

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am not. I have had similar experience to that of the Minister for Lands.

Mr. Watts: It must be backed up by legislation.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We will have to do exactly what we did when we appealed to the Commonwealth and State bond-holders a little while ago to convert their money from 7 per cent. to 4 per cent., or whatever it was.

The Premier: We did not appeal to them.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes, we did, and 97 per cent. responded. Three per cent. had to be forced by legislation.

Mr. Rodoreda: It was a voluntary-compulsory arrangement.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I suppose they knew. If we pass legislation in this House, and through another place, we will find very little of it will be needed. It would be there as—

Mr. Marshall: Intimidation!

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No, it would not be intimidation.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Provision was made in that case that if they did not do the right thing they could be asked to do it by court intervention, or by some other responsible authority. In these circumstances I make it perfectly clear where I stand. I am one hundred per cent. behind the member for Katanning in his motion. I want those members who said I was not prepared to support this to hear every word I say. If this is introduced fifty times, until these people get relief, it will have my whole-hearted support.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.8 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 18th September, 1941.

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

QUESTION—LAMB KILLING CHARGES.

Hon. G. B. WOOD asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Is the Government aware that the following lamb killing charges are in vogue at treatment works in the several States of the Commonwealth—

	Per Head.
	s. d.
Per 32 lb. lamb—	
N.S.W. total return to works ..	2 3
Queensland total return to works ..	2 0
South Australia total return to works	2 7
Tasmania total return to works ..	3 1
Western Australia	3 10 ⁷

2, Was it with the Government's sanction that the charges in Western Australia increased approximately 11d. per lamb since 1940? 3, Will the Government take steps to rectify the disadvantageous position which the lamb producers in this State are experiencing in comparison with the producers of other parts of the Commonwealth?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, The exact charges made at Eastern States' treatment works at present are not known. Unless the services embraced in the prices quoted are specified, the figures may not necessarily indicate the comparative charges being raised at Western Australian treatment plants. "Treatment" charges may be higher in Western Australia, but this is governed by a number of factors—not the least of which is the short killing season in this State. It is not known what the charge of 3s. 10d. quoted as being applicable to Western Australia includes. The actual "treatment" cost is 2s. 8d. per 32 lb. lamb, to which must be added the edible offal, the value of which

varies according to the market available. 2, The charges made in 1940 were lower than in previous years by reason of 6d. per lamb rebate which was granted as a seasonal concession by the works. The increase during the current year over normal seasons is approximately 5d. per lamb represented by a charge of 3 per cent. on the value. In the case of farmers where business is carried out through stock firms or exporters, the charges are lower than in previous years. By far the largest proportion of lambs are sold through these channels. It is believed that the total "treatment" and "selling" charges to the industry will be lower this year than in previous normal years. 3, The Government has endeavoured to protect the interests of producers during the war period by negotiation with the Commonwealth Government but is unaware that Western Australian producers are in a more disadvantageous position under existing conditions than during normal periods.

QUESTION—SUPERPHOSPHATE SUPPLIES.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Are ample supplies of superphosphate likely to be available in Western Australia for next season? 2, If ample supplies are not likely to be available, can an estimate be given of the percentage of deficiency? 3, Is it intended to introduce a rationing system in the event of a deficiency of superphosphate? 4, If so, has consideration been given to the form this rationing will take, and when is it likely to be put into effect?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, Taking into account the various factors affecting demand for superphosphate, it is believed sufficient supplies of superphosphate will be available in Western Australia for next season. 2, See reply to No. 1. 3, The position is being watched closely, and consideration will be given to introducing rationing should circumstances indicate this as desirable. 4, A system of rationing suitable to Western Australian conditions has been examined. The necessity for the introduction of rationing would rest with the Commonwealth Government.

BILL—PROFITEERING PREVENTION ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—GOVERNMENT STOCK SALEYARDS.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [4.39] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of the Bill is to provide for the use, control and management of stock saleyards conducted by the Crown. When the Abattoirs Act was passed in 1909, it applied to the establishment of public abattoirs and to other purposes incidental thereto. Under that Act regulations have been gazetted for the control and management of Government abattoirs and also of the saleyards connected therewith, the view being taken that the saleyards are an integral part of the abattoirs.

Doubts have been raised from time to time regarding the legality of the regulations insofar as they affect the saleyards. In all other States of Australia, the legislation controlling abattoirs also covers the management of saleyards attached to such premises, and a similar power has been assumed in Western Australia. The Government is considering further alterations to and capital expenditure on certain abattoirs to meet the increased demands of the markets, and so it is imperative that the legal position regarding the control of saleyards shall be made clear. Hence the proposals in the Bill.

During the last 30 years the Government has had the loyal support and consideration of those using the abattoir saleyards, particularly of the stock agents, and it is hoped that such co-operation will continue, as the intention of the Bill is not to alter the existing management or control in any way, but only to safeguard the Government in its commitments. The proposed legislation will apply only to those saleyards which are already in existence, or which may be built in conjunction with Government abattoirs, and in no way will it apply to private saleyards or to other saleyards conducted apart from abattoirs.

The Bill provides that regulations may be made dealing with the use, control and management of saleyards; their cleansing and disinfection, including equipment used therein; the removal and disposal of waste matter and filth; for records to be kept and reports to be made out by persons in charge; the collection of fees and charges for their use, and all other things necessary or con-

venient to be prescribed for giving effect to the provisions of the Bill.

Owing to the large amount of public money invested in abattoirs, it is desirable that the Governor should have the power to prohibit the sale of fat stock elsewhere than in a saleyard attached to an abattoir; and a clause has been inserted embodying that power. This will not in any way affect saleyards such as those at Subiaco for dairy stock, but will preclude the setting up of a privately-owned fat-stock saleyard to compete with that at Midland Junction within the metropolitan district. This is the explanation of the proposals in the Bill, in which varied powers are sought. They do not interfere with present practices, their main object being to contribute towards general efficiency and better control. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. E. H. Gray—West) [4.46] in moving the second reading said: When the Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act was passed in 1939, by which power was taken to prevent profiteering in rent, it was thought that the protection granted to a tenant against any increase was all that was needed, and as a consequence no penal provisions were included. Most landlords have adhered to the spirit of the legislation, but there are those who endeavour to take advantage of the times and raise their rents. Cases are known to the department administering the Act, and it is these that the Bill seeks to cover in its scope. The proposal in this Bill is to establish a complete legal right for an overcharged tenant to recover any increase so inflicted. It further proposes that a landlord who overcharges rent may be prosecuted. Penal provisions are inserted, and prosecutions for offences may be commenced and dealt with under the limitations imposed by the Justices Act.

It was assumed in pegging the rents at the 1939 figure as the "standard rent" chargeable, that a tenant in having the rights conferred upon him by the Act would refuse

to pay any unfair increase in rent demanded of him by his landlord. Such has proved not to be the case, however. Landlords have sought to increase rents, and in some instances the tenants have refused to pay. Notice to leave has been served, and the tenant has been faced with the alternative of either paying or incurring the inconvenience of seeking accommodation elsewhere. In such circumstances he first of all chooses the latter course and finds that no accommodation is available. Every member is aware of the existence of an acute housing shortage in the metropolitan area. Rather than have any more trouble, some tenants pay the increase demanded of them. The powers sought in this Bill will provide the required protection for a tenant against such a landlord.

The Commonwealth regulations dealing with fair rents allow for both civil and penal action, and the various States of the Commonwealth have covered the position with similar provisions to those now included in this Bill. New South Wales passed a Fair Rents Act in 1939, which, on general lines, is similar to our own Act. It contains penal provisions with a maximum penalty of £50. In Tasmania there is an Act, known as the Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act, with provisions similar to our own and with a maximum penalty of £100. In South Australia there is an Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act which contains no penal provisions in the measure itself, but allows fines to be imposed by regulation and to be recoverable summarily, the maximum amount being £20. In Victoria there is a Fair Rents Act. This contains provisions similar to our fair rent provisions, and the penal section fixes a maximum penalty of £50. Clause 3 of this Bill amends Section 8 of the principal Act by altering the word "five" to "six." Certain alterations were made to the original draft legislation when it was being dealt with in the Council, and a consequential amendment was not provided for. It is intended to remedy the position by the amendment now proposed. The measure will, I believe, appeal to all members. While it can be said that most landlords have not tried to take advantage of the shortage of housing, there are some who have done so. The Bill, therefore, is necessary. I move:—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. Thomson, debate adjourned.

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. E. Kitson—West) [4.50] in moving the second reading said: This is a non-contentious measure which provides for certain small amendments to the Municipal Corporations Act, and I feel sure it will have the support of members. The proposals embodied in the Bill have been sought by local governing authorities whose practical experience of the administration of certain provisions of the principal Act has disclosed the need for what may be termed minor amendments.

The Act gives municipal councils the right to levy rates on the unimproved value in lieu of the annual value, if considered desirable to do so, and also sets out in a schedule the number of votes a ratepayer is entitled to on the basis of the annual value of rateable land. No provision is made in the schedule for unimproved values. The proposal in the Bill is that the schedule in the Road Districts Act shall be adopted.

The next amendment deals with the closing time for the receipt of nominations for an election. At present the closing time is 4 p.m. It is proposed to alter this to 12 (noon) thereby bringing the Act into conformity with other Statutes relating to elections. Included in the 1938 amendments to the principal Act was a provision giving the Minister power to appoint persons for the purpose of accepting absentee votes under the conditions prescribed. It also set out that all ballot papers, etc., used under this provision should be issued to, and be in the custody of, the town clerks. This procedure has proved unworkable in the large municipalities where it has been found essential for efficiency purposes to issue the papers direct to the approved persons. At the request of the municipalities it is proposed to amend the section to comply with present practice.

Hon. J. Cornell: It will not work as it is. It is a farce.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: That is so. Experience in the larger municipalities has shown that to carry out the system efficiently is impossible. A further proposal is in relation to appeals against valuations on properties owned by pensioners. Members are aware that pensioners are entitled to—and many do—claim exemption from pay-

ment of rates. In connection with appeals, the Act provides that a moiety of the rates on any property must be paid before an appeal can be heard. Pensioners should have the same right of appeal as other more fortunate ratepayers, and it is proposed that pensioners' appeals shall be heard without their being called upon to make any payment.

Those are the main provisions in the Bill. They are non-contentious and have been requested by local authorities. I expect that the Bill will be accepted without much discussion. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [4.52]: The Bill is essential. All it proposes to do is to correct anomalies in the parent Act. The position today is that municipalities are allowed to rate only on the improved capital value of the land. The Bill proposes to give them power to rate on the unimproved land value as well, as is the case with road boards. Then there is the question of the issue of postal vote papers. In an endeavour to overcome alleged discrepancies, the Legislature so tightened up the system that in many instances it will not work at all. The only effect it has had has been to *debar ratepayers from recording votes*. There is at present no possible chance of a sick ratepayer getting a postal vote on polling day.

Hon. G. Fraser: They have to be in by six o'clock the night before.

HON. J. CORNELL: It is only reasonable that postal votes should be taken up to the close of the poll, as is the case in parliamentary or road board elections. The other proposal in the Bill relates to appeals against valuations on properties owned by pensioners. In view of the fact that a pensioner is exempt from paying rates, it seems contradictory to give him the right to appeal against a valuation, but there is another side to the picture. Beneficiaries of old-age pensioners are liable for accrued rates and they should be given some consideration. The idea of the proposed amendment is not to help the old-age pensioner during his lifetime but to put his beneficiaries on the same footing as other ratepayers.

Hon. A. Thomson: He may possibly have some money left to him.

Hon. G. Fraser: Or sell his property.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Yes. I have no objection to the Bill, which will merely correct certain anomalies.

On motion by Hon. W. J. Mann, debate adjourned.

**BILL—STATE TRANSPORT
CO-ORDINATION ACT
AMENDMENT.**

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 10th September.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [4.59]: In introducing this measure, the Minister drew attention to the fact that the State Transport Co-ordination Act was passed primarily to safeguard State-owned transport services from the unfair competition of privately-owned vehicles, and that the provisions of the Act could not properly be applied to State-owned vehicles such as the new omnibuses. That is a matter on which there may be a slight divergence of opinion. When the State Transport Co-ordination Act was brought down, members will recollect that I fought very hard against its passage. What I said has been verified since by the general administration of that legislation. I said it was a measure which placed restrictions upon country vehicles, and did not in any way impose similar restrictions upon vehicles in the metropolitan area.

The Chief Secretary: It is very pleasing to hear that, in view of the statements of other members!

Hon. A. THOMSON: That is what it was brought in for, and I opposed it for that reason. The Bill, as it was then, was introduced to protect State-owned transport facilities then in existence, which apparently could not stand up to the competition of privately-owned vehicles. It is the duty of Parliament to protect the owners of private omnibuses from unfair competition at the hands of Government transport undertakings. The trams and trolley buses owned by the State use the roads that run within the territories of local authorities, but do not contribute to the cost of the maintenance of the roads traversed. The Government vehicles pay no rates, nor do they pay rentals on business premises, car barns or garages. They do not pay 6 per cent. on the gross earnings of each vehicle and pay no dividend tax or income tax to the Taxation Department. All those charges have to be

met by the owners of private transport vehicles operating in the metropolitan area. We have an assurance from the Government that there is no intention to extend its services in competition with existing companies. Whilst I do not doubt the sincerity of the Minister who gave utterance to those words, I feel that the assurance is of no value as a security for shareholders who have invested their money in present transport facilities in the metropolitan area.

Hon. G. Fraser: Do not you think the Government has enough on its hands in helping with the traffic on the routes on which it is now operating, especially during the war period?

Hon. A. THOMSON: If the House agrees to the insertion in the Act of the words "or an omnibus," the trams can operate very unfairly against those companies that are already established in the metropolitan area. Whilst it may not be the present intention of the Government to launch out in a vigorous metropolitan transport service, we know that if those words are inserted in the Act, it will be able to establish, without the leave of the House, transport arrangements in opposition to existing services. In view of the favourable position it now occupies, the Government will be able to act detrimentally to the interest of those who have blazed the track by providing transport facilities in certain areas, with which the Government itself really had nothing to do.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The Government could push them out of business.

Hon. A. THOMSON: A straw will show the way the wind is blowing. Some time ago the Commissioner of Railways stated that the transport arrangements in the metropolitan area should be brought entirely under his control. On two recent occasions the Minister for Railways, in reply to a deputation, voiced the opinion that the department he is administering should run and control all the metropolitan transport facilities. When the Minister makes such a remark, one can assume that he is voicing the opinions of the Government and officers of the department.

The Chief Secretary: Is that a correct quotation?

Hon. A. THOMSON: I can only repeat what I have seen in the Press, and have no desire to misrepresent the Minister.

The Chief Secretary: Why not read all that he said rather than part of it?

Hon. A. THOMSON: That apparently was what was in the mind of the Minister, judging by the words that were published.

Hon. H. V. Piessé: Definitely so, I should say.

Hon. A. THOMSON: If we accept these as the views of the Minister and the Commissioner of Railways, are we justified in giving the Government the right to run omnibuses without imposing upon them the same conditions with which private omnibuses have to contend? I have no desire to prevent the Government from providing transport facilities in the metropolitan area, but I think it would be grossly unfair to allow it to do so in opposition to private citizens who have risked their capital in providing similar facilities, more especially as Government-owned vehicles pay neither taxes nor license fees, nor yet do they have to comply with the provisions of the Traffic Act.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Suppose that the bus service was not satisfactory, what would you do?

Hon. A. THOMSON: I take it that the Transport Board has power to insist that the service shall be a satisfactory one. That is definitely laid down in the Act. The powers of the board are very stringent and effective. Section 10 states—

Subject to this Act, the board may of its own volition, and under the direction of the Minister, shall (a) make investigations and inquiries into transport matters. In making such investigations and inquiries the board shall give consideration, amongst other factors, to all or any of the following factors, namely:—

- (i) The question of transport generally in the light of service to the community;
- (ii) The needs of the State for economic development;
- (iii) The industrial conditions under which all forms of transport are conducted;
- (iv) The impartial and equitable treatment of all conflicting interests.

I put it to members: Can it be truthfully said that the State Transport Co-ordination Act is impartial and gives equitable treatment to all conflicting interests? I do not think even the Minister would say that those who have invested their capital in establishing transport facilities in the country areas have received impartial or equitable treatment. The board has power to demand and obtain information, and has the right to refuse licenses.

Hon. W. J. Mann: And to terminate them.

Hon. A. THOMSON: In Part III. there are general provisions relating to the licensing of public vehicles. Section 13 states—

Subject to the provisions of Section 33 any person who after the date of the commencement of this Act operates a public vehicle in respect of which the required license under this Part has not been granted or is not in force, shall be guilty of an offence against this Act: Provided that this section shall not apply to any journey made for reward by any vehicle, which is not a commercial goods vehicle or omnibus, on any occasion on which the Board is satisfied that a special emergency justified the making of such journeys.

Section 14 states—

There shall be payable to the Board, in respect of every public vehicle licensed, the following fees:—

- (a) For an omnibus license under Division (2) of this Part or for an aircraft license under Division (4) of this Part, a fee determined by the Board and to be assessed and payable in manner prescribed, based on the earnings of the vehicle: Provided such fee shall not be greater than 6 per cent. of the gross earnings of such vehicle as so assessed, and in assessing such gross earnings the amount of any subsidy paid for an area service shall not be taken into account.

At the beginning when a private concern applied to the board for a license, it had to comply with all the conditions laid down in the Act. We are not asked to protect those transport facilities already covered by the Act, but it is proposed now to run the Government-owned vehicles in competition with private firms.

Hon. G. Fraser: Who said so?

Hon. A. THOMSON: If not, why does the Government want the Act amended along these lines? I admit that the Minister, when moving the second reading of the Bill, said it was not the intention of the Government to enter into competition with existing firms, only to assist present services.

Hon. G. Fraser: The Government could not do so if it wished to.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I cannot say whether the Government could or could not do that. If we inserted in the Act the words desired by the Government it could start wherever it liked when the war is over, and at any stage it liked enter into competition with existing services. I feel that Government-owned vehicles should comply with the same conditions as those imposed upon private citizens. I am not asking for any

special favours for private people, and have no interest in the companies concerned. The matter is one of justice. All I ask is that the Commissioner of Railways, if he desires to extend the transport facilities by means of omnibuses shall in fairness to the general taxpayers observe the same conditions that are complied with by the companies. Let me now turn to Section 22 of the Act, dealing with applications for licenses. It states—

Every application for an omnibus license shall be in writing, and shall contain the following particulars: (a) the routes or area upon or in which it is intended that the omnibus is to operate; (b) a description of the vehicle in respect of which the application is made; (c) the maximum number of passengers to be carried at any one time on such vehicle; (d) the service proposed to be provided, etc.

No control is exercised over the railways or tramways in respect of fares.

Can I give a better illustration of what I mean than by referring to the regulations? It may be recalled that I moved to disallow—and was successful in the motion—certain regulations which imposed charges upon persons resident in country districts. By means of those charges the Railway returns were increased by over £50,000. This House voted against the regulations, but because the Commissioner of Railways had power, despite the vote of this House, to impose those charges upon people in the country, they were so imposed. While I do not doubt the sincerity of the Government, I cannot consent to giving it the power to run other people off the road. Doubtless the Government will say that it has no intention of doing so, but I claim to be taking a far-sighted view of the question. I shall give reasons for my opposition. Members will recall that when the question of giving the right for trolley buses to run along the roads was before us, I opposed it on the ground that there would be unfair competition. I contended that the Government should comply with the same conditions that a private individual has to observe.

Hon. J. Cornell: All those arguments were used when the bullock dray was displaced.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The hon. member is going back a long way when he quotes the bullock dray, but had the Government in those days proposed to run bullock drays in competition with those already on the roads,

it would not have been given an unfair advantage over private citizens.

Hon. J. Cornell: The Government built railways and forced private carriers off the track.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That might be so, but does the hon. member approve of forcing off the road people who have invested large sums of money in transport services?

Hon. J. Cornell: I think the less efficient service must go.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I have a copy of the seventh annual report of the Transport Board. I do not intend to make a comparison of tramway and railway figures, but the figures relating to omnibuses are interesting. Of the 262 buses licensed, 212 are in the metropolitan area. In 1940, the total amount of revenue collected by the board was £24,379. Of that sum, omnibuses contributed £18,371 by way of license fees and £610 for special permits, a total of £18,981. The present members of the Transport Board have shown a clearer vision than those who composed the original board. When the board was brought into existence, the Government appointed Mr. Hickey, an official of the Railway Department, to act as secretary. After he had been successful, with the assistance of the then chairman, Mr. Munt, in driving the commercial vehicles off the road, he returned to the Railway Department. The present board has certainly taken a longer view and shown a more generous attitude. The Commissioner of Railways has objected strongly to the sympathetic consideration being given by the board to country services. The board, after having paid the whole of the expenses and provided approximately £1,300 by way of subsidies to country services—one of these services is in Mr. Cornell's province, and several are in the province I represent—there has been repaid to the statutory authority on account of omnibus license fees collected a sum of £11,364. Neither the tramways nor the trolley buses can show figures comparable with those. They are not assisting the revenue of the State.

Hon. J. Cornell: The Transport Board has not done all that with its own money.

Hon. A. THOMSON: It has.

Hon. J. Cornell: The board has received assistance.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The balance sheet shows that the board returned to the statutory authority £11,364. If the hon. member

peruses the report, he will find how the money has been allocated amongst the local authorities. Those bodies have received about £13,000 from these licenses. I have pointed out that there has been a direct revenue of £18,981, and on top of that traffic fees totalled £7,757. Thus £26,737 has been collected from the vehicles that are providing services for the taxpayers. Speaking from memory, I should say the Government collects about three farthings for every passenger carried by the bus companies. I should like to know the amount of taxation that the State collects on the dividends paid by those companies and also what rates are collected from them. On the one hand we have private enterprise providing a service for a considerable part of the metropolitan area and paying income tax, dividend duty, municipal rates, etc. On the other hand, we are asked to insert these three words empowering the present or some future Government—if it chose to exercise the power—to take control of the whole of the bus services in the metropolitan area.

Hon. G. Fraser: This Bill will not give the Government that power.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Was not there some complaint or statement by the Commissioner of Railways a while ago dealing with that point?

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes; I regret that I have not a copy of it before me. If we allow the Commissioner of Railways to run bus services under the conditions conceded to the railways, tramways and trolley buses, the State will lose a considerable amount of revenue. By permitting it, we shall be approving of unfair competition against private enterprise. That is one of my main objections to the Government's proposal. When the original legislation was introduced, we were told that it was designed to co-ordinate transport. We who live in country districts know that it proved to be not co-ordination but elimination, and that quite a number of people lost a considerable sum of money which they had invested in transport services.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: That is what Germany is doing in Europe, co-ordinating it.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes.

Hon. J. Cornell: And not making a bad job of it, either.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The measure may seem innocuous, but the effect of inserting the three words may be so far-reaching as to

cause a considerable loss of revenue to the Government and to local authorities. If the Government desires to run bus services, let it do so on a fair competitive basis. Let it pay license fees, just as a private individual has to do. If the Commissioner of Railways is prepared to agree to those conditions, I shall have no objection to his running buses. To agree to the Bill would be grossly unfair to those people who have invested their money in buses. I repeat that I have no ulterior motive in opposing the measure; I have no interest in any bus company. I speak merely out of a sense of fairness when I say that the Government should not be placed in the happy position of being able to drive private transport off the roads.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [5.22]: In 1933 Parliament approved of a Bill for the co-ordination and improvement of transport facilities. The measure, which provided for the appointment of a transport board, was proclaimed and came into operation on the 1st July, 1934. Thus for a little over seven years traffic has been controlled by the Transport Board. Members who have had experience of the board's activities realise that it is doing excellent work and is one of the soundest of our Government departments. The object of the Act was to co-ordinate transport. This innocent-looking little Bill now before us, however, will have the effect of breaking down the co-ordination that has been achieved. The Transport Board is the authority to determine and issue licenses, stipulate the fares that may be charged by buses, the accommodation to be provided and the routes to be traversed. It is necessary that there should be one body entrusted with the duty of co-ordinating all traffic in the metropolitan area. If we allow another body to step in—I refer to the Railway Department—what will be the result? There will be chaos.

Hon. J. Cornell: How could you keep the Railway Department out whether this Bill is passed or not?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: If the Bill is not passed, a Government omnibus will have to be registered and licensed, just as does a vehicle owned by a private person. True, Parliament granted a concession in regard to trolley buses, but to ask for this exemption for omnibuses is quite a different matter. The desire is to make the Railway

Department entirely free of the Transport Board as regards the running of Government omnibuses, whereas the board should be the body controlling traffic in the metropolitan area.

The Chief Secretary: Does the Transport Board control the trams, too?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: No, they are exempt. The Minister knows that as well as I do.

The Chief Secretary: I know they are, and I cannot follow your reasoning.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The position is quite different. When a proposal is made to grant exemption to a different class of vehicle, the Government is setting out on an entirely different line. I do not doubt the Government's assurance, but this Government may not always be in power. Some other Government might extend this proposed omnibus service all over the metropolitan area. It is much better to leave the matter in the hands of private enterprise, under the strict control of the Transport Board. It must be borne in mind that the local authorities through whose districts these omnibuses will run must provide and maintain the roads, notwithstanding that the Government will contribute nothing to the revenue of such districts.

The Chief Secretary: The local authorities would be very pleased to get the omnibuses.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I have read in the paper time and again of the trouble that residents in Nedlands are experiencing in obtaining transport to the city. The Government services are not adequate for those residents who are in the unfortunate position that they cannot travel in private buses passing along the route. Why divide the control of the city traffic? There is no occasion to do so. The Bill is a simple measure, but these three words, if retained, spell danger. I oppose the second reading.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [5.33]: Mr. Thomson and Mr. Baxter apparently fear that three words in this Bill will, if the measure be passed, adversely affect private enterprise. One could easily spread oneself in arguments favouring the protection of private enterprise. One could speak for hours on the evolution of transport and the various systems in vogue throughout the world. For example, what do we find in Sydney? Ninety per cent. of the traffic is under the control of the Government.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is a matter of opinion.

Hon. J. CORNELL: When one form of transport is supplanted by another, protests are made. Those controlling the supplanted form of transport contend that no one has the right to push them out.

Hon. A. Thomson: But this is not another form of transport.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The arguments put forward by Mr. Thomson are the same as those that were put forward by the owners of bullock teams when the railways were built. Nevertheless, the owners of the bullock teams were not paid compensation. Old systems of transport must give place to new systems.

Hon. A. Thomson: But in this case omnibuses are already running.

Hon. J. CORNELL: No consideration was given to the "bullocky" when he had to give place to railway transport. He got no compensation.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: This is not a new form of transport, but a new form of control.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Take the evolution of transport in Perth itself. I can remember quite well, as no doubt can Mr. Holmes, when the only transport from Subiaco to Perth was a bus. One paid the fare and was lucky if the bus did not get bogged half way and one had to walk the rest of the distance. Then we got the trams and the buses were discarded. The owners of the buses got no compensation. It has since been found that the trolley-bus system is better than is the tramway system, as the public is served better at less expenditure. In the same way cable trams in Melbourne were replaced by electric trams. An Act has been passed to permit the Government to run trolley-bus services. The Government, having asked for and obtained legislation authorising it to run trolley-bus services, is now asking for similar legislation with respect to omnibuses. The Government finds that in existing circumstances it cannot give the required transport service and therefore is proposing to introduce an omnibus service.

Hon. A. Thomson: Let the Government compete on equal terms with private enterprise.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The Government is competing on equal terms with private enter-

prise so far as the trams and trolley-buses are concerned.

Hon. A. Thomson: The Government should do so.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: There is no need to repeat a mistake.

Hon. J. CORNELL: There is a public demand for increased transport services. That demand has been brought about by circumstances over which the Government and the people have had no control whatever. In my opinion, only the Government can meet that demand. Why have not the bus companies met it?

Hon. A. Thomson: They would.

Hon. J. CORNELL: They have not done so. The Government is endeavouring to give increased travelling facilities to the public by the introduction of small omnibuses.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: They should be under control.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The Government should be given statutory authority to run these omnibuses.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. J. CORNELL: All these arguments about the Government's incursion into the realm of private enterprise—

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Don't mention the "bullocky" again.

Hon. J. CORNELL: No. I shall mention the State steamers. The North-West members who came to curse that service remained to praise.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Who?

Hon. G. Fraser: You.

Hon. G. W. Miles: No.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Today those members cannot commend the service to the North too highly. I heard entirely different statements made about it in this Chamber years ago.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Are you going to debate the State Shipping Service, because I would like to have a say directly?

The PRESIDENT: I think it is relevant to the Bill before the House. I hope the references to other transport services will be incidental. We do not want to go into all the details.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I point out that even should Parliament not authorise the Government to introduce these omnibus services, this or some other Government will in course of time introduce them. That has been the

position in the past, and it is the position today.

Hon. V. Hamersley: What is your opinion of the Government?

Hon. J. CORNELL: A Government, of which Mr. Hamersley was most critical, established the State Shipping Service, but when subsequent Governments continued to operate that trading concern he supported them, and North-West members who came to curse the project remained to praise it. It has been argued that the Transport Board should have control of these omnibus services.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: If it cannot, what is the use of the Act?

Hon. J. CORNELL: It was under that Act that the Government of the day appointed the Transport Board. If members think that by defeating this measure they will prevent the Government from introducing these omnibus services, they will be martyrs to wishful thinking.

HON. G. W. MILES (North) [5.43]: I oppose the Bill. The previous speaker said that some members supported the introduction of the State Shipping Service. He also said that those who came to curse it lived to praise it. The State Shipping Service has pushed private enterprise off the North-West coast. The Government has now two ships in the service and if any other ship attempts to carry a bale of wool it is called "black." The result is that the Government is running the inside out of its ships and working its men from daylight till dark. One of my colleagues has just informed me that the Government was responsible for pushing the Singapore boats off our coast. There is an opportunity to make use of the Singapore ships to give service on the coast. The State ships give no service nor satisfaction to anyone and are losing the taxpayers' money wholesale.

The PRESIDENT: I hope the speaker will connect his remarks with the matter before the Chair.

Hon. G. W. MILES: This Bill gives the Government more power to run services in competition with private enterprise. That power should not be granted. In the particular case I have in mind there was some talk of one of our other ships being taken off the coast. I sent a wire to the Minister for the Navy pointing out the comparative position of our service 25 years ago and

today. At that time we had six ships on the coast without having to cater for Darwin.

Hon. G. Fraser: With all-black crews.

Hon. G. W. MILES: No, white crews also. If this Government or the Mitchell Government had had the courage to subsidise a line of steamers and fix freight and fares it would have cost the taxpayers far less and we would have had a more efficient service. Today the State boats cannot cater for all the trade. The Singapore boats carry cattle and wool down but they are not allowed to carry any cargoes north. The State ships would wait 24 hours in a port to prevent other ships getting the cargo instead of co-operating with them. Thus they are running at a loss and behind schedule. We were five weeks at Port Hedland without a steamer coming in. This is the sort of thing which it is sought to extend to the metropolitan area. It is to let the Government come in and push private enterprise out. The people along the coast do not know now when they are getting a boat. I point this out to show the absurdity of giving more power to the Government to interfere with private enterprise.

I wish to quote a case to show the difference between private enterprise and State control. Some years ago, an agent on the coast received a wire from a man at Derby asking him to board his ship when it arrived. That agent wired to the agent in Fremantle, but he did not know anything about it. However, the ship arrived and the local agent went off to it, and he said, "I did not know the ship was coming in. There is nothing to pick up." The man who had wired him from Derby said, "The ship has come in to bring me in. I am a director of this company." This line is what the Labour members call the "black boats." It is the Alfred Holt line, which provides an Empire and world service. Its business has been built up by rendering service to its clients. The manager said to the agent, "Do you ever remember one of our ships shutting out cargo from this port?" He replied, "No." This was in the captain's cabin. This captain was very fond of horse-racing. Evidently he was not like the present officers of the State ships, against whom I have nothing to say, but in the early days the State boats were rushed down the coast to arrive here in time for the trots. It did not matter about the people.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member is going beyond the incidental reference to State shipping allowable.

Hon. G. W. MILES: This gentleman said, "Do you ever remember any wool being shut out?" and he said, "No." After telling the agent that his company's business had been built up by rendering service to its clients, he said, "If there is any cargo shut out of this port in future, and if you are satisfied that there is no good reason for it, will you cable me at Singapore, and it will be inquired into, and if the captain of that ship cannot give a satisfactory explanation there will be a new captain on the next trip?"

Hon. J. Cornell: Was that before the war, or since?

Hon. G. W. MILES: That is the difference between private and State enterprise. The Government has pushed those other boats off the coast, and it is not rendering service, or satisfying anyone. All it thinks of is pushing people off.

The PRESIDENT: I trust the hon. member will not initiate a general debate on the State Shipping Service. All the Bill provides is the inclusion of the words "or an omnibus."

Hon. G. W. MILES: That gives the Government the right to start in competition with private enterprise on other routes. On the Swanbourne route private buses are not allowed to pick up passengers although the State cannot provide sufficient transport.

Hon. G. Fraser: Do you think it could if it were allowed?

Hon. G. W. MILES: I think so, yes.

Hon. G. Fraser: Do you travel on that route?

Hon. G. W. MILES: No.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. G. W. MILES: I am glad you, Sir, call some of these Deputy Chairmen to order.

The PRESIDENT: I trust the hon. member will set them a good example.

Hon. G. W. MILES: I will endeavour to do so. The Minister has given us an assurance that the Government does not intend to start on any other routes, and I believe him, but the present Government or the Government in which some of my other friends may be interested, might set out to do it. I oppose power being given to the Government to enter into competition with private enterprise.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [5.50]: Members have let their imaginations run riot. During the course of the debate every form of transport has been introduced.

Hon. A. Thomson: Even bullock wagons.

Hon. J. Cornell: Except walking.

Hon. G. FRASER: We have been told that if the two or three words proposed are inserted in the Act they will give the Government powers which it does not possess today. That is not correct. If the Government wanted, or intended in the future, to do what Mr. Thomson and other members have stated, it already has the power to do so. If it desires to run in competition with private bus companies, the Act already gives it that power by the running of trolley buses.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Why the amendment?

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Where then is the necessity for this Bill?

Hon. G. FRASER: I will tell the hon. member in a moment. The House knows that the Government already has that power, and the insertion of these few words will not grant it any additional power. It will only grant the Government the right to another form of vehicle with which to enter into competition. Instead of using our imaginations, let us face facts as they are. The facts are that certain services are already run by a Government department. Because of the war and the shortage of vehicles, petrol rationing and so on, which is forcing more people to use public transport, and because of the impossibility, through lack of shipping and other reasons, to obtain more trolley buses, the Government is faced with the necessity of obtaining petrol-driven vehicles to supplement the service on its already established runs.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Why not obtain similar vehicles?

Hon. G. FRASER: There are not many obtainable.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: The Government has first preference.

Hon. G. FRASER: I suppose that is due to its business acumen. It is necessary to amend the Act on the lines indicated so as to allow the Government to provide the required service.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Would you object to trams?

Hon. G. FRASER: We have gone beyond that stage. What is the use of giving the Government the right to run a trolley bus?

Parliament gave it the power to do these things and now, because it is not possible to obtain a particular vehicle—a trolley bus—members refuse to allow the Government to render efficient service because they will not allow some other form of vehicle, which can be obtained, to be substituted.

Hon. A. Thomson: We do.

Hon. G. FRASER: No. Why impose one type of vehicle on the Government? Why impose certain restrictions not previously imposed when the Government was allowed to run the service? It was permitted to run a trolley bus service, but it is now impossible to obtain trolley buses. Other vehicles can be obtained with which the Government can supplement the service. Now members say they will not give the Government the right to do that. The position is ridiculous. Buses are already running on the road, and yet we get complaints from members—even those representing the province most concerned—that the Government is not giving the service it should. The Government is doing all in its power, by the introduction of this new type of vehicle, to give that extra service so much desired. I can see no great objection. If it can obtain many more similar vehicles and place them on the routes on which they are already operating, the Government would even then be taxed to its utmost to give the service required. If the Bill is approved, members imagine that some future Government will go beyond what is intended.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You would do it in a minute if you had the chance.

Hon. G. FRASER: I have not got the chance. The hon. member knows what I would do if I had. If future Governments do what a lot of members imagine they will, this House will still be here to take certain action. It still has a say.

Hon. A. Thomson: We have a say now, and we want to keep what we have.

Hon. G. FRASER: Boiled down, the question is this: Is this Chamber going to allow the Government to give a proper service where transport services are at present operating?

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: You say they give it.

Hon. G. FRASER: They attempt to give it. Some omnibuses are running on the road, but many more are required and will be obtained when it is possible to secure them. If this amendment to the Act is not accepted,

Government vehicles will be operating on the same run under entirely different conditions. That is ridiculous. I am not afraid of anything that may occur due to passing this amendment. To agree to it is the only sensible thing Parliament can do at the present time.

HON. J. A. DIMMITT (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.59]: I cannot see any reason why the Government should seek to exempt omnibuses controlled by the Crown from the operations of the State Transport Co-ordination Act.

Hon. L. Craig: Does it seek to do that?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Certainly, that is the meaning of this legislation.

Hon. L. Craig: That is the intention?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Yes. If the Title of the State Transport Co-ordination Act means anything at all and if the Government is really anxious to co-ordinate transport facilities in the metropolitan area, why does it wish to remove the vehicles I have indicated from the operations of its own legislation?

Hon. G. Fraser: So you want half under the Act and half unaffected by that legislation!

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Because a mistake was made in having trolley buses and trams excluded from the scope of the Act, there is no sound reason for continuing that mistake—I consider it to have been a mistake—by agreeing to the Government's present proposal. The Minister, when moving the second reading of the Bill, stated it was not the intention of the Government to compete with private transport. To me that statement appears strange in view of the facts—and Mr. Fraser said we must face the facts as they are today. The facts are that today the Government-owned buses are competing with privately-owned transport by taking picnic parties and football teams around the country, frequently in petrol-driven vehicles. I have been informed that a few months ago an omnibus company operating in Perth applied to the Transport Board for permission to take a picnic party from Perth to Harvey and back. The board refused permission on the ground that it was necessary to conserve liquid fuel supplies. That company is operating Diesel-driven buses the use of Diesel fuel is not so rigidly restricted as is petrol. The picnic party to

which I have referred was transported from Perth to Harvey and back again in four or five Government-owned buses driven by petrol. Thus it would seem that while it is necessary to conserve privately-owned liquid fuel supplies, the Government can use liquid fuel at its own sweet will.

Furthermore, the custom of the Metro Bus Company has been to take the three Fremantle football teams from their home grounds to ovals on which they have been scheduled to play. That practice has been followed for several years. This year the Metro Bus Company applied to the Transport Board for permission to continue the service, but was again told that it was necessary to conserve liquid fuel and therefore permission was withheld. On Saturday, the 6th September, one of the Tramway Department's petrol-driven buses, so I am given to understand, transported the South Fremantle football team from its home ground to the Perth oval and back to the port. Then again in the "West Australian" of, I believe, Monday the 8th September, we read that a Government-owned bus was involved in an accident at Bunbury. Admittedly it was a producer-gas driven bus. For some time privately-owned motor vehicles have not been allowed to take picnic parties or football teams from Perth to Bunbury and back, simply because the Transport Board said there was a perfectly good railway system that could attend to that type of transport. Despite that, we have had the spectacle of the Tramway Department competing with the Railway Department by conveying the Claremont football team to Bunbury and back despite the existence of the perfectly good railway system previously referred to by the Transport Board.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: Not a perfectly good railway! I have travelled by it once or twice.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Was that done with a petrol-driven vehicle?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: No, it was a producer gas-driven vehicle. It seems to me that if transport co-ordination is to be effective, it must be by means of complete control, and complete control cannot possibly be obtained if a large proportion of the transport facilities in the metropolitan area is outside the control of the board, which is the only point of reference to which private owners of transport vehicles can appeal.

If there is any possibility of redress for their wrongs, that is the point where they can be dealt with. If petrol-driven Government-owned vehicles are removed from the scope of the Act, then the departmental vehicles will be able to invade any bus route and go hither and thither at will. If the Government vehicles remain under the jurisdiction of the State Transport Co-ordination Act, then the private owners will have at least one point of contact for the airing of their grievances. It seems to me entirely wrong that the Government should endeavour to evade the application of its own legislation. I hope the House in its wisdom will reject the Bill and so compel the Government to conduct its new mobile form of transport—that is the rub; it is much more mobile than the trolley bus or the tram car—under the jurisdiction of its own Act. I intend to vote against the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.8 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 18th September, 1941.

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

QUESTION—STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE.

Government Premiums.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM asked the Treasurer: What amount was paid from revenue

and/or loan funds, respectively, during 1940-41 by the Government to the State (Government Insurance Office as premiums in respect of (a) staff salaries; (b) wages; (c) fire insurance?

The TREASURER replied: (a) and (b) Total £108,995. (c) £531. The State Government Insurance Office does not keep separate figures for loan and revenue or for salaries and wages.

QUESTION—RAILWAYS.

Refreshment Rooms.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Railways. 1, Is it the intention of the Railway Department to establish refreshment facilities at Koojeddah Siding? 2, If so, in view of the fact that there are already two refreshment rooms between Spencer's Brook and Midland Junction, what reasons exist for establishing a third one? 3, If question No. 1 is answered in the affirmative, what is the estimated cost of erecting the necessary buildings, and is the department or the successful tenderer to erect them? 4, In the latter instance would the tenderer be compensated for such expenditure should he lose his contract by being outbid when fresh tenders are called? 5, If tenders were called has any one been accepted, and for what amount? 6, Was any guarantee given a successful tenderer regarding the number of trains that would stop at Koojeddah?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Refreshment facilities for troop trains only have been available at Koojeddah since the 31st August. 2, To avoid the stopping of troop trains at the refreshment rooms referred to. 3, The cost of any building which the lessee may consider necessary is borne by him. 4, No. 5, Yes, for £156 per annum. 6, No.

QUESTION—AGRICULTURE.

Muresk College.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Agriculture: In view of the facts that (a) the paddock on the south side of the road leading from the railway siding to Muresk Agricultural College is so overgrown with weeds, particularly wild radish, as to make it almost impossible to harvest the crop, and (b) the paddock opposite and on the north