

that number 139 died. There were 356 children admitted from the country, and I suppose if there had not been a children's hospital in Perth, out of the total of 1,929 treated, half of them would have died. I do not think many people in the metropolitan area realise the serious difficulties that face mothers in the back country. It is however, a source of gratification for them to know that if they can get their children to the city, those children can be treated free of all cost by specialists who give the same treatment as they would were the children sent to a privately conducted institution. This is the point I wish to make: The hospital is without a laboratory. If there were a laboratory and a pathologist appointed, more lives would be saved. The cost of a laboratory would not exceed £250, and a pathologist could be appointed at, say, £300 or £400 per annum. He would have the right of private practice. The matron and the sisters informed me that if they had a laboratory and a pathologist, 25 per cent. of the lives lost last year would have been saved. We are urging the Old Country to send us migrants. Surely for the small amount of money that I have mentioned, we should not hesitate to save the lives of infants who, through being born to the conditions prevailing in Western Australia, would be likely to develop into the best possible citizens. I urge the Government to go into the matter and see whether it is possible to provide the laboratory and the additional conveniences that would result in the saving of life. It would be possible to speak for quite a long time on matters mentioned in the Speech, but I do not intend to do that. There were just a few things I desired to bring before the House, and those things I have mentioned. As a new member I would have been quite content to sit in my seat, listen to other members and learn from them, and thus become more useful as the years go by. I thank members for their attention and have much pleasure in supporting the Address-in-reply.

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

*House adjourned at 9.32 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Tuesday, 31st August, 1926.*

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

### QUESTION—FEDERAL AID ROADS ACT.

Mr. STUBBS asked the Minister for Works: 1, Has he read carefully the Federal Aid Roads Act? 2, Does it contain a section providing that before any payment can be made for a road, the road must be completed and passed by an officer of the Federal Government?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Yes. 2, No.

### QUESTION—CLAREMONT-COTTESLOE SEWERAGE SCHEME.

Mr. NORTH asked the Honorary Minister (Hon. J. Cunningham): 1, Have the local authorities, who at present utilise the Swanbourne sanitary site, notified him of their intention to attempt a scheme of septic tanks throughout the Claremont-Cottesloe district, subject to certain definite safeguards? 2, If so, do the Government intend to introduce the necessary legislation this session?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM replied: 1, A conference of the four local health authorities concerned was to have been held on the 17th instant, but this was postponed. All these bodies apparently agree to the proposal, but finality is delayed pending the conference referred to. 2, If the local authorities agree on the proposed scheme, legislation will be introduced this session.

# **BILL—GOVERNMENT SAVINGS BANK ACT AMENDMENT.**

## *Second Reading.*

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [4.38] in moving the second reading said: This Bill seeks to make a few small amendments to the Government Savings Bank Act, the principal one of which is to repeal the section that limits the total amount of an ordinary depositor to £1,000. I am glad that a considerable number of people find the limit of £1,000 on workers' savings an undue restriction, and I see no reason why the bank should not accept greater amounts from people desirous of doing their business with the bank.

The Minister for Works: That is the result of the present Government.

The PREMIER: If the number of working people who are in a position to bank more than £1,000 is so great, I cannot resist their demand to be permitted to increase it and do the whole of their banking business with the Government Savings Bank. It is difficult to understand why the limit was placed in the Act in the first instance.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It was done to limit competition.

The PREMIER: I hope we can take a different view of the matter to-day.

Mr. Sampson: In future you will have to pay interest on amounts exceeding £1,000, whereas in the past, when that amount was exceeded, no interest was paid.

The PREMIER: I do not think people would allow money to lie in the bank if it were not earning interest.

Mr. Thomson: They would be "mugginses" if they did so.

Mr. Sampson: They might have overlooked it.

The PREMIER: It is desirable to accept greater amounts if they are available.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I think there are two sides to the question.

The PREMIER: I do not think there are. I do not suppose there are many people possessing large sums that would prefer to leave them lying in the Savings Bank, but I should think there are quite a number possessing a few thousand pounds, and I see no reason why they should not be permitted to do their business with the bank.

Mr. James Mitchell: They can go to the bank and take up bonds.

The PREMIER: But they prefer to have their money in the bank at call.

Mr. Sampson: They should take up some investment, or put it into business.

The PREMIER: There is no compulsion; it is a matter of choice and people can bank where they like.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They can keep on banking there now by having separate accounts.

The PREMIER: There may be people without friends whom they can trust sufficiently to put the money in their names.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They do not do that; they bank it as trustees for someone else.

The PREMIER: Why should they have to resort to methods of that kind? If the State can obtain comparatively cheap money in this way, I see no reason why we should not accept it. Another small amendment will enable the manager to pay moneys not exceeding £100 to the credit of representatives of deceased depositors without probate.

Mr. Teesdale: A very good idea, too.

The PREMIER: The next amendment will permit of money being invested in land and buildings for savings bank purposes. At present there is no authority to do that. It is necessary that the bank should have power to invest money in land and buildings. It is a safe investment. This is done in the other States, notably in Victoria, where in recent years some expensive and magnificent buildings have been erected for savings bank purposes.

Mr. Sampson: The same applies to South Australia.

The PREMIER: I noticed them in Melbourne particularly, where right in the heart of the city are some very fine buildings. The next amendment, a small one, is to change the name of the institution from the Government Savings Bank to that of the State Savings Bank. This may seem a rather inconsequential amendment to make, but it will prevent confusion between our Savings Bank and the Commonwealth Savings Bank. People's minds will be directed more clearly to our savings bank. There is no great principle involved in the Bill, but its passing will tend towards the better functioning of the institution. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL** (Northam) [4.45]: This is another of the many little Bills we shall have to deal with during the current session, but little Bills are often important. The change of the bank's name does not matter much. I suppose the change will make it a trifle clearer to the public that it is the Savings Bank of the State, and not of the Commonwealth, though I do not think any confusion has arisen in the past. Since we established our Savings Bank the Commonwealth Savings Bank has come into being, and has taken a great deal of our money

**Mr. Thomson.** The Commonwealth have special facilities for taking deposits through the post offices.

**Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL:** Yes, and people like to go to Government officials in such a matter as banking money. The Commonwealth Savings Bank must have collected far more money than the State institution of recent years. Indeed, our Savings Bank deposits have remained almost stationary, if the increase due to accumulated interest is allowed for. I do not know why people go to the Commonwealth Savings Bank to invest their money.

**Mr. Lutey:** There is greater secrecy.

**Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL:** That consideration no doubt operates. However, it does seem strange that money should be paid into the Commonwealth Savings Bank rather than into the State Savings Bank while both institutions offer the same rate of interest. Work is provided in the State by every penny deposited in the State institution. However, the country has to pay the cost of running both institutions, Federal as well as State, without obtaining any greater facilities than existed before. I hope that the deposits in our State Savings Bank will increase. Every time a Commonwealth loan is raised, we lose a great deal of money from our Savings Bank, the depositors investing in the security which offers a higher rate of interest. During my five years at the Treasury, we used to lose about £150,000 on such occasions. The amendment giving power to purchase land and erect buildings for the conduct of the State Savings Bank operations, really means nothing, because that power exists now.

**The Premier:** No.

**Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL:** The Government have that power, and the amendment really makes no difference. Perhaps the existing system is just as convenient and

as effective as that which the Bill proposes. I have no intention of opposing the three slight amendments proposed by the Bill; but when it comes to increasing the maximum amount of deposits we have to consider why the Savings Bank was first established. It certainly was not established in order that people might stow away their money safely in any amounts they pleased, or to give them absolute security for their money. The original object was to make the small savings of the people safe. The Premier will recollect that at first the limit was £300. The Government take this money, invest it, and guarantee to the depositor repayment with interest. In fact, the State becomes responsible to the depositor. I do not know why people with larger sums should not be obliged to seek investments for them, say, by advancing the money on mortgage. The Government cannot trade. A pound in the hands of a private person does twice as much as £2 in the hands of any Government.

**Mr. Thomson:** The Government do trade.

**Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL:** It is trade of an extremely restricted nature. The Government cannot use money cheaply. Therefore people with money to invest ought to be compelled to seek investments that are safe enough for them. It is not good for the State that Savings Bank funds should take the place of loans. The maximum amount of deposits was increased a few years ago, but I have often doubted the wisdom of that step. Why should the State guarantee absolute safety to a man who deposits £1,000 with the right to withdraw it when he chooses? If he has the money and does not want to invest it in business, he can buy Treasury bills. That is the proper thing for him to do. The Treasurer then has the money for a term of years. The State Savings Bank deposits are at call and we must have the money available at any time. The man who wants gilt-edged security should say to the Treasurer, "Here is my money; will you take it for so many years?" He should not be permitted to obtain gilt-edged security for money deposited from day to day. If he said to the Treasurer, "Here is £1,000; I will leave it with you until I want it; will you pay me interest on it?" the Treasurer would reply, "No, I do not want your money on those terms at all." If this measure passes, a man will be able to go to the State Savings Bank with £10,000 or £20,000 which he may intend to hold awaiting investment for three or four months.

The Minister for Railways: What is wrong with that?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: What is right with it? The money is of no use to the Government if only available for a month or two. Even the Minister for Railways will realise that.

The Minister for Railways: It is all right for an institution with a big turn-over.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No. The Minister does not understand the position. The deposits being at call, the Treasurer has to hold considerable sums of money to meet withdrawals. The Savings Bank cannot be conducted without a large amount of money being held at the credit of the Government. We have no banking facilities such as the Commonwealth Government have.

The Premier: We can always get money at a moment's notice.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Where?

The Premier: From the Commonwealth Bank.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: In order to do that the Treasurer would have to trade on some other account. He cannot get unlimited loan funds.

The Premier: I can.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Not unless there is money on deposit account. It would be a bad position indeed if we did not keep a reserve.

The Premier: Of course.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It would be quite unjustifiable.

The Premier: We keep a reasonable reserve.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: And that very fact increases the cost of the money to the Government. This question has been gone into time and again, and for the life of me I cannot see why the people of this country should guarantee safe investments through the Savings Bank for the owners of considerable amounts of money. I fail to see any advantage in it for the Treasurer, and it is not necessary that we should do it for the people.

The Minister for Railways: If you were Treasurer of this State and floating a loan in three months' time, you would not mind somebody paying money into the State Savings Bank.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It would all depend on whether I wanted it. The Treasurer has not been able to draw money from the Savings Bank in that way for 12 months, nor is he able to do so to-day. The

Bill seeks to guarantee unenterprising people, but it will not do the Treasurer any real and permanent good. The Treasurer often finds it difficult to sell Treasury bills over the counter when he wants to do so. The passing of this measure will not make that matter any easier.

Mr. Thomson: We would have to offer bigger inducements.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No one having £4,000 or £5,000 would deposit the amount in the Savings Bank for any length of time. That would not pay them at all.

The Premier: What would they do with it?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: They would take Treasury bills.

The Minister for Railways: But all the banks pay a little higher rate of interest for deposits for six months. The interest for 12 months is less than that for six months.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But the money may not be paid in for six months. That is the point. If the money were left in the form of Treasury bills for five years or so, it would be of some advantage to the Treasury, but if the Premier has to hold money against large temporary deposits, there will be no advantage to the State. This question has been discussed in connection with our Savings Bank from time to time during years past. The limit was fixed at £300 because we sought to guarantee the small savings. Later that maximum amount was increased and now the Premier proposes that the amount to be deposited may be unlimited. There is some danger in the proposal. The Premier can be perfectly certain that people with large sums available will use the Savings Bank as a convenience, but others will not, for obvious reasons.

The Minister for Railways: For patriotic reasons those people will patronise the State Savings Bank, so that they may help in the development of their country.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister is too simple! People will invest their money with the bank that pays them the highest rate of interest.

The Minister for Railways: That is a laudable ambition.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: And therefore it is not wise for the Premier to offer that inducement.

The Minister for Railways: Surely it is laudable for people with £2,000 or £3,000 to have that money earning interest for six months.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not say it is not, but I doubt the wisdom of providing this opportunity.

Mr. Thomson: Is the removal of the restriction likely to embarrass the State Savings Bank?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is a matter of ordinary business. The management of the State Savings Bank will see to it that the institution is not embarrassed, because money will be held against these large temporary deposits. There are other reasons that could be urged as well.

The Premier: Of course, there are other reasons.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No. I am not taking up this attitude in the interests of anyone else.

The Minister for Works: Of course not.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister for Works cannot understand anyone being honest and frank concerning anything!

The Minister for Works: Of course not!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is scandalous that we cannot discuss a Bill like this without insinuations.

The Minister for Works: But you did the insinuating. There was no insinuation from me.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We cannot discuss anything in the interests of the State without someone saying that an individual is to be injured or safeguarded. There are two ways of lending money to the Government. One is to deposit large sums with the Government by taking out Treasury bills over an extended period, and the other is to deposit those sums temporarily with the State Savings Bank. The latter is the wrong way. If people were waiting to invest their funds in a Commonwealth loan, they could deposit the money for a few months with the State Savings Bank and draw interest during that period. Then when it suited their convenience they could withdraw the money and invest it in the Federal loan. In my opinion the Treasurer is making a mistake in increasing the amount of the limit. If he desires to accept these large amounts as temporary deposits, he should limit the rate of interest to be paid on them. The man who leaves his money with the Savings Bank for a few months should not receive the same interest as the individual who leaves him money with the institution permanently. I hope the Premier has thought the position out care-

fully, or had it worked out for him. To my mind we should play for safety and not allow a man who has £5,000 or £6,000 to make a convenience of the Savings Bank.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [5.7]: It is a wise step to provide for the bank being called the State Savings Bank of Western Australia. I would have liked the Premier, when introducing the Bill, to give us information regarding the future activities of the bank. I am pleased to note that provision is being made to enable the bank to purchase land and erect buildings. That will enable the institution to overcome one of the difficulties that face us continually in the country towns. I can speak feelingly regarding the State Savings Bank business at Katanning.

Mr. Latham: The Public Works Department could overcome that difficulty.

Mr. THOMSON: At Katanning there is a portion of a counter extending for 3ft. or so, at which the people have to transact their savings bank business. That is not conducive to increased business, nor is it an encouragement to people to invest their money with our State institution. Because of this, many people who have money to invest, patronise the Commonwealth Bank and not the State Savings Bank. My influence is always used in encouraging people to place their money in the State institution.

Mr. Teesdale: Is it, do you think, that the workers, who represent the larger proportion of the investors, are afraid of their own Government?

Mr. THOMSON: I would not suggest that! I would be sorry to doubt the stability of the State Savings Bank on that score. I recognise the Government are faced with great difficulties because of the competition from the Commonwealth Bank. At one time I suggested that we should offer a higher rate of interest than was available at the Commonwealth Savings Bank. The object I had in view way to induce people to invest their money in the State Savings Bank so that it would be of advantage to the State Treasurer. I know that the State Savings Bank has been a great boon to the Treasury time and again.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That was a long time ago.

Mr. THOMSON: It has happened so in the past. I understand the objection to increasing the rate of interest was that it would mean paying interest on accounts that

had been running for a number of years, and the institution was not in a position to pay the increased rates. I do not know whether it is the intention of the Premier to take full advantage of Section 27, which is being slightly amended. I refer to the operations of the Workers' Homes Board. A large number of applications for workers' homes have been held up. I understand there are hundreds of them.

The Minister for Works: I think you are wrong. Two or three weeks ago everything was fixed up.

Mr. THOMSON: That is not in accordance with my information.

The Premier: Within the last four weeks the Workers' Homes Board asked us to take some of their funds on deposit, so that they could earn interest. I forget the amount, but I know they asked us to take over several thousand pounds.

Mr. THOMSON: That is news to me. It is totally different information from that which I received. I was told that quite a number of people are desirous of getting their own homes through the Workers' Homes Board, but their applications have been held up.

The Minister for Works: You are thinking of the time when your Government were in office.

Mr. THOMSON: No, I am speaking of the present time.

Mr. Teesdale: No balances were carried at the time the Minister for Works refers to. The money was spent.

Mr. THOMSON: The information I received was that applications for workers' homes were held up owing to the lack of funds. I am merely giving the information as it was tendered to me at Katanning, and I submit it to the House with all confidence, believing it to be correct.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You should ask for a return.

Mr. THOMSON: The people who made the applications were told that their requests could not be considered for at least six months. They were told that other people required homes and funds were not available. I presume the same position applies in the metropolitan area.

The Premier: I can only repeat that less than four weeks ago we were asked to take over a considerable sum of money from the board on deposit, so that the money could be earning interest.

Mr. THOMSON: I am glad to know that but the Premier's statement is at variance with the replies furnished at Katanning.

Mr. J. H. Smith: I was told something similar a few days ago.

Mr. THOMSON: At any rate, it is pleasing to have the statement from the Premier.

Mr. Heron: Perhaps it all depended on who made the applications!

Mr. THOMSON: I should be sorry to think that applications were treated other than on their merits. I believe that, as obtains in some of the other States, funds should be made available from the State Savings Bank in order to enable clients to secure their own homes. I do not altogether agree with the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition who objected to the removal of the restriction on the amounts to be invested in the State Savings Bank. As some member interjected, it is easy to overcome that difficulty. Anyone can deposit in the Savings Bank more than the Act permits. All that is necessary is for a person to appoint himself trustee for Bill Jones or Tom Brown, and as his signature is the only one by means of which money can be withdrawn from such accounts, the person is not confined to the amount set out in the Act, but can invest larger sums. Many people have overcome the difficulty by that means. I see no objection to the other proposed amendments, so I will not oppose the second reading. However, I do hope the Premier will take notice of what I have said about the workers' homes. Instead of money being taken from the Workers' Homes Board more liberal advances should be made for the workers' homes. In my district workers' homes are being held up, and the reply given is that funds are not available.

MR. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [5.17]: While the Savings Bank has a large number of small deposits there is nothing like the same necessity for keeping a big percentage of its liabilities either in cash or in liquid assets; but if the maximum of £1,000 is to be increased, there is the danger pointed to by the Leader of the Opposition of the bank having to keep a considerable amount of cash or liquid assets to meet any sudden demand by the larger depositors. On the other hand there is not much to fear, because with so many other avenues of investment offering higher interest, the Savings Bank is not likely to get many deposits of more than £1,000. As to the suggestion to

allow the Savings Bank to build premises out of its funds, I see no provision for depreciation of those buildings. Section 29 of the principal Act provides that all profits must go into Consolidated Revenue. Therefore there is no reserve for depreciation on bank premises. Large banking premises erected in Coolgardie or Kalgoorlie many years ago would not bring to-day one-tenth of their original cost. Therefore I should like to see any sum spent on banking premises treated as a reserve of the bank. In all banks carrying on in a business-like way the bank premises account is written down considerably, it being recognised that banking premises are of little value for any other purpose. Either some provision should be made for a sinking fund or depreciation fund in respect of those premises, or they should be built out of a reserve fund taken from the profits before the balance of the profits is handed over to Consolidated Revenue. As to worker's homes, I really think there must be some misunderstanding. Only six weeks ago the secretary of the Workers' Homes Board told me that although they have a balance in hand, their commitments would more than absorb it, and therefore it was hopeless at present to ask for any further workers' homes. I hope the Premier will make inquiries, for in country districts there are many people desirous of securing workers' homes.

**HON. W. D. JOHNSON** (Guildford) [5.22]: I cannot follow the Leader of the Opposition in his attitude towards the increasing of deposits. His argument conveyed to me that the Treasurer is offering some special inducement for the investing of money beyond £1,000.

**Hon. Sir James Mitchell**: No, nothing of the sort.

**Hon. W. D. JOHNSON**: I understood from the hon. member's remarks that we should not provide for people depositing larger sums in the Savings Bank, but should definitely preclude it, so that they would have to invest it elsewhere.

**Hon. Sir James Mitchell**: No, no.

**Hon. W. D. JOHNSON**: The hon. member argued that private investments did more for the community than investments in the State Savings Bank.

**Hon. Sir James Mitchell**: I said that if they wanted to invest with the Government, they should take Treasury bills.

**Hon. W. D. JOHNSON**: But that was not all the hon. member said. Evidently I did not understand him correctly. I could appreciate opposition if the Treasurer proposed to induce people to become investors by increasing the interest on amounts above £1,000. But I take it the Bill is simply to overcome a difficulty that is perfectly obvious. The Savings Bank report points out that while a comparatively limited number of people invest above £300 or £400, there are a few who go a little over £1,000. It must be mighty inconvenient to the administration of the bank to have to bring it under the notice of the depositor when he exceeds the limit of £1,000. I do not think there is much danger of people wanting to invest more than £1,000 at so low a rate of interest as that paid by the State Savings Bank.

**The Premier**: Mostly the excesses have been due to the accumulation of interest.

**Hon. W. D. JOHNSON**: That is what I was going to suggest; it is an accumulation of interest that causes the inconvenience the Premier wishes to overcome.

**The Premier**: And if the depositor is told to withdraw the balance over and above £1,000, there is the danger of his withdrawing the lot and lodging it with the Commonwealth Bank.

**Hon. W. D. JOHNSON**: Yes, a very real danger too. From the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition, one was led to think the State Savings Bank was coming into competition with other banks.

**Hon. Sir James Mitchell**: No, no.

**Hon. W. D. JOHNSON**: The hon. member questioned whether the Savings Bank should be extended to receive more than the actual savings of depositors, and suggested that a limit of £300 would be sound. But when we realise the part played by the State Savings Bank in the development of the country, we must appreciate that the amounts invested beyond £300 and up to £1,000, have been of considerable assistance to State development. The Savings Bank has not come into competition with the other banks, where the securities are of larger earning capacity than those invested in the Savings Bank. The whole of the Savings Bank money is invested in public activities, road boards, municipalities or local inscribed stock; matters purely of public interest and State development. I commend the Govern-

ment on having introduced the Bill. With advantage to the State we could go much further than the Bill goes. It would be quite sound for the State to increase the Savings Bank rate of interest. It would be in the best interests of the people to popularise and extend the Savings Bank beyond its present activities. However, that is not proposed in the Bill, which is purely to overcome difficulties experienced by the administration. I cannot understand why the Leader of the Opposition should find fault with it.

**MR. SAMPSON** (Swan) [5.28]: One would have expected the Premier when introducing the Bill to refer to the fact that the operations of the Commonwealth Savings Bank in this State were made possible by a Federal Labour Government. To-day unfortunately we are suffering because of the action of that Government. Our State Savings Bank has to face competition. The Treasurer needs the bank's money, and I hope the people will more generally realise that and take advantage of the opportunity offered by the State Savings Bank for the lodging of their savings. The establishment by the Commonwealth of a savings bank in this State was vigorously dealt with at the time. It was referred to as the great steal, and as a serious infringement of the rights of the then Post Office Savings Bank. Unfortunately, as time has gone by we have suffered more and more.

The Minister for Agriculture: Why have not subsequent Governments rectified it?

**Mr. SAMPSON**: I cannot say, but I regard it as wrong, and I think the Minister himself does so. When Sir John Forrest, as Premier of the State, established the Government Savings Bank, the object was to provide opportunity for the people to invest their small savings. I listened with interest to the Leader of the Opposition, and it seems to me there are two sides to this question. It is open to doubt whether the encouragement of the people to deposit large sums in the Savings Bank will be to the ultimate advantage of the State. The original object was to encourage thrift on the part of the people. If we encourage people to deposit large sums in the Savings Bank and collect interest on the money—

**Hon. W. D. Johnson**: Will the hon. member say how the Bill encourages that?

**Mr. SAMPSON**: I will come to that presently. If the State makes it possible for the bank to receive unlimited amounts, it may

have a bad effect on the enterprise of the depositors. The greater the enterprise in a country, the greater the wealth produced. However, I have no objection to raise if the Premier is of opinion that the object of the Bill is a sound one. It is an encouragement to a great extent. There are no deposits at present beyond £1,000. I dare say there were many accounts at various times which exceeded £1,000. When such is the case, it is customary for the bank to utilise that, just as it is in the case of any other money. I believe it is not customary to notify the customer that the amount of £1,000 has been exceeded. The money deposited it is proposed may be used in the erection of buildings for the conduct of State Savings Bank business. I am glad to know that. I believe that the greater the number of conveniences for people to deposit their money in the Savings Bank, the more will the opportunity be availed of. In too many instances the local grocer represents the bank. People are sometimes disinclined to bank with the local grocer or station-master.

**Hon. G. Taylor**: Especially in farming districts.

**Hon. Sir James Mitchell**: What are you to do?

**Mr. SAMPSON**: I realise the difficulty in small centres, but there are centres where a building would pay. I note the reference by the Premier to the work done by the South Australian and Victorian savings banks. I had hoped the Workers' Homes Act would have made it possible for more people to have homes. I shall support the Bill and hope, as time goes on, the bank will be utilised by more and more people. There is an impression abroad that the institution does not offer the convenience to people that the Commonwealth Bank does. I am advised that equal convenience is provided. Any depositor in the State Savings Bank can have the same facilities as is the case with the Commonwealth Bank. This is not generally known.

**Hon. Sir James Mitchell**: It is a case of the post office as against the agent.

**Mr. SAMPSON**: It is a question of drawing on the account in the Eastern States. There is an arrangement now whereby a customer can operate on the State Savings Banks in any part of the Commonwealth.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.



# **BILL—TRUST FUNDS INVESTMENT ACT AMENDMENT.**

## *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS** (Hon. A. McCallum—South Fremantle) [5.37] in moving the second reading said: This is one of the little Bills the Leader of the Opposition is so fond of. It contains only one principle, namely that of allowing trustees to invest trust funds with road boards without the restriction that was placed in the present Act by the Legislative Council in 1924.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I suppose that was to protect trust funds against investment in outback centres?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** It was to guard against the road boards in outback goldfields. These were held to be declining districts, but have since proved to be more permanently settled than ever before, owing to the improvement in the pastoral industry. In 1900 the Act permitted trust moneys to be invested with municipalities. At that time road boards were not allowed to borrow money. When road boards were permitted to borrow, the Act did not allow of trust moneys being invested in road board securities. When road boards were given enlarged powers they required additional capital. There are now within road board areas many big towns, as big as there are in some municipalities. In the Katanning and other road districts there are big towns which are now very substantial. These towns cannot at present, with these restrictions, accept trust moneys as investments. This House passed a Bill extending the powers of trustees to invest these funds in road boards, but another place inserted in it the following proviso:—

Provided that prior to the issue of such debentures, the Minister for Public Works shall have certified in writing (a) that 75 per centum of the ratepayers of the district shall have paid all rates due by them for rates imposed by the road board for the then preceding financial year; (b) that the total annual rateable annual value of the road district shall disclose an average increase of at least one per centum per annum during the immediately preceding five years.

I believe the intention was to guard against the goldfields areas.

Hon. G. Taylor: And the object of the Bill is to repeal that proviso?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** Yes, it has nullified the whole Bill. Not only does it affect outlying goldfields areas but road

boards nearest to the city. Some of these were previously municipalities, such as South Perth, which is seriously affected.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is now no need for the proviso.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** No. Districts which were then on the balance are now more permanently settled than ever before, and are not now dependent on the mining industry.

Mr. Thomson: Is it not possible to get 75 per cent. of the ratepayers who shall have paid their rates?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** In South Perth the percentage of those who had paid was 74.9, owing to the number of absentees. The Crown Law Department naturally said this did not come within the 75 per cent. I might mention Merredin, Wyalcatecham and Murray-Wellington, and other road board districts that are in much the same position. They cannot make use of trust moneys although trustees are anxious to invest the money with them. These local authorities want to push on with development, but cannot do so by this means. If South Perth, for instance, was a municipality, these restrictions would not apply.

Hon. G. Taylor: It is required to be 50 per cent. instead of 75?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** There is no need for any restrictions. Queen's Park, Beverley, South Perth, Toodyay, Roebourne, and other road boards were once municipalities, and need only change back into municipalities to be able to evade the restrictions.

Mr. Thomson: Before investing moneys the trustees would make inquiries as to the stability of the local authorities.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** There cannot be any repudiation of public funds. If the road boards should fail, the State would have to step in. Everyone knows it would do the public credit of the State much harm if a local authority failed, and the Government could not allow such a thing to happen.

Mr. Thomson: What would happen in the case of some of the road boards on the goldfields?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** Those that ceased to exist were amalgamated with others.

Mr. Marshall: They were absorbed.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** Yes. This amalgamation is continually going on.

It makes for sounder local government. Road boards that are now in a position to develop their areas should not be restricted in this way. Securities in South Perth are as good as they are in the city. The Act was amended in the dying hours of the session, when there was no time for a conference. I do not think it was thought that the amendment would nullify the Bill in the way it has done. In the interests of the boards I have mentioned it is most desirable that the Act should be repealed in this particular. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

**BILL—KALGOORLIE AND BOULDER RACING CLUBS ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from 26th August.

**MR. SLEEMAN** (Fremantle) [5.45]: The Premier, when introducing the Bill, told us that it was a very innocent little affair, and he went on to say that it was proposed to give the Boulder Club power to borrow money to maintain and control the racecourse, carrying on racing thereon and providing stakes or prize money. Though it was described as an innocent little Bill, I am not so innocent as to allow it to go through without entering my protest. It is wrong altogether to allow a club to mortgage property, which is practically public property, so that it might raise its stakes. Should the club fail, and it looks as if it were bordering on failure, the State will have to go to its assistance in order to enable it to continue to provide sport for the public, and retain the course as a park for the people.

**Mr. Mann:** Would you be in favour of nationalising racecourses?

**Mr. SLEEMAN:** Yes, but I would not allow people to mortgage a property so that they might raise stake money. The principle is wrong.

**Mr. Mann:** What is the difference?

**Mr. SLEEMAN:** The hon. member would be the last man to allow anyone who held leased property to mortgage it in order to raise money to provide stakes. I had no desire to record a silent vote and rose to record my reasons for voting against the measure.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time

*In Committee.*

Bill passed through Committee without debate; reported without amendment and the report adopted.

**BILL—HERDSMAN'S LAKE DRAINAGE ACT REPEAL.**

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 25th August.

**HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL** (Northam) [5.52]: At the present time the properties around Herdsman's Lake are rated under the Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act, 1909. This Act relates to storm water drains, and the rating is on a very much lower scale than the rate under the Act passed last year respecting the drainage of agricultural land. Herdsman's Lake is really in the metropolitan area, but I suppose the drainage operations have benefited a good deal of the surrounding land. There is no reason why the land should not come under the agricultural provisions. But should the work be connected with the metropolitan area, the position should remain as it is.

**Hon. J. Cunningham:** The intention was that the land should be drained for the purpose of settlement.

**Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL:** The area is inside the metropolitan zone, and the rating under the Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act is lower than that under the Act passed last year.

**Hon. J. Cunningham:** We have a drainage board constituted at Njookenboroo, adjoining the Herdsman's Lake area.

**Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL:** The Minister knows that that area is away from Herdsman's Lake, but it is benefiting by the Herdsman's Lake drainage. There is no suggestion that the district is part of the metropolitan area. However, that is the position—the Minister can rate under the

Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act, and the rate will be on a lower scale than under the Agricultural Land Drainage Act, 1925. If the Bill goes through and the Herdsman's Lake Drainage Act is repealed, the Minister will be able to bring the area under the Agricultural Land Drainage Act and levy a higher rate and what he likes.

Hon. J. Cunningham: Not what the Minister likes; there is a maximum.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There is no maximum.

Mr. Thomson: It means that those people can be rated up to 2s. in the pound.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister can rate up to anything he likes.

Hon. J. Cunningham: There is a maximum of 2s. in the pound on the unimproved capital value.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is practically *ad lib* under that Act. There are two methods of rating under the Minister's Act of last year; one does provide a limit in certain cases, but the other is unlimited. In any case, if it be an agricultural area it is right that it should come under the Act of last year. The Minister could argue that it was wrong to rate people in this area who did not benefit at all by the drainage. He could contend that the storm waters did not affect those in the surrounding hills. What I wish the Minister to take into consideration is the fact that the drainage work cost a great deal more than was anticipated, but the sale of the land must recoup the Government for much of the cost. It will be only the balance remaining that will be any trouble to the Government. In the circumstances I do not know whether that should be debited in full to the people in the locality. I do not think it should. It will not be until the land is sold that the Minister will know just what amount is to be debited. The Act of last year gives him power to debit the total cost of the work to the surrounding district. Before the Bill we are now considering is agreed to, we should be certain that the surplus from the sale of the land will be credited to the cost of the drainage. If I can get that assurance I shall have no further opposition to offer. I should like the assurance from the Minister for Lands because it concerns him more than the Minister for Water Supply.

The Minister for Lands: I suppose it will be.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister supposes so. I want to be certain. The member for the district should have something to say, because it concerns closely the people he represents, and the people who will come under one or other of these Acts. A smaller number would come under the new Act than under the Land Drainage Act.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [6.1]: I would that the Minister had given us a little more information than he did when he moved the second reading. He said that the object of the Bill was purely to repeal the Herdsman's Lake Drainage Act to enable the land to be brought under the Land Drainage Act. The people who purchase this land may be rated up to 2s. in the pound on the unimproved value or up to 5s. per acre on the area basis. I was staggered at the statement of the Leader of the Opposition that it would be possible to pay the proceeds from the sale of this land into revenue—

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Instead of writing it off the cost of the drainage.

Mr. THOMSON: And then levy rates upon the cost of the drain.

The Minister for Lands: If that were done, do you think we should be able to sell an acre?

Mr. THOMSON: That is the point. The cost of draining Herdsman's Lake was estimated originally at £35,000, and I believe it has cost approximately £125,000. At any rate, the figure is over £100,000. It is regrettable that a work undertaken by the then Government in good faith should have cost so much more than the estimate.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Do not you agree that the moneys realised for the land must be written off the cost of drainage.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes.

The Minister for Lands: Who do you think would do anything different?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You say you will do it?

The Minister for Lands: Of course it will be done.

Mr. Lindsay: It is the drain that gives the value to the land.

Mr. THOMSON: It was estimated that 1,000 acres would be available for soldier settlement and on the figures, the cost of the land is approximately £100 per acre. If the land is to be rated at £100 unimproved value—

Hon. J. Cunningham: What does that mean?

Hon. G. Taylor: Does the drainage improve the value?

Mr. Lindsay: Of course; the land would be of no use unless it was drained.

Mr. THOMSON: How do the Government propose to arrive at the unimproved value? The accepted view of unimproved value is the price that land would reasonably bring if placed on the market, less the value of the improvements upon it. I do not oppose the second reading. I realise that a costly blunder has been made. For that the Government of the day were not really to blame because the work was undertaken on the advice of a responsible officer. I hope the Government will tell us what they intend to do with the land.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. W. C. Angwin—North-East Fremantle) [6.7]: I hope that when the land is subdivided and sold it will pay for the cost of the drain, but I have my doubts.

Hon. G. Taylor: I think a lot of hope will be needed.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS**: I have no doubt whatever that if the land will pay for the cost of the drain there will be no charge, as the Leader of the Opposition suggests. What has made the land of value is the drain; it would be useless without the drain. When we sell the land to the people, the price of the land will include the cost of the drain, but no honest man could charge them for the drain afterwards. So the question raised by the Leader of the Opposition is a rather ridiculous one.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Whether ridiculous or not, I want an assurance.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS**: It was the intention of the hon. member when in office to do that, and any other Government would do the same thing. If any Government did otherwise, they would not be worthy of holding the Treasury benches. It is an old land agent's trick to subdivide land and make roads, and then for the purchaser of the land to find that after having paid the agent for the making of the roads, he was billed by the local authority for the same work. Subsidiary drains at Herdsman's Lake will be necessary and the board may have to charge for that work. It may even be necessary for the Government to undertake the construction of subsidiary drains before selling the land. The Herdsman's Lake land would have been sold 12 months ago if it had been thought advisable to sell it.

Hon. G. Taylor: Have you many applications for the land?

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS**: It has not been offered for sale.

Mr. Latham: It is not quite ready, is it?

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS**: When it is offered for sale, I hope that the people who purchase it will be quite satisfied. At the same time it is necessary to make the drainage effective and to have the land thoroughly bleached before it is handed over. Meanwhile, of course, the cost of the land, chiefly owing to interest charges, is mounting up. There are 1,200 acres of land, and if we obtain from purchasers sufficient to pay for the cost of the drainage and lose what we paid for the lake, I think we shall be lucky.

Hon. G. Taylor: So do I.

**MR. MILLINGTON** (Leederville) [6.10]: The land of Herdsman's Lake is owned, not by my constituents, but by the Government. My closest association with it so far has been that some of my constituents' cattle went on to the land and were impounded.

Hon. G. Taylor: It is in your district.

Mr. MILLINGTON: Yes, but it will not be populated until the sweet by and bye. The people who are likely to take up this land are pretty shrewd judges of the value of swamp land, and it would be useless for the Government to put a fancy price upon it. One member suggests £100 per acre. I do not intend to suggest any price. The Government, however, will not be dealing with group settlers when they come to sell this land. They will be dealing with people who will want value for their money. If there are any restrictions regarding the drains, the people taking up areas will know just where they stand before they involve themselves. At present the Government are saddled with the whole of the cost of this drainage work, but it was an absolute necessity in the interests of health, quite apart from making this land available for cultivation. It is now the responsibility of the Government to dispose of the land.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What is similar land at Osborne Park bringing at present?

Mr. MILLINGTON: Some of the swamp land will bring £100; some is being sold for even more, but it is impossible to say that the whole of Herdsman's Lake will average £100 per acre. Had the 1,200 acres been settled, I should have been keenly interested in the area. When the people come to take

up the land, it will be time to settle the question of the value of the land and the assessment of drainage. My constituents come under the provisions of the Land Drainage Act of 1925, and I cannot see why I should feel concerned about the prospective settlers who may take up areas at Herdsman's Lake in the future. It is necessary to have uniformity. When the new area is settled, I hope it will be settled under the conditions that at present prevail at Osborne Park.

Hon. G. Taylor: Osborne Park is not paying drainage rates now.

Mr. MILLINGTON: The prospective holders of Herdsman's Lake should not receive any advantage over the people of Osborne Park.

Mr. Thomson: Have the people at Osborne Park to pay drainage rates?

Mr. MILLINGTON: At present they are working under the provisions of the Land Drainage Act.

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

**HON. J. CUNNINGHAM** (Honorary Minister—Kalgoorlie—in reply) [7.32]: The Opposition Leader referred to the rating provisions of existing legislation dealing with drainage. I do not think the hon. member intended to convey that there was no limit to the amount of rating which could be imposed under that legislation, since he was here last year when the matter was under consideration. It will be generally known to members that there is a maximum rate of 2s. in the pound where rates are levied on the unimproved capital value, and that there is a maximum of 5s. per acre where rating is on the area. I would not like the impression to go abroad that there is no limit to the rating power vested in drainage boards or in the Minister acting in the capacity of a drainage board. People in areas where drainage works are now being carried out might derive a false impression. As to the drainage of Herdsman's Lake, the member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) regretted that I had not furnished more information on the second reading. It may be as well, therefore, to say that the Herdsman's Lake drainage scheme not only relieves the lake of storm waters, but also has a beneficial effect throughout the chain of swamps north of the lake. For some years the water table has been rising steadily in that dis-

trict, and prior to the construction of the drain some holdings had in consequence been out of cultivation for several years. Since then, however, many of the holders who found themselves affected have been able to resume cultivation of their blocks. Thus the Herdsman's Lake drainage has been of considerable benefit to the surrounding country. The drainage board in existence at Njookenboroo are carrying out the ordinary functions of a board under the 1925 Act. The repeal of the Herdsman's Lake Drainage Act will mean that the provisions of the 1925 Act shall operate in the area affected. As for subsidiary drains, when the land is cut up and made available for selection, the subdivided areas will be drained; and it will then be possible to carry on those operations which ordinarily follow upon the drainage of swamp land. The member for Katanning also sought information regarding the capital cost of the Herdsman's Lake drainage works. The capital cost is approximately £105,000. Considerable difficulty was experienced in connection with the engineering work.

Hon. G. Taylor: Does that amount of £105,000 include the purchase of the land?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: It represents the cost of drainage.

Hon. G. Taylor: That cost was estimated at £25,000.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: That was a very early estimate, made when only preliminary investigations had been carried out. Upon further investigation, and as the result of experience, it was found that additional money would be needed. The Minister for Lands has already given an assurance that money received as the result of sales of land will be applied to redeeming the debt incurred on the original drainage works. The purpose for which those works were constructed has been accomplished, namely the draining of storm water off the Herdsman's Lake country. Now it is a question of putting in additional drains, so that the land may be rendered capable of cultivation.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

[Mr. Lutey in the Chair; Hon. J. Cunningham (Honorary Minister) in charge of the Bill.]

Clause 1.—Repeal of Act No. 23 of 1920:

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Did I understand the Honorary Minister to say that the original drain was a storm water drain, and that it will be necessary to put in more drains before cultivation can proceed?

Hon. J. Cunningham: That is correct.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Then the draining of the lake for agriculture has not been completed.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: The drainage of the lake has been completed, but it is always found, after the first drainage work has been carried out, that there is considerable seepage from the surrounding country. Frequently the original drainage operations produce depressions in the beds of drained lakes or swamps. The subsidiary drains will be for the purpose of connecting those depressions with the dams already constructed.

Hon. G. Taylor: Will the subsidiary drains be costly?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: As a rule, subsidiary drains are not costly. Frequently the settler himself carries them out.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

## **BILL—COAL MINES REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 26th August.

**HON. G. TAYLOR** (Mt. Margaret) [7.41]: I have no desire to offer any strenuous opposition to the second reading. The Minister certainly introduced the Bill very briefly. Still, the measure passed this House last year. It now contains one or two new provisions. As to one of these, I am doubtful whether we would be wise in adopting it. However, I am perfectly convinced that some of the clauses are absolutely necessary. Even my limited experience of coal mining on the south coast of New South Wales many years ago makes me pleased to know that under the Bill miners will be provided with shower baths, so that they may leave their work in clean and decent order, whereas in my days miners came off shift as black as negroes. I think you, Mr. Speaker, have some knowledge of that from your young days in New South Wales. The Government

are perfectly right in providing that the miner's coal shall be weighed as close as possible to the pit's mouth. The skips are well topped up, and as they are run along, the coal drops off. Those who handle the trucks do not own the coal, and the man who has cut the coal is at the loss of whatever falls off. The arrangement regarding the juvenile section of the mine employees will, I think, work well. I do not know, however, that we would be wise in legislating to fix the hours during which miners shall cut coal. If we pass the Bill as introduced, we shall be creating a statutory day of seven hours from bank to bank. We know that the arrangement has been agreed upon by the employers, the men, and the Arbitration Court. Still, we are now asked to place that arrangement on the statute book. In other words, the Bill asks us to legislate for the coal miners of Collie in a direction in which we have never yet legislated for any other section of the community. The Arbitration Act provides that these matters shall be settled by the Arbitration Court. I have no complaint whatever against the Arbitration Court's decision setting up a seven-hour shift, which I regard as perfectly right and proper. I assisted the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson) in that direction some time ago in this Chamber. However, I question the wisdom of making such an arrangement statute law for the coal miners as distinguished from every other section of our industrial workers. The Arbitration Court has fixed the hours of work on the southern parts of the goldfields. But that was a decision of the Arbitration Court. I do not know whether the Minister will press that particular clause, although I know the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson) will strongly support it. I will not oppose the second reading of the Bill, but I want to hear valid reasons before I will vote to place the provision regarding hours of labour on the statute-book.

**MR. WILSON** (Collie) [7.46]: I thought that, after passing a similar Bill unanimously last year, we had done our job and done it well. Now we are asked to deal with a Bill identically the same except for the inclusion of 1926 instead of 1925. It appears that the Legislative Council has some Standing Order necessitating this House going over the work again in order to get the Bill before the Upper Chamber.

Mr. Lindsay: We are a year older and have learnt something since.

The Minister for Mines: You have become a bit more reactionary.

Mr. WILSON: During the past 20 years every industry here has passed through an evolutionary stage regarding legislation. The exception has been the coal mining industry, for no amending legislation has been introduced dealing with that branch of industrial activity since 1902. On a number of occasions attempts have been made to amend the existing legislation, but the present is the first serious attempt in that direction. I would draw the attention of hon. members to the fact that the provisions of this Bill were drafted by representatives of the Mines Department in Mr. Montgomery and his inspector of mines, by representatives of the coal companies and by representatives of the unions.

Mr. Thomson: Has the Bill been accepted by the coal companies?

Mr. WILSON: Yes, and by the Mines Department, by the union and by myself. All have had experience in coal mining and coal mining legislation. What more does the hon. member want? What this House does not know about coal mining would fill a whole book.

Hon. G. Taylor: No, two books.

Mr. WILSON: At any rate, the Bill is the outcome of a conference convened by the Mines Department to deal with matters affecting the industry. In addition to Mr. Montgomery, the inspector of mines who assisted him is a qualified manager who obtained his certificate in another State. The others participating in the conference were two certificated managers representing the companies and two experienced miners. With such a combination engaged upon the framing of the Bill, it will be seen that the measure is not one to be lightly passed over. The first matter of importance dealt with refers to the raising of the age of boys from 18 to 19.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is quite right. There is no objection from my point of view.

Mr. WILSON: There should be none, because it is, so to speak, an advance backwards. The general impression is that we want to get a bigger wage for boys. The fact is that we have an industrial agreement in which provision is made for a youth having to be 19 years of age before he can receive a man's wage. Having accepted that age, we wish to bring the legislation into conformity with the agreement.

Hon. G. Taylor: There is nothing wrong about that.

Mr. WILSON: We are giving something away to the companies and so, of course, there is nothing wrong with it. Then we come to the alteration of hours. The member for Mt. Margaret (Hon. G. Taylor) said he did not believe in it.

Hon. G. Taylor: I did not say that. I questioned the wisdom of placing such a provision on the statute-book.

Mr. WILSON: Why question it? From time immemorial legislation dealing with coal miners has fixed the hours of work.

Mr. Lindsay: But there was no Arbitration Court in other countries.

Mr. WILSON: The Arbitration Act was in force here before the Coal Mines Regulation Act was introduced. It was in 1902 that the latter Act was passed. The Arbitration Act was on the statute-book before that. If we go back through the history of coal mining in England, we can ascertain the long hours that were worked in the early days. As a boy I worked in the mines of the Old Country for 14 hours a day. When anyone talks about working for 14 hours below ground at high pressure, hon. members must agree that it cannot be done. A man could dodder through his work for that period, but he could not devote his best energies to his task.

Hon. G. Taylor: At any rate, he could do it for a very short period only.

Mr. WILSON: Coal miners are pieceworkers. It has been said that the more hours they work the greater their returns will be. I claim that is not so, and I will prove my contention with figures. As a matter of fact, the Collie miners have earned more since they had the 7-hour day, which was agreed to in 1920, than they earned when they were working an 8-hour day.

Mr. Thomson: Then they must have gone slow.

Mr. WILSON: They did not.

Mr. Teesdale: No, it was piece work.

Mr. WILSON: I am speaking from experience. When the Collie miners decided, by means of a ballot, to accept the provision, they did not get any increase in the rates paid in order to make up their wages. The same price was paid for hewing for the seven hours as was paid for the eight hours, and not a penny increase was added to their wages. Thus, the coal miners had all to lose and the companies all to gain.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: When was the price fixed?

Mr. WILSON: In 1919.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Was that when you went to Melbourne?

Mr. WILSON: The hon. member is always concerned about the Melbourne and Sydney agreements. Just prior to my departure to the war, I went to the East. The Newcastle coal companies had received an increase of 3s. per ton, and the coal miners on piece-work got an increase in their tonnage rates and day wages, while the men received 3s. a day extra on their wages. The Government of the day here did not give the Collie miners their just dues and we had to appeal to the Federal Government to create a tribunal to get justice for the men. It was nearly six months later that the Collie miners received the advance that had been granted to the New South Wales miners. Later again I was sent back to the East because prices had been soaring.

Mr. Lindsay: Not so fast as the cost of production.

Mr. WILSON: Nonsense! Wheat went up to 7s. or 8s. a bushel, whereas before the war it had been down to 2s. 6d. and 3s. 6d. The hon. member talks balderdash if he does nothing else.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What is the price of coal?

Mr. WILSON: For the best coal the price is 19s. per ton at the pit's mouth. Coal that does not come up to that quality ranges down to as low as 17s. 6d. per ton. Coming to the question of seven hours bank to bank, we agreed to that provision in 1919 and it came into operation in 1920. It has worked most satisfactorily ever since. Despite that agreement for seven hours, the price paid by the Government has not been advanced. The question has been raised as to why this provision should be included in the Act.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is so.

Mr. WILSON: I will deal with the hon. member's contention later. I did not interrupt him when he was having a shot at me. This may be a matter for levity with those who have not worked in a coal mine. I have been a coal miner practically all my life, and I do not like the sneering and gibing that is going on. The man who works below ground is the man who knows what he wants. We do not desire to hear so much gibing and sneering when it comes to a matter of the welfare of miners. I can give any hon. member who would dare to read it, the report of the Royal Commission appointed in 1841 by Queen Victoria to inquire into coal mining conditions in England at that period.

Hon. G. Taylor: I have read extracts from it.

Mr. WILSON: I have a copy of the book and it affords the most tragic reading one would desire to peruse. Yet here to-day, in 1926, we have gibes and sneers, and when I hear them it makes me feel annoyed. However, reverting to the question of the eight hours bank to bank, that has been established by law in Western Australia for 24 years. It was also included in the Western Australian 1902 Act and is identical with what is in operation all over the world. The seven hours bank to bank day has been worked by the British miners since July, 1919, and they are fighting to retain it now. Good luck to them in the fight! Promises were made that if they kept the wheels of industry moving during the war they would never have to revert to the eight hours bank to bank. No sooner had the aftermath of war conditions passed away than the Baldwin Government wanted to bring the miners back to the eight hour bank.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is not in this Bill.

Mr. Teesdale: Give us the Bill. Leave the Old Country out.

Mr. WILSON: I want to give the House some information. At present we have the seven hours bank to bank. We wish to legalise that agreement.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Is that so?

Mr. WILSON: Yes, and I am giving reasons for the legalisation of that agreement. Let me give the annual tonnage produced under the eight-hour day and the seven-hour day respectively. In 1918 when the eight-hour shift was being worked, the average output was 726 tons; and in 1920, the first year in which the seven-hour shift was worked, the quantity rose to 755 tons, or practically 30 tons more than in 1918. Is not that convincing?

Mr. Mann: I suppose they had better machinery in 1920.

Mr. WILSON: No, it was the same machinery. Understand, there was no hewing by hand; it was all by coal-cutting machine. In 1921 the output was 698 tons, but in 1922 it rose to 771 tons. So in 1918, working an eight-hour shift, each man produced 726 tons, whereas in 1922, working a seven-hour shift he produced 771 tons.

Mr. Teesdale: That is a fine illustration of the efficacy of piece work.



Mr. WILSON: Usually the coal miner works wearing not too much clothing, just a pair of short pants. He does not require very much time for crib. He is on his tonnage and he has to make his wage in seven hours. Let me say it is all very well for the man who has God's pure air to work in to talk about an eight-hour day. If such a man can work eight hours a day, then I say the man cooped up underground should not be asked to work more than seven hours per day.

Hon. G. Taylor: Six hours underground is quite equal to eight hours on the surface.

Mr. WILSON: That is so. Common sense tells one that much, and I think I have proved that a miner on piece work, engaged at high tension, can produce a bigger tonnage when working seven hours per day than he ever did when working eight hours per day. And the illustration is not as if it were for one year only: I offer you proof extending over six years. In 1920 we secured for this agreement the signatures of the five companies then operating, and to-day we practically have the signatures of the other two companies. Let me say, we also have the approval of the Mines Department. All the organisations were represented at the conference that drafted the Bill, so I do not think any objection can be offered to the principle by members of the House. Then there is the question of the position of the weighbridge. The men want to have the coal weighed as near as possible to the pit's mouth. At one of the Collie mines the coal is carried in skips for a quarter of a mile from the pit's mouth. Every lump of coal that falls off a skip during the journey is a loss to the miner, for the coal is weighed net. So we want the weighbridge as near as possible to the pit's mouth and, the companies having agreed to the principle, there cannot be any objection to it here.

Hon. G. Taylor: Nobody has objected.

Mr. WILSON: There is in the Bill a clause providing that there shall be a manager to each mine. We say that one man should not have control of five or six mines. The lives of the miners are of more consequence than a few tons of coal, and if a mine cannot afford to pay a properly qualified manager, the sooner that mine closes down the better. We have young men going through their studies, after the day's work

at the mines, and passing examinations for first class certificates; so it is only by reason of greed if certain companies find a difficulty in securing qualified managers. We do not believe in the system of one manager to several mines, nor does the Mines Department believe in it. Nevertheless under the existing Act such a system is possible; hence the provision in the Bill to remedy an evil that may come along some day. We believe that every mine should be under the care of a properly qualified manager.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is for Collie.

Mr. WILSON: The same principle should operate in every mining field. Then we want a little provision in respect of the Accident Relief Fund. The fund at Collie was one of the first to be created in the Commonwealth, although New Zealand had such a fund operating for some time previously. Under the Western Australian Act of 1902 it is provided that for every ton of coal won the company shall pay a half-penny into the Accident Relief Fund, the coal miners also paying their contributions. That fund has been in operation for 20 years or more. Our fund has been operated with general satisfaction. Still there is one point we wish to amend. The Act provides that every employee working about the mine shall contribute so much per week towards the fund. In point of fact, some of the managers and some of the staff have not paid into the fund. On one occasion a manager was killed. Unfortunately, although he should have been paying into the fund he had not done so, and as a result his dependants got nothing out of it. We contend that "every employee" embraces the manager and every one of the staff on a mine. The present managers and staffs and the department are all agreed as to that definition, and so there should be no difficulty about getting it through the House.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But that is for mutual arrangement between the companies and the men. It is not for the department.

Mr. WILSON: It is in the existing Act and in the New Zealand Act and in the Act of New South Wales. The only thing is we contend that "every employee" means every employee in or about the mine.

Hon. G. Taylor: The fund is properly supervised, is it not?

Mr. WILSON: It is. There has never been the slightest complaint on that score.

Surely if we are inclined to go in for a little self help we should be entitled to compel every man on the mine to join up. There is just another little provision, which is an old friend. I am trying to provide for the men of 60 years and over who are now not able to work, and who get merely the £1 per week from the Federal pension fund. I pointed out to the Minister for Mines when he was in Collie last year, one man who was 70 years of age. His name is Sam Price. He had been working in the mines altogether for 60 years. He now receives an old age pension of £1 a week.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: And he is lucky if he gets it.

Mr. WILSON: We would like to help these old fellows in their declining years, and give them a little to enable them to buy tobacco and perhaps a drink. We had in mind that the old age pensioners can earn up to £84 10s. a year. The pension is £52, and the Federal Government allow them to earn another £32 10s. We decided, in order that the Commonwealth Government should not touch the money, to give these old men another 12s. 6d. a week, bringing their total to £84 10s.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is the intention of this clause.

Mr. WILSON: Yes. The coal miners are unanimous in their agreement to pay 3d. every week into the fund in order to give these old men an extra allowance.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is being embodied in a Bill for the first time.

Mr. WILSON: Yes. The companies have agreed to pay a similar amount. Before I went on with this matter I thought I would find out what the companies were willing to pay. I thought they would be just as ready to contribute towards the support of those men who had been working for them for years, as their comrades who had worked beside them were ready to do. I received a letter from the amalgamated companies to the following effect:—

Referring to your proposed amendment to the Coal Mines Regulation Act, in order to make an allowance for the aged and infirm coal miners, I am pleased to advise you that the company will be prepared to contribute the sum suggested in your amendment.

This means that for every pound collected by the miners as a whole the companies will also contribute a pound.

Mr. Teesdale: Hear, hear, for the associated companies!

Mr. WILSON: Including miners, engineers and others there are approximately 800 employees in the mines at Collie. If each of these contributes 13s. a year, the total will be £520 a year. To this will be added another £520 from the companies. There will be no administration charges in connection with this fund.

Mr. Teesdale: And no paid billets?

Mr. WILSON: No, there will be no paid secretary. It will not take much to give half a dozen or ten old men 12s. 6d. a week.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Have you no more than that after all these years?

Mr. WILSON: We shall not have very many. As a rule the men work up to a ripe old age.

Mr. Teesdale: They do not get the sack like they do under the Government?

Mr. WILSON: I want these old men to be paid fortnightly. During the past three or four years a number of men have come to Collie from the goldfields, some of them suffering from miners' disease. They will not come under the legislation we passed last year, but we will not forget to look after them if this Bill is passed. If they have worked in Collie coal mines they will be treated just as other old miners will be treated. We have to be fair. If there is too much money in the fund, it will be held in trust. This is an innovation, but I think it is a step in the right direction. We are trying to help these old fellows in such a way that the Federal Government will not be able to come down upon them because they are getting too much. The other items in the Bill are of a minor technical nature. One error crept into the draft of the Bill, and that is in regard to the number of men who shall work at a face. It has been understood for years that no man can work alone as a coal cutter without an experience of two years in coal cutting. I will show the absurdity of the Act. It says that no man shall work alone as a coal cutter unless he has had two years' experience, or is under the supervision of a practical miner. Although no man can work alone without two years' experience, a hundred inexperienced men can work together. We are now providing that each face or place shall contain 50 per cent. of skilled labour. Where there are two men working at the face, one must have the necessary experience in order to

protect the other, who may not have the experience.

Hon. G. Taylor: That applies only to the coal hewers.

Mr. WILSON: Yes.

Mr. Thomson: That is not the proposal?

Mr. WILSON: Nonsense. I am prepared to let the gold and metal miners be exempted from this clause because the men on the goldfields know how to look after themselves, and this will cover the lot. The lives of our coal miners ought to be protected, for they are of great importance to the State. The provision that 50 per cent. of the men working underground shall consist of skilled men is the best provision that can be made. I hope the Bill will be passed as it stands. The people who drafted it understand the industry from A to Z, and their wishes have been consulted. This Bill places no imposition upon the Government or the people of the State. It deals only with the master, the man, the Government and the people generally.

**MR. THOMSON** (Katanning) [8.25]: One cannot help being struck by the fact that this Bill represents an agreement between the mine owners in Collie and the coal miners.

Mr. Wilson: And the Government.

Hon. G. Taylor: They have put their heads together.

Mr. THOMSON: Why is it necessary to embody all these details in an Act of Parliament? I know the Act provides that no man shall work underground for a longer period than 8 hours. It is now proposed to amend that to provide that the period shall be cut down to seven hours. From the point of view of the Minister this must be very satisfactory: It is surprising to know that men can do more work in seven hours than they can in eight. That is an astonishing statement. I should have thought that with coal-cutting machinery men would be able to get more out of their machines in eight hours than in seven. Surely this type of machinery has improved, and is more efficient than it used to be. The Minister also said that this reduction in hours was embodied in an arbitration award. Why is it necessary to place these restrictions in an Act of Parliament?

Mr. Panton: Why use the word "restrictions"?

Mr. THOMSON: It is a restriction. The present mine owners are in a unique posi-

tion. They entered into an agreement with the Government to supply the railways with coal. They have a nice little combine and they said, "We can adjust the price that we will charge to the Government." This is embodied in a contract.

Mr. Wilson: Who told you all that?

Mr. THOMSON: If coal companies desired to start operations at Wilga, or some other part of the State, they could not open up their mines for a certain period, because the present companies have the right to supply all the coal requirements of the railways. The present mines sell the bulk of their coal to this purchaser. I admit that when the Collie lighting scheme comes into being, the position will be somewhat altered.

The Minister for Mines: What has that got to do with the Bill?

Mr. THOMSON: It has a lot to do with it. We are prescribing in an Act of Parliament the hours that shall be worked in the coal-mining industry. If this were merely a clause in the arbitration agreement, it could be altered.

Mr. Latham: I do not see the necessity for an Act of Parliament when an agreement has been entered into between three parties.

Mr. THOMSON: That is my point.

Mr. Panton: Why put the 44 hours into the Shops and Factories Act?

Mr. Latham: You got at us that time.

Hon. G. Taylor: They were generous in those days.

Mr. THOMSON: The member for Collie said that the price of coal had not increased, despite the fact that the hours had been reduced from eight to seven a day.

Hon. G. Taylor: And the output had been increased.

Mr. THOMSON: In his report the Commissioner of Railways says that in 1915-16 the price paid for Collie coal was 10s. 6d. per ton, and for Newcastle coal 26s. 11d. Today the average price they pay for Collie coal is 18s. 5¼d. or an increase of 75 per cent.

Mr. Wilson: On a point of order, the hon. member declares that I said the price of coal had not increased and he quoted the 1916 figures. What I said was from the time the men started the seven hours at the beginning of 1920. I do not want my remarks to be misconstrued.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is merely a personal explanation.

Hon. G. Taylor: And you did it well.

Mr. THOMSON: I have no desire whatever to misinterpret the hon. member's remarks or the information he supplied to the House.

Mr. Wilson: I did not supply it to the House; I will ask that "Hansard" be produced.

Mr. THOMSON: My desire is to show the increases that have taken place in the price of Collie coal. In 1916 the average was 10s. 6d. and the price of New South Wales coal was 26s. 11d. Last year the average price paid by the Commissioner for New South Wales coal was 47s. 5d., an increase of approximately 40 per cent., whereas the increase in the price of Collie coal between 1917 and 1925 was approximately 75 per cent. I am not arguing that the statements advanced by the member for Collie are not sound and legitimate from his point of view, but I am wondering whether the State is going to benefit by placing on the statute-book the fact that the coal miners shall be permitted to work only seven hours per day. I do not mind if they work only six hours, provided that is contained in the arbitration award. Why should we embody an agreement into an Act of Parliament? We have an Arbitration Court and the award of that court becomes the law of the land, and those who break it are liable to substantial fines. There is no reason why such an award should be embodied in an Act of Parliament. The Commissioner of Railways tells us that the quality of Collie coal has been fairly satisfactory.

Mr. Wilson: On a point of order, what has the quality of the coal to do with the Bill we are discussing.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think the subject of Collie coal and incidentally its price may have something to do with the Bill.

Mr. THOMSON: The Commissioner declared that the quality of Collie coal had been fairly satisfactory, delays to trains having declined from 209 in 1924 to 118 in 1925. This is the point to which I wish to draw the attention of the member for Collie. Inconvenience had been caused by the irregularity of supply and the necessity had arisen for an increased use of imported coal. We find that despite the excellent working conditions to which the member for Collie has drawn attention, more coal was produced under the seven hours working agreement, but that the Commissioner complains that the irregularity of supply meant the use of a greater proportion of imported coal.

Mr. Wilson: When did he say that?

Mr. THOMSON: In his latest report. I do not see the necessity for embodying these regulations in an Act of Parliament. I have no objection to the proposal contained in the Bill raising the age of boys from 18 to 19, but we are establishing a bad precedent in the other direction, and if we make it applicable to one industry, then almost every other industry will be entitled to come along and ask for a similar privilege. No one can take any exception to the suggested method of creating a fund for the aged and infirm. That is an excellent provision and I would that every other industry did something similar. We all feel that when people arrive at that stage when they are no longer able to earn full wages, consideration should be shown them. I hope the Federal Government too, will be able to do something in that direction instead of continuing the rotten system of old age pensions. If each one contributed during the course of his lifetime in the manner proposed in the Bill, it would mean that old age would no longer hold any terrors for the people. Personally, I will rejoice if ever such a day arrives when a scheme of that kind is put into universal operation. It is proposed in the Bill that a certified manager shall have the control and management of one mine only. That is somewhat at variance with the recommendation made by the Royal Commission that sat last year on the gold mining industry. That Commission declared that we had too many managers and that to reduce overhead expenses the management of the mines should be consolidated. Here we propose to put into what will become an Act, a system which must mean increased expenditure. The Premier has intimated that it is his intention to provide at Kalgoorlie a central power scheme, whereby it will be possible to reduce costs from a working point of view. That power scheme will take the place of many units existing to-day. That is quite all right in principle and we approve of it. But why should we go to the other extreme in another branch of mining?

Mr. Chesson: A little knowledge is harmful.

Mr. THOMSON: That may be so, but if a principle is wrong in connection with gold mining, it must also be wrong in connection with coal mining. Especially must this be so when we remember the increases that have taken place in recent years in the price of Collie coal. We owe a duty

to the public and it is to see that those who are to use the coal do not in respect to working costs pay even 3d. per ton more than is absolutely necessary. Frankly I admit I do not know anything about coal mining. I also admit that no one in this House knows more about it than does the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson). I must admit, however, that I view with a certain amount of suspicion the meeting of employers and employees for the purpose of mutually fixing prices. This kind of thing means that the public have to pay, and after all, this House has a duty to the public as well as studying the interests of the coal miners and the proprietors.

**HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL** (Northam) [8.43]: I would like to know from the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson) whether everything that is contained in the Bill has been arrived at by agreement between the parties. If that be the case, why should we concern ourselves if the agreement is law. There is one man at Collie who runs the industry from end to end, and no one else has a say in it. After running the industry at Collie and dictating to both parties, he comes to the House and asks that we shall join in and confirm all that has been done.

Mr. Teesdale: He even threatens us, too.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am inclined to think that those people would be better off without this legislation seeing that they have been able to arrange so much by agreement. I know that under the parent Act the hours are limited to 48.

Mr. Thomson: It does not say that they shall not be fewer than 48 by agreement.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is so; by agreement they can be made any number suitable to the parties concerned. The Arbitration Court is the proper tribunal to fix hours and wages. Coal mining must be a very healthy industry. We are told that if the miners contribute 13s. a year, and the owners contribute 13s. a year, it will be sufficient to give the men a small pension when their days of work in the mines are over. The industry has been going for a good many years and there must be a certain accumulation of men ready to receive the pension. I hope the amount will be sufficient, but it seems to me to be very small.

Mr. Wilson: We cannot make it greater or the Federal Government would deduct it. We do not want to give it to them.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I wish to know how, by any stretch of imagination, a union secretary can come under this provision.

Mr. Wilson: He is also a check inspector, who goes down the mines, sometimes twice a week, and he could easily be killed there.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is easy enough to be killed by a motor car. It seems extraordinary that the union secretary should be included amongst the men to receive the benefit. No doubt there is an explanation which we shall receive in Committee. This agreement seems to be satisfactory to all parties except to the users of coal. The Premier flatters himself that it will not entail additional cost to the department, but I know too much to believe that that happy state of affairs will be realised. If we pass the Bill no doubt someone else will pass on the cost to the Government in the shape of increased price for coal. If this Bill is the result of an agreement, the people who have made the agreement should have a little time to know what we propose for them. While I have little objection to voice at this stage, I suggest that we might well postpone the Committee stage in order that the miners and mine owners might have an opportunity to raise any objection that they desire.

**MR. CHESSON** (Cue) [8.49]: I support the Bill. I realise that the agreement hinges on the seven hours bank-to-bank under which the men are working to-day. All that this Bill seeks to do is to embody in a statute an agreement arrived at by the coal companies and the miners. To that I have no objection. We make provision by Act of Parliament for the early closing of shops and for the restriction of hours for licensed premises, and there is no reason why we should not embody in a statute the hours for coalminers working underground. Coalminers are engaged on piecework and, once they get underground, very little time is lost. The men take little or no time to eat their crib. While they are underground they are working at their best and no industry takes more out of men than does coal mining on piecework. The men themselves prefer piecework. There are provisions in the Bill dealing with the number of men working underground that must be practical miners.

Hon. G. Taylor: There is no objection to that.

Mr. CHESSON: Years ago I worked in a coal mine, and at that time every man working on a face had to be a practical miner. He had to understand something about ventilation, about securing the face, and about the occurrence of gases.

Hon. G. Taylor: There were no machines in your day.

Mr. CHESSON: We used the old hand pick and the hand boring machine, but we did not have coal cutters such as are used at present. The output of coal is much greater since the advent of machinery. Therefore I should think the work would take a good deal more out of the men employed on the face. This applies to men working on the machines in gold mines. In the old days gold miners lived to a fair age, but the life of a gold miner nowadays is short.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is due to the dust.

Mr. CHESSON: Partly to the dust, but speeding up has a good deal to do with it. When a young fellow has been wheeling for a year or two, he is taken into the face. Thus he gains his experience. When we consider what a coalminer, as compared with a gold miner, has to contend with in the way of gases—

Mr. Thomson: There is not much in the way of gases here.

Mr. CHESSON: It was not considered that there was much gas at Mt. Mulligan, but an explosion occurred there. It was said there was no gas at Mt. Kembla, but an explosion occurred there.

Mr. Wilson: There were three men poisoned at Collie 10 years ago.

Hon. G. Taylor: Through beer?

Mr. Wilson: No, gas.

Mr. CHESSON: I am glad to find the stipulation that mine managers shall have five years' practical experience and shall control only one mine. The member for Kataning (Mr. Thomson) said that the Royal Commission on gold mining expressed the opinion that one manager should control a group of mines. The same argument would not apply to coal mining.

Mr. Thomson: I am bothered if I can see why.

Mr. CHESSON: The concentration of mines at Kalgoorlie would permit of one winding plant being used. The mines would be connected and the manager could go from the central shaft and inspect all the workings. That could not be done in coal mines, which are miles apart and are not connected with each other. One coal mine might have

no noxious gas; in another mine there might be different kinds of fire damp. The underground manager needs to be a practical man who can test a face at any time. If a man in a gold mine is acquainted with methods of timbering and the breaking of ground, he might be called a practical man. A coal mine manager, however, requires a fair amount of experience in order to test any portion of a mine. He has to see that the air is distributed in order to guard against the accumulation of gas. Altogether he requires to be a more experienced man than one in a gold mine. If he has a big mine with 200 or 300 men to look after, he has as much as he can do.

Mr. Teesdale: Suppose three small mines could not keep a manager each, would you close them up on that account?

Mr. CHESSON: Special provision is made for small mines. If a mine cannot keep a manager to safeguard the lives of the men employed, it should be shut down. It should not be carried on at the expense of the men's lives.

Mr. Teesdale: If they were small mines and he could manage the three, it should be sufficient.

Mr. CHESSON: Provision has been made for a small mine in the development stage. We are in accord with the proposal to have the weighing machine as close as possible to the pit's mouth. When the coal has to be trucked any distance, some of it is bound to fall off, and the hewer has the biggest claim on the weight of the coal until it has passed over the weighbridge. No one will cavil at the hewer being adequately protected.

Mr. Teesdale: He should receive credit for every ounce.

Mr. CHESSON: Provision is made regarding Sunday labour. The continuous process may be worked to keep the mine in order and to repair machinery. Provision is also made for a change room. Everyone who has worked in a coal mine realises that a decent change house with a hot and cold water service installed is an absolute necessity. This Bill only makes the same provision as is contained in the Mines Regulation Act. Members generally seem to be in accord with the principles of the measure. In large gold mines there is an ambulance provided, and that is only necessary. Severe accidents are likely to happen, and rather more so in gold mines than in coal mines. This Bill is a long-desired measure. It includes provision

for a seven-hour day, the companies and the men having agreed to that shift. From the time the coal miner enters the pit's mouth until he returns to the surface, he is working at his best pace; and seven hours are quite long enough. I give my support to the Bill.

**MR. LINDSAY** (Toodyay) [9.3]: I listened with much interest to the remarks of the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson). We all recognise that he is an authority on coal mining. However, when he tells the House that the Bill represents an agreement between certain parties, and when I take note of his eloquence, I can quite understand that the parties agree. He says the Bill need not be discussed, having been carried last year. Still, the measure did not become law. I think it was defeated in another place.

Mr. Wilson: That is not the reason. The Bill reached another place too late in the session.

Mr. LINDSAY: One must agree with many of the provisions of the measure, and the member for Collie is to be congratulated on his speech in support of it. We learn that as the result of an agreement with the mine owners, the coal miners of Collie work seven hours per day instead of the usual eight. The coal miners have obtained a seven-hour day from the Arbitration Court. There is no reason why the coal miners should not obtain a six or five or four-hour day from the Arbitration Court. In that case, should we proceed to enact such a working day for the coal miners? Hours of labour are a matter for the Arbitration Court to decide. It is fit and proper that we as members of Parliament should abstain from interference with the functions of the Arbitration Court. I see no reason for the seven-hour clause, and shall vote against it in Committee. The member for Collie, in order to prove to the House the necessity for reducing hours in the coal mining industry, said that six hours underground were harder than eight hours on the surface. The hon. member also stated that in Collie to-day there are miners 70 years of age working in the mines. One of them, he particularly mentioned, had worked 60 years underground. That was a fact adduced to establish that working underground is detrimental to health. The illustration, unless it represents a purely isolated instance—

Mr. Wilson: It is perfectly true.

Mr. LINDSAY: It goes to show that coal mining is a much healthier occupation than any occupation on the surface.

Mr. Wilson: That man earns his living at piece work. If he had to be paid the minimum wage, he would be dismissed.

Mr. LINDSAY: Evidently he earns enough to hold up his end in the mine. Therefore he remains. Now, if a man 70 years of age is a fit and proper person to work underground, that kind of employment cannot be so unhealthy as the member for Collie would have us believe. Another unusual feature of the Bill is that which provides that a youth of 19 years shall be considered a man. The present Act lays down that a youth of 18 becomes a man. Many boys of 19 are good men, but many boys of 19 are not yet men. If the industry is so dangerous and unhealthy, we should not encourage boys to enter it with a view to performing a man's part at the age of 19.

Mr. Wilson: The Bill contains other provisions. This refers to paying into the accident fund.

Mr. LINDSAY: The Arbitration Court should decide the point. The member for Cue (Mr. Chesson) also adduced certain illustrations. He referred to the Licensing Act, which he said fixed certain hours. The hours under that Act are from nine to nine. I would not suggest for one moment that coal miners should work 12 hours per day. Even if hotels do keep open from nine to nine, not a single employee in them works more than eight hours a day.

Mr. Chesson: I merely said that hotels close at a certain hour.

Mr. LINDSAY: The hours under the Licensing Act have nothing to do with hours of labour. The people of this State decided to shorten the hours within which drink could be obtained, and so the present Licensing Act was passed. We have an Arbitration Court to which employers and employees can appeal. Then why should we, without hearing evidence, remove that function from the Arbitration Court and provide for the working day by an Act of Parliament? With that I do not agree. I rose to voice my protest on that aspect. Otherwise I support the second reading.

**MR. J. H. SMITH** (Nelson) [9.12]: The member for Collie (Mr. Wilson) has a thorough knowledge of the coal mining industry, and as he has spoken on this Bill I do not consider it necessary to say much. The one objection I have to the measure is that it seeks to convert an Arbitration award into an Act of Parliament. If we follow that principle to its logical conclusion, there will eventually be nothing for the Arbitration Court to do. Principles would be settled around a table, and then embodied in Acts of Parliament. Certainly, if we embody the coal mining industry's 7-hour shift in an Act, we shall have other industries coming here with similar requests for legislation. I know that the mine owners and coal miners of Collie are working amicably together with the assistance of the member for the district, and that any friction which occurs is readily adjusted. I do not dispute for a moment that seven hours underground is long enough for any man. With regard to Clause 5 of the Bill, I would like the Minister to explain what is meant by this—

Subclause 1 of Section 6 of the principal Act is repealed, and a subsection inserted in place thereof as follows:—"No person shall be, or be employed, below or in a mine for the purpose of his work for more than seven hours during any consecutive 24 hours."

Does that mean that if a man knocked off work at 4 p.m. to-day he would not be able to start work until 4 p.m. to-morrow?

**Mr. Wilson:** It is a question of shifts.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** I would remind the member for Nelson that that subject should be discussed in Committee.

**Mr. J. H. SMITH:** Very well, Sir. I have no objection to the second reading of the Bill, though I object to doing away with the Arbitration Court.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES** (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet—in reply) [9.14]: I do not know whether the opposition to the Bill from the other side of the House is in reality as strong as the speakers would pretend. Much of the opposition to the Bill has been based on the ground that it was the result of an agreement. I should have thought that in the circumstances, the measure would be welcome.

**Mr. Thomson:** No. The objection is to embodying in an Act of Parliament one particular agreement while other agreements are registered in the Arbitration Court.

**The MINISTER FOR MINES:** The Bill represents an agreement between the mine owners, who desired the amendment of the Act, the employees, who desired it, and the Mines Department, who thought the Act should be amended. The Coal Mines Regulation Act was introduced in 1902—24 years ago. Conditions have changed in the industry during the interim. Just as legislation affecting other industries has been amended, there is every right to amend the Coal Mines Regulation Act.

**Hon. G. Taylor:** It shows what a complete job was made of the legislation 24 years ago.

**The MINISTER FOR MINES:** I wish to emphasise the point that amendments were asked for that could not be agreed to. They do not appear in the Bill. Only those that were agreed to find a place in the measure.

**Hon. G. Taylor:** Did the proposed amendments that were not agreed to come from both parties, or from one party only?

**Mr. Wilson:** From each party.

**The MINISTER FOR MINES:** There were some points we could not agree to. The department could not accept some proposals made by either side. What were agreed upon for inclusion in the Bill will be to the advantage of both parties. Exception has been taken to the hours question. This is not the first time hours of work have been changed in legislation dealing with an industry. The law governing the coal mining industry in England provides for a seven-hour shift. That Act has been amended recently by the Baldwin Government.

**The Minister for Lands:** Our Shops and Factories Act contains references to hours.

**The MINISTER FOR MINES:** That is so. We have amended legislation regarding hours of labour, quite apart from the Arbitration Court. In France, Italy, and Germany hours of work have been fixed by legislation. In England to-day the coal owners, with the help of the Government, are trying to extend the hours of work. I do not know why objection should be taken to the provision for the seven-hour day as set out in the Bill. If that provision is already made in the agreements, why object to it being mentioned in the Bill?

**Mr. Sampson:** The hours specified may be too long.



The MINISTER FOR MINES: The parties concerned agree that seven hours is a reasonable day, and no objection is raised to it. It has been the custom for years here to work a seven-hour shift, and it has been so in the Old Country for many years, too. When we consider the conditions under which men work in the coal mines, away from the sunshine, in impure air, with the necessity for fresh air being pumped down to them, we must admit that a shift of seven hours is quite long enough to work below ground.

Mr. Sampson: It was suggested that this might be an interference with the work of the Arbitration Court.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is not so.

The Minister for Lands: That was only an excuse!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Some hon. member suggested we should not place in a Bill that which was already in an agreement. The inclusion of the points of agreement will not give either the employers or the employees an advantage over the rest of the community. It does not mean an increase in the price of the coal to the community, and it does not specify how much coal the miner shall hew. The men are on piecework, and hon. members may rest assured that during their seven-hours shift they will work for their lives.

Hon. G. Taylor: It is a pity we do not put more men on to piecework.

The Minister for Works: Why not try it yourself?

Hon. G. Taylor: I have always been on it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: This is not the first time legislation has been introduced in the interests of a particular class. The Mitchell Government introduced Bills giving privileges to dentists, architects and others.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I think you tried to introduce preference to unionists.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: In the Bills I refer to there was no limitation upon the hours of those engaged in the industries, but rather a restriction upon the number of those who might be employed in the industry. Provision was made for the industries to be close preserves, and the examination of future applicants was to be in the hands of those already in the profession. Thus they sought to restrict the employment in the professions. No objec-

tion was raised on that occasion by the hon. members who now object to the Bill before us. Nothing in the Bill compares with what was contained in the measures introduced by the previous Government.

Mr. Sampson: There was nothing in the Architects Bill restricting charges.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes. There was the provision setting out that the architects would be able to say whether a man should practise his profession or not.

Hon. G. Taylor: The applicant had to pass an examination, just the same as a mine manager under the Bill before us now.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Under the Architects Bill the examination was to be by men whose interest it was to see that the profession was a close preserve. In the Bill now before us the examination is to be conducted by impartial people, who have no interest in the matter at all. Reference was made to some men who were working although they were 70 years of age. I have seen prospectors who reached the age of 75 years, but they were not engaged as are the coal miners on piecework. As a matter of fact, it does not matter to the company whether a miner is 70 or 80 years of age, because he is paid only according to production. Some hon. members criticised the provision that each mine shall be managed by a separate manager. The member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) tried to draw a comparison between the Government proposals regarding the Golden Mile and the Collie mines. Even if the mines on the Golden Mile were placed under the control of a general manager, each mine would still have its separate manager. What the Government propose for the goldfields is one general manager and one treatment plant. To-day there are half a dozen general managers drawing salaries of probably £2,000 a year each. The criticism levelled against the working of the Golden Mile was against the overhead charges, with so many general managers, and so on.

Mr. Thomson: In the Bill you set out that a certificated manager shall have control and management of one mine only.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: And that would be the position on the goldfields. There would be the one general manager, but separate managers for the mines. If hon. members gave a little more consideration to the Bill and did not speak

without knowledge, such statements as we have heard would not be made.

Mr. Thomson: That is rather offensive.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No, it is not. I hope the Bill will not be amended.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

## BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

### *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS** (Hon. A. McCallum—South Fremantle) [9.25] in moving the second reading said: This is the third occasion on which I have introduced a Bill to amend the Traffic Act. The session before last this House passed such a Bill, and it was transmitted to another place. All that survived was the schedule. It was argued that the Bill reached the Upper House too late to be dealt with fully, and as the schedule was the important part, members there passed the schedule and the rest of the Bill was discarded. Last session the Bill was introduced at an early stage, but owing to the Main Roads Bill being referred by the Legislative Council to a select committee, the Traffic Act Amendment Bill, which related largely to the Main Roads Bill, could not be dealt with until we knew the Council's decision regarding the Main Roads Bill. The result was that we were not able to deal with the Traffic Act Amendment Bill until towards the end of the session, and only the schedule was passed. However, the operations of the Bill were limited to the 31st October so that there will be no traffic fees after that date. Unless something is done between now and the 31st October, the local authorities will not be able to collect any traffic fees at all. It is essential that Parliament should deal with this measure at an early stage. The Bill is practically the same as introduced previously, but we have taken into consideration Acts that have been passed in the Eastern States in the interim, resolutions passed by road board conferences, and a few suggestion from the Commissioner of Police. They are embodied in the Bill, but despite that, the measure I am now placing before hon. members is not much different from that of last session. One of the main points is that the Commissioner of Police is made the sole licensing authority in the metropolitan area. At present the Minister

is vested with that authority; but actually he has always delegated the power to the Commissioner, and in reality it is the Commissioner who has been the licensing authority. The existing Act provides that a motor bus is a vehicle licensed to carry more than seven passengers. A motor bus has to pay a substantial licensing fee, together with a tax of 30s. per seat, and can be confined to a given route. The taxi carrying seven passengers is not a motor bus, cannot be confined to any given route, and does not pay the heavy fees that a motor bus has to pay. Under the Bill we make it clear that a bus is any vehicle used as a passenger vehicle to carry passengers at set fares, irrespective of the number of passengers carried. Such a vehicle will be classed as a bus. The position on the Perth-Fremantle road has undergone many changes, passing through a most interesting evolution. When the charabanc came on the road the discussion was as to the competition between the charabanc and the railways. When the charabancs reached 20 in number, we had complaints from the owners that there were too many on the road for the living afforded, and that we should not permit any more to go on that road. That request was agreed to. Afterwards the taxis came on to the road. We tried to apply to the taxis the law relating to buses, but we found that under the definition in the Act the taxi was not a bus, and could not be treated as such. So the taxi has been allowed to compete against charabancs while having the advantage that there is no seat tax to be paid, the fees are not so heavy, and there is no particular route. Of course the next appeal was from charabanc owners against the taxis. They urged that the taxis should be confined to given routes, restricted as to number, and made to pay the same fees and taxes as charabancs. But again we found no power in the existing laws to do that, and rather than take a test case into court we decided to ask Parliament to make the position clear. To-day there are over 70 taxis on the Perth-Fremantle road, and recently I had a deputation from the taxi owners asking that those vehicles be limited. The competition amongst them is altogether too keen and, moreover, the road is becoming dangerous. Consequently the taxi owners have asked for a limitation of their number, and that they be controlled as to routes. They all agree that the present situation is

quite unsatisfactory and positively dangerous.

Mr. Stubbs: What about the yellow cabs to come?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: They do not trade on a route. They go on a rank and are engaged for specific jobs. They are entirely different from the taxis on the Perth-Fremantle road. The position on that road is most unsatisfactory. Charabancs have to pay a heavy licensing fee, plus 30s. tax for every seat, whereas the taxis pay altogether lighter fees and can run where they like. Charabanc owners and taxi owners have now agreed that stricter control is necessary. It is not proposed in the Bill to increase the licensing fees. It has been urged on me by local authorities that the fees for heavy lorries should be increased, and even that those vehicles should be debarred from going on certain roads. In the Bill we are taking substantial powers in that respect. It is admitted that there are running on our roads certain motor lorries that, when loaded, weigh from 13 to 15 tons. The roads were not built to carry such loads.

Mr. Teesdale: They are mostly beer lorries, are they not?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am advised that a certain brewery has ordered two lorries that will weigh 50 per cent. more than those loads I have given. I have warned the brewery what to expect. The local authorities cannot afford to build roads to carry such weights. It is suggested we should take power to confine those heavy lorries to certain roads specially constructed to carry such loads, and that we prevent them from running on any of the lighter roads. However, I will deal with that later. What I want to explain now is that we are not increasing the licensing fees. When we complain of the competition our railways and tramways have to face in the shape of motor omnibuses and taxis, people point to the fees and taxes paid by those vehicles. Let me say the Perth tramways pay to the local authorities over £8,000 per annum, and for road service spend over £12,000 per annum. Those trams have seating for 4,600 persons. In other words, the Perth tramways pay to the local authorities £4 15s. per seat as against the 30s. per seat paid by the charabancs.

Hon. G. Taylor: You are not counting those tram passengers who have to stand.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, nor those who have to stand in charabancs. I am simply counting the seats. The trams pay £4 15s. per seat, whereas charabancs pay 30s. per seat.

Mr. Latham: Plus licensing fee and petrol tax.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is true, but then they run on the roads.

Mr. Latham: So do the trams.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Well I thought they ran on rails.

Mr. Latham: But they very seriously damage the roads.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Clearly on those figures the tramways pay a higher tax to the local authorities than do charabancs, and that without doing anything like as much damage to the roads as charabancs do. Moreover, the trams help to maintain the roads.

Hon. G. Taylor: Very badly.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Well I am not going to defend that. I merely give these figures to show that the tramways are paying more than charabancs. The relationship between the issue of licenses in the metropolitan area and the issue in districts outside that area is most unsatisfactory. Whilst the Commissioner of Police—nominally at present the Minister—can control the licenses issued within the metropolitan area, any local authority just outside the metropolitan area can issue a license to a bus and that bus can come into the city and run where it likes, the Commissioner of Police having no power whatever over it. Twelve months ago I had a deputation from the men on the rank asking that I should refuse to issue any more licenses for motor cars to stand on the ranks. I asked the police for a report. That report showed that a number of those men were earning a very precarious livelihood, there being already too many taxis on the rank, and that it was leading to a lot of illicit business. Consequently, I decided that no more licenses should be issued for the rank. But whilst we decided that in the metropolitan area, any local authority outside the city could have issued a license, and the licensee straightway could have come into the city and gone on the rank. I propose that this should be altered, and that where one local authority refuses a license, no one else can grant a license for the purpose of going into the area of that local authority. Without the consent of the local authority, the bus cannot go in

there. If a bus is running under a local authority, that will define the route to be taken. This is only fair and reasonable and overcomes the awkward position we are now in.

Mr. Teesdale: I wish you would tighten up some of the timetables. The buses are often half an hour late, and seem to run as they like.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Section 10 is not clear with regard to the use of vehicles on farms. I believe the local authorities have not been charging for vehicles that are used solely on farms. This Bill will make it clear that no vehicle used solely on a farm shall be taxed. The scope of this matter will be widened considerably.

Hon. G. Taylor: I do not see why that should be.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: These vehicles do not run on the roads. In pastoral properties motor cycles and motor cars are often used for running around the paddocks, whilst farmers also use vehicles that never leave the farms.

Hon. G. Taylor: Once they go on the road they are taxed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, except those that pass over a cross road in order to get from one paddock to another. If they are used for carting along the road, they will have to be licensed. In the metropolitan area the arrangement is that the Minister distributes the traffic fees, which are all pooled. They are distributed in proportion to the chainage of main roads within the boundaries of the local authorities. There are first-class and second-class roads. There used to be third-class roads, but I have abolished them. There is a lot more traffic on the north side of the river along the road between Perth and Fremantle than there is on the south side of the river. The road on the north side is a first-class road and that on the south a second-class road. There is not such a heavy allowance made for a road carrying lighter traffic as there is in the case of a road carrying denser traffic. This principle has been generally approved by the local authorities, but I do not say they are all satisfied. No one has been able to suggest a better system. They now have a basis on which they will get the money. Whilst the local authorities have discussed the matter, no one has had a better proposal to put forward than this system of distribution.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: Did not the roads board conference suggest that you should treat farm motor lorries on the same basis as farm wagons?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not prepared to do that. When the fees are distributed in the metropolitan area, although it is laid down by the department that the money the local authority gets in the metropolitan area for traffic fees shall be spent on the roads which are declared main roads, and upon which the distribution is made. While it is urged by the department that the money should be spent on those roads, there is nothing to enable that position to be enforced. We have had the experience of local authorities collecting fees on the length of main road running through their territory, declining to spend the money on that road, and desiring to force it back on to the Government while they spend the fees on the by-roads. We are proposing to give the Governor-in-Council power to tell the local authorities that the main traffic fees allotted to them are to be spent on specified roads. The maintenance of the Perth-Fremantle road is the only one dealt with under the Act. The Bill provides for the maintenance of the Causeway, the Fremantle road bridge, and that portion of the Karrakatta road abutting on the cemetery. The upkeep of the roadway or the decking of the bridges, as the case may be, will also be a charge on the traffic fees. Up to now they have been a charge upon Consolidated Revenue. The anomalous position has existed wherein the Causeway, which is in the Perth City Council district, has not been looked upon as the responsibility of that authority. This was long before we came into office. In the country the local authorities have to accept responsibility for the bridges in their district, but the City Council declined to accept any for the Causeway. They argued that all the traffic that came into the city from the country used that thoroughfare. Such an argument could be applied to a large extent to almost any main road in the State.

Mr. Sampson: It would be a bad thing for the city if the traffic did not come into it.

Hon. G. Taylor: If you closed up the Causeway, what an effect it would have on the city!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The previous Government said this was a national question. We are providing that instead of it being a charge upon Consolidated Revenue, the traffic fees shall be expected to keep the

Causeway in order. The point about the road alongside the cemetery is that the Government own the property on both sides. The local authorities have argued that it is not fair to ask them to pay out money on a road on which they collect no rates.

Hon. G. Taylor: The pool will pay that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is the suggestion. It is further provided that the Main Roads Board, instead of the local authorities concerned, shall maintain the road from Perth to Armadale, that from Perth to Midland Junction, and that on the south side of the river to Fremantle. I have delegated all the authority of the Public Works Department as it affects roads and bridges, to the Main Roads Board, who will now have charge of all the roads and bridges work in the State. I do not want a duplication of offices, to have two departments, two sets of engineers, two sets of accounts and records, all for the one object.

Mr. Teesdale: Will the boards be free from political control?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Except for the allocation of the money, which must lie with the Minister who is responsible to Parliament. The Main Roads Board will be the constructing authority.

Hon. G. Taylor: They will have power to spend £1,000, I suppose.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: As soon as they get the money, they will do the work.

Mr. Latham: Have they taken over the offices of the Roads and Bridges Department?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. They will have full control. This will save a lot of duplication, and prevent the building up of another department. I propose they shall take charge of these roads I have mentioned. We are regulating the position created when the local authorities had charge of the road from Perth to Fremantle. This road fell into a terrible state of disrepair, and became practically impassable. One authority would do its part, but another might neglect its particular portion. The whole business was most costly. We have now spent £18,000 on the road between Perth and Armadale. It still remains to be completed and to have a bitumen dressing. Having put it into decent order, we do not wish it to drift into disrepair, and to have the money wasted. The Main Roads Board will be in a better position and better equipped to look after the roads than the local authorities. As these are through roads, it is better that the board should be held re-

sponsible for the work. The maintenance of these roads will come out of the pool.

Hon. G. Taylor: What about the Fremantle bridge?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The decking will be provided for out of the pool. We have to face the position of the road between Perth and Fremantle, and Perth and Midland Junction. There are two alternatives. Either we have to widen the road on this side of the river, or construct a road on the other side of the river, upon which to divert some of the traffic. The police are constantly putting it up to me that the traffic is becoming dangerous. One thing or the other must be done. No less than three times, the State has spent loan moneys on reconstructing the road to Fremantle. That has been a charge on the general revenue, but there has been no recoup. The last amount for reconstruction was £30,000. The road had to be repaired; otherwise traffic could not get to the port. The Main Roads Board will have to decide between these alternatives. It is suggested that the money for these substantial improvements, or for the construction of new roads, such as I have outlined, should be found by the Treasury and appropriated by Parliament for the purpose, and that a charge of half that amount should be set against the pool. That will mean that we shall apply to these roads the same principle that we apply to the main roads in the country under the Main Roads Act, where the local authorities have to meet a charge of half the money that the State spends. It often occurs that the police and local authorities report that the passenger vehicles plying for the carrying of passengers, are in a bad state of repair, and unfit for that work. No power exists at present, either for the local authority or the Commissioner of Police to order that such a vehicle shall be repaired or be taken off the road. Authority is now being taken to enable the local bodies to call upon the owner to prove in the local court that the vehicle is safe. If the vehicle is not safe, it must undergo certain repairs, or be taken off the road and the license cancelled.

Mr. Thomson: Is there anything to compel the local authority to inspect for breakages, etc.?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: A vehicle must be properly inspected before a license is taken out. At present the department appoints inspectors to look after the roads that are controlled in the groups.

These are the only districts where we can say the Government do control the roads. They are not handed over to the local authorities until after five years, because, until the expiration of that time, the local authorities will get no rates. I have seen south-western roads, on which thousands of pounds had been spent, turned into bogs within a month or two by heavy traffic. Under the arrangement which the Government propose, heavy motors will be warned off such roads. However, unless someone is appointed to see that those vehicles keep off the roads, they will continue to use them. Inspectors were authorised to do this last year, though really there was no legal warrant for doing so. Under the Bill the Government take the necessary power. Still, the Government will not appoint inspectors where the local authorities do it. The Bill provides, further, that no license shall be granted to a person to drive a motor vehicle if he or she be under the age of 19 years. At present the minimum age is 18. I propose to increase it by a year, though personally I would like to make it 21. Persons under age have not the balance and the collective control of older persons.

Mr. Latham: Some of them have more balance than men of 40.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That has not been my experience.

Mr. Latham: I prefer a boy of 19 to some of these half-drunken drivers.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: In that regard I would make very stringent provisions. The minimum age for a person driving a vehicle that plies for hire is now 20 years. I propose to raise it to 21.

Mr. Sampson: Will licenses already issued to boys of 18 be allowed to continue?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The measure will not interfere with them, because it will not apply until next July. An applicant for an ordinary driver's license may be required to submit himself for tests of sight and hearing, and an applicant for a license to drive a passenger vehicle shall be subject to other medical examinations. No provision exists now even for an eye test. When I was in Sydney recently there was a level-crossing accident in connection with which it was proved that the driver of a motor bus was blind in one eye and could hardly see out of the other.

Mr. Latham: Will these provisions apply to country districts as well?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The tests will be prescribed, and the House can rest assured that the tests for a man driving his own car will not be severe. Still, the country driver with defective eyesight comes into the city, and is a danger to everyone on the road. But the medical examinations will not apply to a man driving his own car. The general rule throughout Australia and the rest of the world is as provided in the Bill. Not long ago there was an accident in Sydney, the driver of a motor bus dropping dead at the wheel. As it happened, the bus simply wheeled into a wall and stopped; but if the vehicle had been coming down an incline, there might have been a tragedy. We already insist on severe examination of railway and tramway employees, and similarly we should insist on severe examination in the case of drivers of motor vehicles conveying passengers. The driving of a motor bus is more risky, in a way, than the driving of a passenger train, because the train cannot run off the rails. A great many of the clauses of this Bill were considered during previous sessions. The measure provides that no bus can run on any route unless that route is defined on the license. Special licenses are provided for special trips, for instance on Sundays. However, the route for which the license is issued must be endorsed on the license. We ask for power to deal with heavy traffic. As I explained earlier, very heavy vehicles are coming into use here now, some of them over 13 tons. The roads are not fit to carry such vehicles. What is happening in the city is that a number of big lorries cart from the warehouses to suburban stores. They go out with big loads and cut up a road. That road having been rendered too bad to use, they take the next cross-street; and so on, until all the roads leading to that destination have been cut up. Heavy traffic should be confined to certain roads, according to weight. Thus the local authorities would be enabled to make roads up to the standard weight, and preserve the subsidiary roads for lighter traffic. The regulations which the Government ask power to frame will be largely the same as those under the Victorian Act. These have been adopted by the South Australian Royal Commission on motor traffic, who have drafted a Bill which the South

Australian Parliament now has before it. The Bill is almost identical with the New South Wales Act. Here we ask power to specify routes and timetables. At present we have no power at all to set out a timetable, which means that the buses secure a route and run when they like. Instead of catering during slack times, they run to where there is better business, or else the buses are laid up. No one can say, in the absence of a time-table, when a bus is likely to come along. We ask for power to regulate fares, to prescribe the maximum number of buses for any defined route, and also to fix stopping places. The last point is important because on the Fremantle-road the charabanes and taxis race to get a few passengers ahead. With proper stopping places many of the dangerous practices now prevalent on that road would disappear.

Hon. G. Taylor: Will you fix the timetable?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Commissioner of Police will have to approve time-tables. In Clause 22 power is sought generally to preserve the safety of the public travelling in motor buses. The Government want power to deal with the type of motor car itself. There should be proper exits arranged, in case of accident; and the bus itself should be in proper order. Recently a motor bus was partly destroyed by fire on the Terrace. Fortunately it had just discharged its passengers. The fire was right under the middle of the bus, and had the vehicle been travelling at the time, there would probably have been a tragedy. We further propose that the owners of all motor vehicles licensed to carry passengers should take out insurance policies to cover the risk of injury to persons. In the Eastern States the amount of the policy is fixed at £3,000 for a bus, but it is provided that the owner of a number of buses need not take out an insurance for more than £5,000 in all. I have introduced a new principle, based on the number of passengers for which the license is issued. Some taxis here carry seven passengers, while some buses carry 30. I stipulate that the insurance shall be for a minimum of £1,000, with £100 additional for each passenger the vehicle is licensed to carry beyond ten. At present there are many men running taxis and charabanes who have no resources. On the Fremantle-road taxis are being run by men who have not even paid a deposit, but have

been given cars by agents merely on monthly payments. They have invested no money whatever, but are merely buying cars as they go along. If such a driver had an accident, possibly involving the killing or crippling of passengers, those people would have no redress. We provide that everyone licensed shall take out an insurance policy. I am somewhat doubtful as to whether £100 per passenger is enough. The South Australian Royal Commission recommend £300 per passenger. However, if we ensure that each owner shall take out a policy, we could trust the owners not to go without sufficient cover for the expenditure of a few extra shillings by way of premium.

Hon. G. Taylor: Anyhow, we shall know after a year.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I want to emphasise that the Government do not get one penny of the license fees; the whole of them go to the local authorities. The local authorities are now called upon to find the proportion of 7s. 6d. out of 35s. spent on main roads, and they will need as much as they can get from the traffic fees. Though I have been urged to increase the traffic fees on the heavier traffic, I am not suggesting any increase. Last year the South Australian Government introduced a Bill to make provision for the control of motor buses, but the measure was ultimately referred to a Royal Commission. It was thought that the Commission would take evidence in South Australia only, but the Government afterwards agreed to their travelling through the Eastern States. The Commission consisted of two members of the Legislative Council and five members of the Assembly. The Commission have drafted a Bill and submitted it to the Government. Although we did not see the Bill before ours was framed, it is remarkable how similar the two are. Wherever the Commission took evidence, even in cities like Brisbane where there was divided control, all concerned agreed that there should be one authority and that the central control should be vested in the Commissioner of Police. The Commission were of opinion that Victoria was the only State having complete legislation to govern motor bus traffic. Although we had certain control from the early stages, Victoria has the best control of any of the States. In the South Australian draft Bill it is proposed that no person shall act as a driver of a motor bus unless he holds a certificate of competency and medical fitness, and is a person of good

character. The certificate is to be issued by the Commissioner of Police. No person under the age of 21 years and no female may act as a driver. It is also provided that the license fee for the driver shall be £1, whereas our license fee is 5s. Provision is made for insurance of £3,000 for buses carrying up to 10 passengers with an additional £300 in respect of every passenger in excess of ten. It is further provided that where a person owns more than one motor bus, the Commissioner may accept a policy of insurance in respect of such buses for an aggregate amount deemed reasonably sufficient to meet all possible liabilities. I am not satisfied with the £100 provided in this Bill, but if we lay that down as a minimum, it is possible that owners will take out a little more insurance in order to be adequately covered. The South Australian Commission recommended that the fees payable for buses should be £3 10s. for every passenger the bus is licensed to carry, with a reduction to £2 10s. for buses fitted with pneumatic tyres. In this State the fees are £2, but the amount is reduced to £1 10s. when pneumatic tyres are used. So our fees are £1 per seat lower than those proposed in Adelaide. In Melbourne the fee is £6 10s. and in Sydney £6. Therefore it cannot be argued that our fees are high. In the Eastern States the whole of the fees are paid to the main roads boards and are spent on main roads. The local authorities do not receive the money. Here the local authorities get the money. The South Australian Commission also recommended that a bus carrying more than 10 passengers should have a conductor. This also applies in New South Wales. We are not making provision for the compulsory carrying of conductors. In New South Wales the traffic officers have power to order off the road any bus that they consider to be unsafe. We do not propose to give such extensive powers to traffic officers, but when such a question arises, we suggest it should be decided by the court. The conditions in Victoria are very similar to those we are proposing. Although in Brisbane the City Council control the licenses, the traffic is under the supervision of the Commissioner of Police. Even there the South Australian Commission were urged that there should be a central authority. These are the main points of the Bill. The House has had the measure before it in two previous sessions, so it should not be neces-

sary for me to enter into additional detail. For the better control of traffic, particularly in the metropolis where it is becoming congested and dangerous, we are asking authority to introduce one-way traffic. At present there is no authority for that, although the City Council have endeavoured to introduce it.

Mr. Sampson: I thought provision was made restricting traffic in King-street to one-way traffic.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: But the Bill was not passed.

Mr. Mann: I think we agreed that in King-street and Queen-street there should be one-way traffic only.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Such provision may have been made for particular streets, but it is proposed that the Commissioner of Police with the local authority may provide for one-way traffic in any street. Efforts were also made to prevent motor cycles from passing hospitals on Sunday mornings, but there was no authority for that. There is urgent need for the amendment of our traffic laws; the danger due to lack of proper control is becoming more and more evident. I understand that the accidents in Perth, in proportion to the number of motor vehicles, are greater than in London. Such traffic needs careful handling and we require wider powers than we have at present to deal with it.

Mr. Thomson: Would the greater proportion of accidents here be due to inefficient drivers?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not know whether it is due to speeding or to want of control over machines. I looked into the existing Act to find what power the court had to cancel licenses. I discussed the matter also with the Solicitor General and I cannot imagine how it would be possible to give the bench wider authority to cancel licenses than is given by the existing Act. They have power to cancel or suspend a license for almost any offence, and I am disappointed that the bench have failed to exercise it.

Mr. Mann: They exercise it occasionally.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Very occasionally. They generally inflict a fine of a pound or two that a man can pay. The Premier said that when in London he noticed that the penalty inflicted for offences more often than not was the suspension of the license. Such a penalty here would have more effect than all the



monetary penalties. It is within the discretion of the bench to inflict that penalty, but they have not exercised the power. I believe everyone is of opinion that better control of motor traffic is essential, and that is the object of this Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Latham, debate adjourned.

## RESOLUTION—FINANCIAL RELATIONS, COMMONWEALTH AND STATE.

### *Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read, notifying that it had concurred in the Assembly's resolution, as follows:—

That this House is of the opinion that there should be no departure from the basis upon which the financial relations of the Commonwealth and States have rested without the fullest consideration at a constitutional session of the Federal Parliament and the approval of the people by referendum; and that no financial scheme should be assented to by the States that does not provide for their receiving from the Commonwealth Government an annual payment of not less than 25s. per head of population.

*House adjourned at 10.27 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Wednesday, 1st September, 1926.*

## QUESTION—KONDININ-EASTWARD RAILWAY PROJECT.

Hon. J. E. DODD asked the Honorary Minister: 1, What will be the length of the proposed Kondinin-eastward railway? 2, Are the Government aware that blocks have been surveyed and occupied to a distance of 50 miles east of Kondinin?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied: 1, It was proposed to construct 25 miles as a first section, but the matter will be further considered. 2, Land has been surveyed and occupied up to 50 miles East of Kondinin, but such land was not surveyed in advance of selection.

## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

### *Twelfth Day.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [4.40]: In addressing myself to the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply, I would like to follow the lead of other members and while expressing regret that certain of our members have fallen by the wayside since last session, extend a hearty welcome to the new members we have amongst us. I feel sure we shall benefit by their presence for they bring new minds and new views to bear upon the questions that will come before us from time to time. I also appreciate the return to Western Australia of the Leader of the House, who paid a visit during the recess to the islands close to our northern shores. After the arduous session he experienced, I am sure the trip must have done him an immense amount of good. His experience of new conditions in the islands he visited must have made him realise the close proximity to our coast of those foreign lands, with their millions of people. His appreciation of what it means to Western Australia will probably enable him to entertain views regarding some of our legislation that would not have been possible had he not undertaken his trip. It behoves more of us to pay visits to the countries lying to the north of Western Australia.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Travelling by the State motor ship "Kangaroo"?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I do not mind how members may travel. For my part I prefer a faster boat, but the "Kangaroo" is a good vessel to negotiate some of the

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