

The PREMIER: Up until this session the Leader of the Opposition was a very patient man. I used to admire his patience and I tried to match mine with his. However, this session he has changed very greatly and he has become most impatient. I think, in all the circumstances, if I may pursue this line for a moment, that this Government has taken the House into its confidence very greatly before the Budget for this financial year has been presented to the House. Admittedly, there have been pressing circumstances that have moved the Government to act as it has done.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It looks as though there is more to come.

The PREMIER: I think the Leader of the Opposition need have no fear as to what is likely to come because, if my memory serves me aright—and it can be very treacherous—the other extra charge that is to come would not affect him until after he has passed to Heaven.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I tipped that one! I thought that one would come!

The PREMIER: That charge will be the worry of those who live on after he has left this earth.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: An increase in probate duty! My forecast was fairly accurate.

The PREMIER: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 4.58 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 22nd September, 1953.

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

QUESTIONS.

HEALTH.

As to T.B. Treatment and Chest Clinics.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) What facilities exist in the State for the treatment and control of tuberculosis?

(2) Is the Minister satisfied with the voluntary attendance at chest clinics?

(3) What is the Government's intention regarding compulsory examination for tuberculosis?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Well-organised facilities exist for case-finding, diagnosis, treatment, after-care and rehabilitation.

(2) Yes.

(3) The intention is to continue with the compulsory examination of certain groups of the population with special risks, and of certain districts receiving a visit by a mobile unit.

HOUSING.

As to Location of Railway Department Land.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

Was he able to ascertain the information I requested of him in connection with the situation and area of the land the Housing Commission is endeavouring to obtain from the Railway Department?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

No. I have not had an opportunity of ascertaining that information.

BILLS (6)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Criminal Code Amendment.
- 2, Local Courts Act Amendment.
- 3, Kalgoorlie and Boulder Racing Clubs Act Amendment (Private). (Hon. E. M. Heenan in charge.)
- 4, Government Employees (Promotions Appeal Board) Act Amendment.
- 5, Mine Workers' Relief Act Amendment.
- 6, Associations Incorporations Act Amendment.

Received from the Assembly.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Tenth Day.

Debate resumed from the 15th September.

HON. H. K. WATSON (Metropolitan) [4.45]: Before addressing myself to the motion, I should like to take the opportunity of extending my congratulations to Mr. Fraser upon his appointment as Chief Secretary and Leader of the House. I have no doubt that in that capacity he will continue to demonstrate the outstanding characteristic displayed by him over the years of appreciating that there are two sides to every question—two views, his own view and the wrong one.

To Mr. Strickland I also offer congratulations on his appointment as Minister for the North-West. If reports count for anything, he is already making his weight felt. I understand that houses are being shipped to the North-West in fairly considerable numbers at a cost of about £3,000 each, and I have it on the most unreliable authority that to every bill of lading there is attached a Legislative Council enrolment card for use for the next election for North Province!

To Mr. Griffith I also offer congratulations upon his success at the recent by-election. He is the youngest member of the Council, not only in membership but in years, and I trust he will have a long and useful association with this House.

I was greatly interested in the suggestion made by Dr. Hislop as to the desirability of setting up a committee to study the mass of regulations that are tabled in this House from time to time. Dr. Hislop, in elaborating his case, gave some rather striking illustrations of the absurd manner in which regulations are sometimes drafted. A somewhat similar illustration can be obtained from a regulation under the Traffic Act. The regulation was tabled this session, having been gazetted on the 31st March last, which was previous to Mr. Fraser's taking the office of Chief Secretary.

This regulation deals with the use of traffic signals. Members may recall that before March last, the traffic regulations simply provided that a driver must in-

dicate with his outstretched arm his intention of turning left or right. If the driver used a mechanical sign, he still had to indicate with his arm the direction in which he intended to turn. This applied to English cars having a mechanical indicator depicting a hand with the thumb extended upright. The same applied if it was an indicator such as is provided on some of the American cars, which is in the nature of a flashing light at the rear and at the front of the car.

In March last the authorities, in their wisdom, decided that if one were driving an English car with the English indicator, one could be relieved of the necessity of extending the hand to indicate the direction of turn. That concession was not extended to the American cars, the mechanical signs on which consisted of a flashing light at the front or back of the vehicle. That was quite all right, so far as it went, and had the regulation stopped there, the position would have been that the person driving the English car could use his mechanical sign instead of his hand to indicate which way he intended to turn and the driver of the American car could use the mechanical sign, but was not relieved of the necessity of using his hand also to indicate the direction of turn.

In the third paragraph of that regulation, however, we find provision that a person shall not drive a vehicle on the road when it is fitted with a mechanical sign other than the English type. Of course it was never intended but, strictly speaking, any person driving a vehicle fitted with a mechanical sign other than of the English type has, during the period of this regulation, been using his vehicle on the road without authority. As soon as this stupid provision was pointed out to the Chief Secretary, he took prompt steps to set in motion the arrangements necessary to have the anomaly rectified, and see that the regulation conveyed the commonsense intention—that the driver of a vehicle fitted with the American type of sign could use it on the road but was not relieved of the necessity to use also his hand to indicate the direction of turn.

I have no doubt that many other regulations tabled from time to time contain similar anomalies that escape the attention of members simply because no one is charged with the responsibility of scrutinising carefully all regulations tabled in this House. I maintain that regulations require more than a general perusal and should, in fact, be given a careful scrutiny.

From time to time we receive the reports of various departments and I would like the Government to endeavour to arrange for the annual reports on its various departments to be made available to members within a more reasonable period after the close of the financial year. I was pleased this afternoon to see tabled

two or three reports in respect of the year ended the 30th June last. That is as it should be, but all too often, even towards the end of a session, one sees tabled reports for the year ended the 30th June the previous year or even the year before that. Such reports are stale and out of date before they are presented to give members opportunity of considering them. One excellent exception to what has been the general rule was the report of the State Electricity Commission for the year ended the 30th June last which, as members may recall, was tabled in this House over a month ago. It is true that in order that that report could be tabled so promptly after the close of the financial year, it was presented without the Auditor General's certificate.

I would suggest that if it is simply a question of that certificate holding up the presentation of reports to Parliament, the practice adopted in respect of the report of the State Electricity Commission could well be followed with regard to those of many other departments. If our minds are to be properly educated on the various subjects dealt with, it is necessary that we should have before us current reports.

The Companies Act of Western Australia provides that a company shall submit its annual report within six months after the close of its financial year and I believe it would be a good idea if the Government were to ensure that the reports of its various departments were submitted also within six months of the close of each financial year.

I had intended this afternoon to say something about the desirability of extending the jurisdiction of the local court in regard to rents, repossession of properties, evictions and so on. As a matter of fact, I had intended to bring down a Bill, during the current session, dealing with that matter, but it so happens that the measure which has been introduced here this afternoon, dealing with local courts, covers most of the points I had intended to raise, and I am glad that at such an early stage of the session I am likely to find myself in complete accord with the Chief Secretary with respect to one of his first Bills.

With considerable interest I read the speech delivered by Mr. Barker during the current debate. He gave a most interesting and informative address on the North and the desirability of developing that area. There is no question that the defence and development of our North-West are essential, not only in the best interests of the State, but also in the interests of the Commonwealth as a whole, and therefore the development of that part of our State is as much a Commonwealth as a State responsibility. In some respects the peculiar problems of Western Australia, and particularly of its North-West, are not dissimilar to those of Newfoundland, which has many primary assets,

minerals, timber and so on, that she could never develop economically from her own resources.

I was interested to read that recently an arrangement has been made whereby a group of English capitalists, consisting of banking houses, insurance companies and business men, has subscribed many millions of pounds to develop the inaccessible parts of that Dominion, under liberal concessions that have been granted by the Government of that portion of the Empire. It may well be that something of a similar nature will sooner or later have to be done in regard to our North-West.

For the moment, however, I would suggest that one remedy for the present difficulties and one incentive towards the populating and developing of the North-West would be the granting of freedom from income taxation north of the 26th parallel, as has been advocated by a committee of North-West people which has been pursuing its activities for a number of years. That committee submitted its proposals back in the days of the late Mr. Chifley, but without much success. However, it has kept on hammering away at its objective and I understand that it is at the moment in Canberra again presenting its views to the Federal Treasurer.

The proposal of the committee—which I believe has the backing of all local authorities in that area and which I think should also have the backing of this Parliament—is, I understand, that wage and salary earners in the North-West should, for a period of from 10 to 20 years, be completely freed of income tax and that business concerns should be freed of 60 per cent. of their income tax on the condition that they ploughed back, for the purpose of developing the area, a reasonable proportion of the income they derived from it. I believe that if freedom from income taxation were granted north of the 26th parallel, the estimated loss of revenue to the Commonwealth would be in the vicinity of only £500,000.

I suggest that £500,000 out of a total of £532,000,000 which is at present being collected would not be missed by the Commonwealth Treasury. Freedom from taxation would be a definite incentive to workers, miners, pastoralists and many other citizens to settle in the North and build up a competence for themselves within a reasonable period. When one considers that £30,000,000 has been spent by the Commonwealth Government at Woomera in the last couple of years and that tens of millions of pounds have likewise been spent by that Government on the Snowy River scheme, I suggest that a paltry £500,000 would mean practically nothing to the Commonwealth and should not be considered unreasonable.

For my part, I trust that members of this House and this Parliament will support the committee

which is at present in Canberra and, personally, I wish it luck. At the same time, I consider that although it is all very well for us to tell the Commonwealth Treasury what to do—our own Premier has been fairly good at that during the last couple of months—a good example is better than precept and our own State Parliament should do something in the matter. For instance, it could assist by granting the residents of the North freedom from the payment of death duties or other taxes in respect of property.

Hon. H. Hearn: The Government is going to increase them.

The Minister for the North-West: Do you mean, if one dies in the North?

Hon. H. K. WATSON: The policy of the Government or the State Housing Commission seems to be fairly confused on the question of housing. On the one hand we find that the Commission has at the moment 11,500 acres of land sufficient for, say, 40,000 building blocks and yet, on the other hand, despite the fact that it has all that land available, it now proposes to build flats in the middle of the metropolitan area. It intends to go further than that and build them on the basis of subsidised rentals and so on. I suggest that it should do either one thing or the other.

Although extensive flat accommodation is being provided in England at the moment where perhaps the climate is more suitable for such buildings, I cannot see any merit in erecting large-scale flats in a State such as ours. Even if such a proposition has any merit, it is not the function of the State Housing Commission to embark on a project of this nature. It should be left to private enterprise which would be entitled to demand and receive an economic rent for the accommodation provided. In London, many of the flats are owned by the London County Council and whilst I was there the London County Council elections were being held. The whole election issue revolved around no other question than whether the flat rents were to be increased, were to stay as they were or were to be reduced. It is a sorry state of affairs when elections are fought on issues such as that.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Where was that?

Hon. H. K. WATSON: That occurred during the London County Council elections. I would be sorry to see the elections in Western Australia fought on a similar low plane. However, they well could be if this flat proposal is developed. The position is bad enough with the ordinary State rental homes, but no doubt it could be considerably aggravated with the building of these flats. It seems to me that the present Minister for Housing is no better than his predecessor, and I would say of him, as I did of his predecessor, that I think his undoubted ability and boundless

energy would be better employed if he were given the portfolio of minister for tourist trade and his present office were abolished.

If that were done it would be in the best interests of Western Australia. There is no question that the development of the tourist trade is well worth while because it is one of the best export industries that we could foster. However, we cannot attract tourists unless we can assure them that excellent amenities such as good transport, accommodation and so on will be provided. I believe there is ample room in this State for the appointment of a Minister who would devote practically the whole of his time to co-ordinating the hundred and one angles that are connected with the tourist trade.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: You do not attach much importance to housing?

Hon. H. K. WATSON: Yes, I do, but it could well be left to private individuals. We do not want so much interference in housing. The Governor, in his Speech at the opening of Parliament, referred to rent-control. The existing legislation controlling rents is due to expire on the 31st December this year, and I suggest that if it is renewed it will mean a continuance of the anomalies and injustices that have been prominent for many years notwithstanding that some of them have been removed by amendments to the legislation from time to time.

I will give an illustration, however, to show that many basic injustices still remain. Let us say that two houses were built in 1939 and each cost £2,000. One was let in 1939 for, say, 25s. a week. That house today is, under our regulations, returning a rental of £2 a week at the most. On the other hand, the house which was not let in 1939, but which is now let for the first time could be returning £6 or £7 a week, which is a fair rental at present-day costs and values. That anomaly persists because one house was let in 1939 and the other was let only recently. In other words, one owner can receive a fair economic rent whereas the other receives that which is far below it.

From the Press the other day I noticed the State Housing Commission is building, I think, seven shops at Medina. The Commission called for tenders from prospective occupants of these shops. Whilst we are told and are conscious of the fact that rents are subject to control, the advertisement inserted by the State Housing Commission simply states to the prospective tenants of these shops, "Tell us what rent you are prepared to pay." In other words, the Housing Commission is prepared to let them to the highest bidder, regardless of what the figure may be.

Whilst on that point, I would remind members that at Medina, which is virtually a State Housing Commission township, it is proposed to build only seven

shops. I was in Victoria a short time ago and I noticed that in a similar area, private enterprise was given the opportunity to build the required shops, and contractors are now building a street of 60 of them. That shows what can be done if initiative is left to private contractors to fend for themselves and to introduce a little originality into town planning. If everything is left to the State Housing Commission only a bottle-neck will be created. Of the seven shops to be erected at Medina, one is to be allotted to a baker, another to a grocer, one is for a post office and probably another will be allotted to a two-up school. My point is that they are not being offered at a rental which will bring merely a fair return on the capital outlay, but the prospective tenant is simply asked to state what rent he is prepared to pay.

Another point in regard to rent-control was raised in a judgment recently delivered by Mr. Justice Virtue. To my mind, this would tend to cramp magistrates who have hitherto been charged with the duty of fixing a fair rent on application by either party to the court. Members may recall that although the Act specifies what rent shall be charged, it also provides that any person may apply to the court to have a fair rent fixed, and it goes on to say that in fixing a fair rent in response to such an application, the court shall take into consideration all circumstances that it considers relevant and material.

I would have thought that provision meant what it said and that when the court was considering the question of increased rent, it could act entirely on its own initiative and take into account whatever factors it considered should be taken into account, including the present-day value of the property; and, in fact, up till the time of this judgment, that is what was taking place. I understand that in Perth the magistrate was granting a reasonable increase based upon a formula that he had evolved in the light of experience, and that at Fremantle even more liberal increases were being granted by the magistrate there, who was virtually basing his rents on the present-day value of property, to which no exception could be taken.

But in this judgment of his, although the Act says that the court can take any factors into consideration that it considers relevant, Mr. Justice Virtue has interpreted those words to mean that the court shall nevertheless have regard to the 1939 rent plus the permitted increases that have been made by statute and that virtually ends the matter unless there are really exceptional circumstances. It seems to me that that is another point that certainly requires correction.

I feel the time has arrived when rent-control should be abolished; but if it is retained, I would suggest for the serious

consideration of the Chief Secretary that many of these anomalies should be removed by deleting the existing statutory provisions as to what the rent shall be, leaving to the tenant and the landlord the whole question of fixing the rent, subject only to the right of either party to go to the court to have a fair rent fixed.

On the question of price-control, the position is that since 1948 the Commonwealth Government has made a contribution to the States towards the cost of administration of State price-control and the grant made to the Western Australian Government was of the order of £60,000 per annum. Human nature being what it is, I suppose that the State Government, seeing that the Commonwealth was prepared to give it £60,000 a year, thought it was a pity to abolish price-control and so it has gone on and on and on. But this year the Commonwealth Government has discontinued the grant. It has informed the States that it proposes to discontinue paying our State £60,000 a year towards the administration of price-control. That raises very definitely and pertinently the question whether price-control should be continued this year at the cost of an extra £60,000 or more to our State Treasury.

Similar problems are arising in the other States, and I noticed while I was in New South Wales that one of the daily papers decided to investigate the price investigators. The result of their week's investigation was that, in the main, apart from spending their time in the morning at morning tea and in the afternoon at afternoon tea, the prices investigators did not do very much. I am not suggesting that the prices officers in Western Australia are guilty of the same dereliction of duty, but I do feel that having regard to all the circumstances, price-control has outlived its usefulness.

It may be remembered that in Western Australia, anyhow, it exists only by the merest fluke. It will be recalled that on a certain Thursday afternoon last year Mr. Fraser rose in his seat and announced that he and his colleagues, along with myself and other members, were going to vote against the Bill for the continuance of price-control. The House adjourned that afternoon for a week. In the meantime one of Mr. Fraser's constituents got busy, with the result that when the House resumed the following Tuesday week, he announced that he intended to vote for price-control; and price-control in Western Australia today really exists because one company in Fremantle wanted to continue making reasonable or good profits. It was not a question of reducing prices but of assisting a company in Fremantle to maintain its profits. I trust that if the Government does suggest the continuance of price-control, this House will give very serious consideration to whether it will agree to any such proposal.

Recently the Federal Budget was introduced, and the Federal Budget these days is of material concern to State Parliaments. So far as our own Parliament is concerned, we find that half of our revenue, or all over £30,000,000, comes from or through Commonwealth sources. That has obtained, of course, since 1942, when uniform income tax was introduced. Although the Premier shed crocodile tears over Sir Arthur Fadden's treatment of the pensioners, I suggest that our own State Treasurer might do something for the widows and orphans, which is within the scope of his own ability. I suggest that he might ease the death duties in Western Australia. The Federal death duties are to be eased under the present Federal Budget. We are informed that the exemption is to be raised from £2,000 to £5,000. We are also informed that the exemption will apply to the estate of any person dying after the proposal becomes law. This has been described as an incentive budget, and I would suggest that that provision would be a pretty good incentive to keep a man alive until the amended law is introduced!

The State exemption from death duties is only £200 as against £5,000 under the Federal system. The State death duties are levied on estates of over £200, so that if a man dies leaving a humble cottage and a bit of furniture, which was worth £1,000 prewar and today is valued at £3,000; if a man leaves just that cottage and furniture with not a bob in the bank and not a pennyworth of insurance, his widow has to find a death duty of £45. In the circumstances, I think she should really be entitled to a bonus of £45. Instead of that, however, our State Treasurer exacts a death duty of £45, simply that the widow may have the right to continue living in the family home; that is all.

It is not a question of a tax on a legacy or a bequest in the ordinary sense of the world but simply a tax on misery, suffering and distress. Similarly, if a person died leaving no life insurance and no money in the bank, nothing except a home and furniture worth £6,500—and £6,500 at present-day values is nothing out of the ordinary—if the widow were left that cottage and furniture and no other assets at all, the Western Australian death duties payable on that £6,500 would amount to £390.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: And if the widow died a year after, a similar amount would be claimed again.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: Yes, I think after a period of 12 months there could be another claim. The death duty would be £390 on an estate consisting of nothing more than a house and furniture valued on present-day prices at £6,500.

The Minister for the North-West: That has been going on for six years.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: That is so. That is how our State Treasurers treat widows and the fatherless.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Money values have changed since that period.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: Yes.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Our salaries are being increased and everything is being altered.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I certainly suggest that this question of death duties needs serious consideration, not only so far as poorer persons are concerned, but as it affects the whole community. The exemption here should be raised to at least £5,000 to make it level with the Federal exemption. I feel also that in just the same way as when a person has to submit himself to the means test to decide whether he is or is not entitled to a pension, and in doing so has his house excluded from his assets, so, when an estate is valued for probate, the family home should be exempted. I think that is fair.

While we are on the question of death duties, I consider there should be exemption for people located in the North, or property situated there. I also consider that the half-rate for a spouse or issue should be restored. Up till 1939, the Death Duties Act provided that the rates on various estates should be a certain percentage, starting at 1 per cent. and rising to 10 per cent., or whatever it was; but there was a proviso at the end of the schedule that the rates specified should be halved when the estate passed to the widow or the widower, or to any direct issue of the deceased. That existed for many years but, for some reason, was abolished in 1939. I do feel, however, that the Government should give serious consideration to restoring that system of half-rates for relatives.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: That does not appear in the Year Book issued by the Chief Secretary. The half-rate is still there.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I thank the hon. member for his interjection. What the Year Book does say, and what the Act says, is that the half-rates shall cease at £6,000. Until 1939, the half-rate ran right through the schedule. Since then, it has ceased at £6,000. My point is that for all practical purposes the half-rate is not worth much because it does not take a great deal to amount to £6,000, especially if we include a house. As a means of looking after not only the North-West but our primary producers generally, I suggest that here, as in England, the Government might consider the question of providing that agricultural properties shall be assessed at half-rates so that our primary industries may be encouraged and promoted, and not crucified.

I would like to say a word on the question of Federal aid road grants. We know that in ancient times there was a Cain who killed Abel. At the present time, there is abroad a Cain—the Hon. John Cain, Premier of Victoria—who has done his best to kill the wheat agreement; who has killed Mr. Cosgrove's goose that laid the golden egg; and who is also doing his best to kill the special assistance which Western Australia receives under the Federal Aid Roads Agreement Act. Mr. Cain is a pretty astute gentleman. I make the point that in my opinion our State Treasurer is falling down pretty badly in his duty to the State so far as the Federal Aid Roads Agreement is concerned.

The position is that the Commonwealth Government makes an annual contribution of some £15,000,000 to the States out of the petrol tax. This sum is distributed among the States not on a population basis, as is usual, but on the basis of $\frac{2}{3}$ of the grant being on a population basis and $\frac{1}{3}$ on an area basis. By reason of the North in this State, Western Australia gets nearly £3,000,000 of the £15,000,000. If it were distributed on a population basis, we would get less than £1,000,000. All the other States, including Mr. Cain's State, are jealous of this special treatment meted out to Western Australia, and at the last Premier's Conference the Victorian representative vigorously—and not without some justification, as I shall show in a minute—urged that the basis be changed to a population basis. Although the report of the conference shows that our Premier had a lot to say on many questions, nowhere does it show that he attempted to combat the efforts of the Victorian Government to alter this base.

If the State Treasurer does not look to himself, there will certainly be some justification for the Victorian claim, because every other State of the Commonwealth is spending the money it receives by way of this grant and is asking for more on the ground that the Commonwealth receives more than £15,000,000 as customs duty on petrol, and the States are logically claiming a greater part of the petrol tax for the purpose for which it was imposed, namely, to make roads. The other States are not only spending the full grant they receive but are asking for more, and are capable of spending it. They recently approached the Commonwealth for more, and the reply they received was this, "Why do you want more? Some States, or at any rate one, cannot even use what it is getting now." That State is Western Australia.

The Minister for the North-West: Not today.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I understand that is the position.

The Minister for the North-West: It was.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I understand that up till quite recently the best part of £1,000,000 had not been spent in Western Australia.

The Minister for the North-West: That has not been so for a couple of years.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: Because of this, the Federal Government says it will not make any further grants. The State Treasurer should see that, either through the State Government or the local authorities—under the Act the money can be given to local authorities for work on rural roads as well as main roads—the full quota is spent. Quite apart from that, I feel that the Treasurer should take active steps to counter the activities of Mr. Cain in endeavouring to have the basis of the grant altered, because it is a great thing for Western Australia to have it on the present basis.

Another question—this was not mentioned in the Governor's Speech but it was in the Federal Budget—that is pertinent to Western Australia is that of the abolition of the Federal entertainments tax as from the 1st October next. In the Budget speech, the Federal Treasurer gave as his reason for the abolition of the tax, the following:—

The Government proposes to abolish entertainments tax and abolition will become effective in regard to entertainments held on and after 1st October, 1953. This tax has largely been levied upon those popular entertainments which, in modern times, people have come to value as part of the normal enjoyments of life. Its removal must therefore be regarded as an aid to both family and individual budgets.

This tax has always been an irritation tax. It has been imposed not merely on entertainments, as we ordinarily understand them, but on other types of entertainment. If a church, football, cricket or golf club wants to hold a ball or dance, it has to go through all the rigmarole in the world to register that ball or dance as an entertainment. Even meals have been included. The club may receive exemption if it shows that its out-goings have not been more than 50 per cent. of the total receipts. The tax has had an adverse effect on attendances at entertainments, and, in addition, it has greatly added to the cost of entertainment enjoyed by the average family man.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: The exemptions are limited to charitable causes.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: Yes, but even then they are not exhaustive, because the authorities have to be satisfied that the costs are not more than 50 per cent. of the total receipts. The position was bad enough under the Federal regime when stamp tickets could be purchased at the local post office, but that will not be possible when this is operated by the States.

The selling of stamps may become another job for the local policeman or the clerk of courts. I can see all sorts of difficulties and irritating requirements if the tax is imposed in Western Australia.

The Federal Treasurer has clearly stated that, because the tax was irritating and did not bring in a great amount anyhow, and because he felt the family man should be relieved in the cost of his entertainment, he decided to abolish it. But what do we find? No sooner has Sir Arthur Fadden decided to give the long-suffering public a bit of a breather than the Premier swoops down like a vulture—at any rate, like a hawk—and proceeds to grab his share by reimposing the tax.

Why is this tax being imposed? Is it to help meet the proposed increase in members' salaries? If it is, then I say, "A plague on both propositions." Is it to find the £68,000 to continue price-control—the £68,000 that we previously received from the Commonwealth Government but which will not be supplied to us in the future? It does seem to me that to introduce the entertainments tax in Western Australia is simply taxing for the sake of taxing. It certainly did not appear in any policy speech delivered by the Premier at the recent elections.

It has been suggested that if entertainments tax is imposed in Western Australia, it will not apply north of the 26th parallel. This strikes me as being really humorous. Just imagine the position of the boys at the leadmine at Ragged Hills or at the Nunyerry asbestos mine! I am sure it will give them great relief. Mr. Barker will hear me out there. The entertainments they receive in the future will be free of tax! In my opinion, this tax should not only not apply north of the 26th parallel but south of it also.

I vigorously oppose any attempt by the State Treasurer to reimpose the tax, and I trust the House will not allow him to get away with such a piece of brigandage. The Federal Treasurer abolished the tax as a concession to the people, and we should see that they are not denied it. It is time we got away from the idea that the people cannot do anything unless they are either controlled or taxed on it. It seems to me that successive Governments, both Federal and State, have for far too long given the people the run-around on controls and taxation. I support the motion.

HON. W. R. HALL (North-East) [5.45]: I desire to take this opportunity, together with other members, of congratulating the Chief Secretary, Mr. Fraser, and the Minister for the North-West, Mr. Strickland, on their elevation to Cabinet rank. I hope that their sojourn here as Ministers will be a long and happy one although I have good reason to believe they will have some ups and downs during that period.

Hon. A. R. Jones: It will not be so long.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I also want to take this opportunity of extending a welcome to the new member, Mr. Griffith. I know that he is not new to politics but I hope that his stay here will be a happy one and that he will get on with the rest of us because, taken by and large, we are a happy family. I wish to thank members for the honour they have conferred upon me in electing me to the position of Chairman of Committees. I will endeavour to do my best and give entire satisfaction to members of all parties, irrespective of their political colour.

For once in 15 years I did not intend to speak on the Address-in-reply because I had come to the conclusion that speaking to this motion was merely a let-out and only a means of filling "Hansard." I also thought that a speech on the Address-in-reply was a sort of parish pump idea and that very little notice was taken of it either by the Minister in charge of the House or those in charge of the departments referred to in such speech. However, I have now come to the conclusion that I have no alternative than to rise to-night and say something about the gold-mining industry because it is in a precarious position, and has been for some considerable time. If railway freights are increased, the industry will be in a worse position than ever.

Although the industry is producing more wealth than it has in past years, there has been a large decline in the number of men employed. Today only 6,934 men are working in the goldmining industry and I include in that number men working in an area from Laverton or Wiluna in the north to Esperance in the south and including such places as Bullfinch, Southern Cross, Big Bell and others. Members can see from the small number of men employed, even after it has been in existence for many years, that the gold-mining industry is in a precarious position. I realise that the mining companies have had to look for ways and means of overcoming their manpower problems in the past and this has caused them to introduce various labour-saving devices. They now use a tungsten drill and I believe that by the use of this drill two or three shifts of tool-sharpeners have been dispensed with, and the companies have been able to do without the services of blacksmiths. The use of this drill has lessened the cost of production, which is of considerable importance to the mining companies, but it has also been responsible for a reduction of labour in the industry. You, Mr. President, will be able to bear me out in that regard.

The goldmining industry is responsible for keeping in existence many towns in the North-West, the Eastern Goldfields and the Murchison and we must take a serious view of the present position. Today some mines, because of low-grade ore and high

cost of production, are on the breadline and one or two of the big mines in Kalgoorlie, in recent years, have had to look at every penny they have spent. Now that there is to be an increase in railway freights, it will not be safe for Goldfields members to visit their districts.

Hon. H. Hearn: I thought you were popular up there.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Yes, but at present we are not as popular as the hon. member who resides in Victoria Park.

Hon. H. Hearn: Who is that?

Hon. W. R. HALL: As there is a fruit war in Victoria Park, the hon. member would be very popular at present; but Goldfields members today are far from popular because of the various increases and penalties that have been imposed upon people in the goldmining industry, and they are the people whom we represent.

Hon. A. L. Loton: And not only in the goldmining industry, either.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I realise that other industries are affected but, after all a member must speak about those industries with which he is familiar. It is my job to point out to members the grave disabilities which affect this industry. I want the Minister, and the other members of Cabinet, to give serious consideration to the position of the goldmining industry. After all, three members of Cabinet represent Goldfields electorates. There are also two Ministers in this House, and if they could be persuaded to realise the disabilities under which the industry is labouring we would have a total of five members of Cabinet willing to do what they could to render assistance.

Hon. H. Hearn: You think the law of self-preservation should prevail!

Hon. W. R. HALL: At present Goldfields people are incensed at the idea of extra freight charges.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Without any increase in the price of gold.

Hon. W. R. HALL: That is so. For years people on the Goldfields have existed simply to provide gold for America; in other words, they are working for America. So far the International Monetary Fund has done nothing. I was pleased to hear Mr. Heenan say the other evening that there might be an increase in the price of gold, but I cannot see any hope in that direction. Now that the war in Korea has finished, America may be looking for customers in other countries and we may be able to receive an increase in the price of gold beyond the 35 dollars an ounce that is paid now. However, I doubt very much whether there will be any increase.

For years people on the Goldfields have been forced to accept many impositions. Generally speaking, residents in those areas

are very tolerant and I must admit that on occasions people in the farming districts have had a bad spin. But at present no one can gainsay the fact that those in the goldmining industry are having a bad time and that if there is to be an increase in railway freights it will affect many other aspects. For instance, the cost of living will increase because freights on all commodities will rise. The cost of explosives will be increased; the cost of water has gone up and that is another thing about which the people are hostile.

Hon. H. Hearn: And timber.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Yes, the cost of all commodities will rise.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Fuel on the Goldfields has gone up £1 9s. 3d. a ton.

Hon. W. R. HALL: The mine at Big Bell employs about 450 men and in a mining town the total population is usually three times the number of men employed on the mine concerned. Therefore we could say that Big Bell would have a population of about 1,500 to 2,000 people, and for some considerable time the Big Bell mine has been working on three dwts. The enormous tonnage produced has been the only factor that has made it possible for the mine to keep going. You, as well as I, know that is so, Mr. President. Recently this Government did grant some assistance to the goldmining industry and I think that the previous Government also granted some concessions.

Hon. L. A. Logan: The previous Government gave them £100,000.

Hon. W. R. HALL: The previous Government did assist the Big Bell mine but it is still in a precarious position. If this mine, which is a good one, is forced to close down, where will the men and their families go? Admittedly, the Hill 50 mine is a bright spot in the goldmining industry at present, and it appears that this mine may be the means of bringing into the Murchison goldfields approximately £1,000,000. This money, which will be spent on testing the area around the Mt. Magnet-Murchison district, has been provided mostly by people who reside in Adelaide and Victoria. So members can see that the Hill 50 is one of the bright spots. But if the Big Bell mine is forced to close down, what will happen to the people now employed there?

In those areas the cost of living is terrific. Only last year I spoke about railway freights to that district and the ex-Minister for Railways will bear me out on that point. I said last year that there used to be a flat rate of 1s. 6d. for every 35lb. consigned to that town, but that that rate had been steadily rising until it reached 3s. 5d. That was last year. Many people in that area send to Perth for their fruit and vegetables, and when I spoke on this question last year there was only one greengrocer in the town.

Consequently people had to queue up for their vegetables. Now that freights are to be increased, on a sliding scale, by another 35 per cent., those people will face many increased costs, and over the years the residents of those districts have been responsible for a good deal of the revenue received by way of railway freights.

So I ask the Government to exempt the people in the goldmining industry from those extra freight charges. If that is done the industry will be able to keep its costs of production at today's level. Something must be done or the Government will be killing the goose that is laying the golden eggs; in other words, it will be strangling the industry. The previous Government increased railway freights, and apparently all Governments seem to think that this is a means whereby they can obtain extra revenue. Later on I will deal with increased freight rates and railway expenditure, but at the moment I am dealing with the goldmining industry. If something is not done, the industry will go out of existence.

The goldmining industry has been the salvation of the State and its main theme; it will always mean a lot to Western Australia. I say that without fear of contradiction because of the number of townships that have sprung up and because of the thousands of men who have been employed in the industry. It has also sustained thousands of families. Kwinana will never be in the same street as the goldmining industry, and it will never mean as much to Western Australia as that industry has meant. I am pleased to see that work has been started at Kwinana and I hope it will be a success, but had various Governments done as much for the goldmining industry as they have for Kwinana, I for one would have been very pleased, as would other members representing that industry. Kwinana will never be the asset to Western Australia that the Eastern Goldfields, the Murchison and the Northern Goldfields have been.

I would now like to refer to prospecting. I do not think there is a great deal being done for prospectors today. On making inquiries I find that there are about 40 men affected under the prospecting scheme which the Government has operated over a period of years. My inquiries establish the fact that those men are from 50 to 65 years of age. Of course, there are a number of prospectors who are not worried about the scheme at all, and I appreciate the fact that they are doing a good job for themselves. It is their luck if they can go prospecting without worrying about the scheme. A prospector on the Eastern Goldfields today gets about £4 10s. a week from the Government. If he is in the North or North-West he gets £5 10s. a week. I think that is true.

If we are to get capital into Western Australia and if we are to do our best for this industry, then it is essential that we

have these men. Although a number of old-time prospectors have left this planet, there are still many who are very conversant with prospecting but who, for various reasons, cannot go out into the bush. One of these reasons is, of course, the physical difficulties encountered, quite apart from the fact that a man must try to exist on £4 10s. a week. The result is that some of them who are not interested in the scheme get outside backing and some of them make a very good job of it.

While the Government has raised the amount for the prospectors under this scheme from £2 to £4 10s., seeing there are a large number of men who are old-age pensioners. I think it would be better if they were allowed to retain their pensions of £3 10s. a week and in addition to that, were given £2 a week. What is wrong with letting them retain their pension? A number of the men receiving pensions do not feel inclined to renounce them, because once they have been given up it is difficult to get them back. Apart from this, they are asked far too many questions in connection with the return of pensions.

What is wrong with the Government permitting the men to keep their pensions and awarding them £2 over and above that amount? That would mean they would get £5 10s. and, at the same time, the Government would save £2 10s. a week. Apart from this, the men would not be obliged to renounce their pensions. That is fair and logical. I cannot see anything wrong with it. I am told that these prospectors are policed in regard to the present scheme and they have to submit to this, that and the other. When one is out prospecting in the bush one has not the time to submit to anything; all one is interested in is that elusive weight.

Hon. G. Bennetts: They are under big expenses today.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Even from its inception the prospecting scheme to which I have referred has not proved all that it has been cracked up to be. If we desire to foster this industry, and to find new mines and thus invite large capital into the country, we must look to those men to do it. In concluding my remarks on the goldmining industry, I would like to say this—and I am very sincere about it—that the Government of the day should explore every avenue before it is too late, with a view to exempting this industry from the burden it carries and under which a number of the mines will find great difficulty in continuing. If I am any judge, before very long there will be a pretty big hue and cry about this matter. Luckily with the Sons of Gwalia mine the position is not so bad. At one time it had to have Government assistance. It is far better to release mining companies from the heavy burden they carry and to lessen their cost of production than to see them on the breadline, putting men off. These men will be on the unemploy-

ment market and we will be faced with that all over Western Australia. We will have an army of unemployed.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Do you think the Lancefield mine will start again?

Hon. W. R. HALL: I would like to see it start again. From what I have read and the reports I have seen, it would seem that the outlook is promising.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: It is giving every indication of starting again.

Hon. W. R. HALL: There was a big mine at Lancefield. Cable Bros. had it, but the machinery was taken off. It is there now. I believe there is a big chance of something being done with it.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Will the increased freight charges have an ill effect?

Hon. W. R. HALL: The increased freight charges will have an ill effect on everything. It is going to be very difficult and a great burden. The matter is in the hands of Cabinet members, however, and they are the people to see that something is done. Another very contentious matter which I wish to mention is the Commonwealth Government's health benefit scheme. When that came into operation there were advertisements and posters everywhere which led people to believe that for a small weekly contribution one could be insured for from £3 10s. to £21 a week for hospital benefits, in addition to the Commonwealth benefit scheme. I am not in the position yet to say what the effect of the scheme will be, but I do know that when the advertisements were circulated in the State and statements were made over the radio, they led people to believe that for a contribution of 3s. 6d. one could get cover if one went into a hospital and had a surgical operation.

I would like to say, however, and here I can speak authoritatively because I have been through the mill, that since January of this year until July, or before the 31st July, I paid £140 for hospital expenses and surgical operations and so forth. There were seven medical men, all specialists, and I think therefore that I am qualified to say a little about this matter. On the whole, I have done fairly well, considering that though it cost me £140 I got back £66 odd, and had to pay £70 odd out of my own pocket. What I am complaining about, however, is the humbug and extra work involved when one makes one's claim. One has to get the doctors to state this, that and the other and they are put to a whole lot of trouble.

I believe that as the scheme goes along, it will profit from the mistakes made in the past and eventually I hope it will benefit the people of Western Australia and the Commonwealth as a whole. To my way of thinking, however, unless one is aware of the charges to be made by the doctors and surgeons, it is not possible

to get 90 per cent. of the total cost from this fund on payment of 3s. 6d. a week. Prior to the 31st July, one paid 3s. 6d. and that covered one's wife and family. That amount ensured as much as £7 7s. or £8 8s. a week for hospital expenses. As Dr. Hislop has said, and as I have experienced since, it is not possible to get a bed in a hospital for less than 35s. a day or £12 12s. a week. That is the lowest charge I know of. If none of those beds were available, a person would have to occupy one costing £18 18s. a week. The extra money would, of course, come out of his own pocket. But even before the 30th June, the amount paid would not cover one. A select committee should be appointed or an inquiry of some sort should be made by Parliament for the purpose of finding out and explaining more about the scheme to the people, with a view to informing them exactly what they are to receive for their weekly contributions.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I have already pointed out that, according to most of the advertising in connection with the funds, one is expected to consult a general practitioner first of all and that certain money is set aside to cover expense. The amount for a general practitioner would be smaller than that for a specialist. If I wanted to go to a particular surgeon or specialist, it should be my right to do so. I should not be expected to consult a general practitioner if I considered that he was not the right man to consult in the circumstances.

Hon. L. Craig: Who is to say? Everyone would go to a specialist if he could.

Hon. W. R. HALL: If he pays for it, he should be allowed to do so. Some medical men have specialised in a particular branch of medicine or surgery and the contributor should have the right to consult the specialist he prefers. Why should it be necessary for him to be referred by a general practitioner to a specialist? Is it feared that otherwise the general practitioner might lose his patients?

Hon. L. Craig: Do you think that a patient knows what is wrong with him without going to a general practitioner?

Hon. W. R. HALL: I am afraid that there are some general practitioners who do not know very much. Another important point is the psychological effect upon the patient. That, also, should be considered. In St. George's Terrace we have some really excellent specialists. I happen to know a few of them now, and I would not be likely to consult a general practitioner in one of the suburbs if I believed that there was a specialist in the Terrace who knew more about my particular trouble.

Hon. H. Hearn: Under your idea, the specialists would be kept busy.

Hon. W. R. HALL: If a specialist had to diagnose the hon. member's complaints, doubtless he would be kept busy. However, the hon. member must have his little joke, and I may as well be made the target as anyone else. This is a very serious matter. The fund has been inaugurated by the Commonwealth Government and it is designed to benefit people who are sick. When one visits a hospital, one can visualise how high the cost is if a patient is kept there for only a couple of weeks. Yet many of them are inmates for months. If the contribution of a married man with a family were increased from 3s. 6d. to 4s. 6d. a week, the charge of 12 guineas for a bed in the hospital would be just about covered. This extra shilling, however, does not make any allowance for a surgical operation.

Hon. L. A. Logan: The surgical operation would be covered by the contribution of 3s. 6d.

Hon. W. R. HALL: The fund that the hon. member has in mind might be a better one than I am quoting. This applies to some of the funds operating in New South Wales. I do not wish it to be thought that I am complaining about the scheme. The trouble is that the people have been left in such doubt as to the precise effect of the scheme, and there has been so much delay in the payment of claims and so forth that something should be done to stimulate action along the right lines. I submitted a claim about the 1st of this month, having filled in the requisite forms, but the matter is still in abeyance and I have heard nothing about it. True, the amount involved is only small, but still there should not be such delay.

Hon. L. C. Diver: You have plenty of grounds for complaint.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Possibly the hon. member knows something about the fund that I refer to. If so, he is not the only one; the matter has also been mentioned in another place. According to the propaganda that has been distributed by various benefit funds, claims up to 90 per cent. of the total expense could be recovered, but I cannot understand how that can hold good when it would not be known what the surgeon's fee would be. If there were a certain payment to qualify for the 90 per cent. and one could anticipate what the surgeon's fee would be, one might be able to pay into a fund the requisite amount to cover the cost.

Some surgeons' fees are fairly high, and if a patient needed to have a couple of operations in a year, I doubt whether the fund would cover 90 per cent. of the actual cost. There are anomalies that ought to be removed and the whole position needs to be clarified. I maintain that this House

is the right place in which to ventilate complaints of this sort to the end that contributors may be given a clear explanation of the position. There are thousands of people who are now contributing to the various funds, but they are not receiving enough information about the scheme.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Too much propaganda and not enough fact.

Hon. W. R. HALL: That is so. It is a simple matter to contribute to the various funds on the basis of 3s. 6d. a week and get stamps from chemists and others, but when a claim is made, it is not so easy to recover the amount.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: I think you will find that a contributor may obtain only up to a maximum of 90 per cent.

Hon. W. R. HALL: That is true.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: He would not know until the assessment was made, but 90 per cent. would be the maximum.

Hon. W. R. HALL: A contributor makes his payment to a fund and amongst the propaganda there is a schedule of benefits giving the amount allowed for operations, but no mention is made of what a surgeon's charges might be. Suppose a contributor was suffering from appendicitis, the charge made by one surgeon for operating might be very different from the charge made by another. The charges might vary from 20 guineas to 40 guineas. If the Commonwealth Government allows £11 5s. for a certain operation, the fund will allow 1½ times that amount in addition, but there again I say it depends upon what the surgeon charges.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: The contributor is not told that the fund will pay 90 per cent. All he is told is that it is possible to obtain up to 90 per cent.

Hon. W. R. HALL: That is precisely the point. Nobody knows what contribution would be necessary in order to qualify for the 90 per cent. I am endeavouring to direct attention to some of the vagaries of the scheme in order that the position may be clarified. Many thousands of people are interested and not many understand the real position. I venture to say that an inquiry might bring clarification. I consider that there is need for greater co-operation between the medical fraternity and the fund so that contributors may know what they will be charged for operations or for the treatment of other ailments. This is the type of information that is not available at present.

If one insures one's car or takes out a third party policy, it is effective from that date, but some of these benefit funds have a proviso on their application form stating—at least in one particular case—that the benefits will not be paid in respect of treatment for a disability of which symptoms were apparent to the contributor before

the expiration of the qualifying period of eight weeks, and if that is not a loophole I would like to know what is. I had occasion to write to a specialist in regard to this very point, as follows:—

I now find that an unfair advantage can be taken in regard to the above clause which can be read to mean that when a person presents himself to a medical practitioner for examination and he diagnoses something which has not been apparent to the contributor, although it is apparent to the medical practitioner, and may have been contributing to the illness of the contributor for a time, it may perhaps be the cause of the contributor being deprived of the benefits under this scheme.

Hon. L. C. Diver: That is happening to-day.

Hon. W. R. HALL: It puts the medical practitioner or specialist in an invidious position. If a person took ill tomorrow he might make an appointment with a medical practitioner or specialist who might, on examination, diagnose a complaint of long standing and in that case the clause I have referred to might become awkward.

Of course, one does not go to a medical practitioner or specialist unless one is ill. One man might have known for a long time that there was something wrong with him, while another might be stricken down without warning and go to a medical practitioner or specialist. In such a case the patient might receive a notice—as I did—that the fund was not satisfied, and might be put to a lot of trouble by having to go back to his medical adviser in order to have various forms filled in. That sort of thing is not fair to either the medical fraternity or the patient.

While dealing with one such matter I saw a letter from a certain benefit fund stating, "Your claim will be reconsidered if you present another medical certificate completed by the doctor," and so on. I do not think that patients, having been treated, should have to run back to the doctors or specialists to have further forms filled in. One should have the right to consult the practitioner in whom one has confidence, as that often has a good psychological effect. I have been denied payment for a specialist because the person concerned did not go to a general practitioner in the first place. I believe an inquiry—perhaps by a select committee—should be held into these benefit funds so that the people of the State might know what they are to receive in return for their contributions.

There is plenty of propaganda being distributed by the medical benefit funds, and it is only when one wants to collect the benefits that the fun begins. What is to be the position of the working man who

falls for the propaganda that these medical benefit funds are disseminating? I hope the Government or the Minister for Health will make a move in order to see that the medical benefit funds are of real benefit to the people of the State. I will deal now with the proposed closure of the Meekatharra-Wiluna and Leonora-Laverton lines.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: They had a run-away up there yesterday.

Hon. W. R. HALL: One of the connecting rods on the engine broke and caused the delay in that case. The ex-Minister for Railways in this House said that no Government likes to close or pull up a railway; but of course people interested put pressure on their Parliamentary representatives who, in turn, put pressure on the Government, and so it is possible that, irrespective of the recommendations of the Railways Commissioners, we will be able to keep all our railways in operation. Apparently someone recently got information that the Leonora-Laverton line was to be pulled up. Representations were made and the next thing we knew was that the line was to be left there.

It is a retrograde step for any Government to pull up a railway that is serving the people or one that is likely to be an asset to the State in future years. Wiluna was for a long time a great asset to the State. Laverton was also an asset and apparently, with the development of the Lancefield mine, will be so again. It is a shame that either the previous or the present Government should have intended to tear up these railways and I will oppose any move to close them. Road transport, as I said last year, can never compete with the railways, even if rail freights are raised. Although our trains sometimes run late, they always get there, and that is more than can be said for road traffic.

Hon. H. L. Roche: All drivers are not like you.

Hon. W. R. HALL: The hon. member may have had a bad trip with me once or twice but I have become a much more reliable driver in recent years. It is bad enough for people in the outback to be faced with the present very high cost of living, without having their only reliable links with the rest of the State severed. Even if the railway from Meekatharra to Wiluna has to be closed, I feel it would be a sorry state of affairs if the Government were to pull up the rails. Although the Meekatharra-Wiluna line may be showing a loss, there are many other lines in the State from which some of the loss could be made up, and another way in which to increase railway revenue would be to eliminate the running of railway buses and private transport parallel with the railway line from Kalgoorlie to Perth. In the last few years, while there have been trains travelling between Kalgoorlie

and Perth and carrying very few people, railway buses have run parallel with that line, carrying national service trainees, football teams and so on. One needs little imagination to realise that that policy runs away with the revenue of the railways.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: Are you suggesting that football teams should travel by train?

Hon. W. R. HALL: Why not?

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: They might not get there in time.

Hon. W. R. HALL: The hon. member does not represent teams such as you, Mr. President, and I represent in the North-West Province. Our footballers are of the type who get there whenever they wish to do so. I believe the Eastern Goldfields Transport Board in recent months has run some of its buses down to Perth. If we are to reduce our huge railway deficit we must cease running other passenger services parallel with our railways. I believe we should start at the top if we are to pare down the huge railway deficit, instead of suggesting that we should pull up some of our railways.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: You are right there.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I believe that a great deal of money is being lost in the administration of our railways and that there is considerable room for improvement there. I repeat that the worst thing any Government can do is to close down or pull up a railway line. The amount of revenue the State Government receives from people travelling on the Trans-train would be no more than £2 per passenger, which is exceedingly small when compared with the total running costs. Mr. Thomson referred to our railway coaches and dining-cars. I can assure the hon. member that if he travelled in one of our AH coaches he would be convinced that it is equal to any in the Eastern States. There is no doubt that those new coaches are an acquisition to our railways. It is true, as he said, that the dining-cars are not air-conditioned, and a passenger could easily lose two or three pounds in weight while sitting in one of them having a meal.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Some people pay to slim!

Hon. W. R. HALL: Yes, that is true.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: You have not lost much weight.

Hon. W. R. HALL: The hon. member has still a long way to go, but I hope he succeeds.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: What do you think of the Kalgoorlie refreshment rooms?

Hon. W. R. HALL: I must admit that the dining-cars on our railways are definitely out of date and there is no doubt that they are not fitted for summer conditions. When a Trans-train passenger

leaves the Commonwealth train at Kalgoorlie and boards the Kalgoorlie express, he feels keenly the change in conditions, and complains bitterly about the lack of air-conditioning. Nevertheless, apart from that, our coaches compare very favourably with those in the Eastern States. In answer to the hon. member's question regarding the Kalgoorlie refreshment-room, I do not profess to know much about it compared with similar establishments in other States.

I now wish to refer to traffic. Last year I was taken to task and criticised severely by people in some quarters because I referred to the money spent by the National Safety Council in trying to prevent road accidents. At that time, while speaking on the floor of the House, I mentioned that if the number of police motorcycle patrolmen was increased, it would achieve better results in reducing the accident rate than all the marks and signs placed on the roads by the National Safety Council.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Do you consider the National Safety Council is not doing a good job?

Hon. W. R. HALL: I am not saying that, but it is the patrolman on the motorcycle who does the best work. Whether it was as a result of my comments or not I do not know, but I did notice that 20 more patrolmen were put on the roads in an effort to improve traffic conditions. The number of motorcar registrations in our State is increasing, but I do not care to see motorists penalised to a greater degree than is necessary, because, in my opinion, they pay more taxes than anyone else. They are instrumental in keeping a large industry going and a great many men employed. Instead of a breach of the Traffic Act by a motorist being made to appear a crime, he should be absolved from the inconvenience of having to attend court and lose a day's pay, in addition to being fined. It is hardly worth his while to attend the court to pay the penalty for minor traffic breaches such as parking.

In my opinion, the negligent driver is the greatest road menace of all. I admit that a drunken driver can be dangerous and is a danger to himself and others. A negligent driver, however, will often cross intersections at great speeds without giving correct signals, and is a greater potential killer than some drunken drivers. In South Australia, the traffic law is administered by the Adelaide Shire Council, and I believe it prescribes set penalties for traffic breaches. When a motorist commits a breach of the Traffic Act, he merely has to forward his fine to the Shire Council, and the same principle could be applied here.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Adelaide has some antiquated traffic laws.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I admit that Adelaide has some very narrow streets, and the motorist has a different way from ours of

signifying that he intends to make a right-hand turn, but I am still of opinion that when it comes to prosecutions and paying fines, we could emulate Adelaide's example with advantage. I would like the powers—that be to take notice of my comments, because I think some action could be taken to this end. The only alternative to heavy penalties for traffic breaches is to increase the number of police patrolmen. I know from my own experience as a driver, that they do excellent work. At one time, a motorist had no need to worry much about the appearance of a patrolman, but now he is forced to be continually on the alert. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

On motion by Hon. H. Hearn, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.11 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 22nd September, 1953.

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

QUESTIONS.

MIDLAND RAILWAY COY.

As to Shares and Shareholders.

Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Justice:

(1) Will he advise the House of the number of shares held in the Midland Railway Coy. by—

(a) shareholders in Western Australia;

(b) shareholders outside Australia?

(2) Will he state the number of shareholders in Western Australia?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The Midland Railway Coy. of Western Australia Limited is a company incorporated in England. As a foreign company in this State it is not obliged by the Companies Act, 1943, to furnish to the Registrar of Companies any information which would supply answers to the questions asked.

The information sought could be obtained from the Companies Registry in London.

(2) It is believed that there are four stockholders resident in Western Australia and that they hold stock to the value of £1,700 out of a total paid-up capital of £593,162.

RAILWAYS.

(a) As to Coaching Traffic Losses.

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Can he advise the House of the proportion of the railway working losses attributable to coaching traffic?

(2) What portion of the working losses sustained by the coaching traffic can be attributed to the metropolitan suburban service?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) The information is not on record but an estimate is being made from the data available, and will be supplied to the hon. member as soon as possible.

(b) As to Mundaring-Midland Service.

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Is it proposed to cater for railway patrons on the Mundaring-Midland line by—

(a) railway, or

(b) tramway buses, or

(c) both services?

(2) If (b) or (c) services are proposed, will railway employees be given the usual railway concession rates of fares?