

tion stated, the hours of polling at Federal and State elections should be made uniform. Many electors do not distinguish between one election and another, just as, when filling in claims, they do not realise that they have to submit a Federal claim card and probably a couple of State cards. In the matter of the hours of polling, they think that because at a previous election they could vote up to 8 p.m., they may do likewise at a State election. The hours should certainly be made uniform. It is regrettable that some of the other recommendations of the Royal Commission could not be adopted, particularly the one regarding the redistribution of Council seats. That matter does not come within the compass of the Bill, but I consider it would be advantageous if, as in South Australia, and as mentioned by the member for Northam (Mr. Hawke), both Council and Assembly elections could be held on the same day. Next year we shall have Assembly elections probably in April and Council elections in May.

Mr. Marshall: What would be wrong with our all going out next May and returning for six years?

Mr. PATRICK: That would be a good idea. A similar set of officers will be necessary to take the votes at each of the two elections only a month apart. While it is almost impossible to arrange for compulsory voting at Council elections, we propose to adopt it for Assembly elections. In my opinion, that is a very proper thing to do. If the elections for both Houses were held on the same day, the practical result would be compulsory voting for the Council, because the electors would be at the booth to vote for the Assembly and doubtless would cast their votes for the Council at the same time. There is not much more that I wish to say at this stage. The Bill is chiefly a Committee measure. I hope the Minister will take notice of the points I have raised, particularly the one about keeping open polling places for absent voters, because we have such a number of unopposed elections that the position is entirely different from that which obtains in the Federal sphere.

On motion by Mr. McDonald, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.20 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 26th September, 1935.

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

BILL—FORESTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time, and *passed*.

BILL—STATE TRANSPORT CO-ORDINATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 18th September.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.37]: Mr. Thomson, under his Bill, seeks, among other things, to give a municipality or a road board power to grant a license to run a commercial goods vehicle. In other words, he presupposes that a municipality or road board may apply for a license for a commercial goods vehicle, and start carting merchandise for Jack, Bill, Tom and Harry at so much a ton.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is not the intention.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know what the intention is, but I know what is the interpretation. Mr. Thomson is a little premature. Municipalities and road boards have no power at present to establish trading concerns of this sort, and their embarking on such enterprises in the future has not been contemplated by the Acts under which they are controlled. In Section 10, the State Transport Act provides, inter alia, that the board shall consider and determine all applications for licenses in respect of public vehicles, the assumption being that such applications would only be made by the owners of public vehicles and not by municipalities or road boards. In any case, an amendment of the Acts governing local authorities would be necessary before these bodies could enter into competition with private enterprise in the carriage of goods.

Section 24 and other sections provide that persons may make application to the board for the right to operate commercial goods vehicles or omnibuses, and that the board may grant or refuse to grant the application. It is further provided that the board may, if it grants a license, impose conditions. Section 24 also provides that if any person who, on the 31st day of December, 1933, was the holder of a license for a vehicle which was licensed in accordance with the provisions of Section 10A of the Traffic Act, is refused a renewal of the license by the board, then the person who made the application to operate a vehicle shall have the right of appeal to a magistrate. It will be seen that under the Act as it stands only those who held licenses on the 31st December, 1933, had a right of appeal. And for a very good reason. These people had vested interests. They had built up a business, to a greater or lesser extent; and it was only just that the refusal to grant them a license should be subject to an appeal to a magistrate.

At the present time 589 trucks are licensed by the Transport Board to operate in various parts of the State. Nevertheless, Mr. Thomson deems it necessary to introduce a Bill which provides for an appeal to a magistrate merely because the Transport Board has refused to license a motor truck to transport all classes of goods between Perth and Kojonup. Let me deal with this aspect. Section 34 of the Act provides that the board may, on the application of the owner, grant or refuse to grant a license in respect of a commercial goods vehicle. Section 35 provides that every application shall be in writing and shall contain certain particulars; for instance—the route or area upon or in which it is intended that the vehicle is to operate; the classes of goods proposed to be carried, and such other particulars as are prescribed. The form in which such applications should be made was prescribed, and applicants were required to reply to all the questions that were set out on that form.

Only one application was made to the board for the right to transport goods between Perth and Kojonup; and the applicant, in reply to the question regarding the proposed scale of charges for the carriage of goods by him, quoted as follows:—

Sheep—2s. to 2s. 6d. per head (according to distance).

Wool—at brokers' charges (assumed to be railway rates).

Petrol—3d. per gallon.

General merchandise—average price, £3 10s. per ton.

When the application was received, the Board was required by Section 36 of the Act to take into consideration—

(a) the necessity for the service proposed to be provided and the convenience which would be afforded to the public by the provision of such service;

(b) the existing transportation service for the carriage of goods upon the routes or within the area proposed to be served in relation to its present adequacy and possibilities for improvement to meet all reasonable public demands; and the effect upon such existing service of the service proposed to be provided.

The members of the board informed me that they gave very particular consideration to this section before deciding to refuse the license. For instance, it was ascertained that the existing transportation service, namely the railway, provided a facility which could meet all reasonable public demands. That is to say, the Commissioner of Railways as a common carrier was able to convey to and from Kojonup all classes of goods. In fact, during the year ended 30th June, 1933, the Commissioner carried from the Kojonup district goods as follows:—

	Tons.
Hay, straw and chaff	103
Wheat	721
Other grain	196
“A” Class goods (including bark)	203
Sheep	11,458

and to Kojonup district 878 tons of fertilisers. The board also ascertained that during the year 1929-30 the Commissioner of Railways conveyed to the Kojonup district high-freight goods (1st, 2nd and 3rd Class) 226 tons, whereas in 1932-33 he carried only 42 tons. It was thus very evident that while the Commissioner was still required to carry all of the low-freight goods, road transport was depriving him of the high-freight goods. It is certain that the producers within the Kojonup district cannot carry on successfully if they are deprived of the service afforded by the railways, and that therefore, within reason, the railways should be protected against the unfair competition which was proposed to be provided by the applicant for the license.

The shortest distance by rail to Kojonup—that is, Perth via Boyup Brook—is 230

miles, and the railway freights now charged are as follows:—

	Per ton.
	£ s. d.
Manure	0 6 10
Miscellaneous classes	0 17 8
Special grain (wheat)	0 15 0
Other grain	0 19 0
“A” Class	1 11 9
“B” Class	2 3 11
“C” Class	2 15 3
Wool	3 3 2
First-class goods	4 7 9
Second-class goods	5 14 11
	Per head.
Sheep	1s. 11.8d.

It will be noted that the applicant proposed to charge £3 10s. per ton for the haulage of general merchandise—or 5¼d. per ton per mile. In 1933 the Commissioner of Railways reported that if he could have levied a flat rate of approximately 1¾d. per ton per mile on all goods carried during that year, the revenue collected would have been sufficient to pay operating expenses and interest, and return a surplus.

When deputations waited upon the board, many extravagant statements were made; for instance, that “there had been an attempt to work up a fat-lamb industry, but that the Transport Board had wiped it out.” The answer to that is that during the 12 months ended 31st December, 1934—up to which time the owners of motor trucks had the right to transport stock as well as general goods—the Commissioner of Railways carried to Midland Junction, Fremantle, and Robb’s Jetty 569,561 sheep and lambs. Also, that during that period, when the growers had the option of despatch by rail or by road, only 26,723 sheep and lambs arrived in Midland Junction and Fremantle from all sources by road, and that of these only 1,794 were transported by road from the Kojonup district. The numbers railed from Kojonup in 1933 totalled 11,458, and during the year ended 30th June, 1934, 7,943. These figures conclusively prove that the producers of sheep and lambs for the metropolitan markets have in the past, and must in the future, rely upon railway facilities for transport, and that even when owners of motor trucks had the right to carry general goods they did not cater for the transport of livestock, except to a very limited extent.

Mr. Thomson quoted certain figures which, in his opinion, proved that the Kojonup people were suffering disabilities by

reason of the Board’s action. Those figures were produced by members of a deputation that waited upon the Board 12 months ago, and they were dealt with in a comprehensive reply to those who presented them. Actually those figures prove nothing at all, unless it can be shown what the truck owner would have charged if he had been compelled to carry grain, superphosphates, chaff, etc., at railway rates. In any case, they mainly refer to small parcels delivered to individuals. Everyone knows that it is because produce other than wool is carried at low rates by the Commissioner, that he is compelled to charge higher rates for the carriage of general commodities. Mr. Thomson mentioned that the truck owner carried sugar over a comparatively short distance by road at £2 13s. 4d. per ton. He said that the charge by rail would be £3 14s. As a matter of fact it is now £2 15s. 3d., or 1s. 11d. a ton more than the charge of the truck owner. After having stated that the Transport Board was biassed and did not view this matter impartially and equitably, Mr. Thomson goes on to say that he had no desire to attack the Transport Board. In support of the amendment of the Act which he has submitted, Mr. Thomson quotes a section from a New South Wales Act. The Act referred to is No. 18 of 1930, and is an Act to provide a Transport Trust for the regulation and control of tramway and omnibus transport and public vehicles in what is described as the metropolitan district of New South Wales. The New South Wales Act, No. 32 of 1931, which provides for the improvement and co-ordination of means of and facilities for locomotion and transport, gives to the constituted board the right to grant or to refuse licenses, and there is no provision for an appeal of any kind to a magistrate or to any tribunal. So Mr. Thomson quoted from the Act dealing with the metropolitan district, not with the whole of the State of New South Wales.

Mr. Thomson is concerning himself mainly with the activities of the Transport Board in regard to the manner in which it deals with applications for commercial goods vehicles. He does not in any way propose to give the right of appeal to the owners of omnibuses, who are left to care

for themselves. If the proposal be good for commercial goods vehicles, why should it not be good for omnibuses?

Hon. A. Thomson: I will insert "omnibuses," if you agree.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not agree at all. Mr. Thomson proposes to ask Parliament to give the owner of a commercial goods vehicle, or any other person who feels himself aggrieved by any decision of the Board, the right of appeal to a magistrate. If these amendments were passed, the effect would be that if the Board refused to grant a license or imposed conditions which were not satisfactory to the applicant, the decision of the Board could be upset by any magistrate, and the Board would then be compelled to issue a license merely because the magistrate thought that it should be issued. Where would this lead to? There would be endless appeals, and topsy-turvy magisterial decisions, where uniformity should exist consistent with justice. The Act provides that the Board shall consist of three members—one of whom shall be a Government official, one to represent rural industries and one to represent city interests; and, further, that the members shall be persons who, in the Governor's opinion, are capable of assessing the financial and economic effect on the State as a whole of any transport policy. The Board is required to make investigations and inquiries into transport matters, and, particularly, to give consideration, among other factors, to the question of transport in the light of service to the community, the needs of the State for economic development, and other matters that are detailed. The board members give all these questions serious study. In the course of its investigations, the Board has acquired knowledge which qualifies it to decide whether licenses for road transport should or should not be granted. Every application is very fully investigated before a decision is arrived at, and many factors are taken into account. It is doubtful whether any magistrate in the State has had an opportunity of investigating the world-wide problem of transport by railways, road and air. In the circumstances, it would be farcical to insist that magistrates, who do not possess the requisite knowledge, should be placed in the position of forcing the Board to do what, in its opinion was wrong. To sum up: Mr. Thomson's Bill aims at giving

municipalities and road boards power to appeal against an application which they cannot make without violating the laws that restrict their sphere of duty; an application, also, which the State Transport Board could not even consider without going outside their jurisdiction. He would give a magistrate power to permit a commercial goods vehicle to compete unfairly with the State railways; to pick the eyes out of the traffic; to carry only high-freight goods and leave the railways to carry low freight goods at a loss. He would set up variegated courts of appeal, consisting of men, competent no doubt to perform their ordinary duties, but unequipped for the task of deciding whether William Jones or James Smith is entitled to a license over a route which the Board considered should not be granted. If Mr. Thomson thinks every magistrate has all the necessary knowledge at his finger tips, well then his Bill should be to abolish the Board and leave the issue of licenses to the magistrates. It would, in the initial stage, save a considerable amount of time and expense. It would be a novel experiment, but I am afraid it would turn the administration of the Transport Act into a comedy of inconsistencies; create hopeless confusion; strangle the railways, and make the measure the laughing stock of the community. I must oppose the Bill.

On motion by Hon. H. V. Piesse, debate adjourned.

BILL—RURAL RELIEF FUND.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East)

[5.0]: I intend to support the second reading of the Bill. When the Bill was introduced in another place I do not think it can be said that the Minister who submitted it evinced much enthusiasm. I recognise that the task which is going to be set the trustees who will be appointed under the provisions of the Bill will be arduous and difficult. Not only are they going to have difficulties to face, but they will have duties thrust upon them which, in my opinion, have never before been put upon the shoulders of three men. Consequently I am hopeful that the men who will be appointed to occupy the office of trustees will be men of sound judgment and experience in the adjustment of debts. There is a view that we

frequently lose sight of and it is that the Bill is seeking to implement the genuine desire of the Federal Government to assist the primary producing section of Australia as a whole. There is no gainsaying the fact that that section of the community has suffered grave disabilities through the depression and the reduced prices of primary commodities, as a result of which not only have the primary producers suffered, but also the business people associated with them who have shown a genuine desire to assist in carrying a great burden. With that knowledge, I am satisfied that the gesture on the part of the Federal Government is one for which we should be grateful. It can be said that the intention of the Federal Government is to try to relieve a portion of the indebtedness which is unduly pressing upon the farming community. There was an old saying which we learnt in our school days that if we took care of the pence the pounds would take care of themselves. That old proverb, we can say, applies with equal force to the situation in which the farmers now find themselves and that is, that if we take care of the primary producers and make them prosperous, we need have no fear about the success of all sections of the community. The total amount of money we are to receive from the Federal Government is approximately £1,560,000.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I think it is £1,300,000.

Hon. A. THOMSON: There is an additional £260,000 which has been granted. I am quoting now what was said by the Minister in another place. It was the intention of the Federal Government that for every 5s. paid, the indebtedness of the farmers would be reduced by £1. That, in my opinion, is not going to be practicable. Each case will have to be dealt with on its merits. There will be some cases in which the creditors will be glad to receive 3s., but when the creditors have met and discussed the position and received a statement of accounts submitted by the farmer debtor, it may be found there will be required considerably more. That, of course, is not a matter which enters into the provisions of the Bill; it is a matter which the trustees, whoever they may be, will have to deal with. They will be expected to hold the scales of justice evenly. Let us assume that the intention of the Federal Government was carried out. It would mean in effect that the £1,560,000 which is being provided would reduce the farmers' indebtedness in Western Australia by £4,680,000. The position would

then be that the farmer would still owe the balance of the £1,560,000 and that money will have to be returned to the department during a period of years up to 20. It is also provided that none of the money advanced under the provisions of the Bill need be paid within the first three years. If the policy which has been laid down in connection with the expenditure of the Commonwealth money in South Australia had been adopted, it would be carrying into the effect the intention of the Federal Government, namely, the reduction of farmers' indebtedness. Under the Bill before us it is proposed that the £1,560,000 will pay off a portion of the indebtedness, and then the farmer who has taken advantage of this money must start to repay it after the lapse of three years. The adoption of the principle set out in the Bill before us will mean setting up another Government department for a period of at least 20 years. Means will have to be provided whereby this money will be repaid into a fund, which as far as I can see, must be a perpetual one because, as I read the Federal Act, the State Government are not to receive any benefit from the money to be made available under the grant. I am sincerely hoping that long before the 20 years have expired there will be no necessity to continue to hand out the money which the Commonwealth Government have made available. If the South Australian system were adopted, it would mean doing away with the establishment of another department which, of course, must be kept in being. That will mean additional expense to the State because it is provided that the Act must be administered by the State.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: We will require to have a staff in any case.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Suppose we establish a staff and distribute the whole of the money the Commonwealth has made available and we say that the farmer is a fit and proper person to receive the benefits of this legislation and that the creditors have agreed to accept 5s. in the pound. Then the indebtedness will be so much less and they can carry on. The farmer would have the advantage of having his total indebtedness reduced. There is a clause in the Bill which provides that the farmer must put his request through the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Board. I believe an amendment has been suggested which will limit the amount likely to be charged to the farmer. Under

the provisions of the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act a minimum of £10 is charged and levied against one who comes under the care of the trustees. Even supposing a charge of £5 were made and 3,000 farmers came under the Act, it would mean a total of £15,000 towards meeting the costs of the department administering the Act. So I am hopeful that the Government will accept the suggested amendment.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I do not know that the Bill makes it compulsory for the application to be made through the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Board.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes, as I read the Bill: but I hope I am wrong.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: Read Clause 8.

Hon. A. THOMSON: As I read the Bill, the position is as I have stated it.

The PRESIDENT: I hope the hon. member will confine his remarks to the general principles of the Bill. The details can be discussed during the Committee stage. Of course he may make an incidental reference to the clauses.

Hon. A. THOMSON: It is provided that relief may be given over all assets including acquired assets. That shows the reasonableness of the suggestion I make that the advances should be regarded more in the nature of a gift than a debt. In fact, everything that a farmer may have earned or have acquired later is affected under the provisions of the Bill.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: They should be glad to get a loan for 20 years free of interest.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That is so, but it must be remembered that this money is not made available in similar circumstances to an ordinary loan. The money has been made available in order to assist in rehabilitating the farming industry, and to assist farmers slightly because of the position in which the depression and low prices have placed them.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: There is no other industry that could get a loan under such conditions.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am prepared to admit that fact. At the same time I do not think there is any other industry that has suffered so much as that of wheatgrowing. The very sufferings of the industry gave rise to the necessity for this step being taken. In this State the Government are so satisfied with the future prospects that they have decided it is unnecessary to con-

tinue the financial emergency cuts, and salaries and wages are to be restored to their former level. Some members of this Chamber are satisfied that certain emergency legislation now before us should be repealed as being unnecessary. I wish the farming community were in a similarly happy position.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The farmers would have been in that position if they had not nationalised their industry.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Unfortunately, that applies throughout Australia, but I am not dealing with that point just now. There is one phase regarding the position of creditors. A large number of farmers are indebted to the Agricultural Bank for considerable sums of money. The Bill provides that the trustees shall have power to compel the creditors to accept whatever sum the former may decide as being reasonable in view of the position of a farmer. I have faith in the trustees and I hope their judgment will be tempered with wisdom. There is one phase regarding the Agricultural Bank that is worthy of consideration. Quite a large proportion of the indebtedness of the farmers to-day is represented by accumulated compound interest owing to the Agricultural Bank. I would not suggest for one moment that the Government should waive any charge against the farmer regarding the principal advanced, but I do suggest that a certain proportion of the accumulated interest could be written off to enable the farmers to carry on more satisfactorily. I hope that policy will be adopted. If I were a creditor I would be much inclined to say to the trustees, "Very well, you say I must accept 5s. in the pound for money that is owed to me by this farmer, but what about your accumulated compound interest? Why not reduce that indebtedness and so give the farmer a more reasonable chance to succeed. If you adopt that course, you will at least show your willingness to assist in the relief accorded this man."

Hon. E. H. Angelo: Until this year the money has gone into consolidated revenue.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That is so. The Bill provides the trustees with unfettered discretion regarding the disposal of the fund. The trustees will be able to appoint district debt adjustment officers to assist them in the work. But the Bill definitely

states that any application for assistance must be transmitted by the debt adjustment officers to the Director in Perth. That procedure will occasion considerable delay. I am afraid that if that policy is maintained, it will be two or three years before some of the farmers will be able to secure any response to their applications for relief.

Hon. G. W. Miles: How otherwise could you deal with the business?

Hon. A. THOMSON: I suggest that the trustees should have power to delegate some of their functions. I do not think the difficulty is unsurmountable. Would it not be possible and practicable for the trustees to divide the State into sections and distribute the work? The district debt adjustment officers will go into the position of the various farmers, after which they will submit their reports on the affairs of those farmers to the Director in Perth. Surely it will be recognised that that will occasion much delay.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The Director mentioned in the Bill is the Director who is dealing with the applications under the Farmers' Debt Adjustment Board, and he will have the necessary information in the office.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Unfortunately that is not so. While, of course, information is now available regarding those who have already had dealings with the Director, he will not have information about the later valuations of properties representing which assistance may be required. There may be quite a number of new applicants for assistance. If those who will require assistance were merely those whose affairs have been dealt with already under the Farmers' Debt Adjustment Act, the difficulty could be overcome quickly. The trouble is that there will be a large number of applications from clients of the Associated Banks and of the Agricultural Bank as well.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Who would not apply for assistance if money were available for 20 years free of interest?

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am not arguing from that standpoint. I am drawing attention to the certainty that there will be considerable delays. For that reason, I suggest that the trustees should delegate some of their authority.

Hon. H. V. Piessé: That is done now with regard to debt adjustment.

Hon. A. THOMSON: But the applications must be sent to Perth to be placed before the Director.

Hon. H. V. Piessé: That is all right.

Hon. A. THOMSON: But that is where unnecessary delay will be encountered. At any rate, I hope that something will be done to expedite matters.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: If the detailed work is prepared, the Director will not take long in arriving at his decision.

Hon. H. V. Piessé: Concrete propositions will be placed before the trustees for decision.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: If you have three or four authorities distributing the money, you will soon exhaust the fund.

The Honorary Minister: And you will require more than three trustees.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am not advancing this suggestion as a joke. My suggestion will require careful consideration because of the delays that will result from such a method of distribution. Surely it will not be suggested that it is impossible or impracticable for the trustees to divide the work, so that applications may be dealt with on the spot, and thus save time. My proposal is not absurd. It is practicable, and I submit it for consideration.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Probably that matter will be dealt with by way of regulation.

Hon. A. THOMSON: If Mr. Nicholson will look through the Bill, he will see that it contains no such provision.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And we do not want it there either.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I think it is necessary, so here again there is a difference of opinion.

Hon. L. Craig: It is the preparation of the case that will take time, not the allotment of the assistance.

Hon. H. V. Piessé: The trustees can travel if they wish to do so.

Hon. A. THOMSON: There will probably be upwards of 20,000 applications for assistance. It is all very well to say that the trustees will deal with the applications after the reports have been submitted to them. If members had had as much experience as I have had during the past 20 years in connection with Agricultural Bank matters, they would realise that delays are inseparable from a system that requires applications to be dealt with in Perth. What has been the reason for the accusation against members of Parliament that they paid fre-

quent visits to the trustees of the Agricultural Bank? The explanation arises from the piles of applications that had to be dealt with by the Bank trustees, and frequently the only definite way in which we could secure assistance for our constituents was to have their files picked out from the mass awaiting attention. I can easily visualise a repetition of those delays if the system suggested in the Bill should be adopted. That must mean delay, though the object of the Bill is to bring about a distribution of the money as quickly as possible.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I think it is necessary to have one final authority.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Well, I believe the matter could be dealt with by delegated authority. I have raised this point because I think it worthy of consideration. In view of the introduction of this measure, I wish to direct attention to the position in the farming districts. Until recently a farmer who desired to purchase agricultural machinery could obtain it by paying one-third of the price down, and the balance over a period of two years. Another third had to be paid in a year's time and the final instalment a year later.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Are the machinery firms doing business in that way now?

Hon. A. THOMSON: They were, but an alteration has been made, and I have been informed that the alteration is due to the introduction of this measure. Now the firms are demanding one-half down and the balance after next harvest, but the balance must be guaranteed by a bank.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: That is rather hard.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I believe that my information is correct. I was informed of it only half an hour ago.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is as it should be.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I congratulate the Federal Government on having made a genuine effort to assist the farming industry of Australia. Though there has been a good deal of criticism of the amount to be made available and of the method of distribution, I do not propose to discuss those matters. The farming community of Western Australia are grateful to the Federal Government for making available £1,560,000 to relieve their needs and to give them a reasonable chance to carry on. I congratulate the State Government on having introduced the Bill so promptly, and I assure the Minister I will do all in my power to expedite

its passage. If any amendments are passed in this Chamber, I hope that a spirit of compromise will be shown by both sides so that the measure might be finalised and the money distributed at the earliest possible date.

On the motion by the Honorary Minister, debate adjourned.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [5.35] in moving the second reading said: In order that matters relating to the control of traffic and the licensing of vehicles may be kept up-to-date, this Bill is being submitted. It is proposed to amend several sections of the Act which have been found, during the past 16 years, to need improving or amplifying. The Bill also includes new clauses which are necessary to cope with modern traffic developments and which have been asked for by the Commissioner of Police, various local authorities and the representatives of such bodies as the Automobile Club, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Chamber of Automotive Industries. I do not propose to deal extensively with all the proposed amendments at this stage, but there are a few of major importance to which it is desirable to make reference. Members will agree that a measure of this kind, involving a large number of amendments, can be more efficiently dealt with in the Committee stage than on the second reading. The Act provides that no motor vehicle, including a motor truck, shall be permitted to carry passengers for hire or reward unless it is licensed in accordance with the provisions of the Act and insured in regard to injury to persons. Nevertheless, it is a well-known fact that owners of motor trucks not so licensed do carry passengers for hire and reward, and the Bill is designed to prevent the indiscriminate carriage of passengers on motor trucks. The owner of a motor truck, however, may, with the permission of the local authorities, carry workers to and from their places of employment, and the definition of a passenger carried on a motor truck does not include the wife or husband of the owner, the parents or family, or a person employed by the owner. A certain

amount of confusion has arisen regarding the payment of fees on a quarterly, half-yearly or yearly basis. Consequently, the relative sections are to be amended to make clear to the 140 licensing authorities just what those fees shall be. From time to time applications have been made by the owners of motor vehicles for a refund of license fees paid. The applications have been made for various reasons—because of the destruction of the vehicle by fire, because the vehicle has been scrapped, or because it has been transferred to another State. It is curious to note that no provision appears in the Act whereby such refunds may lawfully be made. Refunds have been made, but purely as an act of grace. The Bill will empower the Commissioner of Police to suspend any license that has been issued to a driver if, in the Commissioner's opinion, such driver is unfit to hold a license on account of mental incapacity or physical disability. In such an event, the person may be called upon by the Commissioner to produce a certificate from a medical practitioner, and if any person is deprived of his license to drive, he will have the right of appeal to a magistrate. The Commissioner of Police has reported that on some occasions drivers of vehicles involved in an accident have refused to give their names, places of abode and other information to members of the police force. Under the Act there was no power to demand such information. The Bill proposes to make it an offence to refuse to give the information and provides a penalty for that and similar offences. A heavy penalty is proposed if any person neglects to report to the Commissioner of Police, or to a local authority, when a vehicle causes bodily injury to any person or damage to property. The Governor is to be authorised to make regulations for the control of pedestrian traffic.

Hon. A. Thomson: It is long overdue.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I believe it is. The Governor is also to be empowered to provide for safety regulations in regard to pillion-riding on motor cycles. That, too, is long overdue.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Are you providing for compulsory insurance?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes, but not for third-party insurance under this Bill.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Is that proposal coming down later?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I think so.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: How much later?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Really now, members are asking too many questions. Authority is also given in the Bill for the making of regulations dealing with the placing, erection or installation on roads or footpaths of traffic signs and directions. It will be an offence for any person to advertise any inquiry or request for the conveyance of passengers in any motor vehicle unless such vehicle is licensed to carry passengers for hire or reward. Members will appreciate that a person who is endeavouring to earn a livelihood, and who is licensed to carry passengers for hire or reward, suffers a real disability if others not so licensed carry passengers for hire. Advertisements are often published stating that so many seats are available for a journey to a certain place, which must be detrimental to the people who pay a license fee to carry on that business. The Bill also deals with trailers. The use of trailers of various kinds has become popular in recent years, and they may be seen attached to all kinds of motor vehicles. The scale in the Act was designed at a time when trailers were mainly of a heavy type attached to motor trucks, and the minimum fee prescribed was £4. Such a fee would be high for some of the light trailers in use to-day. Consequently we propose to amend the Act to provide for a minimum fee of £1. The minimum charge for a trailer under the Act is higher than that charged for a light motor car.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Conditions have changed since the Act was passed.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes, very much. The Fourth Schedule of the principal Act has been repealed for the reason that it has never been enforced, because it provided for a load to be carried out of all proportion to the width of the tyre. For example, it allowed a weight of 4 tons 14 cwt. to be carried on a 4-wheeled vehicle with a 3½-inch tyre, and 8 tons 4 cwt. to be carried on a similar vehicle with a 5-inch tyre. The consequent damage, especially to country feeder roads, can be imagined when vehicles of that kind are loaded to their full capacity.

Hon. A. Thomson: Are you reducing the carrying capacity?

The HONORARY MINISTER: In some cases. The proposed new schedule is in two parts. One provides for solid rubber-tyred vehicles, and the other for iron or steel-tyred vehicles. With regard to the latter type, consideration has been given to the diameter of the wheel.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: That is nonsense, the diameter of the wheel.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I say that consideration has been given to the diameter of the wheel for, according to the experts, it is material to the position. In any event, the effect of the new schedule will be to protect country roads, which cannot stand up to the heavy traffic they are called upon to bear to-day. In addition there are many consequential amendments to the Act. No doubt members will be prepared to agree to most of the amendments contained in this Bill. In Committee I shall be pleased to give any further information that may be asked for. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

House adjourned at 5.48 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 26th September, 1935.

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

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On the motion by Mr. Wansbrough, leave of absence for one month granted Hon. J. J. Kenneally (East Perth) on the ground of ill-health.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT CONTINUANCE.

Message.

Message from the Lient.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purpose of the Bill.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet) [4.33] in moving the second reading said: The continuance of the Act is necessary because there are still settlers whose debts have not been funded. Owing to the late rains this year and the lack of feed, it has been found necessary, especially in the north-eastern wheat areas, such as Mukinbudin, Kununnoppin, Ben-cubbin, and along the Kulja-eastward railway, to grant assistance for chaff and other requirements. As the Premier pointed out during the debate on the Address-in-reply, over 1,000 tons of chaff had to be purchased to relieve the situation in that portion of the State. Those advances had to be made under the Industries Assistance Act, without which they could not have been furnished. As an emergency measure, the Industries Assistance Act contains a provision that allows credit to be granted, if necessary, giving an automatic charge over the crop, as well as the lands and chattels, of the borrower. It is not proposed to utilise the Act except where its provisions can be effectively employed, particularly in respect of requirements such as I have just mentioned and for harvest operations. The granting of such credit is not possible under the provisions of the Agricultural Bank Act. The position in respect to the Industries Assistance Board as at the 30th June, 1935, was as follows:—

		£	s.	d.
No. of Accounts	1,374			
Liabilities—				
Non-funded ...	Principal	672,122	12	4
	Interest	184,896	7	9
Funded ...	Principal	829,862	11	2
	Interest	204,407	3	5
Grand Total		£1,891,288	14	8
<hr/>				
Advances for year ending				
30th June, 1935 ...		10,985	19	6
Plus refund of proceeds ...		533	9	0
		£11,519	8	6