the Government is now tied up, by giving them money for road purposes only.

We know that the road boards over a period of years have been assured of the proceeds of the traffic fees. Right from the inception of the rating of motor vehicles, those funds have been set aside for the local authorities, and I see no reason why the system should be altered. Mr. Moore said it was being done at the direction of the Federal authorities and mention was made of some remarks by the Commonwealth Grants Commission. Members have claimed that the State would get so much more money by way of disabilities grant from the Commonwealth Government if the State Government took these fees into Consolidated Revenue. But this money has always been recognised as the property of the local authorities, and now they are being asked to accept in lieu something which I imagine is only a will-o'-the-wisp. The proceeds of the petrol tax are paid under a contract that will expire in a few years' time. Many local authorities point to the wonderful progress that has been made in their districts as a result of the expenditure of these funds. In a comparatively short space of time there has been a great advance in the development of producer gas. It has given wonderful service and many people are deriving increased benefits from its use. Consequently, the consumption of petrol is likely to be lower, not only on account of the war, but also on account of the use of

producer gas. As further investigations are made by the University authorities and by practical men in the country, I am satisfied it will lead to a considerable reduction in the quantity of petrol used.

The local authorities ask what guarantee they have of increased returns in lieu of the money they are asked to give up. They have benefited from the large increase in the traffic fees during the last few years, but any increase in the future will go to the Government, and they will be left with decreased receipts and perhaps with no return from the petrol tax. In any event, the people running motor vehicles are paying the petrol tax. If the Government wants more revenue, why should it take the money from these people? One section of the people, not the whole of the people, are providing this money, and they have been prepared to provide it in return for improved roads. At present the local authorities can please themselves how they spend the money. I wish to impress upon members that the motorists have really taxed themselves in order to provide this money, but in respect of any increase in the number of motor vehicles, the local authorities will be deprived of the expanding revenue which, in the past, has been theirs by right. I am certainly against any proposal to take that revenue away from them. I do not agree with the suggestion that we should gain by handing the fees over to the Government because of some fetish that the Federal Grants Commission feels that we shall benefit by reversing the position. Local authorities do not want any change of the kind. I quite agree that whatever the consequences, those authorities should stand four-square by the source of revenue which is so necessary in their work. In many cases the money from traffic fees comes in at a time of the year when it is not possible to collect money from the ratepayers by further burdening them. In many districts rates have not been paid in anything like the ratio that motor license fees are paid. Those fees come in at the beginning of the financial year. I support the attitude of the local authorities in making an early appeal to their members for protection. There are many other things I should like to say, because this is a sort of rogue elephant of a Bill; but I do not wish to detain the House. I shall vote against the second reading.

**HON. E. H. H. HALL** (Central) [8.47]: There appears to be a holy dread of recording a silent vote on the Bill, and therefore I feel that I should join the happy band to keep the discussion going a little longer. Having listened to the debate on the measure, I have come to the conclusion that it is far more dangerous than at first sight it appeared to be. I do not often have an opportunity to keep the Chief Secretary until midnight, but I feel like availing myself of the present opportunity. Then I shall have the pleasure of travelling another four or five hundred miles to finish the session, perhaps the week after next. Mr. Seddon, as usual, spoke a word of wisdom. The word was that the Government might have conferred with the Road Board Association on the Bill, considering the big effect it will have on men who, throughout the length and breadth of the State, are rendering honorary service to the people—I refer to the local government authorities. If we are told by the Chief Secretary, as I dare say we shall be, that the Bill does not affect country road boards, I would ask why could not the Government have taken the Perth City Council into its confidence, in which case a great deal of the criticism levelled at the measure would have been disarmed. Only the other week I heard an hon. member congratulate the Government on having extended consideration to certain people interested in a Bill, as a result of which the measure had a smooth and easy passage through the Chamber. That Bill, compared with this one, was relatively unimportant. Ministers are not amateurs. They have been in their jobs for years, and it might have been expected that the hint dropped by Mr. Seddon would be unnecessary at this stage.

We have been inundated with letters from various local authorities, who may or may not be under a misapprehension. To my way of thinking, notwithstanding the Government's promises, a bird in the hand is worth half-a-dozen in the bush. That is the thought which guides me—rightly or wrongly. Who knows better than country members here and in another place the acute financial position facing local authorities? We are told the Government is hard up. The Government is not nearly so hard up as local authorities throughout the agricultural areas are. The gentleman occupying the position of chairman of the Kalgoorlie Road Board, the situation of which cannot for a

moment be compared to that of boards in the agricultural areas which have not been able to collect one-half the rates due to them, farmers not having been able to pay rates, owing to the low price of their products, has drawn attention to that aspect. I agree that the Bill is most inopportune. It should not meet with any other fate than that which awaits it.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West—in reply) [8.50]: One would need to be an optimist indeed to believe that a speech at this late stage would affect the decision of the House. So many members have committed themselves with regard to the Bill that I can only describe the situation as appalling. It is absolutely appalling to reflect that 20 members of the Legislative Council of Western Australia have taken up such an attitude as they have adopted on this Bill, more particularly when one has to recognise the fact that the measure has been before the public for five or six weeks. It was the subject of debate in the Legislative Assembly for a considerable time. Every point that could possibly be raised against it was raised in another place.

Hon. J. Nicholson: And it was carried by only one vote.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY**: Yet the Bill was carried.

Hon. J. Nicholson: By one vote.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY**: Whether it was carried by one vote or by twenty is immaterial. The fact of its being carried was sufficient to show that there had been plenty of opportunity for members of this Chamber to know what the Bill actually involves, and what the complementary measure involves. Yet we have members rising here one after the other making statements which, to my way of thinking, they must know are not in accordance with the facts.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Do not say that.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY**: What can one say? Mr. Thomson, for instance, referring to the complementary Main Roads Bill demanded an assurance regarding refunds from Federal Aid Road funds. Yet the hon. member it was who secured the adjournment of the debate on the Bill when it was introduced here. What can one make of that?

Hon. A. Thomson: What assurance did I ask for?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: From the hon. member's remarks one might think that he does not know what is in the Bill. He finished up by saying that he would vote against the Bill mainly because the local authorities in his district had asked him to do so.

Hon. A. Thomson: 'And as an old road board member.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Bill before us does not affect any local authority outside the metropolitan area. That fact of itself does away with the suggestion made by some members that the Government should have consulted local authorities outside the metropolitan area before bringing down the measure. What reason would we have for consulting with those boards? Why should the Government at any time, except for the purposing of obtaining information, consult with people who are not affected by legislation coming before Parliament? Admittedly, this legislation will affect local authorities in the metropolitan area, road boards as well as municipalities; but those authorities will not be affected in the way some members would have the House believe. Even Mr. Bolton, when quoting from his brief, referred to the fact that the Bill meant 4½d. in the pound so far as the Perth City Council was concerned. Then he carried on a little further with his brief and found that he was not quite right.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Pardon me, I did not.

Hon. V. Hamersley: There was no mistake about it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is just what happened. The facts of the case are plainly understood by anyone who likes to read the two Bills together. I can quite comprehend why local authorities in the country areas sent such letters as most members have received—I along with the rest—but I certainly fail to understand any local authority sending such a letter as the one quoted by Mr. Wood. It is for Parliament, and not the local authorities, to say what shall be done. How can a local authority possibly write such a letter as has been quoted here? Simply because the authority has fallen a victim to unscrupulous propaganda which has been sent out during the last two or three weeks with a certain degree of regularity. I would like those country members who have had

so much to say about what local authorities do with traffic fees to consider for a moment another circular sent out to all local authorities by another organisation particularly interested in this matter. I refer to the Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia. Some members, in speaking to the Bill, have quoted extracts from that club's circular in support of their opposition to the measure. I only want to draw attention to one paragraph of the letter in question.

The traffic fees and petrol tax are definitely contributions made by a section of the community for road construction and maintenance purposes.

Where do we find the supporters of the local authorities in regard to that matter? We have had a definite intimation from numerous members here tonight that there are various local authorities that do not use traffic fees for that purpose, but use them for other, general purposes. It is that kind of thing which gives rise to the Royal Automobile Club using the argument that if the money collected from traffic fees is not spent on making a new road or maintaining old roads, there must be a reduction in such a case. That is their argument. Where would the local authorities in the country be if that particular argument were brought to a head?

Hon. A. Thomson: It would be just as unpopular as this suggestion.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Of course it would be. I have pointed out that the local authorities in the country will not be affected in the slightest by the Bill. Before anything could be done to affect their position with relation to the receipt of traffic fees, a special Bill would have to be introduced and this House could then determine whether it was prepared to agree to the Bill or not. Much of the argument we have heard on this Bill is so much bunkum. I cannot describe it in any other way. I know the reason so many local authorities have found it desirable to ask their members of Parliament to oppose the measure. It is because they have received from a certain source information which is, shall I say, erroneous. I could use much stronger language in regard to the propaganda disseminated in connection with this measure, but I do not wish to do that. If I did so, I might offend some members in this House and that is the last thing I desire to do.

Hon. J. Cornell: The Minister will agree that the letter I read regarding a conference of goldfields local authorities is not over the odds.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have not suggested it is, but I intend to read an extract from a circular sent out by the secretary of a body representing all the local authorities. As a result of that circular many members have raised opposition to the measure. The letter is dated the 1st November and was sent out by the secretary of the Local Government Association of Western Australia (Mr. E. H. Rosman). I need read only one paragraph which is as follows:—

At the present time it is not proposed to amend the Traffic Act so far as the collection of license fees by local authorities outside the metropolitan area goes, but if sanction is given by this session of Parliament to metropolitan traffic fees being taken into Consolidated Revenue it would appear inevitable that the next move of the Government would be to take the whole of the license fees into Consolidated Revenue.

That is the basis of the whole of the opposition received from local authorities which are not at all concerned with the present Bill. The circular was sent out by the secretary of the Local Government Association, members of which waited on the Minister as a deputation. The Minister made the position very clear to that deputation, but apparently the members were not willing to accept his word. On the contrary, the association was prepared to submit its own idea of the position to the local authorities with a view to those authorities approaching their representatives in Parliament, as they have done, with the object of persuading them to vote against the Bill, because from the viewpoint of that association somebody might be affected in the metropolitan area. That is the position. I do not want to quote all that the Minister in charge of the matter had to say to the deputation. Needless to say he made the position very clear and even went so far as to assure the deputation that if the Bill did not establish as clearly as it might that what he had told them were the actual facts of the case, he would have the Bill amended to their satisfaction. What more could a Minister do? He said "If members can show me that this Bill does not mean what I say it means, or can suggest an amendment that will make it clearer, then I will have the Bill amended."

But there has been no move on the part of the local authorities to secure an amendment. The only move has been an endeavour to obtain the support of all local authorities throughout the State in opposition to the measure.

Now let us examine briefly what the Bill means, or rather what the two Bills really mean. There is no doubt that this State has been suffering for some years past by virtue of the attitude of the Commonwealth Grants Commission regarding unproductive loan expenditure. The Commission has pointed out in several of its reports that until such time as this State is prepared to put its House in order and endeavour to secure a bigger return from its loan expenditure the Commission would continue to penalise the State to the same extent as in the past; and at the present time that penalisation amounts to approximately £22,000 per annum. As pointed out by Mr. Moore, and referred to by myself when I introduced the Bill, the Government has offered on several occasions to assist the Commonwealth Government to the best of its ability and it has been advised by the Commonwealth Government by the Grants Commission, and by the Loan Council that the best way in which it can assist the Commonwealth Government is to balance its budget. This is one method by which the Treasurer will more easily balance his budget without in any way depriving the local authorities in the aggregate of the total amount of money they would receive from traffic fees under the existing scheme. At present whatever amount is received from traffic fees in the metropolitan area is paid into a trust fund and later in the year that money is distributed to the local authorities, the figure being arrived at by means of a certain formula. We desire to alter that method. We say that by paying this money into revenue and distributing the same amount to the local authorities as they would get under the present system—that is, by distributing it from another fund upon which we have not to pay interest—we would be saving the State the interest payment on the amount, whatever it might be, and in addition we have the word of the Commonwealth Grants Commission that our present method of dealing with traffic fees results in our being penalised to the extent of £22,000. By transferring this money to revenue instead of to a trust account for the time being we



are in effect contributing towards the debt charges on loan expenditure on roads, the equivalent amount of money the traffic fees amount to. In other words, it is a book-keeping matter.

I desire to be fair. I do not want members to be under a misapprehension. Under the Federal Aid Roads Agreement the money from that fund cannot be allocated for any purpose other than expenditure on roads. Consequently the Government cannot make any distribution from that fund except for work done on roads or in connection with transport. So we are faced with this position: That if the Bill did—by good fortune, I would say—happen to be agreed to, we would find those local authorities that were spending money on roads—and nobody can tell me that any local authority will not spend money on roads—would be recouped from this particular fund; and the Minister has given an assurance—and the other Bill before the House proves there is nothing wrong with that assurance—that the amount of money to be returned to the local authorities will be the equivalent of that which they would have received under the present system. Those local authorities that are likely to be spending a smaller amount of money on roads than the amount they think they will receive from traffic fees may find that they are not entitled to quite as much. Others would be entitled to more under this system, strange to say. I suppose it is hard for any local authority or the representative of any local authority to agree to a change as a result of which he thinks there is a possibility of the local authority not receiving as much in the future as in the past. I have had to point out on several occasions during the last week or fortnight, when dealing with taxation measures particularly, that the Treasurer is extremely anxious to balance his Budget. One measure that would have made a small difference to him has already been defeated. This Bill means more to him than the measure to which I have referred and, if it is not agreed to, the Treasurer will have to find money by other means. Some hon. members had a lot to say when we were considering the amalgamated taxation measure as to the rate of tax to be imposed next year on account of the amalgamation. I suggested then that when

the time arrives for the fixing of a rate of tax the action of this House in regard to measures of this kind will be a big factor in determining the rate to be imposed.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Is that a threat?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, if the hon. member likes to take it as that. The hon. member knows better than some members of this Chamber that if we are to balance the Budget the money must be found and the Treasurer, in presenting his Estimates to Parliament, has taken into consideration the various amounts to which I have referred from time to time, including the amount in this Bill. If the measure is defeated the Budget can be balanced only by increasing the rate of taxation, and the consequence will be that those who have been complaining very bitterly in this Chamber during the last week or two with regard to the possible rate of taxation will be called upon to bear their additional share.

Hon. J. Cornell: Of course, that is coming next year whether we like it or not.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This will make the position worse. When I hear members saying they are here to protect the interests of local authorities, I ask myself whether that is the right attitude to adopt. Surely they can give support to the local authorities without taking up the attitude some members have adopted, and thus affecting the interests of the State as a whole. I do not subscribe to the idea that a letter from a local authority to an hon. member necessarily represents the point of view of the whole of the people in the district served by that local authority. Only too frequently many of the letters which have been received by members have never been considered by the local authorities, as local authorities. Many people in the districts concerned have no idea that this Bill is before the House.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is why we have to protect them.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Members have a greater duty to perform than to protect the interests of local authorities. Members of the Government, including myself, are very desirous of giving all credit to the local authorities to which they are entitled. No one knows better than we the work they perform in an honorary capacity year after year. The country local authorities are not

affected by this legislation. It will be time enough to consider their position when they are affected. Those in the metropolitan area may be affected, and one or two detrimentally. I say definitely that the same amount of money will be returned to the local authorities as they are getting under the present system. While that position obtains I fail to see any solid argument why there should be objection to this measure. Surely the financial position of the State is of more importance than are some of the arguments used in the Chamber. Are we going to adopt the attitude of one member and say, "I will do everything I can to prevent the Government from getting any revenue?" What sort of policy is that? Members have said that if we are not careful we shall have unification in the next year or two. If we are going to have one section of the House supporting local authorities, irrespective of the effect on Government finance, another section objecting to the Government getting any additional money, and members denying support to anything that will mean a concession to a certain section of the community, we shall have unification more quickly than can be imagined. Whilst this State is not responsible for war expenditure to the same extent as is the Federal Government, Western Australia will be affected.

Hon. T. Moore: It is suffering already.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, and it will suffer to a greater extent than at present. More money will be required, and can only be provided from one source. The Bill has been badly misrepresented. There has been propaganda throughout the State, which does no credit to those responsible for it. Quite a large number of members have been led away by the receipt of many letters representing the type of propaganda to which I have referred. There was so much to which one could reply, so many statements I would like to challenge, that I think in the circumstances I have almost said sufficient. There are a few figures, however, I would like to quote. During the past ten years no less than £5,154,450 has been spent on road work outside the metropolitan area.

Hon. W. J. Mann: The people have contributed towards that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: And £495,739 has been spent in the metropolitan area from the Federal Aid Roads Fund.

From other sources, traffic fees, etc., £140,733 has been spent in country areas and £454,850 in the metropolitan area. These are tremendous figures. This money could not have been spent had it not been for the great increase in receipts from these sources. In 1919 there was a proposal for the pooling of traffic fees, and a year or two earlier there was also another proposal. The Minister of that day said that at that time the license fees collected amounted to something like £20,000 a year, and it was proposed by the Government to add another £20,000, making a total of £40,000, which would have been a very respectable and sufficient sum if properly handled to deal with the making and maintenance of main roads of the State. We have only to compare a statement like that with the present state of affairs when the huge figures I quoted a moment or two ago represent the expenditure on roads.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Look at the development that has occurred since.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes. The local authorities had no idea they were going to receive such a big percentage of general revenue from this source.

Hon. J. Cornell: You have only to compare the working bee of 1915 with the present day.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Bolton said this Bill would be responsible for the City Council having to increase its rates by at least 4½d. in the pound. He knows that could not be so, unless the Perth City Council refused to spend any money on the maintenance of roads within its boundaries. That is the kind of argument used elsewhere. We know that the City Council spends huge sums of money each year. In view of the way members have expressed themselves on this measure I will say very little more. Whatever may be the fate of the Bill, the Government will find it necessary to introduce a measure of this kind again. Because of what we have been told by the Commonwealth Government, the Loan Council and the Grants Commission, that this is the only State in the Commonwealth in which license fees are paid in this way to local authorities, some alteration will have to be made in the system, whether by this Government or some other. It rests with this House to say whether that alteration will take place this year or not. If the Bill be defeated

the Treasurer will have to find the money from some other source, as no doubt he will do. The only other source I can suggest is by increased taxation.

*Point of Order.*

Hon. L. B. Bolton: On a point of order. I respectfully ask the Chief Secretary to withdraw the statement that I have made a mistake in quoting the figure I gave from the Perth City Council in regard to traffic fees last year. The figure I quoted was £26,000, which I said represented a rate of 4¼d. in the pound. I said that every £6,000 represented a rate of one penny. I made no mistake, and I ask for a withdrawal of the statement.

The President: I am sure the Chief Secretary will withdraw the remark, and intimate that he meant no reflection upon the hon. member.

The Chief Secretary: I did not question the figures, because they are absolutely correct. If the hon. member thinks I did, I will withdraw the statement.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: You said I had made a mistake in quoting the figures.

The Chief Secretary: I said the hon. member found he had made a mistake when he stated that this Bill would mean a rate of 4¼d. in the pound to the Perth City Council.

The President: I take it the hon. member is satisfied.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: I am satisfied so long as the Chief Secretary does not adhere to the statement that I made a mistake in quoting the figures.

Question put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	7
Noes	..	..	..	20
Majority against	..	..	13	

**AYES.**

Hon. J. M. Drew  
Hon. E. H. Gray  
Hon. W. R. Hall  
Hon. E. M. Heenan

Hon. W. H. Kitson  
Hon. T. Moore  
Hon. G. W. Miles  
(Teller.)

**NOES.**

Hon. E. H. Angelo  
Hon. C. F. Baxter  
Hon. L. B. Bolton  
Hon. J. Cornell  
Hon. L. Crale  
Hon. J. A. Dinmity  
Hon. J. T. Franklin  
Hon. G. Fraser  
Hon. E. H. Hall  
Hon. V. Hamersley

Hon. J. J. Holmes  
Hon. J. M. Macfarlane  
Hon. W. J. Mann  
Hon. J. Nicholson  
Hon. H. S. W. Parker  
Hon. H. Seddon  
Hon. A. Thomson  
Hon. C. H. Wittenoom  
Hon. G. R. Wood  
Hon. H. Tuckey  
(Teller.)

Question thus negatived.

Bill defeated.

**BILL—RESERVES (No. 2).**

*Second Reading—Defeated.*

Debate resumed from the 23rd November.

**THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon.**

E. H. Gray—West—in reply) [9.33]: I have been amazed at the reception accorded the Bill. Last session the debate on the clause in the Reserves Bill dealing with this particular phase occupied a very few lines in "Hansard." The fact that the Government dealt with this matter in a clause in the general Reserves Bill showed that Ministers felt sure the House would agree to the provision without question. Unfortunately members rejected it, and the Bill as a whole was lost. It was then thought that during the ensuing year members of both Houses would have an opportunity calmly to consider the proposed site and, after a dispassionate examination of the proposal, would agree to it without further ado. I am particularly interested in the measure because it will ease the lot of my departments. Members of this House, at a time of grave crisis in the world's history, cannot lightly, as Mr. Nicholson mentioned—I shall use the argument because he advanced it—set aside a sum of money that cannot be used for purposes other than that suggested.

Members generally are in full agreement with the Government as to the need for providing centralised accommodation for the various departments. Further, they are prepared to admit that the question of accommodating the Lands Titles Office and the Department of Agriculture in suitable offices is a matter of particular urgency. Nevertheless, despite the fact that this Bill represents an initial step in the solution of our housing difficulties, they are still reluctant to commit themselves to a proposal backed by the full authority of the Government's expert advisers.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: But the advisers were confined to one site.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member knows that statement is not true; they were not confined to one site.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Your Minister in another place said they were.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Other sites have been considered over the years. I wish to emphasise that when the Government decided some years ago that the time

was ripe to consider the question of erecting new public buildings, it sought the fullest possible information regarding every likely site within reasonable access of the professional and commercial interests of the city, that might be utilised for the purpose of centralising the Government offices. An early committee, consisting of the then Under Secretary for Works, the then Under Treasurer, and the present Principal Architect, narrowed down the range of alternatives to two sites, namely, the Esplanade and the Government House Domain. The committee advised the Government that these were the only sites that were suitable for the purpose, having regard to the following considerations:—

- (a) That it was desired to centralise the bulk of, if not all, the Government offices.
- (b) That any site selected should not only be large enough for present requirements, but should also allow a good margin for future extension, and
- (c) That the site must be on sufficient area to allow of the creation of a Governmental centre with a pleasing grouping of buildings in a proper garden setting which would be a definite contribution to the beauty of the city.

The Town Planning Board in its report also refers to this latter consideration. It suggests that—

The site for a governmental centre should be so situated and of such area as will allow of proper grouping of buildings in a garden setting with easy vehicular and pedestrian access to all buildings and where it is impossible to surround the group with tall buildings or buildings of a conflicting use.

Some members appear to consider that the Government need take little or no account of the aesthetic aspect of the problem involved in choosing a suitable site. The Government desires, however, that the completed scheme of buildings shall be a worthy ornament to the city. As Mr. Parker has pointed out, we do not want to have the new offices cooped up as the old ones are. Space must be left between the blocks in order to give access to fresh air and light. At the same time, it is desirable to make provision for the planting of gardens. All these amenities have a most important bearing on the efficiency of a staff. Mr. Baxter and Mr. Wood and one or two other members suggested that the Government should utilise the Barracks site for the proposed buildings.

The committee definitely rejected this site. While it would be possible to construct a suitable building of eight or nine storeys there, such premises would not suffice to house all the departments, and moreover, they would completely blanket Parliament House from the city. I can hardly imagine any member of Parliament in these days suggesting that public buildings should be erected in such a way as to close out Parliament House, which is situated on one of the finest sites of the Commonwealth. Is it not imperative that we shall do everything possible to preserve the Parliament House site? Any Government should do its utmost to improve Parliament House and its surroundings. By doing so, increased respect of the people will be demanded. What is the position today? Because there has been a succession of Labour Governments in Australia, to deride Parliament has become fashionable.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: That is no compliment to yourselves.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It is no credit to people who adopt that attitude. Nevertheless that is the position, and we find increasing disrespect for parliamentary government.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: But not because of Labour Governments. I do not think that is right.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I say it is right, and the duty devolves upon every member jealously to safeguard democracy and to ensure that Parliament shall be held in respect by everyone. As Mr. Mann pointed out, the site on which Parliament House stands is the finest enjoyed by any legislature in the world. So I say it is definitely stupid to suggest we should encroach upon Parliament House grounds and it is equally stupid to suggest we should pull down the Barracks for the purpose of erecting government offices.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Any site north of the railway line would suit me.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That has also been considered.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Where will be the most suitable site 50 years hence?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Mr. Holmes should not back his own opinion but should take notice of the Government's expert advisers, who know more about the matter than he does.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Well, that is that.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: What about the Treasury Building site?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The suggestion has been advanced that the Treasury Buildings, plus the Town Hall site, would answer the purpose fully. Mr. Wittenoom, Mr. Thomson, Mr. Macfarlane and Mr. Franklin were all agreed upon the point. The area of this site, however, is only about two acres, inclusive of the Town Hall. While the committee agreed that by erecting tall buildings on this site sufficient accommodation could be provided for some years to come, they emphasised that this would involve using virtually the whole site for building construction. The result would be a very fine building, but it could not have any semblance of a setting as visualised by the committee. Mr. Thomson suggested that the existing public offices on the Treasury site could be modernised. The question of remodelling existing buildings and adding further storeys was considered by the committee. It was realised, however, that to add further storeys would necessitate the strengthening of foundations and the introduction of a reinforced concrete frame. Moreover, the present facades do not architecturally lend themselves to further storeys. Therefore, in addition to the internal strengthening and remodelling referred to, all the facades would have to be reconstructed. Even after all the heavy expenditure involved in these directions had been incurred, the Government would still be committed to the existing layout, which, as members are aware, is far from satisfactory.

It is, of course, true that increased efficiency could be obtained by the internal remodelling of the existing buildings. On the other hand, the accommodation that would thereby be provided would be insufficient, so that in the long run the problem as it exists today would have to be faced up to again. Even if new buildings were constructed on this site and erected to the maximum building height allowed, namely 125 feet, we would only be able to provide sufficient accommodation on this area to meet present requirements and to allow 10 per cent. for future expansion.

The claims of other sites, including Hale School and the Observatory, have also been tentatively advanced by some members, who have stated that the trend of the city is westward and northward. This aspect has been fully considered by the various com-

mittees that have furnished reports to the Government. The Town Planning Board, which is a body competent to give authoritative opinion on a problem of this kind, makes the following comment in regard to the possible and probable development of the city:—

Although the present tendency is for the business and professional portions of the city to develop in a westerly direction, it is practically certain that, owing to contours, the development will be arrested at the foot of Makolm-street. Further development will then tend eastwards towards the Causeway. The Government House site would be practically central in the development visualised. . . .

With regard to the question of transport convenience for the general public, Parliament House site, the Observatory and Hale School all suffer the same disability in that they are located well away from "the centre of the concentration of the major number of traffic routes from the various parts of the metropolitan area."

As to the site suggested by Mr. Mann, its close proximity to the noise of the railway yards renders it unsuitable for public office purposes, and moreover it has the added disadvantage of being located away from the professional and mercantile centres. In this connection, it is well that I should remind members that the immediate reason for the introduction of the Bill is the Government's desire to re-house the Agricultural Department and the Titles Office. If we are to secure a maximum of efficiency in the conduct of inter-departmental business and at the same time serve the convenience of the professional and business community to the fullest possible extent, then a site must be selected which is not only in close proximity to the existing departmental offices, but also near at hand to the centres of professional and mercantile activity. When they learn that the number of persons calling at the Titles Office averages over 200 per day, members will realise the necessity for choosing a site convenient to the centres I have mentioned.

The problem of housing the Agricultural Department raises further considerations. As members are aware, the pathologists of the Department carry out research work in the departmental premises in connection with animal and plant diseases, and therefore it is necessary that facilities should

be available to permit of the continuance of these activities. That, however, is by the way. The position is that the Government, after receiving a report from the committee I have mentioned, gave consideration to the two suggested sites. It eliminated the Esplanade, and then later asked the Public Buildings Committee—which includes the Public Architect and the Town Planning Commissioner—to report specifically on the Government Domain. A copy of that report is in the possession of each member. The committee considered the question of the suitability of the site from every aspect and made certain recommendations which it was believed would lead to “the ultimate creation of a Governmental Centre which would not only centralise Government offices but would also be a real contribution to town planning and to the dignity and amenity of the city”. The site fronts the city’s most dignified thoroughfare, while consideration has also been given to a river frontage. Mr. Baxter has suggested that “the land is unsuitable from the point of view of foundations”, but I am informed by the Principal Architect that, except in the case of the central nine-storey structure, piling will be unnecessary. It has been suggested by Mr. Nicholson and one or two other members that this is not a time to erect public buildings. To these members I would reply that as ample money is immediately available from the State Insurance Reserve Fund to construct the first unit of the scheme, we have a responsibility to ensure that business is carried on as usual. I now wish to deal with the remarks made by Mr. Nicholson. He is the President of the Red Cross Society in this State, and said that because there is a slump in the building trade the Government should hesitate to undertake a work of this nature. I am thunderstruck by that suggestion. Who is going to lead the way, if not the Government? We do not know what will happen in the future. Our sons and our daughters may be forced to leave the State; drastic changes may take place because of what is happening in Europe. Are we to rely on the youth of the country to bear the brunt of the struggle? Is that a sensible suggestion to make? The opposite should be the case. If we expect our young men to take their place in the militia, in the A.I.F., and the Navy, we should guarantee that their

fathers should not want. A fund of about £260,000, in round figures, is available to proceed with the erection of this building which is necessary for our civil servants. Our desire is to provide work for our artisans. It is our bounden duty to pass the Bill.

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

Ayes	..	..	10
Noes	..	..	17
Majority against ..			7

#### AYES.

Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. J. A. Dinmunt	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. T. Moore
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
	(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Hon. E. H. Angelo	Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. J. T. Franklin	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. E. H. J. Hall	Hon. C. H. Wittenoom
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. J. M. Macfarlane	(Teller.)

#### PAIR.

AVE.	No.
Hon. C. B. Williams	Hon. H. V. Piesse

Question thus negatived.

Bill defeated.

## BILL—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.

### Second Reading.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [9.58] in moving the second reading said: This is a very small measure, necessitated by the fact that we are at war. It is brought forward for the purpose of amending Section 35 of the Friendly Societies Act. This section was enacted during the period of the last war to protect the interests of members of friendly societies who were engaged on active service. The proviso to Section 35 to which I have just referred sets out that the committee of management of any society or branch might, during the continuance of the war—1914-1918—suspend or modify the benefit of any member who is on active service. That particular proviso, which operated during the last war only, is now obsolete and the friendly societies desire to have a new proviso inserted in the Act.

The Bill therefore provides that the committee of management of any society may, subject to the approval of the Registrar, suspend wholly or partly the contributions of any member on active service and similarly the benefits may be suspended wholly or partly. Obviously the managing committee of the societies must have this power to deal with the contributions and benefits quite apart from the rules of the societies themselves. Most of the societies have only biennial meetings for the amendment of rules; others have annual meetings, but in either case, too long a period would elapse if any emergency arose, before it could be dealt with by the societies.

Members will appreciate the necessity for the proposed amendment. If the present war continues for any length of time, and the societies have not the power to suspend or reduce contributions, it is fairly obvious that many of their members enlisting for active service would be likely to cease membership by reason of non-payment of dues. In any case members on active service will receive their full military pay during the period of any incapacity and they will therefore not require sick pay from the societies. In the event of death, a modified death benefit will be paid to dependants, and after the period of war or date of discharge, members will retain all rights and privileges in the society for full benefits.

The societies are taking steps to ensure the provision of medical benefits for wives and children of members on active service, and require this legislation to enable them to give the best possible service to members and dependants. Anything that the committee of management of any society may propose is subject to the approval of the Registrar, whose duty it will be to protect the financial interests of the societies. I feel sure from past experience that this duty will be faithfully carried out. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**HON. J. CORNELL** (South) [10.3]: This Bill is not only necessary, but it is overdue. In regard to a single man, it is to his benefit and to that of the society that the membership should continue, but what inducement would there be to continue membership without a law of this kind? The man who goes on active service has provision made for him under the terms of military enlistment for invalidity, sickness or death.

When a married man enlists the responsibility for him is also taken off the shoulders of the friendly societies. Naturally the friendly societies are very anxious to preserve the assets represented by the younger generation and they can retain that asset by relieving members of the necessity for paying contributions while on active service. This Bill is an improvement on the amendment passed in 1918 because the Registrar of friendly societies will judge what form the relief shall take and how long it shall continue. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

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 35:

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I omitted to mention that this Bill has been introduced at the request of the friendly societies who, by deputation, waited on the Registrar. That accounts for the Bill having been brought down at such short notice. I am pleased at the reception given to the Bill.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

#### *Third Reading.*

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

### **BILL—LOAN £2,137,000.**

#### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 23rd November.

**HON. H. SEDDON** (North-East) [10.7]: A Loan Bill comes forward every year and sets out the policy of the Government with regard to the money it seeks to borrow and, by individual items in the schedule, shows the direction in which the money will be spent. That is obviously the intention so far as the investor is concerned. As a matter of fact, when we deal with Loan Bills, it frequently happens that we divert money from the purposes originally intended and use it in other directions. Under

this Bill, money is diverted from a purpose for which it was originally appropriated and it is to be used for other purposes. To that extent the loan policy of the country might frequently be represented to the investor in a way quite different from that in which it is carried out.

There have been some very peculiar features about our loan policy and I wish to refer tonight to the fact that there has developed in recent years a policy regarding loan expenditure which, although we appreciate the cause producing it, is, in my opinion, going to operate in a direction the reverse of that which was intended. The idea behind this borrowing is that the people who lend the money are asked to make it available for the construction of certain public works. Those works are intended to enable the country to proceed more efficiently with its production of wealth and, to that end, to provide facilities to carry on that production of wealth. But it is always expected that there shall be some sense of responsibility in employing the money, especially with regard to the financial aspects. For example, the investor expects that when money is borrowed in this way, the Government shall engage at any rate that the money shall be so used as to earn interest and sinking fund. In fact, that is the inducement we offer to the people who lend the money, and whether people are lending their private savings or whether a financial institution like an insurance company, is lending its provision for the future, the idea is that the money shall be safeguarded by the Government's ensuring that the work on which it is expended shall earn interest and sinking fund.

Our borrowing involves that requirement as a condition of good faith. We hear a lot of talk today about our national credit. National credit is really nothing more or less than national good faith. Consequently when people talk so glibly about utilising the national credit, they really mean utilising the good name that the nation has established, the good name being involved in meeting the obligations attached to borrowing. But the idea of these people is that a tremendous reserve of wealth is available that can be drawn upon by adopting their peculiar ideas on finance. Those ideas can be indeed from this standpoint: If there is anything in their contention that the coun-

try would benefit by putting those ideas into operation, if there is anything of real value to the public in their ideas, surely it has occurred to them that the banking institutions, which have studied this question and have had experience extending over many years, would not refuse to use that credit if there was not some very sound reason for their action! It would be of no use my going to a banking institution and saying, "This business is merely a book-keeping entry, and by making a book-keeping entry, you can supply me with money that I require to develop my property." By so doing, the banking institutions would be placing in jeopardy the money entrusted to them by the depositors.

When we read the history of banking, we realise that some hundred years ago many of the banks in the Old Country were exploring this very avenue of extended credit. They could see a prospect of great profit in it. What was the result? One bank after another went to the wall. This wonderful scheme of creating credit failed because good faith was not maintained. What was the effect as regards the unfortunate depositor? He suffered very serious privation. The conditions of our borrowing for national purposes depends entirely upon preserving our good faith. When we depart from that principle, we enter not only a very dubious but a very dangerous field. Other members besides myself have referred to the report of the Auditor General on our loan expenditure and the large proportion of the public debt that is not producing interest and sinking fund. We pointed out the effect on the general public of having funded no less than £12,000,000. Governments in the past have spent annually in excess of their revenue and have afterwards converted the deficit into a loan, thus placing on the general community charges that will have to be paid for generations to come. But there are other directions in which our loan expenditure can be questioned. How can we honestly justify the expenditure of money on migration? How can we possibly justify the enormous amount of money poured down the sink known as the L.A.R.? The operation of that fund has been extended year after year since 1914. Men have been carried on that fund from 1914-15 up to the present time. If those people continue for the next 50 years they



will not be able to make a success of their farms, and yet we persist in the idea of spending further loan money in carrying them on through the I.A.B. When we take the tables placed before us in connection with the Budget, we find there is very little money received on account of what is supposed to be return from loan works. On this account no less than £2,000,000 has been made up by the taxpayers of Western Australia. The whole of our taxation does not equal the losses that result from our loan works. Does not this imply the importance of having a committee established somewhat similar to the Mining and Development Migration Commission that was for so many years maintained by the Federal Government in order to examine public works proposals?

Hon. A. Thomson: It saved the Commonwealth millions of pounds.

Hon. H. SEDDON: It saved the Commonwealth and the States useless expenditure that would have amounted to millions of pounds. Take the 3,500-farms scheme and the thousands of pounds spent on it. After the money has been expended we find a report by an expert pointing out the very serious difficulty in regard to provision of water supplies, a difficulty that was going to wreck the scheme. Apart from the burden placed on the taxpayer in meeting the annual losses on these works, there is a still more serious result in the effect that it has on the investor. Hon. members will recall what happened in this State in 1929-30. Those facts had been made known to London, and the result was that Mr. Bruce received a very plain intimation from those who had been finding loan funds for Australia, that the position of affairs in Australia was such that they could no longer recommend their clients to invest in Australian loans. In other words, Australia's credit had gone; and it had gone because of the lack of good faith in not exercising due responsibility in the expenditure of public moneys. The foundation of credit is good faith. Once that is questioned your credit is in danger; but once let that good faith be shown to be lacking, and your credit is gone. What is the result? Upon Mr. Bruce's return the first job he took in hand was the establishment of the conditions underlying the Financial Agreement. He realised, of course, that something would have to be done to help the States. Although they had been responsible for this very unwise expenditure,

he came to their assistance with Commonwealth funds and inaugurated the present system whereby the Commonwealth Government is a contributor towards the sinking funds of the States every year. He also included in the Financial Agreement the conditions which had been repeatedly mentioned in this Chamber, that when moneys are borrowed for the purpose of funding the deficit, those moneys shall carry 4½ per cent sinking fund. The fact that that decision has been set aside by a legal quibble is, in my opinion, simply another blow at our credit.

The reason why I am taking this line of argument is this: In 1930 Western Australia was confronted with a highly serious unemployment problem. That trouble had arisen chiefly for the reason that a very large number of men had been employed year by year by the Government on Government works, and that when the overseas source of loan money dried up the Government was no longer able to employ those men, and they were thrown on the labour market. The greater number of those men were engaged in casual manual work. It was pointed out at the time that this consequence of the Government's policy arose from the idea that instead of moneys being used for the purpose of providing public works which would be sound in their ability to provide interest and sinking fund, the underlying policy was that the Government should simply be desirous of providing employment. That was the primary consideration with regard to Loan Estimates, and the value of the work in which the money was invested was an entirely secondary consideration. I agree, of course, that the Government has responsibility regarding men who are unemployed, and I fully support that idea; but I contend that the Government, instead of making that an excuse for borrowing money, should have met the responsibility through its revenue funds. The effect of that would be that the large number of men who today are living by casual employment would be considerably reduced; but on the other hand, by adopting a sound policy of loan expenditure many of those men would be engaged in skilled occupations. What is only too frequently lost sight of when considering necessary works that are desirable from the standpoint of increasing the efficiency of our people is that although we spend money on materials, the manufactured goods, the

greater part of the cost of those manufactured goods is in turn but labour cost. One has only to keep dinning it further and further back, and one finds that the labour cost is the all-important one. My contention is that if we reverted to the sound principle of Government finance, and adopted the idea that we would first of all expend such moneys as we borrowed in the direction, for example, of providing machines to do the work that the men are now doing, we would enormously increase the efficiency of those men and would be providing further employment for the men who make the machines. I indicated that what happened in 1930 was that the large number of men who were engaged on Government works were thrown out of employment. The Honorary Minister replied to certain remarks of mine on taxation, and pointed out that the Government had to consider the question of employing 7,000 men. I have the Minister's own words here—

The figures presented by hon. member constitute a summary of certain aspects of the Public Accounts, but the hon. member appears to forget that the Government has endeavoured to find employment for approximately 7,000 men; and that is the crux of the situation.

As a matter of fact, I was far from ignoring that aspect; my whole argument during the years with regard to loan Bills has been that the Government's attitude towards loan work has been based on a wrong principle. I contend again that the best way of expending loan money is to spend it in a way that gets the best and the most efficient results.

Another result, of course, of our borrowing and unwise loan expenditure has been increased taxation. When we realise the enormous sums that we have to find year by year in the way of taxation and realise that so large a proportion of that is due to the fact that loan works constitute a constantly increasing burden on the community, we say, and I think we say rightly, that sooner or later we will get to the dead end. The natural result will be that an enormous number of casual manual labourers will once more be thrown on the market. The Honorary Minister had an experience of this phase only yesterday. The Minister himself made use of this argument. He said to the men who presented themselves and demanded Government work: "There is plenty of work in the country, on the farms. Go to it." And the men refused to go. Why did they refuse?

Because they got better conditions on relief work than they got on the farms. There the Minister was faced with one important result of the Government's attitude in regard to loan expenditure.

The Chief Secretary made a significant statement regarding the Government's attitude—

Mr. Seddon must know that this State could not possibly exist without loans, would be unable to carry on without loans.

I do not admit that. There was a period when this State had to face the problem of carrying on without loans, and the position was highly serious then. If the present situation continues a little longer, the State will again have to face the position of carrying on without loans. The Government's policy will intensify the position if it still persists in charging to Loan, works that it cannot justify from the standard of interest and sinking fund. The important thing is that severe as the depression was in 1930-31, the lesson of that depression was not learnt; the attitude of Governments was that as fast as they could get money made available in the Australian market—the overseas market being closed—so fast did they spend it. As I have said, the future holds some very serious problems for us. The most serious problem of Governments is when they are confronted by men who have been taught to look to the Government for regular employment. On the other hand there is no reason why that body of men should be as large as it is. With the vacancies that have been created by men who have enlisted in the A.I.F., there must be opportunities in the field of commercial enterprise for men now relying on the Government for sustenance. If the Government desires to establish increased employment on a permanent basis, it must amend its loan policy to that standpoint.

Much has been said of the intention of the Government to develop secondary industries. In fact, it has embarked upon that policy and is finding out for itself the validity of some of the very serious objections that have been offered in the past by people who had money of their own to invest or could obtain it from financial institutions for the purpose of establishing enterprises in this State. Those people, versed in the profitable employment of money, have shown no willingness to embark on secondary

industries here. On the other hand, they have plainly stated that the disabilities existing here are such that they are not prepared to risk the money available to them on enterprises in Western Australia until there is an entirely different industrial outlook.

There has been a great deal said about the ability to find money to remedy many social evils. When one realises what is involved in war, he can discover the explanation of that apparent paradox. When a country is at war every effort has to be made to secure a successful issue. Everything has to be subordinated to that end. In other words, the wealth of the country has to be utilised to the extent of winning the war. The alternative is to find the country in the position in which China finds itself today as a result of Japanese aggression and in which the Poles find themselves as a result of German aggression; the position in which the whole wealth of the country is lost to its owners, being taken over by the conquerors. Furthermore, when a country is vanquished the industrial conditions established so painfully year by year are lost by one blow. The consequence is that the people who prided themselves on the conditions under which they were working, find themselves reduced to absolute slavery. It is to avoid those conditions—reduction to slavery and penury—that a Government demands, and rightly demands, that all available sources of wealth should be made use of. That is the difference between finding money for war purposes and finding money for purposes of peace. When the world becomes more converted to Christianity, it will be unnecessary to take such drastic steps, and we shall approach social questions from a different viewpoint.

To refer now to some of the items in the Bill. Certain items illustrate my argument. There is an amount provided for extension of sewerage schemes in the metropolitan area. That project is undoubtedly very desirable, but one cannot help thinking that there are other directions in which the Government might spend its money more profitably.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: That is a reproductive enterprise.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Yes, it is reproductive from the standpoint that the persons who put in sewerage extensions repay to the

Government the money advanced. It is reproductive because those people are able to pay rates. I would like to ask the hon. member, however, how many would be able to pay rates if it were not for the productive capacity of the country. The fact remains that they are able to pay their way because the wealth is being produced by people battling outback, people who have to live under primitive conditions with regard to sanitation. It is reproductive because of the production of the country. What happened in 1932? It was not a question of being able to pay rates then. Scores of people lost their ability to pay because they lost their employment and they lost their employment because there was no money available to employ them. That was due to the vicious system that was set up throughout the years of providing relief work of an unproductive character from Government funds.

There is another sum set aside in the Bill for the development of agriculture. I notice that the Minister said that this sum was to be expended in reconditioning abandoned holdings.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What is the amount?

Hon. H. SEDDON: Fifty thousand pounds according to the Bill but the Minister referred to the fact that a sum of £100,000 would be required to finance the project. Let us look into the matter. These holdings were taken up and money was advanced to the people securing them to enable them to clear the properties. The money was advanced through the Agricultural Bank. In other words, borrowed money was made available through the Agricultural Bank to those people. They cleared their holdings but were unable to carry on. At this point I would ask hon. members not to forget that much of the depression in our primary industries is due to the fact that there is no proportion between the wages or the conditions obtaining in the city compared with those obtaining in the primary industries, and a large proportion of the burden that has come upon the primary producers and placed them in a position in which they cannot pay their way is due to the fact that the conditions in the city are so much better and add to their costs. We find that this money was expended on the areas from which the holders eventually walked off. The land then reverted to nature. Now the Government proposes to spend further loan money to recondition

those holdings. That is an example of the way in which our loan money is being expended.

The Chief Secretary: Do you suggest that the land should be allowed entirely to revert to nature?

Hon. H. SEDDON: Suppose the holdings are reconditioned, what chance does the Minister think persons will have of utilising them?

The Honorary Minister: They are being sold every day.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Are people taking them over and expecting to make a success of them with the price of wheat at what it is today?

The Chief Secretary: This has nothing to do with wheat.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I understand the Government is writing off a considerable amount of the money previously expended and if these people make a failure, the additional money will also be written off.

The Honorary Minister: There is no chance of their making a failure.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The hon. member is very optimistic. I cannot think of any better way of undermining the credit of this country—and credit is another word for good faith—than adhering to a policy of this kind. There is another item that provides for short-term advances to meet expenditure pending the receipt of revenue; in other words, money advanced to the Government to enable it to carry on and make a deficit each year. The Government has stated that it expects a deficit of £32,000 this year, but it takes the precaution of providing in this Bill for an advance of £150,000 to balance the Budget.

The Chief Secretary: This House has increased the probable deficit by 100 per cent.

Hon. H. SEDDON: All I have to say is that the loss of that Bill was due to the fact that the Government neglected to educate the people instrumental in securing its defeat. I have opposed loan Bills for some years, and must adopt a similar attitude on this occasion, because the whole loan policy of the country is such that we are simply undermining our credit. We are confronted by a position that forecasts not a mere temporary condition of war but a permanent condition of war so far as the British Empire is concerned. Consequently we shall not be able to continue borrowing money year after year. Loan money will not be available even for

what could be regarded as sound purposes because it will all be required for carrying out a policy of defence.

I have spoken at length and reiterated statements I have made previously, largely in answer to a remark of the Minister the other day with reference to the Government's idea of loan expenditure. I have endeavoured to show that that idea starts from the wrong angle and has a great deal to do with the financial position the Government finds itself in from year to year. I have tried to drive home to the people of this State who are looking to the Government for succour and support important facts that sooner or later they will have to face. One of those facts is that the only way to obtain permanent and profitable employment is for people to engage in commercial enterprise on sound lines, and to produce the many articles we require in our daily lives. There is no reason why in a young country like this, under a wise developmental policy, the standard of living should not be very much higher than it is. The State could be established on sound lines if the Government would have regard to the elementary principles of finance that have guided successful enterprise in the past.

**HON L. CRAIG** (South-West) [10.44]: I desire to devote only a short time to the Loan Bill. I wish to speak about money allotted for water supplies and agriculture, including drainage and irrigation, in the South-West districts. The expenditure of this money from Loan funds has been criticised by Mr. Seddon. First of all, that is definitely a work that should be carried out with loan moneys. Secondly it must be admitted that the Government is faced with an unemployment problem that it has to solve. If unemployment is recognised as a permanent condition, it should be financed partly out of revenue. The revenue of the country is not sufficient without very greatly increased taxation. If work is to be carried out from loan funds at the present time, and the price of most primary products being so low that there is only one part of the State in which loan money can be expended, namely, in the safer and heavier rainfall districts, where the Government does propose to spend it. One of our difficulties in those districts is the production of butter and dairy products in the summer time. In the winter we are producing

our full requirements, and very often have a surplus. In the summer we are still not producing the requirements of the State, and are importing butter from the Eastern States. To overcome the difficulty we must produce green grass in the summer, and the only way to do that is by the introduction of extensive irrigation works. There is no other way. Huge sums of money are being sent to the other States for a commodity we should be able to produce locally. The only way in which to do that is by the expenditure of loan moneys on irrigation works.

The Government is to be congratulated on spending money that is reproductive. The schemes themselves will probably show a loss, but indirectly will return good profits. I would point to two similar districts within a few miles of each other, one with an irrigation scheme and the other without one. The land and the conditions are somewhat similar. Three or four years ago, I obtained the railway revenue figures for the two districts. The revenue from one railway station was £2,000, and from the other £20,000. That was due to closer settlement in the one district and increased production brought about by the introduction of irrigation. The works proposed are the extension of the Harvey Weir. They are to be built above the present site, and will have a capacity of 12,000,000,000 gallons. It will, I think, irrigate about 12,000 acres, and seeing that the average irrigable area of a farm is about one third, the weir will bring about 36,000 acres within the scheme. Is it not better to increase production in an area that is good to live in, where roads are constructed, the railway already built, where schools are provided, and no expenditure under those headings is necessary? Surely that is a good work. If by the expenditure of a comparatively small sum of loan money we can put 10,000 people where today there are only 1,000, is that not a good work and a reproductive one?

Hon. A. Thomson: Do you suggest that the expenditure will bring another 10,000 people to the district?

Hon. L. CRAIG: It will increase the population almost tenfold.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: That is only a figure of speech.

Hon. L. CRAIG: A small place like Harvey has 250 children at school. A few

years ago Harvey was almost only a siding. Irrigation work has tremendously increased the population. Waroona was nothing but a siding, but the irrigation works have greatly developed the district, and induced Nestle's Milk Co. to open a factory there, because it is possible to get milk in the district all the year round. To ensure continuity of supplies there must be green grass. It is difficult to carry on dairying in the summer without green feed, and the introduction of irrigation ensures that. Waroona is quite an extensive place today, and in the last five years has developed almost into a town.

The Chief Secretary: And it is still growing.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Buildings are going up there every month. The people have their own electric light plant, there is a new road board office, a new hall, and the Bank of New South Wales has put up a new building. The Nestle's company is exporting from Waroona to Victoria over 50 tons of condensed milk per week, while the milk passing through the factory totals over 5,000 gallons per day. That is due entirely to the wise and careful expenditure of loan money. If it is possible to do that at Waroona and Harvey, it should be possible to do it elsewhere. There is a sale for these products at a profitable price, though not an unduly high price. Is it not good to use loan money on works of this nature when they ensure a large population being carried, and people being able to live in good centres under healthy conditions and provided with all the facilities of civilisation? I commend the Government for the expenditure of money in all directions where definite good is going to be done, and where healthy and happy people will be brought to live under good conditions. Mr. Seddon criticised the item dealing with the development of agriculture. We have to face a problem with regard to single sustenance men.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Relief workers.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The "C" class men are not easy to employ. Many of them are not fit for work, and numbers are incapable of doing a full day's work. They have to be fed and clothed, nevertheless. The most healthy occupation to give them is in the country where the climate is good, and in a district where the work they do will be of some value. I do not suggest that the

money expended will be fully reproductive, and work of that class should be paid for out of revenue. The problem is a permanent one. It will not be possible to get interest on the money expended, but these people must be employed, and must be employed in a decent district. Years ago the Government spent a lot of money on the partial clearing of blocks in the group areas. Many of the blocks were abandoned, and suckers grew up as thick as is the hair on a cat's back.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: That was a catastrophe!

Hon. L. CRAIG: So thick were the suckers that one could hardly see the land. It is easier to chop through suckers three inches thick than to cut down trees 18 inches thick. Today there is a definite sale for that land. I would not be exaggerating if I said that seven group farms per week were being disposed of with very substantial cash deposits.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Who are the buyers?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Many Slavs and Italians, but some settlers have come from the Eastern States.

The Chief Secretary: Many have come from the Eastern States.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Admittedly the original cost price of the blocks has been greatly reduced, but that is neither here nor there. It is better to sell a farm at 50 per cent. of its cost than to have it overgrown with suckers so that no one will occupy it. These farms are in areas that are producing saleable commodities. Four commodities are being produced—I refer to the areas around Pemberton—namely, tobacco, hops, butterfat and pigs. Is this not good work when we have to deal with the unemployment problem? Men have to be kept at work, even if we do not get full value for what we pay them. Can members suggest anything that is better than that? I know of nothing better for that class of man than to clear up neglected holdings that can be put to good use and sold. I will quote an instance. Some few years ago a farm was abandoned in that district. A Rumanian asked to be allowed to rent nine acres of the farm and the house itself, and the department allowed him to do so at the rate of £1 per week for the house and land. This man put in a tobacco crop, and I had the opportunity of seeing it. It was the best crop I had ever

seen, and I was told by the experts it was excellent. I went into the house where the tobacco was stacked, and asked the expert to ascertain for me what the crop was worth. Bear in mind that this tobacco was grown on an abandoned farm, the owner of which had walked off. Subsequently the expert informed me that the gross return received by the grower for his crop was £3,100.

Hon. A. Thomson: Not many men are making that sum.

Hon. L. CRAIG: It is undesirable that they should do so, but that indicates what can be done by growing marketable commodities. The tobacco industry in this State is gradually developing, and we are just now beginning to know how to grow that type of crop.

Hon. A. Thomson: Our own people will not tackle it, but the Slavs do.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Our people will tackle it in time, but meanwhile the Slavs are doing the work well. Every pound of tobacco grown and used in this State prevents the importation of that amount. Surely that is a good thing. People get used to a certain flavour of tobacco and will smoke no other. We have been smoking American tobacco and have got used to it. I feel satisfied that in time cigarette and similar tobaccos smoked in Australia will be 100 per cent. of Commonwealth origin. Why do people smoke Egyptian cigarettes? If a person goes to Egypt, although he has been accustomed to smoke Virginian cigarettes, before long he takes to the Egyptian product. When I went to Egypt I did so, and when I left I took 500 to England. I smoked about 100, but then I reverted to Virginian cigarettes. However, I am sure that if we produce good quality tobacco, very soon nearly all that is smoked within the Commonwealth will be Australian grown. Surely it is advisable to spend money in the country where people live. That is what we should aim at.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: And the Government would secure taxation.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Of course, the men would pay the tax imposed.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: Look at the income tax that would be paid.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Is it not advisable for the Government to spend money where there is unemployment in a district such as that to which I refer? I do not think the Government should be subjected to criticism because

it has spent a lot of money in the South-West. We must help people to live in the country if they wish to do so. They should not be encouraged to go there simply to get what they can out of it and then leave the area to live elsewhere. How many men go to the far eastern wheat belt because they desire to live there? On the other hand, how many go there hoping to make money and then get out? I should say 98 per cent. of them are imbued with the latter desire.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Not many of them get out with a fortune.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Our object should be to get people to live in the country because they want to, not for what they can get out of it. For that reason, I think expenditure in congenial parts of the State is more advisable. I live in the South-West because I like the country. The more we can get to do that in a similar frame of mind, the better it will be for the State. Expenditure on irrigation works and the improvement of abandoned farms is advisable and should be encouraged.

**HON. E. H. ANGELO** (North) [11.2]: I am in accord with the views expressed by Mr. Craig and have no fault to find with expenditure along the lines he has indicated. The present Government, as well as past Governments, derived a bitter lesson from the expenditure of huge sums of money in the south without sufficient knowledge regarding the productive capacity of the land. Today the position is different. We have had our lesson and gained from our experience. I am certain that any expenditure of that nature in the future will be more satisfactory. We must not lose sight of the fact that money spent on irrigation works means that ultimately the Government will derive revenue from the people in the form of taxation. In those circumstances, we cannot say that expenditure under that heading is unproductive. As a member representing the northern portions of the State, I find that the schedule contains one item only that affects the North. It relates to additions and improvements to jetties, tramways and rolling stock. Certainly that part of the State is mentioned in connection with water supplies, but I do not expect that our share of that allocation will be more than £5,000. In fact, I do not think the North-West will see the expenditure of more than about £15,000

out of the total loan expenditure of £2,137,000 mentioned in the Bill. I was interested to note in the report of the Harbours and Lights Department a reference indicating that last year the excess of revenue over expenditure earned on jetties, harbours and tramways at Carnarvon, Hedland, Broome and Derby was £6,168. If we consider the expenditure of £10,000 this year we shall probably show a return of about 60 per cent. on the money spent on the work I have mentioned.

I rose to participate in the debate for the purpose of begging the Government or at least of asking them seriously to consider urging the Federal Government to take over the northern portion of Western Australia above the 20th parallel, which strikes the coast at about Condon. Year by year, the position in the North gets worse. There are fewer people, cattle, sheep and horses there than 30 years ago, and that is proved by statistics.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Largely on account of the drought.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: That has affected the position only during the last few years.

Hon. L. Craig: But you have a bigger debt!

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: Yes, but that is not the point I wish to make. What concerns me is the danger to Australia and the Empire in having a huge territory vacant that would support a tremendous number of people. That area is now lying absolutely unproductive and unpopulated. That part of Australia represents the weakest link in the chain of British Empire defences. I feel sure I am expressing the view of every member that knows the North-West. For several years I and my colleagues have strongly advocated that the Government should approach the Federal Government—I do not say it should jump at any arrangement without giving full consideration to the proposition—with a request that it make an offer for taking over the North-West.

Hon. T. Moore: Why are the people leaving that part of the State?

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: Because they have no money or Government help enabling them to develop their holdings. The expenditure of a tremendous sum will be necessary, but as irrigation is making the South-West, so it will make the North-West. Since I spoke on this sub-

ject 12 months ago, the danger of the empty North has increased considerably. Only during the last week or so we read in the Press a suggestion by prominent Japanese that they should take advantage of the present war to secure a hold on the Dutch East Indies. From that part to Western Australia would be a mere stepping stone. When we consider that Java, which is 300 miles long by about 55 miles wide, has a population of 34,000,000, members may ask themselves of what use would be that area to a country like Japan with its teeming millions crying out for land. On the other hand, no territory in the world would suit the Japanese better than the north of Australia. The information supplied by experts indicates that, with proper irrigation and management, the Kimberleys could carry a huge population, and if we are to keep the country for the British race it must be populated quickly. The Government must attend to that task. As the State Government cannot develop the resources of the North, why not ask the Federal Government to do so? If the Federal authorities cannot find the necessary money, then the British people will. We should secure migrants of the right type. There are plenty of people in European countries, people with a knowledge of agriculture and its requirements, who would be only too glad to leave Europe and settle in the north of Australia. The position is so serious that it demands prompt attention. For that reason I felt I must again ask the State Government to give the matter further consideration.

**HON. G. B. WOOD** (East) [11.11]: The one matter to which I desire to make reference relates to the unemployment situation. We have been told a lot about the 7,000 unemployed that the Government has on its hands. Has the Government faced up to the position and endeavoured to find work for those men in the country districts? The "West Australian" daily has advertisements offering country jobs at wages from 50s. and keep down to 30s. a week, according to the qualifications demanded. Nevertheless men are not willing to take those positions. On the other hand, any road board can communicate with the Public Works Department and secure an almost unlimited number of men for tree-clearing along country roads. That work is quite useful and will help in

road-grading operations, but cannot be regarded as so essential as harvesting. We find it practically impossible to get men to undertake that work although a thousand men could be absorbed in such operations. Those engaged on tree-clearing work along the roads receive the basic wage, but many farmers could not afford to pay that rate. Surely it would be better for the Government, as a temporary expedient, to subsidise the farmers who, if they provided £2 a week and keep, could receive from the Government a subsidy of £1 a week. I offer that suggestion to the Government and urge Ministers to consider the payment of a temporary subsidy to farmers. I see no reason why that could not be done.

The Chief Secretary: And the subsidy would be paid to whom?

**HON. G. B. WOOD**: To the farmers, so that they could pay the basic wage to the employees.

**HON. J. Nicholson**: Would that not be a mistake?

**HON. G. B. WOOD**: Such a system might be abused in some instances,

The Chief Secretary: It was abused when it was tried.

**HON. G. B. WOOD**: But formerly the subsidy was not granted along the lines I suggest. In that instance the Government provided all the money, but I suggest that the farmers themselves should pay £2 a week and keep, the Government providing only £1 a week to bring the wage up to that paid to basic wage earners, in that the farm employees would receive £3 in cash and an additional 22s. 6d. a week in the form of keep. Another matter of importance to rural interests is the fact that the Defence Department has called up many sons of farmers just when harvesting was to be undertaken. I do not know if the Government has made any protest to the defence authorities. Many road boards and other organisations have done so. It seems extraordinary that on the 14th November, the Defence Department should call up the sons who were required to go into camp, leaving their parents to carry on harvesting operations on their own. That would have been all right had other labour been available, but it was not. I wanted to make the suggestion to the Government as to the subsidy.



**HON. E. H. H. HALL** (Central) [11.15]: I listened with great interest to Mr. Seddon, and I hope he will not take it as a reflection on him when I say that I listened with even greater pleasure to the member who followed him. Mr. Seddon was rather pessimistic tonight. He should realise that the Government of the day cannot afford to allow all the abandoned farms of this State to go, as it were, "to pot." I think the hon. member had in mind, when he was referring to abandoned farms, the abandoned farms in the wheat areas. He was corrected by an interjection to the effect that the money it is proposed to spend on abandoned farms would be expended on what could more correctly be termed abandoned group holdings. It was with great pleasure that I listened to Mr. Craig's roscate and optimistic story. It made those of us who come from the northern districts feel as though the South-West was a much more desirable part of the State. Certainly the South-West has an excellent rainfall. As the hon. member was speaking I was wondering whether or not it would be an ideal spot for our single men and whether they might not become web-footed if they settled there. I well remember an occasion when a Minister came to Geraldton and advised some of our men to settle in the South-West. I do not blame them for having refused to go there, because many of them would have died of pneumonia or at least become very sick. The climate is entirely different from that of the North; and it was altogether unreasonable to expect them to go to the South-West, where they would have to become acclimatised.

I was very pleased indeed to hear Mr. Angelo speak upon a subject on which I have had the temerity—I use the word advisedly—to address the House. My opinion is that we should not only voice what we consider to be the wants of the people of our provinces; we should visualise the interests of the State as a whole. I support the hon. member's advocacy of the policy that the State should give serious consideration to an endeavour to get rid of our fine asset which is known as the great North-West.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: Only the Kimberleys.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Very well. If I had my way, I would give away all that part of Western Australia north of Carnarvon. It would relieve the Government, which we are told is hard up, of two Govern-

ment enterprises which have swallowed up I do not know how many millions of money—the Wyndham Meat Works and the State Shipping Service. Would it not be splendid in this time of financial stress to get rid of two big losing propositions like those?

To look at the happier side of the picture, I certainly think that the Federal Government has the money required to open up and develop the great North-West, in much the same way as the Mitchell Government opened up and developed the South-West. Sir James Mitchell's name will ever be associated with that great work. Only last night as I was coming to Perth in the train, one of the smartest business men of Perth told me that what Sir James did for the South-West would for ever be held up against him. Tonight we have listened to a member who is not without some perspicacity. Since he has been in this Chamber he has been credited with much knowledge of the subjects upon which he speaks. He told us tonight that he lived in the South-West not because he was forced to live there, but because he liked it. He told us of the money that could be made in the South-West and that people would be well advised to go there and take up dairying and tobacco growing.

Hon. L. Craig: And get wet feet.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: They would have to take a risk. As I say, a business man told me on the train last night that it would for ever be held up against Sir James Mitchell that he was responsible for wasting millions of money in endeavouring to open up the South-West.

Hon. L. Craig: I did not say the money was wisely expended in the first place.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: The hon. member is surely not trying to spoil a good speech! He said things were coming right and I think he had justification for making that statement. But let us get back to the North-West. As Mr. Angelo pointed out, the opening up of the South-West has cost the taxpayers of the State a huge sum of money. If they cannot pay it, then it will not be the first time in history that people have been beaten by circumstances over which they have no control. I take it to be our honest endeavour to pay; but if we cannot, it will be because we are unable to pay, not because we will not. If it has taken millions of money to open up the South-West, many more millions will be re-

quired to open up the North-West. That great area is today practically lying idle. North-West members have told us—we have heard it for some years—that fewer people were now living in the North-West than were residing there years ago. An interjector asked why. Everybody knows. One of the main reasons is the tariff imposed by the Commonwealth, which makes it difficult for a person to earn a living in the North-West. Mr. Angelo has considerable knowledge of the North-West. We can give him credit for that, as we can give Mr. Craig credit for considerable knowledge of the South-West. Mr. Angelo says the people have been driven out of the North-West. One of the reasons, I repeat, is the tariff policy of the Commonwealth. Therefore the Commonwealth should find the money necessary to open up and develop that huge territory. I rose to speak because the Government, with some justification, is continually asking for criticism of a constructive nature. What I am about to say perhaps may not be regarded as constructive, unless one takes the long view. The Bill provides for an expenditure of £4,000 upon native hospitals, depots, etc.; and for an expenditure of £1,000 upon native cattle stations, improvements and equipment. So I am in order in referring to the money we are spending as well as to money that ought to be spent on providing native settlements. I wonder if the following figures are new to hon. members! I have here the report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs for the year ended the 30th June, 1938. It deals with the two years 1936-37 and 1937-38. I now claim to be speaking on a subject about which I know something, and that is the number of half-castes in Geraldton, where I live. In 1936-37, according to the Commissioner's report, there were no half-castes in Geraldton and therefore no expenditure was incurred for the maintenance of half-castes. In the following year, 1937-38, there were four half-castes. The sum of £20 8s. 2d. was spent for stores and provisions and the sum of £3 5s. 10d. for meat for those half-castes, or a total of £23 14s.—not a very large item for the year. Hon. members will be considerably surprised, as I was, to learn from the report that during August last the amount expended for the support of half-castes who are classed as indigent was £17. There were two families consisting of 14 people; five children in each

family. That indicates how the number in Geraldton is increasing. I know this is nothing new to members from the Great Southern district, where there are hundreds of half-castes. It is, however, something new to Geraldton. These people are congregating in and around the town. When I spoke on the subject on a previous occasion. I tried to drive home the fact that some members were ill-informed on this point. There were several interjections that the amounts I quoted were for rations supplied to aged and indigent natives. That may have been so on some occasions, but on the occasion to which I referred the money was expended for supplies to young, able-bodied men. For some four or five years one of them had been employed on relief work. When relief workers obtained the basic wage, he also received it. He was living as a native and getting the wages of a white man. Some weeks ago he saw me and complained that he had been put off relief work and he requested me to get him reinstated. I called at the department, and was informed that the man had been stood down because he was a half-caste. I then said that he had been employed for a number of years and asked who was responsible for the change. The reply was that the department was endeavouring to weed out these men. The half-caste is now living in idleness in Geraldton. He is well able to do a day's work with any white man. So helpless is the Government and the department controlling natives that they are feeding this man and scores of other half-castes who are living in idleness. Can anyone imagine anything more detrimental to the morals of those people? Then we talk about the expenditure. When this is occurring in one town, am I not justified in concluding that it is occurring elsewhere?

Hon. J. J. Holmes: We have nothing of the kind up North.

Hon. F. H. H. HALL: It might not be so hard to deal with the full-blooded native, but the problem of the half-caste is certainly very difficult, though that is not sufficient justification for the Government's evading its responsibility in the matter. I feel it my duty to bring before the Government this instance of its failure and neglect. These people have a certain amount of white blood in them and we are not doing anything to give them a chance. I know the argument has been used that the Common

wealth Government should assist us. Every time we ask for anything that will cost money, we are told the matter is one that the Federal Government should undertake. Perhaps the sooner the Commonwealth takes us over, lock, stock and barrel, the better it will be. Then we shall not have to consider the building of public offices or the completing of Parliament House. The Government should give attention to the half-castes and endeavour to provide settlements where these people might at least raise some of the food they require and so give them a chance to get away from contaminating influences in the towns. I support the second reading.

**HON. T. MOORE** (Central) [11.32]: One matter I wish to refer to is the amount of working capital provided for the Agricultural Bank. I do not know how it compares with the amount provided in previous years, but the wheat farmers, in my opinion, will need more assistance than they have done for many years. In saying that I speak advisedly. The price of wheat is ridiculously low, and we have reached the stage when business firms will not be prepared to continue granting liens. Last year some of the firms could not possibly continue to finance the farmers by way of lien, and the Agricultural Bank had to take them over and grant them sustenance. The need in that direction is likely to be even greater during this financial year. Although the wheat industry is depressed it should not be neglected. This is only a passing phase, and we certainly do not want the same thing to happen in our wheat areas as Mr. Craig said happened in the South-West. Evidently in the South-West an attempt was made to force the pace. We must realise that in raising primary products, we shall have seasons when prices are high and seasons when prices are low. The farmers have always had to contend with this movement of prices.

Because the price of wheat has fallen so low, we are likely to have more people leaving the land. I hope this will not be permitted for want of a little assistance on the part of the Government. I feel sure that most of the land our farmers are holding now is well worth holding. Certainly I do not want to see any man leave any farm that I know in the Central Province, and I have travelled that province fairly extensively.

I believe there is a living to be made on all those farms, but I also know something of the burden of debt that has been piled up, and unless something is done to brighten the outlook for the farmer, he is likely to leave the land. For a long time past I have been in contact with the farmers in my province and many of them see no hope whatever ahead. We have been told that a mistake was made by the Menzies Government in that when the one set of people had two products for sale—wheat and wool—one that was wanted and the other not likely to be wanted, we should have grouped the two and thus would have received a better deal. A well-informed visitor to Australia a little while ago expressed himself astounded at our modesty in accepting such a price for our wool. Nobody would have been hurt had the price of wool been raised by 6d., so that the farmers would have had a chance to change over from wheat to wool, because the firms deal in both wheat and wool and would have assisted the farmers in this trying period.

**Hon. A. Thomson:** The trouble is that the farmers were not asked what they would take for their produce.

**Hon. T. MOORE:** The whole business was put through hurriedly and a great mistake was made. I am wondering whether there is any possibility of the mistake being rectified.

**Hon. L. Craig:** It is subject to revision every 12 months.

**Hon. T. MOORE:** Britain has agreed to take our wool for the duration of the war and one year after, and therefore I think we should stand out for a better price next year. Such an increase would be of material benefit because it would give the struggling settler a ray of hope. Today he has no hope at all. Quite a lot of ill-informed people in the cities are finding fault with the unfortunate farmer who is threatening to resort to direct action in order to call attention to his position. I hope that no harsh thoughts will be entertained against the farmers. Though some people might object to the methods they have adopted, theirs was a desperate situation and, we have been told, desperate ills need desperate remedies. I hope the Government will provide as much money as possible in order to retain on the land all the farmers in my areas. Most of the weeding out that was necessary in the marginal areas has been accomplished, and most of

those who are now there are on farms well worth carrying on. I hope that an attempt will be made to hold in cultivation all the land that is now occupied. I know how quickly a farm deteriorates when the owner leaves it. Once the trouble in Europe is over I am inclined to think that in the next run wheat may be on top again and the rush will be to get back to farms rather than leave them.

Hon. G. B. Wood: What about the interest bill?

Hon. T. MOORE: We must make provision for that by assisting the Agricultural Bank to keep the farmers going. I know the institution has not been expecting to get interest for many years. We should give the bank all the working capital it requires, and we may be sure it will do a fair thing by the growers. For a long time I have heard no word of complaint against the bank, which is giving a fair deal to all the settlers with whom I come in contact. I have in my possession a letter asking me to convey the thanks of one settler to the bank for what it has done for him. The institution is doing a good job, and we should provide it with all the working capital required for the next year or two.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West—in reply) [11.41]: Many members have exercised their rights in dealing with this Bill, and passed remarks whether or not they were relevant to any clause in the measure. I do not object to that procedure.

**THE PRESIDENT**: It is the practice that on Bills of this nature discussion shall not be limited.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY**: I hope members will not expect me to reply to all the questions they have asked, or deal with all the suggestions they have offered at this stage. One or two important questions have been asked and these warrant some notice. In such instances I will do as I have done in past years, give the information asked for as early as possible.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You gave us some useful information afterwards last year.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY**: It is impossible for the Leader of the House, when dealing with loan expenditure, to have knowledge of all the details, but so long as he is prepared to obtain the information required and to give it to members as early

as possible, that should meet the position. Mr. Bolton spoke about the Bundibup farm. This is a property of 2,269 acres on the east side of the South-West railway line about two miles south of Wokalup. It was secured by the Government for the establishment of a farm colony for mental deficients, and will also be utilised as a research station by the Agricultural Department. The fears of Mr. Bolton that the Government may make a loss on its new farming property appear to be groundless. The property consists of 1,534 acres of cultivable land, 735 acres of grazing land, and is situated in a progressive district. Mr. Bolton also referred to the question of rolling stock. The Bill makes provision for £50,000, and the Loan Estimates for £60,000. The sum of £60,000 has been allocated for the continuation of the rolling stock problem. The sum of £5,000 has been earmarked for the super-heating of ten locomotives, and £49,000 has been provided towards the construction of 10 new "S." class locomotives. A certain amount of money will be applied in constructing covered vans of the "Da." and "Db." classes. Such expenditure is necessary if our railways are to be efficiently maintained. Mr. Thomson spoke about electricity supplies. He wanted to know what the amounts in question included. I find that the provision in the Loan Estimates is for the extension of the electricity supply system to meet the demand for current, namely, ring main feeders, additional power and switch gear, and minor works. These are essential to the system. As the demand for electricity increases and our mains are pushed further afield, additional expenditure of this character must be incurred. The hon. member also wanted information about the Loan Bill provision of £70,000 for pine planting, the purchase of land, and forest regeneration. This includes the expenditure of £50,000 on forestry works that are reproductive, and on which "A" class workers will be employed; and £20,000 for the employment of "C" class relief workers who are, as far as is practicable, employed on effective work. As already explained, the amount asked for under the current year's Estimates will be utilised for a continuation of the work of regenerating cut-over forests, the extension of fire control organisation to protect virgin stands of karri and jarrah,

and the extension of mallet and pine plantations with the consequent employment of approximately 200 "A" class men, and 80 "C" class men throughout the year. That can be classed as reproductive work.

One or two points raised by Mr. Thomson I referred to when introducing the Bill, and gave a fair resumé of the details. Mr. Thomson also wanted to know about the loan provision for public buildings. Provision has been made for further expenditure in respect of the Technical College (a new building); additions to the mental hospital; the erection of, additions and improvements to schools generally, including new equipment; police stations, court houses and public hospitals generally, including sewerage, and grants to the hospital fund to meet the cost of hospital construction generally. The loan provision is £40,000. Mr. Thomson raised a point about State quarries. The provision on the Loan Bill of £3,000 is for a recoup to loan suspense (£2,646) and the estimated unexpended balance of authorisation on the 30th June, 1940 (£354). Mr. Thomson also referred to roads and bridges throughout the State, including feeders to railways and grants to local authorities. The Loan Bill provision is £325,000. Provision on the Loan Estimates is £267,678, which includes a recoup to Loan suspense of £117,678. The balance of the provision, namely £150,000, has been earmarked for further assistance to local authorities—under the co-operative scheme whereby the department provides labour and the local authorities all other expenditure—and roads and bridges generally not included under the Federal Aid Roads Scheme.

I may refer to the remarks of Mr. Seddon and Mr. Craig. I shall not be stretching a point when I say that we have all listened at all times to Mr. Seddon's observations on matters of this kind with a great deal of interest, and that tonight we listened to Mr. Craig with especial interest. I may describe the two addresses as one being the practical side of the business and the other the theoretical side. I thank Mr. Craig for his remarks and the support which he offers the Government in connection with Loan expenditure in the South-Western portion of the State. Undoubtedly there are facing us problems that will become worse as the years go by, more particularly in view of the

fact that we are in a state of war, and that nobody can predict what the next few years may have in store. But, as I have remarked on previous occasions during this session, there never was a time in Western Australia's history when the Government of the day was more particular in regard to the expenditure of its funds, whether from Loan or Revenue. It has been our desire and endeavour at all times to expend loan moneys on works which would be reproductive at least to some extent. There are many works which, though they cannot be classed as reproductive to any extent, yet are necessary and in some cases essential.

Hon. T. Moore: And indirectly may return great benefit.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Undoubtedly. If we take the long view, I suppose, all these works are highly valuable from the aspect of the development of the State. While our position at present is not enviable, I at least hope, notwithstanding war conditions, that the time will arrive some day, sooner or later, when returns from our primary industries will be much better than they have been during the last year or two. If we only reached the stage of our primary producers receiving good prices for their products, many of our major problems would rapidly disappear. I am inclined to think that if today we were in a position of remunerative prices being received by our primary producers, there would not be so much criticism of the Government's proposals regarding the expenditure of this money. I have made notes of other important questions which have been raised and to which I am not now replying. Regarding these I will endeavour to do as I have done in past years, and supply the information later.

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.

Clauses 1 to 6—agreed to.

First Schedule:

Hon. A. THOMSON: I query the amount of £73,000 in connection with forestry mainly to point out that the revenue received by the Forests Department last year was £145,723 and its expenditure £28,000; so that ap-

proximately £117,000 was being taken into revenue.

The Chief Secretary: There are large amounts of revenue spent out of revenue, and we are now dealing with Loan Estimates.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes; but the position as regards the Forests Department is as I have stated.

The Chief Secretary: Money is also spent on regeneration of forests.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Last year £73,000 was expended from Loan. Last year's revenue showed a surplus of about £117,000 over expenditure, and though £73,000 was expended from Loan last year on regeneration, another £74,000 is to be expended from Loan this year on regeneration.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I am perfectly satisfied with the Minister's explanation regarding Bundibup Farm. I thought it might have been obtained for some other purpose. The purpose for which it is now to be used is admirable, and I wish the Government every success in its efforts. Another question I raised was as to £50,000 for rolling stock. I notice that the Chief Secretary refrained from referring to that matter. However, I hope that perhaps tomorrow I may get some information from the hon. gentleman. I did notice that tonight he carefully kept away from the question.

Schedule put and passed.

Second and Third Schedules, Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

### *Third Reading.*

Bill read a third time, and *passed*.

## **BILL—SUNDAY OBSERVANCE.**

### *Second Reading—Defeated.*

Debate resumed from the 23rd November.

**HON. J. NICHOLSON** (Metropolitan) [11.58]: The Honorary Minister, in submitting the Bill to the House, mentioned that it was introduced for particular purposes in connection with the building trade to meet circumstances with which the Government had been confronted. The Minister's explanation was interesting. I observed that

the introduction of the Bill, according to his statement, was due to the fact that certain persons had been engaging in work during the week-ends, that is, on Saturdays and Sundays, at rates of pay that would be unprofitable to those usually engaged in such operations as builders or contractors. The Title of the Bill suggests some inconsistency, for it sets out that the measure is to regulate Sunday observance in certain trades. If we interpret Sunday observance for ourselves, we must regard it as diametrically opposed to what the Minister suggested during the course of his speech. Obviously we must regard it as definitely associated with our religious duties on the day of the week that for centuries has been regarded as a sacred day. Yet here we have the introduction of the Bill to regulate Sunday observance in certain trades by way of a prohibition, and a prohibited trade is defined as every industry, trade, calling or handicraft declared to be such under the provisions of the legislation.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Would that cover hotels?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The use of the word "calling" would be wide enough for the Government to render almost everything subject to the legislation.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I thought they "shouted" in hotels, not called!

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Yes, that is so. The Bill provides what amounts to an innovation that should not be commended by members.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: I understand they do not have Sundays on the goldfields.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Perhaps so.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: How will the people get on there?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I do not know. I draw attention to the clause that sets out that the measure shall "apply to the building trade as herein defined, and to such other industries, callings, trades or handicraft as the Governor may from time to time by regulation prescribe as a prohibited trade." If anything were calculated to condemn the Bill, such a clause should prove sufficient. I regard it as unjustifiable. We are entitled to look at the matter from a more extended point of view and consider whether such a measure is necessary for Sunday observance. To my mind there is no such justification, for the statute-book already contains a measure which, although ancient, being dated

1677, is still in force. I took the trouble to look up the Act and found it interesting to note the difference in the wording of the Act compared with the Bill now before members. The old Act has the following provision—

Tradesmen, etc., working on Sunday and exposing to sale wares, etc.—For the better observation and keeping holy the Lord's Day, commonly called Sunday, bee it enacted by the King's most excellent Majestie by and with the advice and consent of the lords spirituall and temporall and of the commons in this present Parlyament assembled and by the authoritie of the same that all the lawes enacted and in force concerning the observation of the Lord's Day and repaireing to the church thereon be carefully putt in execution. And that all and every person and persons whatsoever shall on every Lord's Day apply themselves to the observation of the same by exercising themselves thereon in the duties of piety and true religion publickely and privately and that noe tradesman, artificer, workeman, labourer or other person whatsoever shall doe or exercise any worldly labour, business or work of their ordinary calling upon the Lord's Day or any part thereof (workes of necessity and charity onely excepted) and that every person being of the age of fourteen years or upwards offending in the premisses shall for every such offence forfeit the summe of five shillings, and that noe person or persons whatsoever shall publickly cry, shew forth or expose to sale any wares, merchandizes, fruit, herbs, goods or chattells whatsoever upon the Lord's Day or any part thereof upon paine that every person soe offending shall forfeite the same goods soe cryed or shewed forth or exposed to sale.

Hon. G. Fraser: Is that the Act containing a clause stating it is an offence to rob on the highway on Sunday?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That is referred to in Section 5, but a portion of the Act has been repealed. It will be observed that the law as laid down in the Act of Charles is framed on a very different basis from that contained in the Bill. The main purpose of that Act is very clearly set out in the title, while the purpose of the Act is in harmony with the title. The title to this particular Bill is foreign indeed to the subject matter of the Bill. I am rather at a loss to understand why a measure of this kind should have been introduced and I have been trying to find some explanation.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Particularly so late in the session.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Yes. It has been suggested to me that an explanation would

probably be found in the fact that the Bill is one of those rods which is recoiling on ourselves for passing legislation limiting the working week in many cases to five days. A man may work from Monday until 5 o'clock on Friday afternoon, and so would have until next Monday morning before he was required to resume his ordinary occupation. Men of a distinctly active temperament refuse to be idle; they desire to utilise any spare time they may have in some useful occupation. Possibly some of the men who find themselves free over such a week-end undertake contracts which they perform during the week-end. If they were busily engaged up to the usual time for ceasing work on Saturday, they might feel less inclined to undertake such work. Whether that is an explanation or not, I leave to the Honorary Minister to consider. He can reflect whether there is any other explanation that he has not given to us. I have remarked upon the disparity between the law as it now exists under the ancient Act of Charles and the Bill now before us. But there is another reason. Some consideration must be given to the people whose holy day or day of worship is not on Sunday. Many devout people who are good and diligent citizens believe that, according to their religious principles and the dictates of their conscience, the day of worship for them is a day other than Sunday. They can be as devout and as holy on another day of the week as some of us are or might be on Sunday. Amongst those people we have those of the Jewish faith, whose day of worship is Saturday. There is also another large religious body, the Seventh Day Adventists. Respect should and must be given to those particular bodies. I observe that the Honorary Minister has placed on the notice paper a proposed amendment with a view to meeting the situation. I venture to suggest the amendment will not achieve that object. In view of the fact that we have a law that is quite ample for all purposes, a law actually in force, there is no justification for the Bill and I hope the House will vote against it.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [12.21]: Listening to the Honorary Minister explain the second reading, I was led to believe that the Bill had met the situation relating to what might be termed noxious and unnecessary works on the Sabbath

Day. Only a glance at the Bill, however, was needed to prove that the measure, although probably intended for that purpose so far as the Honorary Minister is concerned, actually goes much further. Subclause (2) of Clause 2 provides that the Bill will over-ride any award or industrial agreement permitting work in any necessary trade on a Sunday. I do not think the House will agree to anything of that description. Are we to side-track existing Acts of Parliament and existing awards of the Arbitration Court? Surely that is not intended. We were led to believe from the Minister's speech that the measure applied to the building trade, but it goes much further than that. In Subclause (1) of Clause 4 we read that "this Act shall apply to the building trade as herein defined and to such industries, callings, trades or handicrafts as the Governor may from time to time by regulation prescribe as prohibited trades." Regulation again! Everything by regulation! There will be government entirely by regulation before many years have passed. Every calling and trade is to be included. Clearly the House cannot support a Bill of this kind which over-rides any enactment that may be in conflict with it and also any award of the Arbitration Court. The court has already established certain hours of labour on a Sunday and there is provision in some awards for double time to be paid for work done on Sundays. We know that there are many kinds of work that must be carried out on a Sunday.

Hon. J. Nicholson: There are awards providing for Sunday work.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: That is what I have said; double rates are paid, and that has been agreed to by both sides.

Member: What trades are they?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: There are numbers of such trades. That applies to those employed on trams and trains. Trade in perishable goods must also be carried out on a Sunday. Some building trades are covered by awards which will be interfered with by this Bill. Provision is made for exemption in cases of hardship. Who is to define a case of hardship? Will it be one in which an addition must be made to a building in which business is carried on throughout the week? Who is to be the judge? Mr. Nicholson referred to a law already in exist-

ence. According to the law courts of Australia a law does exist but it is not the Act of 1677 to which Mr. Nicholson referred, but the Arbitration Act and the awards made under that Act today. In a test case in Sydney some time ago a ruling was given that the Arbitration Act over-ruled the Act of 1677. Yet this innocent little measure is introduced and designed to over-ride the Arbitration Court awards. I am with the Minister in his endeavour to prevent certain work being done on Sunday, but I am not in support of this Bill.

The Honorary Minister: Amend it then.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Even the draftsman who has made it so difficult for us to understand Bills this session cannot make this a good Bill. It is impossible. What is more vital is that the measure interferes with the liberty of the subject. To that we should object very strongly.

Hon. V. Hamersley: There used to be liberty of the subject.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: That is so, but it is fast disappearing every day. We have had other Bills during the present session tending in the same direction. People are not all of one religious belief. There are those who observe a holy day different from that observed by most of us. The day they recognise is just as important to them as Sunday is to us. Are we to stipulate that they shall work only five days a week because they happen to follow a particular religious belief? The Minister may say he has prepared an amendment. Does the amendment he has prepared indicate any respect for the liberty of the subject? Does it not insist that people must go cap in hand to the Minister? What for? To ask for something to which they are justly entitled. This is what the amendment says—

Exemption may be granted under this section to any religious organisation or member thereof on proof to the satisfaction of the Minister that such organisation or member thereof customarily and conscientiously observes the Sabbath on any day other than Sunday, and providing that the granting of such exemption is not likely or calculated to cause a nuisance or be otherwise objectionable.

They have no liberty at all. They must go cap in hand and say, "Can we get exemption on this particular day?" They have to go to the Minister and ask for permission to work on a certain day. When shall we finish interfering with the liberty of people?



The latter part of the proposed amendment is an insult to any body of people. It says—

Provided that the granting of such exemption is not likely or calculated to cause a nuisance or be otherwise objectionable.

The person who drafted that ought to be ashamed of himself for passing such a reflection on a body of people because they happen to observe a different holy day from that which we observe. There is only one thing to do with this Bill and that is to pass it out on the second reading. I am prepared to agree that certain work should not be carried out on Sunday, but there are people who should be allowed to follow their callings without interference. The essence of the Bill is to stop Sunday work, but an army of people will be created to run around the country doing work. The Bill will add to the number of people working on Sunday. As a matter of fact, almost without exception every Bill introduced in this Chamber by the Government not only encroaches on the Arbitration Court awards, but attempts also to set up another body of people to pry into the business of private citizens of this State. Are we not to have any freedom at all? The Workers' Compensation Act Amendment Bill, which was returned to another place last week, had to be remodelled in this House. The only part of the Bill as introduced that was sent back to another place was the Title and the concluding clause connecting it with the parent Act. That Bill contemplated the appointment of a big army of inspectors, just as does this Bill. Members should certainly not support such a proposal. We prate about our liberty and talk of the restrictions that are imposed upon people in other parts of the world, and yet here is an attempt at drastic restriction. There is one way to deal with this Bill, and that is to vote against the second reading, and I hope members will support me in taking that course.

**HON. J. J. HOLMES** (North) [12.31]: I propose to speak only briefly on this Bill. From what I can see of it, Sunday observance from a religious point of view does not come into the picture at all. This is a Bill to prevent work on Sunday, and for the time being, according to the measure, in the building trade only. But as has been explained by previous speakers, the Minister

would be empowered to include every trade in existence in the State. To what purpose? I think because the number of men who are not doing work to make themselves tired during the week and not earning their pay have so much energy and so much time at their disposal at the week-end that someone behind the Government thinks it time to stop them from working at the week-end. There are two bodies that are going to be dictated to under this so-called Sunday Observance Bill, but they will not be dictated to if I have my way. We are told that bodies with religious convictions, such as the Seventh Day Adventists can go to the Minister and explain and get a permit. If that is not an interference with the liberty of the subject, I do not know what is.

I have employed hundreds of men in my time and have never asked any man what religion he professed. All I have been concerned about was whether he was honest and whether he was prepared to do his work. If I choose to say that I am going to work from Sunday morning to Friday night and observe Saturday as my day of rest, I do not think there should be any law to prevent my doing so. If arbitration awards or agreements conflict with this measure, this measure is to prevail. Why retain the Arbitration Court when attempts are being made to undermine it in this way? A Government wedded to arbitration is attempting to undermine the Arbitration Court every day of the week. All sorts of conflicting positions could arise under the measure. I have the authority of King's Counsel for saying that if a carpenter in the building trade attempted to mend his own clothes on Sunday, he would be liable to a penalty under this measure, though he could do his own carpentry work on Sunday. All sorts of complications could arise that would make this House ridiculous in the eyes of the people. I understand that if a carpenter had an orchard in the hills—and I believe some of them have—he would not be allowed to pick his oranges on Sunday, but he might be allowed to nail up the case on Sunday so long as he had picked the oranges on the previous day. He could work on his own house on Sunday, provided he did not employ help; but if he put a nail in a paling for a friend next door, he would be liable to the maximum penalty of £50, even if he did not make any charge for the job.

Hon. J. Nicholson: You mean if he makes a charge.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I do not know whether the hon. member is a King's Counsel. We have heard lawyers' opinions disputed in this House on various occasions. I am giving the opinion of a King's Counsel. Another question arises. An army of inspectors will be necessary to police this measure, and the inspectors will have to work on Sunday. For that work I presume they will be paid double time.

Hon. J. Cornell: And they will have to have an Arbitration Court award.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Yes. The Arbitration Court makes awards and registers agreements. It has all the evidence before it as to the necessity for Sunday work, and double pay is provided for Sunday work. This Bill has been introduced by a Labour Government to prohibit work in the building trade, and with the right to prohibit work in any trade on Sunday. Yet an army of inspectors will have to work on Sunday to ensure that the other fellow does not work on that day. Could anything be more absurd? I oppose the second reading.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [12.40]: This Bill is a sad commentary on 50 years of responsible Government. In the days of Charles II, 262 years ago, a Sunday Observance Act was passed, and during 50 years of responsible Government in this State that Act was regarded as being sufficient for all purposes. It is now considered by the Government that the Act should be amended for the better observance of Sunday in the building trade. If the draftsman had endeavoured to indulge in flights of imagination, I do not think he could have succeeded better than he has done in this Bill.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: You must not comment upon the drafting.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Beaufort-street, through the Minister for Labour, has given the Parliamentary Draftsman an almost impossible task, namely that of putting into phraseology what is required to be done in the way of Sunday observance. Some members have consistently said, "Hands off the Arbitration Court." If they pass this Bill they will have kept their hands off the court, but will have allowed the Government to

place both feet upon it. There is no limit to the scope of this Bill.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Not the slightest.

The Honorary Minister: You may limit it if you wish to.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I would limit it out of the door. The Bill is to come into operation by proclamation, and can be added to by regulation. By proclamation it can be made to apply to all parts of the State, and to 101 trades and callings. It can be extended to any degree whatsoever. I join with Mr. Holmes in declaring that the Bill has most interesting phases. Clause 5 is the essence of it. It defines "work" and declares what "work" shall not include. The clause says—

For the purposes of this section "work" shall include performing any of the operations usually carried on in any prohibited trade or the transport or delivery of any goods or materials used or to be used in or in connection with such prohibited trade and the words "to work" and "working" have a corresponding meaning.

"Work" shall not include the performing of any of the operations aforesaid (i) in case of necessity or emergency where loss or damage to property would result or serious inconvenience would be caused if such operation were not performed.

There is a qualification to the exemption—

(ii) If any such operation is performed by any person on his own property and not for gain and without the assistance or employment of any artificer, journeyman, tradesman, clerk, labourer, servant or other employee, etc.

A man may not call in anyone even to hold his hand. The sting is in the tail, for the clause says—

Provided that such person aforesaid is not ordinarily or customarily engaged or interested in a prohibited trade.

The Honorary Minister: I intended to move an amendment to strike that out.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Let me give an illustration. Bill Smith, a bricklayer, may be working on a mine on the Golden Mile. For months his wife may have been at him to rebuild the stove, but as he is a bricklayer he will not be permitted to do the work on Sunday. Jim Smith, a publican, is told by the law to close his hotel from midnight on Saturday until midnight on Monday morning. The Government, however, has said to the police, "Hotels on the goldfields can keep open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday." Accordingly Jim Smith employs extra men to cope with the increased

demand for liquor on Sundays, and that is called Sunday Observance. The Government wishes to prevent certain work being done on Sundays, but on the other hand says that the law should be amended by its own will to provide that hotels on the goldfields shall remain open on Sundays, and that liquor shall be sold then. Surely that savours of hypocrisy.

The Chief Secretary: How long has that been going on?

The Honorary Minister: It was all right when the Government of which you were a supporter was in office.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The present Government is doing it every day in the week. On the goldfields more people go into hotels on Sundays than they do on Monday.

Hon. T. Moore: They have been at it for 40 years.

Hon. J. CORNELL: It is hypocrisy for the Government to say that certain men shall not work on Sunday under penalty of a fine, whereas by instructions to the Police Department it has declared that the law shall be amended so that hotels can remain open on Sunday.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: And extra men put on.

Hon. J. CORNELL: To cope with the increased demand. That does not appeal to me. Another interesting feature of this clause is the following:—

In any proceeding for a breach of this Act in which it shall be material to prove that any work was done in or on any place on a Sunday, proof that at the time sounds were heard proceeding from the place such as would ordinarily be heard if persons were working therein in the usual manner, or that any member of the police force or an inspector was refused or hindered in gaining admission into the place shall be prima facie evidence that work was then being done therein.

The work connected with the discovery of these mysterious noises is not only the prerogative of a policeman or an inspector, but the prerogative also of the private individual. A man may be hammering a tack, or he may be knocking his wife about with the hammer.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: That would be working in the ordinary manner.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Some person may be sneaking around the corner, some sticky beak may be meandering about, and hear these mysterious noises. He can lay a

charge to the effect that certain things were being done.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: That would be prima facie evidence of what was occurring.

Hon. J. CORNELL: In any proceedings taken against any persons for offences against the Act, information may be laid in the name of an inspector, police officer or constable, or any other person.

When the complaint is laid by any person other than an inspector—

I do not know why the constable is omitted.

the complainant may be represented by an inspector.

That is to say, if a sticky beak lays a complaint and goes on with it, he shall have an inspector to do the talking for him. Another feature is that the inspector may require and oblige any person whom he finds in any place to answer any question touching any matter under any such provision and require such person to make a statutory declaration as to the truth of his answers, provided that no person shall be required to answer any question which may tend to criminate him. I understand that in another place the Minister said there were three leading points in this Bill—the ethical, the industrial, and the third I forget. Religion is a man's own business. Whatever shrine he chooses to worship at, let him worship at it so long as he does not try to ram down another man's throat that the other man should not worship at his shrine but at some other shrine. Observance of Sunday, how it should be kept, are religious and ethical functions of the pastor in charge of his flock. It is his duty to endeavour to inculcate upon the flock the genuine tenets of Christianity and the observance of the Sabbath Day as a day of rest. Then comes the difficulty that all worshippers do not accept the same day as Sabbath. There are Jews, and Seventh Day Adventists, and Mahomedans. As the letter of the Seventh Day Adventists expresses the matter —

We claim that in matters religious all men have equal rights whether they be the majority or the minority, therefore if it is right for the benefit of one section of the community to enforce Sunday as a day of rest, then by all the laws of justice the Government would be in duty bound to enforce Saturday and Friday for other sections of the community. If it is right to compel us, who are Sabbath (Saturday) keepers, to cease work on Sunday for

the benefit of Sunday keepers, then it would be equally just to expect that Sunday keepers would be compelled to cease work on Saturday for our benefit.

We have been told that in Committee an amendment will be moved to get over the Seventh Day Adventists difficulty. I understand from representative men of that denomination that they do not want the Bill; and the matter of exemption is something that is not capable of adequate definition in view of the facts. The amendment on the notice paper gives with one hand and takes away with the other. If this House is the House I take it to be, it will reject the Bill, and ask that a simple Bill be prepared for next session. Surely there is enough ingenuity among our draftsmen to produce a simple measure which will increase the fine that was fixed in the days of Charles II. All that the Act of Charles II. contains is provision to punish by fine men who work on Sunday. Every day cases come before our industrial courts for breaches of awards, for payment of men working on Sunday, or to decide whether they have been paid too much or too little for working on Sunday. Only on those lines will I consent to give my vote for tightening up a law that was enacted 250 years ago and that has been on the statute-book of Western Australia for 70 years.

**THE HONORARY MINISTER** (Hon. E. H. Gray—West—in reply) [12.58]: Apparently hon. members do not like the Bill.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Do you?

Hon. J. Cornell: I do not believe the Honorary Minister does.

**THE HONORARY MINISTER**: Every endeavour has been made by me to come to some agreement as to an amendment which would be acceptable to the Seventh Day Adventists, who observe Saturday as the Sabbath day. The president of that organisation, Pastor W. H. Thrift, who with other members of his church waited upon me, received every possible consideration. There is no intention expressed or implied against any bona fide religious organisation in the Bill, and the amendment I have tabled proves this statement.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Would not your amendment prevent a bookmaker from operating on Saturday afternoon?

**THE HONORARY MINISTER**: Members of the House can ridicule any proposition

that is advanced. Mr. Holmes ridiculed the Bill in good style. When the first legislation was introduced in Parliament, it was ridiculed just as the Bill now before members has been ridiculed.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: That is not all we are going to do with it.

**THE HONORARY MINISTER**: Members who have spoken against the measure have failed to notice what is going on under their very noses every Sunday.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Could you not stop that by other means?

**THE HONORARY MINISTER**: It can be stopped only by legislation, not by the Arbitration Court. Mr. Cornell and Mr. Holmes displayed their ignorance when they spoke about the Arbitration Court. It is all very well for members to say that this represents an interference with the Arbitration Court. That court has nothing whatever to do with the position and has no control over it. Today many people are being enslaved by their fellow countrymen. Aliens are arriving here in large numbers and anyone driving about the hill country and elsewhere can see what is going on. These people are being enslaved by their fellow countrymen and are lowering the industrial standards of Australia.

Hon. L. Craig: Do not they come under an award?

**THE HONORARY MINISTER**: No.

Hon. L. Craig: Why?

**THE HONORARY MINISTER**: Because their employers are not governed by Arbitration Court awards. The court is powerless to stop this sort of thing. The offenders are undermining industrial standards that are recognised throughout Australia. They are forcing men to work seven days a week and for more than 15 hours a day. Yet we have capable stonemasons who cannot get jobs because of what is going on. To say that this is an interference with the Arbitration Court is useless, because it is not. The only object of the Bill is to stop the shameless sweating that is going on as a result of countrymen enslaving their fellows. I can see that members will not listen to me. The Bill is perfectly reasonable and is an attempt to stop an undesirable state of affairs that constitutes an affront to Australian citizens. I do not propose to say any more. The Bill should be acceptable to everyone.

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

Ayes	..	..	7
Noes	..	..	17

Majority against .. 10

AYES.		
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. W. H. Kilson	
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. T. Moore	
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. G. Fraser	(Teller.)
Hon. E. M. Heenan		

NOES.		
Hon. E. H. Angelo	Hon. G. W. Miles	
Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. J. Nicholson	
Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. H. S. W. Parker	
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. H. Seddon	
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. A. Thomson	
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. C. H. Wittenoom	
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. G. B. Wood	
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. H. Tuckey	(Teller.)
Hon. W. J. Mann		

PAIR.		
AYE.	No.	
Hon. C. B. Williams	Hon. H. V. Plesse	

Question thus negatived.

Bill defeated.

House adjourned at 1.8 a.m. (Wednesday).

## Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 28th November, 1939.

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

### QUESTION—HOSPITAL TREATMENT.

#### Adult Children's Responsibility for Parents.

Mr. MANN asked the Minister for Health: 1, Under what section of the Hospitals Acts of 1930 and 1931 is the Health Department empowered to take action against adult children to compel them to pay hospital costs of their parents? 2, Is the Health Department compelling committees of country hospitals to take that action? 3, Why should patients in country hospitals who claim to come under Section 11 of the Hospitals Act, 1930, be treated differently from similar patients treated in city or Government hospitals? 4, Does he know of any other law whereby adult children are responsible for the debts of their parents? 5, Is he aware that the Health Department informed the committee of a country hospital that no one is entitled to free hospital treatment?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH replied: 1, There is no Hospitals Act, 1930-1931, but section 33, subsection 3 of the Hospitals Act, 1927, contains the power referred to. 2, No. 3, There is no differentiation whatever in the administration of section 11 of the Hospital Fund Act of 1930, as amended by section 3 of No. 55 of 1931. 4, Yes—the Lunacy Act, 1920. 5, Under the legislation referred to in No. 3 above no one can claim free