

ments. I do not wish to take up the time of members further at this late hour, but I have pleasure in supporting the motion.

On motion by Hon. E. Rose, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 11.22 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Tuesday, 13th September, 1932.*

	PAGE
Questions : Peel Estate, Richardson Swamp settlers, ...	546
Workers' Compensation Act ...	546
Messages from the Lieutenant Governor ...	546
Bills : Road Districts Act Amendment, 2R. ...	546
Metropolitan Whole Milk, 2R. ...	548
Closed Roads Alienation, 2R. ...	555
Main Roads Act Amendment, 2R., Com. ...	556

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

### QUESTION—PEEL ESTATE.

*Richardson Swamp Settlers.*

Mr. McLARTY asked the Premier: What action is being taken by the Agricultural Bank to relieve the settlers on Richardson Swamp, Peel Estate?

The PREMIER replied: The matter is under consideration.

### QUESTION—WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

*Third Schedule Premiums.*

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE asked the Premier: 1 What amount has been paid by the mining industry in premiums under the Third Schedule of the Workers' Compensation Act since its inception, also the amount paid by the Government on their behalf? 2, What has been the total payments under the Third Schedule for the same period?

The PREMIER replied: 1, £213,391 5s. 11d. up to 30th June, 1932, of which £83,154

was paid by the Government. 2, £25,146 10s. 9d. has been paid under the Third Schedule, in addition to which £20,000 has been re-funded to the Mines Department in respect of amounts met by that department which could have been claimed under the Third Schedule. A further £20,000 has been allocated for the same purpose. Under the Miner's Phthisis Act £278,187 has been paid, and it is estimated that the greater part of this sum might have been claimed under the Third Schedule. There is also an accruing liability in the case of every miner in respect of which some reserve must be created.

## MESSAGES FROM THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR.

Messages from the Lieutenant-Governor received and read recommending appropriations for the purposes of the Main Roads Act Amendment Bill, and the Industries Assistance Act Continuance Bill.

### BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT.

*Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS** (Hon. J. Lindsay—Mt. Marshall) [4.37] in moving the second reading said: This is mainly a Committee Bill, there being no outstanding principles involved. Several attempts have been made to amend the Road Districts Act. In 1929 the Hon. Mr. Cunningham brought down an amending Bill. That measure proposed to amend the franchise and to alter the name "road board" to "district council." In the Bill before the House neither of those amendments has a place. Under the Act a road board district may be abolished and amalgamated with some other district if the revenue from rates falls below £300 a year for two consecutive years. In the Bill it is proposed to increase that amount to £500, for it is thought that nowadays a board cannot properly function on a smaller income. It is further provided that if a road district be transferred to a municipal district the loan obligations incurred by the municipal district shall not be a liability within the area transferred to the municipality. Provision is also made that if a person nominates for membership of a board, knowing that he is not eligible, he

shall be liable to a fine. The Act permits boards to grant gratuities to their officers for long service. In the Bill it is proposed to extend that to any employee of a board, but such an employee must have served for at least 10 years, and the amount of the gratuity is limited to the equivalent of 12 months' salary. Difficulty has been experienced in the management of agricultural halls and similar buildings vested in road boards. Under the Act a board has no authority to delegate their powers to members of the hall management committee who are not members of the board. The Bill proposes to remove this disability. Under the Act a board shall, upon demand, call a special meeting. The Bill contains provisions that such meeting shall be held within a specified time, and that the requisition for the meeting must set out in detail the subjects to be discussed. Again, some boards have had difficulty in effectively draining their roads or reserves without encroaching upon the district of another local authority. There is in the Bill provision to overcome this difficulty. The Act gives to road boards power to control advertisements, but only advertisements or hoardings erected during building operations. An attempt is made in the Bill to give the road boards precisely the same power in this respect as is given under the Municipal Corporations Act. Conditional purchase lands are exempt from rating for the first two years after selection. Sometimes a block is selected, partly improved, and abandoned, and then reselected. According to the Act, two years must elapse from the time of the second selection before rates can be collected. Under the Bill the Under Secretary for Lands may certify that the land taken up a second time is sufficiently improved to justify the local authority in levying rates forthwith. It is also provided that if a board adopt the Taxation Department's valuation and the Taxation Commissioner subsequently reduces it on appeal, then the board shall automatically adjust its rate book accordingly, and refund the excess rates if paid.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: The Bill says "may," not "shall."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think it is intended to be "shall." At present no board can levy a rate of less than 1d. per acre on the unimproved value. The Bill reduces that to  $\frac{1}{2}$ d., and provides also that in certain circumstances the rating on the annual value can be increased. It also re-

quires that in certain circumstances the maximum rate can be increased to 9d. in special areas. Some of the local governing bodies near the metropolitan area have asked for this. The Act provides for an annual value of 2s., but the Bill sets out that the amount may be increased to 2s. 6d. Before a board can borrow money, they must give notice of their intention, and 20 or more ratepayers in opposition can ask for a referendum. The Act provides that if an absolute majority of the resident ratepayers vote against the loan, the board cannot borrow the money. It is proposed in the Bill to provide for an absolute majority of those who vote to decide the point. The Act also provides that a board can borrow seven times its ordinary annual income based on the last preceding two years. Under the Municipalities Act they can borrow ten times that much. It is intended to amend this to allow road boards to be placed in the same position as municipalities. Provision is also made that if a board borrows money to benefit a particular portion of the district, they can rate that particular portion, and can vary the rate in that area or in any other portion of their district. One of the difficulties we have experienced is in connection with agricultural halls in country districts. Certain people will use the halls, and derive some benefit from them. There may be two wards on each side. The people within five or six miles will use the hall more or less regularly, but those who live 10 or 12 miles away will not do so. Under the Act it is necessary for a flat rate to be charged over the whole district. The Bill will allow a portion of the district to be rated, and for the rate to be varied in any portion of the district. According to the benefit received, so will the people pay off the loan. It is intended to abolish ratepayers' auditors. The road boards have agreed that in future the auditors shall be Government officials. The three auditors we have are not sufficient. It is intended to increase the number to six. Half the cost of the six auditors will be borne by the local governing bodies themselves. All the amendments outlined have been agreed to by the Road Boards Association. The Bill is designed to make the Act more workable than it is to-day. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. Cunningham, debate adjourned.

## BILL—METROPOLITAN WHOLE MILK.

*Second Reading.*

### THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

(Hon. P. D. Ferguson—Irwin-Moore) [4.53] in moving the second reading said: In Western Australia this type of legislation is of an experimental nature, but in other countries and States of Australia, similar legislation is already on the statute-book. In Queensland and New South Wales, for instance, control Acts are already in existence, and are operating fairly satisfactorily both to the milk producers and to the consumers. In Victoria, according to the Press, the Minister for Agriculture, has promised a deputation of milk producers to bring down a Bill to assist them in organising their industry. I believe that to be a fact, because we have been asked for a copy of our proposed legislation. In view of the fact that the Bill is experimental, members will expect me to prove to them the necessity for it. This necessity can be explained by the parlous condition of the whole-milk industry generally. To-day the suppliers of whole milk in the metropolitan area are almost on the lowest rung of the producer's ladder. This is largely due to the fact that they themselves have embarked upon a system of price cutting, and have been selling milk at well below the cost of production. They have not been able to carry on their business with any measure of profit to themselves. It is unfortunately true that certain middlemen have encouraged this type of cut-throat competition, which is responsible for what the trade in the metropolitan area regards as the "blow-ins." Many of these blow-ins are operating within the area mentioned, and their activities have not been in the interests of traders generally.

Mr. Marshall: Have they done anything in the interests of the consumer?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The consumers in the metropolitan area are not complaining about the milk supply, for they have not much to complain about.

Mr. Marshall: They may have some reason to complain if the Bill becomes law.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: They will have less cause than ever for complaint because under the Bill they will get even better treatment than heretofore. They are fairly well off to-day in comparison with consumers in any other part of Australia.

Mr. Marshall: That is no argument.

### The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

The developmental policy of the State in the near South-West has been responsible very largely for groupings having entered into competition with existing suppliers of whole milk in the metropolitan area. Due to this development, many farmers, who had established themselves without Government assistance, have also been attracted by the prices offering for whole milk in the metropolitan area, and have abandoned the sale of their products to butter factories and have marketed them in the metropolitan area as whole milk. The transport facilities have greatly improved during recent years, so that the price for whole milk became more attractive than that which the factories were able to pay. Several years ago the bulk of the milk supplied for consumption as whole milk in the metropolitan area came from districts adjacent to the city, mainly in the vicinity of Osborne Park, Wanneroo and the outer suburban areas of Perth. For the reasons I have stated, the range of supply has been extended until milk is coming from as far north as Muchea on the Midland railway, and as far south as Brunswick on the South-West line. Some of the metropolitan dairymen seem to be of the opinion that the group settlers should not be entitled to participate in the whole-milk trade that they were placed on the land to produce butter fat for the factories. Judged by the statements made by the metropolitan dairymen to deputations before various Ministers, this appears to be their view. I would like to disabuse their minds of that impression. It is wrong that the dairymen in the metropolitan area should expect to have a monopoly of this trade. Any man who likes to settle on the land, whether as a group or an individual settler, is just as much entitled to market his products in Perth as are the men who have established the industry at Osborne Park, Muchea, or anywhere else.

Mr. Kenneally: Do you propose to make country dairies subject to the same inspection and conditions?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. It might as well be argued that because farmers in the Northam district had been supplying Perth with wheat for many years, or that fruitgrowers on the Swan have been supplying the metropolitan area

with fruit for a long period, they should have a monopoly of the market, as to say that the metropolitan wholemilk producers should have all this market to themselves. They are not entitled to such a monopoly and the Bill will not give it to them. Owing to the price of butter fat having receded in recent times, and the price of milk in the metropolitan area having remained about the same until recently, many producers of butter fat have been tempted to discontinue supplying factories, and to send their milk to the metropolitan area for consumption. This has led to very much increased competition in the milk trade in the metropolitan area, and also to a reduction in price.

Hon. P. Collier: Will not the law of supply and demand rectify that, inasmuch as a great fall in milk prices may induce people to move back again to the factories?

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** No. The price in the metropolitan area, notwithstanding the fall, is still higher than the price at butter factories. In 1927-28 the average butter fat value was 19.17d. per lb., whereas in 1930-31 it was 14d. per lb. As it takes about 2½ gallons of average four per cent. milk to equal 1 lb. of butter fat, it will be recognised that the price is about 6d. per gallon, whereas the price of whole milk is to-day in the vicinity of 8d. per gallon. It must be realised that the whole milk supplier is entitled to more than the butter fat producer, for he has many essential services to render in connection with the supply of whole milk, services the butter fat producer has not to render. The whole milk supplier has to milk very early in the morning, and has to deliver milk twice a day. He has to submit to certain inspection of his premises the butter fat producer has not to submit to. He also loses the value of his skim milk. Therefore the whole milk supplier is entitled to something more than the butter fat producer. The conditions which I have mentioned have brought about a state of chaos in the industry, and no one engaged in it has any confidence in the future. All are greatly concerned as to what is going to happen to them. This refers particularly to the metropolitan suppliers who have built their dairies on high-priced land adjacent to the city. Owing to the fact that chaos reigned in the industry, all those engaged in whole milk production were more or less stampeded; and deputation after deputation

waited upon the Premier and the Deputy Premier, and occasionally on me, asking that something be done by the Government to organise and stabilise the industry. To that end I established a Milk Industry Organisation Board. That board consisted of representatives of country milk producers, metropolitan milk producers, wholesale distributors, retail distributors, and departmental officers. To the credit of the board be it said that they did excellent work in smoothing out many of the difficulties operating against the successful conduct of the industry; but unfortunately, being without statutory control, they were unable to enforce their wishes on a small minority of the whole milk producers, and thus were unable to function quite satisfactorily. They had as their object an adequate supply of wholesome milk in the metropolitan area at a price reasonable to the consumer and also remunerative to the producer. If 99 per cent. of those engaged in milk production and distribution had been satisfied to leave affairs in the board's hands, a better state of affairs would exist to-day than operates at the moment.

Hon. P. Collier: Does that member of the Primary Producers' Association who successfully led the recent strike approve of the Bill?

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** Those who led the recent trouble in the industry—

Hon. P. Collier: There was only one leader.

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** Quite a number were concerned, and they heartily approve of some measure of organisation. No individual who assisted in that strike, nor any individual outside the members of the Government, as yet knows the contents of the Bill. The details of the measure have not been discussed with any of those persons, and I do not know whether they will approve of them or not. However, I observe that a section of the producers has already expressed disapproval—without knowing the contents of the Bill. Owing to the fact of the advisory board not having statutory power to enforce their decisions, they were unable to function as successfully as might have been wished. Consequently the Government think it wise to bring down this Bill in order to give a somewhat similar board, which will be elected by the various sections of the industry, power to enforce its decisions. The Government

have given the matter a great deal of consideration, and believe that the measure will appeal to hon. members. This is not the first time that the question of the whole milk industry has received prominence. Royal Commissions have already inquired into it. I should like to read a small portion of the report of the Royal Commission which recently investigated dairy farming in the South-West, a portion referring to the whole milk industry—

... there was unanimity of opinion on the part of the whole milk producers, depot keepers and retailers that organisation and control were essential to prevent overlapping and economic waste, and somehow to bridge the gulf between the price the consumer pays and the price the producer receives. Your Commissioners gave considerable thought to the milk question. It bristles with difficulties and problems, but in our opinion these must be solved by the Whole Milk Board recently appointed.

That refers to the board I previously mentioned.

We are convinced that statutory powers are needed to regulate this branch of the industry also, because no good can be expected from voluntary effort. We consider that whole milk should be paid for on a butter fat basis, making full allowance for the extra cost of seasonal production, handling, and loss of the value of skim milk. Otherwise it will be impossible to limit the supply of milk in accordance with the demand. This proposal would have the effect of securing equal treatment for all dairymen throughout the State. That some reform is needed is apparent from a perusal of the balance sheet of the City Corporation Milk Department of Wellington, New Zealand, for the two years ended 31st March, 1931. After allowing for working expenses, depreciation, sinking fund, interest on capital, bad debts, bottle replacements, etc., the average annual profit made by the municipality was £7,500. The producer receives an average price of 12¾d. per gallon for first grade milk delivered at the depot, and the consumer paid an average price of 1s. 11¼d. per gallon.

I ask hon. members to bear that price in mind.

A comparison with our present metropolitan prices of 12¾d. at depot to the producer, and 2s. 4d. per gallon to the consumer, shows a difference of 4¼d. per gallon in favour of the Wellington system, under which the proportion of first grade milk delivered to depot was 99.5 per cent.

A Royal Commission was appointed in 1925 to investigate the metropolitan whole milk supply, and some of that Commission's findings will be of interest to hon. members—

Our findings show that the milk supply is in a disorganised and unsatisfactory condition.

It will be seen that the position in 1925 was the same as the present position.

Milk is an essential article of human diet, especially for infants; it is highly perishable, and easily contaminated. It should, therefore, be produced and distributed under strict hygienic conditions, and should be made available to the consumer at the lowest possible price consistent with a fair return to those engaged in its production and distribution. To-day the consumer is paying a high price, whilst the return to the producer is so low that he is scarcely able to carry on. The hygienic and economic conditions under which the industry is carried on demand drastic improvement. Milk supply can be regarded as a public utility comparable to water supply, and in order to endeavour to organise the industry on a basis as such it is necessary that some form of control, more effective than that hitherto prevailing, should be instituted. . . . Direct governmental control is not likely to be a satisfactory solution of the problem, even if a special department or branch were set up to deal with it. Municipal control is not recommended, principally because such a large number of local authorities are concerned, and because each local authority has no jurisdiction outside its own boundaries. Any attempt to confer on one local authority the right to exercise its powers in the district of another would present great difficulty. It is necessary that the controlling authority should have complete control, and should not be subject to interference. It is considered that the situation can best be met by the creation under special Act of Parliament of a board or trust to be appointed by the Government. . . . The board should have powers which would enable it—(1) to safeguard the quality of the milk supply; (2) to encourage the consumption of milk; (3) to reduce waste; (4) to adjust prices so that each interest shall receive equitable treatment. The board should be the only authority controlling the metropolitan milk supply, and should have control over all premises concerned wherever situated. The powers of the board should include the following:—(1) To appoint inspectors and other necessary officers. (2) To license milk producers, under conditions to be determined, and prohibit the sale of milk unless produced under license. (3) To buy, sell, and deal in milk and milk products. (4) To establish and conduct such premises as may be required. (5) To license persons to distribute milk, either wholesale or retail, under conditions to be determined, and prohibit the sale of milk except under license. (6) To inaugurate a block system of milk distribution, determine the boundaries of such blocks, vary or alter such boundaries from time to time when deemed necessary; allocate blocks to distributors in such manner as may be determined. (7) To determine the minimum price the producer shall receive for his product; the charges to be made for handling and treatment, and the maximum price to be paid by consumers, and vary such prices from time to time. (8) To make regulations for the efficient control of the industry and impose penalties for breaches of the regulations.

It will be seen that both the Royal Commissions which inquired into the ramifications of the whole milk industry in the metropolitan area came to the conclusion that some form of statutory control was necessary in order to put the industry on a satisfactory basis. In an endeavour to give some statutory control to a board, the present Bill has been framed. The measure, if enacted, will be administered by the board, subject to the approval of the Minister. It provides that every dairyman, every wholesale milk vendor, and every retail milk vendor who is licensed shall have a vote for the election of the representatives of his particular section on the board. Certain fees will be payable to members of the board, subject to the Minister's approval. It is not anticipated that members of the board will have full-time jobs at fat screws, as is the position in New South Wales to-day. The members of the board will not require to devote the whole of their time to the work, though there will be full-time executive officers. The measure contains provision for statutory dairy areas in the country and for statutory districts in the metropolitan area, in which only licensed vendors may sell milk. No person will be allowed to carry on dairying in a dairy area, or to vend milk in a metropolitan district, without having first obtained a license from the board; and the penalty provided in that regard is £50. I wish to point out that this provision will not apply to butter fat producers. Unless the farmer wishes to supply milk to the metropolitan area, there will be no need for him to take out a license. No person will be allowed to treat milk in the metropolitan area without a license. In the past licenses have been issued in the metropolitan area by the Health Department and in country districts by local governing bodies. The Bill will have the effect of abolishing that practice, and in future every person who wishes to supply milk will be able to do so only under license issued by the board. That applies to every license with the exception of that relating to the health of the individuals employed in the industry, and that will remain a function of the Health Department.

Mr. McLarty: What will the licenses cost?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Those costs will be fixed by the board.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: What method will the board employ to test the purity or otherwise of the milk?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: They will have the same facilities as those possessed by the existing bodies. The board will have complete control, and will have the necessary facilities.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: So long as the board will have that power, it will be all right. The Public Health Department did that work in the past.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Public Health Department officials are satisfied that it can be done by the board.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: Probably so.

The Minister for Railways: The local governing bodies pay the Health Department to do the work.

Mr. Sampson: The testing of milk will be continued.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. I will outline the functions of the board. That body will be charged with the regulation and organisation of the production of milk in dairy areas; the supply and sale of milk by dairymen to milk vendors; the supply, sale, and distribution of milk to consumers in the metropolitan area; the treatment of milk before sale and distribution to consumers in the metropolitan area; the transport, carriage, and conveyance of milk produced in dairy areas; plant, machinery, appliances, containers, and other things used or reputed to be used in connection with the production, supply, sale, distribution, treatment, transport, carriage and conveyance of milk. The board will also deal with the inspection of dairies, milk stores, milk, and places for the treatment of milk; the issue and revocation of licenses; measures and means which, in the opinion of the board, are requisite and necessary to provide a regular supply of fresh, clean, and wholesome milk to consumers in the metropolitan area. Then, subject to paragraph (7) of Clause 27, the board will control the making, settlement and approval of contracts for the supply of milk by dairymen to milk vendors, and the fixing of the proportionate quantities of accommodation milk which dairymen shall be entitled to supply to milk vendors.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Now you come to the most important part of that clause.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The board will also be charged with the

fixing of the minimum price per gallon to dairymen for milk supplied.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Where is the Attorney General now? That is price-fixing. What about his talk about fixing rents, and so on?

Hon. P. Collier: The Minister must have got this Bill approved when the Attorney General was not present at the Cabinet meeting.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Apart from whether the Bill has the approval of the Attorney General, I am sure it will have the support of the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. P. Collier: I think the Attorney General is with us.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: And he is not the only member of Cabinet who is.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The board will have the powers I have outlined, provided that, as regards milk, other than surplus milk, the price shall be fixed in accordance with (1) butter fat content and value, (2) bacterial test, (3) added value for services involving the production of whole milk, and (4), if necessary, a premium during periods of scarcity.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: That is price-fixing all right.

Hon. P. Collier: This is the most socialistic measure introduced here for a generation.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The price of the surplus milk is to be fixed in accordance with its butter-fat content and at butter-fat rates, less a charge approved by the board for separation or other treatment carried out by the milk vendor. That is to say, butter-fat rates will be fixed in accordance with world parity.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: World's parity for butter fats in a Western Australian factory!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: These are some of the functions of the board.

Hon. P. Collier: How is the board to be composed?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Leader of the Opposition should not be in too great a hurry.

Hon. P. Collier: Then you will come to that phase?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. The objective of the Bill is to regulate and organise the industry to assure a clean, wholesome and adequate supply of fresh

milk and cream for the metropolitan area, to pay an equitable price to the producers, a reasonable remuneration to the distributors, and a fair price to the consumers.

Hon. P. Collier: That is a nice general statement! What can we make out of that? It meets everyone's objection.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The object also is to provide for the inspection of holdings, premises, and depots, and a systematic veterinary inspection of all cows in herds supplying milk to the metropolitan area. The veterinary inspection is to be on similar lines to those operating under the Dairy Cattle Compensation Act at present. At the moment, within a radius of 15 miles of the metropolis, the provisions of that Act operate, and dairymen within that area contribute to a fund, which is more or less an insurance fund, covering cows from which milk is supplied to the metropolitan area. It is proposed that similar inspections shall take place in respect of every herd licensed for the supply of milk to the people in the metropolitan area. Grave objection has been taken on the part of the metropolitan dairymen to what they style the freedom of the outside men to supply milk to the people in the metropolitan area, without the herds being subject to any veterinary inspection.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: You will have to amend another Act if you intend to carry that out.

The Minister for Railways: We can deal with that when we come to it.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: There is already a measure on the statute-book which provides that it shall not be affected by legislation such as this.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member is confusing the point. This means that the Dairy Cattle Compensation Act will be extended to include everyone licensed under this legislation. At present dairymen, whose operations are covered by the Dairy Cattle Compensation Act, pay 2s. per cow per annum as a registration fee, and in the event of a beast being destroyed as a result of condemnation by a veterinary inspector, the owner of a cow receives 90 per cent. of the value agreed upon between him and the veterinary officer, three-fifths of that percentage being drawn from the compensation fund and the remaining two-fifths being paid from Consolidated Revenue. The Bill pro-

vides that the inspection shall apply to every dairymen in a dairy area who is licensed to supply milk within the metropolitan area. The Bill also sets out that the administration shall be undertaken by the board, subject to the approval of the Minister, and that the board shall consist of seven members. Four shall be representatives of producers, one a representative of retail distributors, one a representative of the wholesale distributors, and one shall be representative of the consumers.

Hon. P. Collier: Six to the consumer's one!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The chairman shall be elected by the board and shall have a deliberative, as well as a casting vote.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: They call that the syndicalistic system in other countries.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The first board will be appointed by the Minister but subsequent boards will be elected by the various sections that have representation. The members of the board will hold office for a period of two years, and every dairymen, wholesale vendor and retailer will be entitled to vote at the election of the representative of his particular section. The board will finance itself from the funds drawn from licenses and fees imposed on dairymen and vendors. In my opinion, the board will not impose any burden upon the general taxpayers. The board will be empowered to appoint inspectors to carry out work, with the exception of that relating to the men handling the milk, and the health of those individuals will still be a function of the Public Health Department. I mentioned at the outset that certain control had been exercised in the marketing of supplies of various cities in other parts of the world. I will give the House some idea of what obtains in some of the leading metropolitan areas of the world. In London, with a population of 8,000,000—I shall give population figures in round numbers—the price for whole milk is fixed annually twelve months in advance, and is determined at a conference of representatives of the National Farmers' Union and the Dairy Traders' Organisation. The average transport cost is  $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per gallon and the milk supply is drawn from an area within a radius of 200 miles of the city. In Glasgow, with a population of 1,000,000, a somewhat similar

trouble was experienced in 1926-27 to that which has occurred here, and there the producers launched a special milk marketing organisation known as the Scottish Milk Pool, covering those handling the milk trade of the city. The pool deals only with producers' organisations in the country. The milk is drawn from within 50 miles of Glasgow and the price is fixed 12 months in advance. They also have in operation a scheme such as that embodied in the Bill dealing with contract, accommodation and surplus milk. In Berlin, with a population of 4,000,000, the price of milk is fixed weekly by a commission comprised of two producers and two traders. In Hamburg, with a population of 1,000,000, the whole milk supply is treated at six creameries in the city, and the supply is drawn from within a radius of 90 miles. The milk is met on the road by a travelling motor laboratory and tested en route. If any of the milk is found to be below a certain standard, it is not allowed to enter the city at all. The price is fixed purely on a butter fat rate. In Paris, with a population of over 4,500,000, there are two prices—a summer price and a winter price. Supplies are drawn from an area within a radius of 190 miles. Milk brought from centres close to the city are traded as it comes from the producers, but that drawn from a greater distance is pasteurised. Under a system that was established during the war, the prefects are still saddled with the responsibility of fixing the price of milk. In Copenhagen, with a population of 750,000, the price of milk is fixed on the butter fat basis, with certain variations as to quality. In New York, with a population of well over 8,000,000, the milk supply is the most costly in the world. The margin between what the consumer pays and what the producer receives is very high. Supplies there are drawn from within a radius of 500 miles from the city. The average cost of transport to New York is  $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. per gallon. The price is fixed by means of collective bargaining between farmers' organisations and the distributors. There are three or four grades in the New York supply, but with the exception of certain ones which are fixed on a certain test, the prices are very high. Grade "A" raw milk taken from tuberculin-tested cows is fixed at  $7\frac{1}{4}$ d. per gallon more than the next highest grade. It is supposed to be the choicest milk, and



is used for the children of the more wealthy sections of the community. That represents  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 per cent. of the total output. The next two grades which are pasteurised represent the great bulk of the supply. In New York the control of the milk supply is more rigorous than in any other city of the world, and the price is the highest. It is interesting to note the average margin between the price the producer receives and the price the consumer pays in various cities—

Paris	.. ..	5½d.
Hamburg	.. ..	6d.
Berlin	.. ..	6¼d.
Copenhagen	.. ..	9¼d.
Glasgow	.. ..	10d.
London	.. ..	11¼d.
New York	.. ..	16d.
Chicago	.. ..	19d.
Perth	.. ..	16½d.

Thus the difference in Perth is higher than in any other city except Chicago. Coming nearer home, in Sydney the average difference is 9d., which is due, I believe, to control legislation recently inaugurated; in Adelaide it is 14d.; Melbourne 14d.; Brisbane 14d.; and Wellington, where the supply is municipally controlled, 10½d. If the measure be passed, it is hoped that the organising board will have an opportunity to reduce the margin that exists here. The consumption of milk in the metropolitan area is about 10,000 gallons per day. Taking the average production per cow as 300 gallons per annum, it will be seen that the consumption represents the production of no fewer than 12,166 cows. Consequently the industry, as represented by the metropolitan consumption, is of considerable importance. Complaint has been made by metropolitan milk suppliers that the Railway Department were transporting milk from centres further afield, such as Brunswick and Harvey, at unremunerative rates, and an attempt was made to get the department to increase their rates. It was the first time I had heard of one section of producers trying to make another section pay more for the transport of their commodity. The average cost of transport of milk from farm to city is as follows:—

London	.. ..	1½d. per gallon
Glasgow	.. ..	1d. "
Berlin	.. ..	¾d. "
Hamburg	.. ..	¾d. "
Paris	.. ..	¾d. "
New York	.. ..	2¼d. "
Perth	.. ..	1d. to 2¼d. "

The consumption of milk per head per annum, which we would like to see increased in view of the fact that milk is a valuable article of diet, particularly for the younger generation, is a matter of great importance, and one which, in my opinion, should be taken into consideration by those who will be charged with the organisation of the industry. The consumption per head of population is as follows:—

Paris	.. ..	15½ gallons
London	.. ..	17 "
Glasgow	.. ..	18 "
Berlin	.. ..	22½ "
Copenhagen	.. ..	30 "
New York	.. ..	45½ "
Perth	.. ..	15½ "

In New York, where the consumption is the highest in the world, the price is the highest. In Perth, the consumption is lower than in any of the other cities I have mentioned. Consequently it should be possible to increase the consumption by proper organisation of the industry, instead of allowing it to remain in the chaotic state in which it exists to-day. Quite a lot of criticism has been levelled at suppliers of milk to Perth. I have heard men in responsible positions complain bitterly of the quality of the milk. One prominent member of Parliament said the milk was so bad that he given up taking it in his tea. The standard of milk is generally gauged by the fats it contains. The following are the legal fat contents of milk in the various cities:—

London	.. ..	3 per cent.
Berlin	.. ..	2.7 "
Hamburg	.. ..	2.7 "
Paris	No fixed standard but it must be the whole milk of the cow.	
Copenhagen	.. ..	3.25 per cent.
New York	.. ..	3 "
Perth	.. ..	3.2 "

In all the other capital cities of the Commonwealth, except in New South Wales, the percentage is 3.2. The only cities that have a higher percentage than Perth are Sydney, 3.3 per cent., and Copenhagen 3.25.

Hon. P. Collier: What is the percentage at Wellington?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have not the figure, but I think it is the same as ours.

Hon. P. Collier: The percentage there is fairly high.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: During recent years producers generally have been taking a much keener interest in

the marketing side of their commodities, particularly milk, and, in common with the distributors, have been asking for power to organise the industry. The Bill is designed to give that power. Something must be done to put the producers on a more satisfactory footing. If those who have been financed by the Government are to be placed in a position to meet their obligations, to the extent of paying at least some of their interest, maintaining their herds and improving their properties, means must be devised to enable them to get a more satisfactory price for their commodity than they are receiving to-day. I know of no means to attain that end other than some form of legislative control and power to organise the industry. I am not particularly enamoured of the word "control" as applied to primary products. I think "organisation" is much more satisfactory. There will be little actual control under this measure. Organisation is the keynote of the Bill, and I believe that, with a board empowered to organise the industry, the result will be beneficial to all concerned. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Millington, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—CLOSED ROADS ALIENATION.**

### *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. C. G. Latham—York) [5.40] in moving the second reading said: The object of the Bill is to empower the Department of Lands to dispose of small strips of land set aside usually for roads. It is proposed that the department may exchange old roads for the purpose of putting in new roads. During recent years when there has been a good deal of work on reconstructing roads, we have found it necessary to deviate roads in order to obtain more suitable grades, but under the Act it is impossible effectively to exchange land. The Road Districts Act provides that where a road once formed part of a holding and has been closed, it may revert to the holding, but that does not apply to a road set out previous to the land being selected and not further required for the purpose of a road.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: How far will this measure be retrospective?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It will not be retrospective.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: It should be. Much injustice has been done.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I cannot see how it could be made retrospective, because the leases affected have been adjusted. I am pleased that the hon. member appreciates the necessity for the measure. It is desired, on the closure or deviation of any such road, to have power to grant the closed road, either in whole or in part consideration, for any new road or deviation. If the land to be exchanged is worth more than the land to be resumed from the holding, the individual will have an opportunity to buy the remaining portion. Consequently, when an exchange is effected, it will be done on the basis of equal value.

Hon. J. C. Willcock interjected.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Where a railway is built, new roads have often to be made to serve the siding, and the old roads are then closed. We could dispose of such land under Section 57 of the Act, but the method is cumbersome. Only a small strip, comprising probably two or three acres, would be involved, the sale would have to be advertised, and then fresh leases would have to be drawn and registered. This Bill will simplify the method. In the event of a road being closed that divides two properties belonging to different persons, it is proposed to adopt the procedure laid down under the Road Districts Act and divide the closed road between the two holders, so that the contiguous portion of the road will become part of the property on either side. There will be nothing unfair in that procedure. Instead of two fences being necessary, one fence will suffice. This will be the simplest form in which to do what the Road Districts Act provides to-day. The Bill provides that where a closed road has been added to or incorporated with other land which was at the time subject to a mortgage or other encumbrances, the mortgage shall have effect over the amended area included in such road. It is also provided that where a closed road is added to land during the currency of a contract of sale, the closed road shall be deemed subject to such contract of sale, and the purchase price or consideration shall be deemed to be increased accordingly. The Bill will not apply to closed roads in a municipality nor to closed

roads which were originally resumed from holdings, as the latter revert to the holder on closure. There are a good many clauses in the Bill, but they are all very simple. The Bill has had the careful consideration of the Crown Law Department, the Commissioner of Titles, and the Under Secretary for Lands. Their object was the compilation of a measure to meet all contingencies and provide that mortgages or other encumbrances shall have effect over the closed roads which, by virtue of the Bill, will be included in the original holdings. Hon. members will be able to appreciate what is behind the Bill. Every clause sets out what it is intended to do.

Hon. P. Collier: Then it must be a model of drafting.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is not intended that there shall be regulations under the Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. P. Collier, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—MAIN ROADS ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 8th September.

**HON. J. C. WILLCOCK** (Geraldton) [5.50]: The Bill which proposes to amend the Act passed eight years ago is not a reflection on the policy inaugurated by the Government at that time. Everyone will remember the condition of the roads of the State eight or nine years ago and the action that was taken to nationalise main roads of the State. What was done at the time was considered absolutely necessary, in fact imperative. Some boards have lived up to their responsibilities, others adopted the attitude, that though main roads pass through their district, it is not their responsibility to maintain those roads. Consequently, roads were left in a deplorable state, the local authorities knowing I suppose that eventually the State would go to their assistance and put the roads in repair. It will be remembered also what happened in the metropolitan area some 10 or 12 years ago. The then Minister for Works objected to pay for the construction of the Perth-Fremantle road, because the several local authorities concerned would not live up to their responsibilities.

A working bee was formed and sections of the road that were in a very bad state of repair were constructed. The Armadale road was likewise in an impassable condition a few years back, but as the result of the legislation that was inaugurated by the Labour Government, that and other main roads have been constructed, and all are highly satisfactory. A grievous mistake was made when the original legislation was passed in giving control of the licensing of vehicles to local authorities. The whole thing should have been done on a State-wide basis as was the position in every other part of Australia. At this stage of our existence everyone will agree that the administration of the Act has not been satisfactory and the frequent amendment of it has caused irritation amongst the local authorities, whilst in some instances injustices have been done to municipalities and other local authorities. Two or three years ago the Act was again amended and certain districts were classed as graded A, B, and C, and a portion of their traffic fees was supposed to be paid into a trust fund and from there to the Main Roads Board. That was found to be unsatisfactory. We should at this stage inaugurate a system which has been found to work satisfactorily in the Eastern States, namely, the State registration of motor vehicles. The Minister for Police knows that the Commissioner of Police has recommended that this system should be followed. There would be considerably better results if this course were adopted. The Minister should indicate something to this effect. We know what the effect of the depression has been on the registration of motor vehicles. The fall in the number of registrations in the country has been 45 per cent., while in the metropolitan area it has been 14 per cent.

Mr. Sampson: Many of the owners of vehicles have not the money.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: I have been present in a road board office when people, taking out a license and paying only part of the money, have said, "I will let you have another 5s. on that license next week."

Mr. Sampson: Many of them could not afford to pay their fee at all; they have not the money.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: But under the Act it is obligatory on a motor car owner not to go on the road until he has paid his license fee. Are some people to be allowed

to run a motor without a license, while others pay half the fee, and a third group pay their fees in full? At least 15 per cent. of the motorists in country districts are not licensed at all until three months after the specified time. The system observed in the back blocks is very loose as compared with that in the metropolitan area. We have made a grievous mistake, and it has permitted people to evade paying their just dues, since the licenses are controlled by the local authorities. This is the time, when we are amending the Act, to deal with the whole question. We should provide that the Commissioner of Police shall have the issuing of licenses throughout the State. No doubt large numbers of vehicles are running about under expired licenses.

The Minister for Agriculture: But the owners pay before the year is out.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Does the Minister hold that in country districts, so long as the motorist pays before the end of the licensing year it is all right, although in the metropolitan area one has to pay his license fee within a fortnight after the due date? So great is the disparity between the administration in the metropolitan area and that in the country districts that it savours of two separate systems. It is not right that producers in the Swan district and other districts contiguous to the metropolitan area should have to pay license fees and pay them promptly, while others in outer districts have but little cause to worry about their license fees. It is well known that some of the members of some road boards go for months without paying any license fees.

Mr. Sampson: That is not true.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: It is true. Even the Minister for Agriculture says they let it go for four or five months, but pay before the end of the year. I know that this applies generally throughout the country districts. The only proper method of collecting license fees is through one authority; and the best authority, of course, is the Commissioner of Police.

The Minister for Railways: The road boards would get their revenue just the same.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Indeed, they would get more than they get to-day, if the Commissioner of Police were collecting all the fees.

Mr. Sampson: The police would require to be considerably increased in number.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: No fear! The Commissioner is prepared to try it, and I am sure he would make a much better job of it than do the local authorities. If a local authority is strict in the collecting of license fees, many of the motorists will take out their licenses under an adjoining road board which is not so strict. The dodging of license fees in country districts in this State is an absolute scandal, and at this stage, when amending the Main Roads Act, we should rectify the wrong that has been done and put things on a uniform basis, as has been found necessary in every other State in Australia. The Minister has missed a great opportunity to get this in without much opposition. He could have pointed out that little or no money would be retained by the Government, that a certain percentage would be charged for the collection of fees, but nothing more. Practically every local authority in the State would have welcomed it with open arms. The Minister is storing up a great deal of trouble, for once the local authorities are able to retain all their license fees and accept no responsibility for the construction of main roads in their respective districts, it will be a very hard job to correct the position. The main roads agreement has only  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years to go.

The Minister for Works: No,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  years.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Perhaps the Minister is right, but in these changing times one does not know what may happen to revenue coming from the Commonwealth to the State. The Federal Government have only to say they cannot afford to go on with the agreement, and they will cut it down, as they propose to cut down the old age pensions. Indeed, they might even refuse to go any farther with it at all. If that alternative proposition were put up to the people of Australia, they would say the Government have a better right to abrogate the main roads agreement than they have to reduce old age pensions. There is no surety that the next 12 months will not see this main roads agreement abrogated altogether.

The Minister for Works: But it was an agreement made between Governments for  $10\frac{1}{2}$  years. Surely the Commonwealth cannot abrogate that!

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: What about the old age pensions, which were fixed at £1. weekly? This has been altered by the Federal Government, who propose still further to reduce the amount. It will be much easier for them to end this main roads agree-

ment. Now that we have the principle established that contracts entered into by Governments may be altered by Act of Parliament, this agreement also may be altered by Act of Parliament. We have been six years building up our roads to their present relatively satisfactory condition. At one time all roads were in chaos, from the metropolitan area for 30 or 40 miles in any direction. If this main road agreement is to be done away with, we shall have to see to it that the local authorities contribute a percentage of their license fees again. As I say, a golden opportunity was missed by the Government for the setting up of a system for the uniform collection of fees throughout the State.

Hon. A. McCallum: I do not know what the Minister for Police was thinking about.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: He is chairman of a road board which receives certain traffic fees. I am in the Minister's electorate, but I have to pay my fees to Perth, notwithstanding which I think his board does collect some fees. However, that should not stop the Minister, even at this stage, from adopting a statesmanlike attitude in this regard. I do not think a single local authority in Western Australia would have any objection to it, provided the boards got as much as they get to-day, less the actual cost of collection.

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

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: I think the Minister has been over-generous to road boards. There is justification for contributions by local authorities from their license fees towards the upkeep of main roads. Almost every board in the State, except perhaps those in the North-West, has a main road of some kind running through its territory. Developmental roads have also been built and will be maintained from the main roads trust funds. Many towns have more than one main road running through them. In the matter of contributions the Bill is likely to bring about anomalies that will cause grave dissatisfaction. In Geraldton the main road in the town is not a main road. In the case of Northam the road that goes through it is a main road. The anomalies that are likely to arise will not make for satisfaction. If people are contributing in equal measure to a common object it is some satisfaction to them to know that other people are also giving out something, and that, whatever benefits may accrue, there is

to be an equal distribution of responsibility. At one time the local authorities made all their roads and drains out of their own revenue. Every road in a town or district, except those in the construction and maintenance of which the local authorities were assisted by Government subsidies, was constructed out of rates. Nowadays a beautiful main road may be running through a town, kept up from the trust funds, and the rate-payers contribute nothing towards the cost. The people get a better service than heretofore, but none of their own money is spent on the upkeep of these roads and they contributed nothing towards the cost. There is justification for a contribution to be made by the local authorities towards the trust funds to keep the main roads in order. With other members, I am sympathetic towards the country districts. We know that the farmers are producing at a loss, and that they cannot afford to pay much. No one objects to paying a just share to a common obligation. In the circumstances the Government have been unwise to allow the local authorities to retain the whole of the license fees. They will now be able to budget for an expenditure they could not otherwise aim at, and will be able to get all these fees. When it comes to the time when some contributions may have to be sought out of the traffic fees, all the old trouble will arise again. There will be discontent, dissatisfaction, and discord, and trouble all through the country districts, because that which they were given will have been taken away again. People in the country are getting considerable benefit from the road communications which have been opened up as a result of the activities of the Main Roads Board. They are all aware of the benefits they have received and are all in agreement with the main roads policy. Furthermore, they all collect revenue from the vehicles which run on main roads. Instead of contributing something to the common pool, to set off against the cost of this work, they are to be allowed to get off without paying anything. The Minister should have made some announcement regarding the policy he intends to pursue. Certain road boards and local authorities still owe money to the main roads trust fund. Legislation was passed imposing on them a duty to collect trust funds on behalf of the State. Many of them kept the money they collected, although part of it

may be said to belong to the Government. Other local authorities, on the other hand, were conscientious enough to shoulder the responsibility.

The Minister for Works: Only five have not paid the lot.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Some have met their obligations in part, but others, Narrogin amongst them, refused to recognise their legal obligations. The Minister weakly says, "We cannot prosecute road boards or local authorities." If we are going to allow these people to dodge their obligations, believing, as they will, that they cannot be prosecuted, and that the money cannot be recovered, they will never meet their obligations in the future. Of what use is it to impose statutory obligations upon them in the circumstances? The same sort of thing may happen in connection with health rates and so forth. If the local authorities know they cannot be prosecuted, they will make no effort to pay. It is idle to pass legislation that is treated with contempt, as apparently some local authorities are treating this particular legislation. During the last month or two they could have made some effort to contribute towards the trust fund. Surely it is not beyond the capacity of the Minister to evolve some means whereby these people can be compelled to make their payments. After all, they have been acting as trustees for the Government. They have simply absconded with the money and used it for their own purposes. The money belongs to the trust fund. Are the local authorities to be allowed to carry on in this way? It is not much encouragement to others who have endeavoured to stand up to their obligations that those who do not fulfil them are not compelled to do so. If that principle is allowed to exist there will be a difficulty in collecting money from anybody. Some attempt has been made by way of subsidies to rectify the position, but it has not been of general application. Whatever is done should be done in a uniform way so that the same treatment will be meted out to all. If everyone is treated in the same way, whether by means of taxes or levies, there may be groans at having to make the payments, but all will be more or less satisfied because everybody will be in the same boat. If one section of the community is picked out for relief, and disabilities are put on another section, there is bound to be dis-

content. If the old age pension had been reduced in equal proportions to the general expenditure of the country, there would have been discontent, but there would not have been the intense dissatisfaction that now exists in every class of the community. One section of the people that can least afford the loss has been selected to bear a greater measure of hardship than any other section. So it is in regard to the manner of dealing with road boards. One local authority may have stood up to its obligations although its financial position may have been very bad, but another in a much better position has declined to make any contribution whatever. If this is allowed to go on, the Government will have no hope of making any collections from the local authorities. I hope before the debate closes the Minister will say what his intentions are. Whatever they are they should be expressed in legislation.

The Minister for Works: What sort of legislation?

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: The Minister is going to waive these debts.

The Minister for Works: I am not.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: The Minister is waiving certain responsibilities due from local authorities.

The Minister for Works: Only after the 1st July last, not before.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: He is waiving debts due by road boards for construction work carried out by the Main Roads Board in their areas.

The Minister for Works: No.

Hon. A. McCallum: The Bill gives power to remit such dues.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Of what use is it to take power to do certain things if the Government do not intend to use that power?

The Minister for Works: The Bill does not give power to remit traffic fees.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: It gives the Minister power to waive certain obligations which certain road boards have towards the Main Roads Board.

The Minister for Works: Not at all.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: It is quite plain to me. We can discuss the matter further in Committee. When the Minister was speaking I made an interjection regarding the declaration of main roads. Main roads have been declared in various parts of the State in connection with the first five-years' plan. There was an implication that this policy

would be continued, and that other main roads would be declared in various districts. The Northampton Roads Board are under the impression that a certain portion of the road from Geraldton to Carnarvon would be declared a main road. The Minister said the policy of declaring main roads would continue. But the Commissioner of Main Roads is the person who recommends that roads be declared main roads, and there is imposed on him by the Act the obligation, before declaring a main road, to take cognisance of the financial position of the trust. With all the money that is being surrendered by the local authorities, I do not think it possible to keep those roads which are already declared main roads in a proper state of efficiency, even without doing any more bridge building. The amount in the trust represents about £100 per mile of road. That expenditure may cover maintenance of well-constructed roads during the first two or three years, but later it will not go anywhere near meeting the necessary charges. The outlook for any local authority to have further roads declared main roads is very poor indeed. The Minister says he hopes it will not be necessary to spend any of the Federal aid money in the metropolitan area. There is no "aid" about it. All the Federal Government do is to collect money from taxpayers in this State and hand it back to the State for the purpose of road construction. It is money collected from road users in this State by means of a petrol tax. It is another case of the Federal Government taking credit for doing things they do not, in fact, do—showing off to the people in respect of what the Commonwealth does for the State. There would be no petrol tax at all were it not for the fact that a considerable proportion of the proceeds is handed back to the States. The tax is enormous, and from any other aspect is inexplicable. For the metropolitan area there will be only about £25,000 per year available; and from where is the Minister to get money to build new roads, a new Causeway, and new bridges, to keep up the Fremantle bridge and the Canning-road, and to grant a subsidy to the King's Park Board? For my part, I do not know. I am not a metropolitan member, but I do believe in equal justice being meted out to all parts of the State. Metropolitan taxpayers represent two-thirds or at any rate three-fifths of the motor licenses in Western Australia, accord-

ing to the figures given by the Minister; and yet the metropolitan taxpayers are to have only £25,000 spent where they reside, out of £300,000 coming back to the State from the Commonwealth. The Minister implies, by promises, that he will build bridges and do all sorts of things. It seems to me that he must be bitten by the Premier's bug of foolish optimism. The Bill suggests splendid possibilities for the country districts; but such governmental generosity would never be displayed were it not for the conspicuous ability shown by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in getting the allocation made as it was made. But for that, Western Australia would have had £60,000 or £70,000 less than it is now receiving. It is well, perhaps, to remind the people of Western Australia that they owe something to the late Minister for Works in respect of his representation of Western Australia at main road conferences. It has been fashionable throughout the country to deride the efforts of the Main Roads Board. It was said that the board was wasteful and extravagant, and poured out money irrespective of value received. However, in the four or five years which have elapsed since the board got into its stride, there has been a huge difference in ease of transit between various parts of the State. Great credit is due to the board for their work. I believe, too, that there is now a better appreciation of the legislation on this subject. Even now the Government would do well to recast the Bill so as to have one authority for the collection of license fees. Better results would be obtained, and everyone would have to stand up to his obligations. Before the debate closes, the Minister should make some announcement as to the action he intends to take with regard to boards which have defaulted in their payments.

The Minister for Works: Repudiated!

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: No; absconded with trust funds rightfully the property of the Main Roads Board of this State. Something must be done about that. Obligations of local authorities to Governments will never be honoured if something is not done to check the robbery that has taken place during the past 12 or 18 months. Before the Bill, which deals with that subject, goes through the House, we should know what action the Government propose

to take. I do not care whether they wipe out the liability, or what they do; but there should be uniformity in the matter.

**MR. SAMPSON** (Swan) [7.53]: I welcome this Bill to amend the Main Roads Act, and feel sure that the reception accorded to the measure throughout the State will be on the same lines.

**Hon. J. C. Willecock**: Thank you for nothing!

**Mr. SAMPSON**: I have been surprised to notice the criticism levelled at the methods of road boards by the hon. member interjecting.

**Hon. P. Collier**: The Minister said they had fallen down on their job.

**Mr. SAMPSON**: The member for Geraldton spoke of boards absconding with trust funds, spoke of robbery. I know that some boards have found it impossible to pay. That has been a matter of deep regret to them. But the hon. member has made an error in levelling these charges, because, as a matter of fact, the Geraldton Municipal Council took a leading part in urging what amount should be repudiated, and actually circularised the local authorities in this State urging them to refrain from making these payments. Therefore it would perhaps be well if we looked at home before throwing mud in the form of these sweeping charges.

**Hon. J. C. Willecock**: I am not the Geraldton Municipal Council.

**Mr. SAMPSON**: The circumstances perhaps called for a little protection, or a few words justifying the action of the Geraldton Municipal Council. I appreciate the fact that the member for Geraldton feels the position acutely, because since he has made what may be termed serious charges against road boards, it must be painful to him that the main municipal authority in his electorate has behaved as it did. We have had what amounts to a homily on the shortcomings of local authorities, but we must not forget that they have been passing through a most difficult time. In many of the wheat districts it has been extremely difficult to collect rates.

**Hon. J. C. Willecock**: Everybody who drives a motor car without a license is offending against the law.

**Mr. SAMPSON**: I know that is so. Everyone who uses a motor truck to carry wheat or other product, unless in possession of a license is also offending.

**Hon. J. C. Willecock**: Do you condone it?

**Mr. SAMPSON**: There are perhaps occasions when circumstances justify some consideration in regard to time. The member for Geraldton will agree that if consideration had not been given in numerous cases, it would have been impossible for some of the wheat to be brought to the railway. Work by the boards in country districts has been reduced to a minimum, because of the fact that rates have come in so badly, and because in so many cases it has been found impossible to obtain payment of traffic fees. Perhaps I need say no more about the remarks of the member for Geraldton; but I do claim that he took an extreme view, particularly having regard to the action of the Geraldton Municipal Council. Realising the difficulties of local bodies, the hon. member might have shown a more kindly spirit. Boards should be made to pay, but if they cannot pay are we to say, "Let the wheat rot on the farms"? I believe the payments in question will eventually be made. Road boards and municipal councils have a record of which they may well be proud. I am firmly convinced that the people throughout the country will welcome this Bill, which permits local authorities outside the metropolitan area to retain the whole of their traffic fees. Reference has been made to the condition of roads in past years.

**Hon. A. McCallum**: You should know something about that.

**Mr. SAMPSON**: Yes, and I must acknowledge the work the hon. member carried out in the construction of roads while he was Minister for Works. In earlier days the road from Perth to Armadale served to divide those two centres rather than to connect them. The retention of the whole of the traffic fees will assist road boards and municipal councils in the country areas to carry on their operations. They have a tremendous quantity of work to do, and it is carried out at a minimum cost. Under those conditions, the new arrangement will be in the best interests of all concerned. In many instances members of road boards act as supervisors and spare neither their time nor their own money in carrying out those duties. I hope I am right in my reading of the Bill when I say that I understand that where circumstances justify that course being adopted, the Commissioner may ex-



tend consideration to local authorities in respect of certain payments due by them. That is justifiable in view of the difficult times most local authorities are facing. I note that, with the approval of the Governor, the whole or part of debts due and payable by local authorities may be waived.

The Minister for Works: That has nothing to do with traffic fees.

Mr. SAMPSON: No, I understand it relates to certain other payments, and I will listen to the Minister's statement with interest when we deal with this matter in Committee.

The Minister for Works: That refers to the maintenance of developmental roads.

Mr. SAMPSON: My object in speaking was to express my appreciation of the attitude of the Minister in making available to country road boards the whole of the traffic fees collected in their districts. In adopting the attitude that the Minister has, I am sure he realises that the expenditure of money can be better left in the hands of local authorities.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: That is the old story.

Mr. SAMPSON: It seemed to me ironical that the most critical in this matter should be the member for Geraldton (Hon. J. C. Willecock), seeing that his district has sinned so badly in circularising other local authorities urging them to do something that he himself knew was wrong.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: In order to bring about uniformity.

Mr. SAMPSON: Uniformity brought about by wrong-doing will, I am sure, not have the support of the hon. member. It is evident that in this matter he is either not in touch with the desires of the municipal council at Geraldton—

Hon. J. C. Willecock: Don't worry about that. The Minister knows how much I am in touch with them.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am sorry that the Minister knows—

Hon. J. C. Willecock: Do you think I would make such suggestions if I were not in touch with the local authorities in my district?

Mr. SAMPSON: If that is so, I am rather sorry that the rest of the road boards were treated to the homily that we heard from the hon. member in the course of which he made reference to absconding in relation to their operations.

The Minister for Works: Some of them deserve more than the hon. member said.

Mr. SAMPSON: If that were the position generally, in a little while the whole of the local authorities would be confronted—

Hon. S. W. Munsie: If a road board collected money that did not belong to it, that money should be handed over. If you and I, as private individuals, did something of that sort, we would be put behind the bars at Fremantle.

Mr. SAMPSON: Perhaps the hon. member and I have done things for which we might be placed behind the bars of the Fremantle gaol—

Hon. S. W. Munsie: You speak for yourself! That does not apply to me.

Mr. SAMPSON: No, I will speak for you too, and perhaps the hon. member would be behind the bars for a longer time than I would be.

**HON. A. McCALLUM** (South Fremantle) [8.5]: The Bill will spell the beginning of the end of the main road policy of the State. It is an indication that the work is not to be done as it has been carried out during the last few years. It will be remembered that when the House decided that local authorities should contribute towards the cost of road making, a select committee of this House was appointed to deal with the matter. Prior to that time, the local authorities complained about the allocation specified by the Main Roads Board as their contribution. The Minister and I were both members of the select committee appointed by the House and we submitted a report that included the graduated scale of payments by local authorities. That is now the law. All along, the local authorities have fought that scale of contributions. They opposed making any contributions at all. Some lodged objections more vigorous than others. I do not say that the opposition has been unanimous, because I know of some country local authorities who still favour the present scheme even in preference to that embodied in the Bill before us. Their attitude is dictated by their fear of what may happen to the main roads upon which they depend so much for means of communication. Now it appears that the opposition raised by most of the local authorities has gained the day. They have objected to the existing law and have said that they will not pay their contributions. They

have defied Parliament, and the Government have capitulated. The Government have allowed the decision of Parliament to be overriden and have agreed to amend the law to comply with the requirements of the local authorities. Thus they have made these authorities superior to the will of Parliament. The action of the Government is a sign of weakness. It is wrong to encourage people who defy the law, irrespective of who they may be or what authority they have. Such local authorities should not be allowed to set a policy for themselves and in their demands for it, make the position so uncomfortable for the Government that instead of enforcing the law, Ministers now ask Parliament to amend it to comply with the wishes of the local authorities. Such weakness on the part of the Government may encourage other organisations to adopt a similar attitude towards laws that Parliament has passed. In my opinion the Bill contains two main principles. The first deals with the percentage of traffic fees that local authorities have been contributing towards the maintenance of main roads. The Minister has decided that the country road boards shall be permitted to retain their traffic fees, whereas the local authorities in the metropolitan area will not be treated similarly. The Government will retain their traffic fees. Why should there be that distinction between the road boards in the metropolitan area and the country road boards? If the latter are to retain the 22½ per cent. of their traffic fees, then I want the metropolitan local authorities to retain a similar percentage.

Mr. H. W. Mann: Hear, hear!

Hon. A. McCALLUM: There should not be that distinction. The Bill sets out that the 22½ per cent. is to be deducted from the pool for specific work, including the building of a certain bridge.

The Minister for Works: For roads and bridges.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: At any rate, that percentage is not to be retained by the local authorities within the metropolitan area. It means that the market gardeners at Spearwood and Coogee in my electorate will have to contribute their traffic fees to the building of a bridge between Midland Junction and Perth. What has that bridge to do with the market gardeners in my district? Why should they be called upon to contribute towards that work, whereas the wheatgrower

at Wyalcatchem, who will use the bridge more than the market gardeners at Spearwood and Coogee, is not to be required to contribute towards its construction? Why should that distinction be introduced? Perhaps there is some significance in it. The Minister for Works has given way to the country road boards, but I would like to know what the Minister for Railways, in his capacity as chairman of the Perth Road Board, has to say about it.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: He is the piebald boy.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I almost misunderstood the position. This bridge is in the electorate of the Minister for Railways.

The Minister for Railways: You are wrong.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I don't know----

The Minister for Railways: You don't know, so you are being told.

Mr. H. W. Mann: It is 50 per cent. in his district.

The Minister for Railways: No part of it is in my electorate. It is in that represented by an Opposition member.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: At any rate, I disagree entirely with this differentiation. When the 22½ per cent. allocation from traffic fees was agreed to, it was on the score that cars licensed in the metropolitan area used the country roads. Some of the local authorities had taken a census of cars that passed through their districts at the weekend, and argued before the members of the select committee that 50 per cent. of the traffic through country towns came from the metropolitan area. Because of that, they contended that part of the metropolitan traffic fees should be applied towards the maintenance of roads in the country areas. In order to meet that contention, the 22½ per cent. allocation was agreed to. Now the Bill proposes that the local authorities are to retain the whole of their traffic fees, but the metropolitan authorities are not to receive the same consideration. The Government are to retain the metropolitan traffic fees so that they may build some bridges or do other work that until now has been a charge on the State Treasury. Can the Minister give any sound reason why the metropolitan traffic fees should not be dealt with in the same way as the country traffic fees? Where is the logical reason for that distinction? Owners of motor cars and trucks in the city will pay not only directly for the

construction of bridges in the metropolitan area, but indirectly as taxpayers they will have to pay for the construction of bridges in the country.

The Minister for Works: How will they pay?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Though the Government.

The Minister for Works: Out of the petrol tax.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Will it all come out of that? The expenditure will be confined to main roads and developmental roads. There is another point that money may be spent on roads whether they come under the Act or not. Did one ever hear of such a thing? It does not matter whether the work is done on roads that come within the provisions of the Act or not, the money may be expended on it. That will practically do away with the policy of main roads and allow jobs to be done higglegly-pigglegly all over the State.

The Minister for Railways: The main roads we have at present have a good deal to do with the troubles of the railways.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: The Minister for Lands asked the other night why should we travel in a rickshaw when motor cars are available? It is idle for the Minister for Railways to think that we can stop motor traffic. The main roads, which have made for the development of motor traffic, have done much to assist settlement and have rendered the life for people in the country more comfortable. People in the country have been able to live with a much greater feeling of security. To rely on railway communication entirely in a country like ours would not be right. Are we going to refuse to take advantage of what science has given us? To do so would be against the interests of the State.

The Minister for Railways: The motor should be used to feed the railways.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: In places where there is one train a week? The main roads have done much to facilitate settlement and make the people in the country feel more contented, and I should be sorry to see the main roads policy abandoned. This, however, seems to be a step in that direction. It is admitted in the report of the Commissioner, what we all know, that less money is being spent. There is less money available. Previously the Commonwealth money was

available for construction and not for maintenance, and the grant was accompanied by all sorts of restrictions. At every conference the point was argued. Now the money is handed over free of restrictions, but the amount is smaller. The Minister has not so much money for construction as we had.

The Minister for Works: Less than half.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: And in face of that he proposes to hand back this money to the local authorities. That shows what a limitation will be set upon road work in future. I take it that the same staff will not be required under the policy suggested in the Bill.

The Minister for Works: The staff numbers 30 now compared with 96 previously.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I take strong exception to the provision that the metropolitan local authorities should be singled out for a tax of 22½ per cent. while no local authority outside the metropolitan area will be required to pay it. The metropolitan local authorities could do with that money. The existing law defines the main roads, and places on the Commissioner the responsibility of maintaining them. Other roads could be added to the list.

The Minister for Railways interjected.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: There was no secrecy regarding the distribution while I was Minister. I think the member for Claremont asked how the money was distributed, and the distribution was explained in correspondence on numerous occasions. I declared in this House more than once that there would be no secrecy about the distribution. It is difficult to find a basis to please all concerned. Some basis is necessary, but to get a satisfactory basis is difficult. I convened conferences and invited ideas, and explored many suggestions.

The Minister for Works: I suggested that the local authorities should get together and decide amongst themselves.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I do not say that everybody was satisfied during my term of office. I do not think anyone could satisfy all the local authorities. I object strongly to owners of vehicles in the metropolitan area being taxed to the extent of the whole cost of constructing bridges in the metropolis. The Government are doing that to relieve themselves of the obligation.

The Minister for Works: How would you construct them?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: How have they been constructed in the past?

The Minister for Railways: They have not been constructed.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: No bridges have been built in the metropolitan area for a good while.

The Minister for Works: I am speaking of roads.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: The metropolitan area is well provided with roads.

The Minister for Works: Out of what money were they built?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Out of the traffic fees; the Government have not built any.

The Minister for Works: You know that the Act does not permit of the money being spent on the construction of any road in the metropolitan area.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: The Government have not constructed any roads in the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Works: What about the Canning-road and the Armadale-road?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: The Armadale-road was built out of the Federal fund.

The Minister for Railways: Those roads were maintained out of the traffic fees.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Out of the pool.

The Minister for Railways: The pool into which we paid a great deal and out of which we got nothing.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: The roads are named in the Act. If the Minister considers that other roads should be included, he should endeavour to get them added. I protest on behalf of the three local authorities in my area against the 22½ per cent. being retained by the Government, while it is being handed back to the other local authorities. If the Government retain the money, no benefit will be conferred on my district. The Minister will build bridges that will probably never be used by anyone living in South Fremantle, and yet the people in that district are to be taxed to build them. Clauses 3 and 4 propose a new principle. I do not know of any similar legislation in this or in any other State. It seeks to place the obligation on local authorities to meet certain charges, but goes on to provide that the Minister may remit them.

The Minister for Works: That relates to developmental roads.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I am talking of developmental roads. The local authorities

are responsible for the maintenance of developmental roads, but if the local authorities appeal to the Minister or to the Commissioner, the money may be refunded. If the local authorities do not keep their roads in a proper state of repair, the Minister may do the work and charge them with the cost; but even then the Minister may make a refund. The Premier, when sitting in Opposition, was fond of quoting a former member who used to say that the Act was the law unless he decided otherwise. That applies to this measure. It provides that the local authorities shall meet those charges unless the Minister decides otherwise. Consequently the Minister is to be given power to override Parliament.

The Minister for Works: There is a road in your district that we have been maintaining for years, and not a developmental road. You know that.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I do not; I would be glad to hear which road.

The Minister for Works: On the Peel and Bateman Estates.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: That is not in my district.

The Minister for Works: Then it is just outside.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Nothing of the kind, to my knowledge, has happened in my district. I should not like to be in the position of the Minister for Works. I would not accept authority of this kind. Imagine what it will mean to the Minister! The local authorities will be clamouring for refunds, and the Minister is sure to be accused of favouring one against another. The principle is wrong. Parliament should decide what is to be done. No Minister should be placed in that position. If there is to be an investigation to determine whether a local authority is in a position to pay, the Minister is not the one to decide it. It would be different if the matter were referred to a court and decided upon evidence adduced. To provide that the Minister shall have the right to override the law will place the Minister in a most unenviable position and bring much trouble on him.

Hon. P. Collier: If a road board backed by the member for Murray-Wellington waited on the Minister, how would he resist?

The Minister for Works: It is the Commissioner who has to recommend.

Hon. P. Collier: The Governor will decide on the recommendation of the Minister.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: And the Governor is in effect the Minister.

The Minister for Works: You always said you had no power under the Act.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: The Minister contended that he had all the power.

The Minister for Works: I agree.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I still say that whatever attitude the Commissioner may adopt towards the present Minister, he was entirely different in his attitude towards me. I was never able to influence any decision, and never attempted to do so. My views never entered into it.

Hon. P. Collier: Should the Commissioner say what should be paid? He should not have the right to set aside an Act of Parliament.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I have mentioned my two principal objections and there is another which we shall deal with in Committee. It says that money may be expended on roads whether within this Act or not. I want the Minister to explain what is meant by that. The Bill proposes to return to the country local authorities their 22½ per cent., but will retain it as far as the metropolitan local authorities are concerned. I take strong exception to that; it is not fair. The other gives power to the Minister to say that this is the law unless the Minister decides otherwise. The Minister hopes that no Federal money will be spent within the metropolitan area. I was not aware that there had been any spent in the metropolitan area for a long time.

The Minister for Works: The Armadale-road.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Yes.

The Minister for Works: And the Belmont-road. Where did the money for that come from?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Did that come from metropolitan money?

The Minister for Works: I cannot say.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: The Armadale-road can be classed as part of a country trunk road. It is used by all country traffic that comes into Perth. It is one of the main arteries from the country to the city. Only last night when I was coming in from Midland Junction to Perth I passed three lorry loads of wool between Midland Junction and the Causeway. They were proceeding along the Canning-road to Fremantle. That will

show that that road is not exclusively a metropolitan road. I endorse the view expressed by the member for Geraldton that it would be better to collect all the fees on a different basis, and it would be easy to arrange for a distribution of the funds amongst the local authorities. There would be no difficulty in each local authority getting its quota. Every country representative that gave evidence before the select committee agreed that a substantial percentage of local traffic fees was not collected in the country. All admitted that and they said there were complaints that members of boards, or friends or relatives of theirs did not pay up. There were all kinds of local influences at work that favoured certain people against others. That kind of thing could not possibly happen if the fees were collected by the police. This is the only State where the fees are not collected by a central authority. Even at this stage I hope the Minister will agree to recast the Bill in the manner I have suggested. I cannot agree that we should be taxed to pay for work up here that there is no likelihood of people at Spearwood using. There would be just as much likelihood of a car from Fremantle using the country roads as there would be a car from Perth using the Subiaco roads; but it cannot be argued that there is a likelihood of a market gardener's truck from Spearwood using the road between the Causeway and Midland Junction, and yet they would have to pay for that. The cases are not parallel. I totally disagree with the two main parts of the Bill and I hope they will be recast.

**MR. DONEY** (Williams-Narrogin) [8.52]: I do not intend to discuss the merits of the Bill, but I wish to express disagreement with the statement made by the Minister for Works on Thursday last. I am also anxious to afford the Minister an opportunity when he replies of either amending the statement he then made or withdrawing it. I am glad to be able to admit that generally the Minister is discreet and careful as to ensure the correctness of what he has to say before he passes it on to the House as a fact. On Thursday last, however, he definitely fell from that high standard. The Minister was speaking on the second reading of the Bill and in respect of the traffic fees which had to be paid by the 48 local authorities, he indicated that there were five that had refused

to pay their dues. He also said that five either did not reply to communications, or if they had replied, they had not put up any proposal. Thirdly, he said that they had refused to make payment. And he concluded his reference by saying that one of the five local authorities was that of Narrogin. On this occasion I tell the Minister that he has blundered; that he has no ground whatever for condemning Narrogin on any one of the three grounds he enumerated. I have sighted the traffic fees file in the municipal council office in Narrogin, and I am able to say that Narrogin did reply to the correspondence on the matter, that Narrogin did put up a proposal, that Narrogin never denied its liability, that Narrogin has made payment, and that the payment was an amount of £270—a pretty substantial sum these days. This amount was paid on the 1st June or about that time, and I know that the Narrogin Council has made budgetary provision for the payment of the balance during the current year. I have also seen a copy of the letter that was sent to the Minister's department setting out the intentions of the council. I know this, too, that three or four months ago a deputation, consisting of the mayor and town clerk of Narrogin, waited on an official in the Minister's Department, and explained to him precisely the method it was proposed to adopt in making the payments. I know that Narrogin is late in making the final payment, but to say that the council definitely refused to pay its quota is far from right.

Mr. Hegney: They do intend to pay?

Mr. DONEY: I have already said that the council has paid a material portion of the amount due, and that it is intended, if it is at all possible, to pay the balance during the current year. I did not appreciate the Minister's all too pointed reference to the Narrogin council. The Minister, having mentioned one local authority, should have mentioned the lot, or he should have remained silent regarding them all. He declared that Narrogin had fallen down on its job. I resent that imputation, and I am sure the Minister cannot make good that claim. I do not mind admitting that Narrogin, like other councils, is possibly culpable to a slight degree on the score of delay. It is just as well to admit perhaps that it has digressed a little from the bounds of propriety because the Minister will be bound to make a mouth-

ful of the fact bye and bye. I do not wish to labour this matter, but I suggest to the Minister that he test the correctness of my assertion that £270 was paid. Then if he finds my assertion to be correct, I am sure he will not mind telling the Chamber that he made the blunder I have referred to. I am surprised to notice that Geraldton has committed a definite offence against the Minister's department by circularising local bodies suggesting they refrain from paying the traffic fees. Why Geraldton should have escaped the tongue-banging Narrogin has received, I do not know. Even now the Minister should make up the lee-way when he goes up there again.

MR. PIESSE (Katanning) [8.46]: I suppose every member can rightly say he is associated with the local authorities and every day comes closely into touch with the activities of the Main Roads Board. For some time past we have realised that there must be a modification of the main roads policy. I thank the Minister for having taken this early opportunity to provide legislation that will meet the altered conditions of the local authorities and the responsibility of the Main Roads Board. Everybody, I think, will realise the important work that has been carried out, particularly during the last few years, by the unemployed representatives co-operating with the Main Roads Board to meet the unemployment difficulty. We are fortunate in having the local authorities so well organised as to be enabled to step in at a time when most needed to assist in providing work, which has been profitably and well carried out. Had it not been for the local authorities being ready to provide special work at a time when we did not know how to find sustenance for the unemployed—

Mr. Kenneally: And in many cases at starvation wages.

Mr. PIESSE: Whatever the wages were, I do not think the hon. member will deny that the very deepest sympathy was shown by those administering the meagre funds at their disposal.

Mr. Raphael: The city council paid bare sustenance wages, and had a £30,000 surplus.

Mr. PIESSE: I am not concerned about the city council, but I am concerned about what the local authorities do. I have no fewer than seven local authorities in my elec-

torate, and I must say it has been a very strenuous time for them bridging the difficulties met with in finding work for the unemployed. I commend not only the local authorities of my own electorate, but also those in other districts for the wonderful work they have done. Probably one could say that also about the Perth City Council and the various municipalities.

Mr. Raphael: You could not say anything good about them.

Mr. PIESSE: The hon. member ought to have a better knowledge of the self-sacrifice of those attending to local government affairs.

Mr. Raphael: The city council would not cut out £14 a week for booze, but they would cut down the sustenance rate.

Mr. PIESSE: I am not here to answer for the shortcomings of certain local authorities, but certainly they are trying to solve the difficulty of unemployment, and finding sustenance for those unfortunate enough to be out of work.

Mr. SPEAKER: There is nothing of this in the Bill.

Mr. PIESSE: I regret that there has been a very serious falling-off in the amount to be available in future for the operations of the Main Roads Board, and I regret that the Minister probably will not be able to provide the funds for the assistance of local authorities on a similar scale to that which has obtained during the past few years. We know that the amount at the disposal of the Main Roads Board is likely to fall from £750,000 to £320,000, which of course must mean a restriction of work. During the past 24 hours I have received several letters, the writers of which are anxious to know how the Minister intends to distribute the £320,000 after providing for Main Roads Board requirements.

The Minister for Works: I have told them clearly what I propose.

Mr. PIESSE: A number of the outer districts road boards are in a very bad financial position, and I feel sure that they need have no doubt about the treatment they are likely to receive from the Minister. But I should be glad if the Minister gave us an idea as to how he is going to distribute the money and whether he intends altogether to cut out the grants previously made available for country district roads. I did not clearly understand the Minister when he said that he did not favour the retention

of the traffic fees by the local authorities after the expiration of the main roads agreement. However, from that remark I take it there is no reason to be anxious during the next 4½ years. Probably by that time the finances will have improved, and so all anxiety will disappear.

Mr. Kenneally: We may have a change of Government before that time.

Mr. PIESSE: I think the Minister is quite right in requesting those boards who have defaulted to make good their obligations and their liabilities. But I hope he will bear with those boards who consider they were due for relief in regard to the 1929-30 traffic fees. Under the 1930 legislation the greater part of the traffic fees collected by the local authorities has been expended. Following on that year we had the collapse in the value of our farm products, which placed many of the newer back-country boards in a very serious position. I hope that even now the Minister will be able to give some relief to those boards. I think the Minister can rightly expect the road boards to keep up to their obligations in regard to outstanding liabilities. He has been very reasonable, and I commend him for the consideration he has shown to various road boards in that direction. The money that will be required for the maintenance of our main roads in future will be very considerable. We should be proud of the main roads that have been constructed throughout the State. At one time we were inclined to look upon them as a wasteful expenditure, but now they are made it is our duty to see that they are maintained, especially in partly settled districts where they are one of the greatest blessings the country could have. Many of our people have to travel long distances by night in all sorts of weather, and it is a comfort to them to know they have good roads to travel over. I can only hope the Minister and the Main Roads Board will see to it that those roads are well maintained. During the winter months heavy rains do more damage to roads than does the traffic. Judging from the results of the past year the Main Roads Board seem to have dealt with their responsibility very well, and I hope that money will be provided for necessary work in the future. We all trust the position of the country will improve and that we shall find that by the time the Main Roads Agreement terminates, some other scheme will be available for the

provision of funds for the main roads, and that the Main Roads Board will never think of taking the whole of the traffic fees away from the local authorities.

**MR. BROWN** (Pingelly) [9.0]: I support the Bill. It emanated from the recent road board conference.

**Mr. Raphael**: It has been dictated by it, has it?

**Mr. BROWN**: The Minister dictated it to the conference, which gave its approval to the Bill.

**Hon. P. Collier**: Then it did not emanate from the conference?

The Minister for Works: Of course.

**Hon. P. Collier**: The delegates only approved of it, then.

**Mr. BROWN**: They knew what suited them best. They know more than metropolitan members do about the matter, especially more than the member for Victoria Park (Mr. Raphael).

**Mr. Raphael**: We are getting a new Causeway. I am quite satisfied.

**Mr. BROWN**: A good deal of money spent on main roads has been ill spent, without due regard to the interests of the State. Many of these main roads are running parallel to the railways. Surely a blunder was made there. The main roads should be kept up by the local authorities, and money should have been obtained for developmental roads to connect up with the main roads. It would have been better if the money had been spent in the construction of developmental roads to feed our railways. A good deal of the money spent by the Main Roads Board has been spent on the construction of roads running parallel to the railways. This has enabled motor trucks to enter into competition with the railway system. A considerable sum was spent by the Main Roads Board on a by-road leading off from the Perth-Albany road. The work went on until the board came to a river, when it stopped. The local authority had not the money with which to build a bridge. For several months of the year no one can use that road, notwithstanding that a good deal of main road money was spent upon it. Neither was there sufficient money in the trust funds for the building of a bridge.

**Mr. Raphael**: Why did you not build it?

**Mr. BROWN**: Many road boards in my electorate have met their obligations, and paid their 22½ per cent. When the recent

allotments were made they received their grant of £350. In the eastern part of my electorate road boards have not been able to collect the rates due to them, and have not paid their traffic quotas. I have in mind the Kulin Road Board. In that locality two-thirds of the settlers are Agricultural Bank clients, who owe in the aggregate £3,000 to the board. In the circumstances the board could not be expected to meet their obligations.

**Mr. Withers**: The Government owe the board money instead of the board owing them money?

**Mr. BROWN**: They have arranged with the Minister to guarantee to pay off the arrears in a certain time, and they too received the £350 grant. That board will now be in a position to repair the roads that have been damaged by heavy rains. But for this money, the roads would have gone from bad to worse. The Kondinin Road Board is practically in the same position. They are arranging with their ratepayers to pay off their rates by doing work for the board. They have a good secretary who sees that the settlers are not being overpaid.

**Mr. Panton**: We agree with you there.

**Mr. BROWN**: A farmer may owe £20 or £30. He may tender more than a job is worth, but the secretary sees to it that he does not get more than he is entitled to. This road board possesses a large territory running into the Lake Carmody district. There are not many developmental roads, so that the settlers have to do a lot of the work themselves. These people are an asset to the State, but they have no railway. If any body of people require transport facilities, they do. Some time ago the Government reduced the fees on motor trucks by halving the rates. If a truck was rated at £8, the fee became £4. The Government still claim the 22½ per cent. upon the reduced fee. Under the Bill it is proposed to give all the traffic fees back to the boards. Many farmers own motor cars which they have not been able to license. The vehicles would only be used once a week to take the family into town.

**Mr. Raphael**: Many metropolitan people are in the same boat.

**Mr. BROWN**: The fees for these cars may run up to £8 a year. These vehicles should also be allowed a license for half the rates.

**Mr. Raphael**: I agree with you there.



Mr. BROWN: The concession on trucks has been a great boon to the farmers, and they will benefit very largely when the bulk handling scheme comes into operation.

Mr. Pantou: You are not allowed to discuss that.

Mr. BROWN: I think the Bill will meet with universal favour in the country districts. The rains in the country have been very heavy this year, and many of the roads have fallen into a bad state. If the local authorities have not the money with which to repair them at once, they go from bad to worse. These boards which have been financed by the Government are now in a position to do this work, and give employment to a number of persons in their own districts.

**MR. KENNEALLY** (East Perth) [9.10]: When similar legislation was previously introduced it was referred to a select committee for inquiry as to a better method of assessment, and a better arrangement for the refund of certain payments to local authorities. The evidence justified the committee bringing down a report, which was incorporated in the Bill at the time. The Minister now proposes to depart altogether from those principles. Even though the percentages agreed to as a compromise are now being altered, those who were called upon to make sacrifices in order to secure unanimity of action will be called upon to make still further sacrifices. I refer to the metropolitan area. The Bill contains a proposal that it should be retrospective to the 1st July last.

The Minister for Works: That is when the license fees become due.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Why is it optional that the local authorities may be called upon to pay?

The Minister for Works: There is nothing optional about the Bill.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Payment may be made at the discretion of the Minister.

The Minister for Works: That is not in the Bill.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The Minister should attend to his eyesight.

The Minister for Works: You are dealing with another clause.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The local authorities should be called upon to pay their dues.

The Minister for Works: That has nothing to do with the traffic fees.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Is this to be at the discretion of the Minister? The local authorities said they would not do certain things, and they have not all done them. Suppose it had been trade unions who found themselves in this position! I cannot see the Minister bringing down a Bill to ratify their action. The Minister now wants to amend the legislation so that the action of local authorities, who have defied the law, may be ratified.

The Minister for Works: There is nothing in the Bill about that.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I want to ascertain whether the Minister is consistent.

The Minister for Works: I am.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I should like to believe that. I cannot see him bringing down legislation to ratify any illegal act on the part of trade unions.

The Minister for Works: There is nothing about that in the Bill.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The Bill provides for the stopping of 22½ per cent. of the traffic fees. Does the Minister deny that?

The Minister for Works: No.

Mr. KENNEALLY: He is doing this only in the case of certain local authorities. Is he showing any discrimination?

The Minister for Works: No.

Mr. KENNEALLY: And it is not showing discrimination to stop them in one case and not in another.

Mr. Raphael: You would not expect it of him, would you?

Mr. KENNEALLY: Those bodies from whom he proposes to stop the fees, are the metropolitan local governing bodies who made sacrifices when previously called upon to do so in order to meet country requirements. Further on in the measure the Minister provides for the cost of development roads to be met out of trust funds. That penalises the local governing bodies in the metropolitan area in a double sense: firstly they do not get the money they should receive, and secondly it is proposed that part of the money should be spent in the maintenance of development roads, which are not to be found in the metropolitan area.

Mr. Hegney: There are some.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Some in my friend's electorate. The measure calls upon the local governing bodies in the metropolitan area to make additional sacrifices in favour of local governing bodies in country districts.

The Minister for Works: Where are they?

Mr. KENNEALLY: I have already mentioned two.

The Minister for Works: In both cases you are wrong.

Mr. KENNEALLY: If I happen to be wrong and the Minister happens to be right, it is an unusual instance, and perhaps we can change about. Will the Minister deny that the Bill provides for the total waiving of liabilities incurred under the measure? The Bill gives power to the Governor-in-Council—which on this occasion means the Minister—to waive any debt due by a local governing body.

The Minister for Works: That is not in the Bill. The Bill only refers, in that respect, to cost of maintenance of development roads.

Hon. P. Collier: The debt then apparently becomes a debt of the Government, and the Government can declare any road a development road.

The Minister for Works: Yes.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Experience shows that not many such roads are declared in the metropolitan area, and that not many local governing bodies in the metropolitan area would be unable to pay the fees as regards which the Minister will have power to exempt. In Committee I shall endeavour to ensure that the sectional legislation which has become characteristic of the Government shall not be so evident as it is in the Bill in its present form.

**MR. HEGNEY** (Middle Swan) [8.50]: I support the second reading of the Bill, in the hope that during the Committee stage certain provisions of the measure will be made more liberal, particularly as regards the metropolitan area. Even if that additional liberality is not secured, the proposals of the Bill represent an advance on the present position, especially as regards the metropolitan area. In my electorate there are developmental roads in respect of which I have frequently urged the Minister to make money available, so as to help the people concerned, especially where the road boards have not the necessary funds. The invariable reply has been that he has not power under the Main Roads Act to spend money from the trust account on roads in the metropolitan area other than main roads. The same thing applies to moneys obtained

by way of Federal aid. Although I understand that at the moment there is no direction as to where the money is to be spent, the Minister has followed the practice of spending such money outside the metropolitan area. Within 15 or 20 miles of Perth there are numerous roads which would serve primary industries, and those industries are important to the State. I refer, for example, to the poultry industry and the fruit industry. Many producers are suffering great disabilities through lack of road facilities to bring their products to the local markets or to the ports for shipment overseas. The provisions of the Act should be liberalised so as to make more money available in the metropolitan area. Certain of the proposed amendments are illogical, in view of the conditions the Bill lays down. One of those amendments is that which says that local authorities in country areas shall have full use of the traffic fees collected, whilst local governing bodies in the metropolitan area shall have only a certain proportion of such fees. As pointed out by the member for Geraldton (Hon. J. C. Willecock), the greater percentage of the traffic fees collected in the State is collected in the metropolitan area. It is a pity that the producers will not get the bridge which the Minister proposed to build somewhere between Guildford and the Causeway, where he seems to be deferring things because Mr. Boas wants to set a grandiose scheme on foot at the Causeway. The bridge would mean substantial relief to traffic in the metropolitan area, and the Minister would do well to carry out the proposals outlined by him to the conference of local governing bodies some weeks ago. He should not vacillate. He declared himself as to the site, and declared to the conference that funds were available. He explained how he proposed to finance the building of the bridge. I do not see how such a bridge can be made available except under the proposals of this Bill. In Committee I shall support any amendment which will make for the more liberal distribution of traffic fees in the metropolitan area.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS** (Hon. J. Lindsay—Mt. Marshall—in reply) [9.25]: There have been various suggestions as to certain clauses of the Bill which provide that the Commissioner may repay certain local authorities any moneys spent. I wish hon.

members to bear in mind that Section 27 of the principal Act provides—

If a local authority fails to maintain to the satisfaction of the Commissioner any developmental road, the Commissioner shall by notice in writing direct the local authority to carry out, within a period to be named in the notice, such works of maintenance as are specified.

Then the section goes on to provide that if the local authority fails to do as directed, the Commissioner may do the work and charge the local authority with the cost of it. Some local bodies cannot raise sufficient money to maintain developmental roads. I agree with the member for South Fremantle (Hon. A. McCallum) that the provision is not such as one likes, but I agree with the Commissioner that the provision is necessary. The existing Act allows the Government to spend money on the construction of development roads, but does not allow them to spend money on the construction of bridges on developmental roads. When at Albany recently, I saw a bridge there, about a mile long, which was in need of repair; but under the law the Government cannot do anything to repair it. The Bill will enable us to do such work.

Hon. A. McCallum: The clause speaks of refunding.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Perhaps it should be worded somewhat differently. We think Federal Aid Road moneys should be used for such purposes, notwithstanding a road not having been declared. The local governing body would have to maintain the work. In one case a bridge was falling down, and the Government spent money on repairing it, though legally they were not entitled to do so. I am surprised to find any member of Parliament supporting any local governing body as regards payment of traffic fees. I have made it perfectly clear at every conference that local governing bodies have to pay. The Government are not asking the local governing bodies for anything they have not received. Section 33, Subsection 3 of the Act provides—

Each local authority required to contribute under this section shall keep a special trust account, into which shall be paid as collected the prescribed proportion of license fees, and at the end of each month all moneys held in such account shall be withdrawn and remitted to the Treasurer.

Hon. members will see that the provision is quite clear. The local governing body col-

lects the traffic fees, and should pay them into a trust fund, and then remit them to the Treasury each month. Up to a month ago, five local governing bodies had not sent in any money on that account. I mentioned Narrogin the other evening, and I mentioned it for a purpose. There are only four of the five local governing bodies referred to in a very bad financial position, but the municipality of Narrogin at least should have paid its dues. The member for Narrogin has given the House some information. I will give some more. For 1929-30 the Narrogin Municipality owed £335 9s. 6d., of which amount they had not paid one penny. They owed £317 5s. for 1930-31, and have not paid one penny of the amount.

Hon. P. Collier: Shame!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: For the year 1931-32 they owed £271 10s. 9d., which they paid on the 8th July last, but there was a reason for that.

Hon. P. Collier: How much did they pay?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: They owed about £900 for the three years, and I think they paid about £271. The reason for that was that certain work had to be done in the district and the Government refused to do anything unless they paid their traffic fees.

Hon. P. Collier: Then they paid under duress.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. The member for Geraldton (Hon. J. C. Willcock) dealt with this question. The Geraldton municipality circularised the whole of the local governing authorities throughout the State urging them to resist the payment of the traffic fees. I was surprised at any local governing authority adopting such an attitude, seeing that the Act is so clear. The Geraldton Municipal Council were prepared to prosecute a ratepayer who did not pay his rates, but were prepared to repudiate their indebtedness to the Government.

Hon. P. Collier: Did they collect the money themselves?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If they did not collect the license fees, we would not ask them for anything. The Act specifies that they must pay over a percentage of what they do collect.

Hon. P. Collier: Then that amounts to misappropriation of funds.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Let us go a little further. The Main Roads Act Amendment Act was assented to on

the 23rd December, 1929. The local authorities regard the Bill as retrospective legislation. The member for South Fremantle, when Minister for Works, met the representatives of the road boards in conference, and the whole question was discussed. That was in 1928, a year before the Act was thought of. The allocation question was discussed and the local authorities were afraid that they would be piling up a debt for the future, in consequence of which they realised something had to be done. They appointed their executive to meet the Minister, and they agreed to a payment of 25 per cent., not 10 per cent. as has been stated. Each local governing body throughout the State knew of that arrangement. They gave the executive authority, if they considered it necessary, to convene a special conference, but the executive did not regard that as necessary. I agree that the greater proportion of the traffic fees for that year were collected and spent before the Act was passed, and, in the circumstances, we had to meet the position that had been created. I gave certain information to the House when I moved the second reading of the Bill, but it is evident that some hon. members did not hear my remarks. I said that 48 local governing bodies should have paid their traffic fees in full, and that 42 had paid the first year's allocation. I said that the Crown Law Department had sent letters to each local governing authority, and in reply we had received many communications, but that seven of the local authorities had not replied, 15 had not yet submitted any proposals, but that every other matter had been arranged. Most of the local governing authorities had made arrangements to pay off their 1929-30 arrears in three years, and that is considered satisfactory. Some of the road boards have not paid at all. As I pointed out previously, the Government cannot be placed in the position of suing a local authority. In order to mete out justice to those who have paid their full dues, I agreed to a special grant of £350 to each local governing authority that had paid 100 per cent. of their traffic fees, and the remainder would be paid in accordance with the percentage of their traffic fees handed over. Many local authorities have since paid up the full amount in order to secure their proportion of the special grant. I believe we shall be able to collect practically all the money out-

standing in the future. The total amount collected in the past three years was £144,902, and of that amount £79,829 was collected in the metropolitan area, and £65,072 in the country districts. The amount owing is £18,708, so that the larger percentage of the amount has already been paid. When I moved the second reading of the Bill, I gave some figures relating to the reduction in the amount of traffic fees paid. I did not then explain that one of the reasons for the reduction in the country districts was that motor trucks pay half-fees only. I agree that another reason is that local governing authorities have not collected as much as they should have done. The member for Katanning (Mr. Piessie) asked me to make a statement about grants. I made that announcement both at the road board conference and when I moved the second reading of the Bill. I stated that the amount we would have to spend in future would be approximately £320,000, instead of £750,000 as formerly. I pointed out that the £320,000 would be for main roads, bridges, developmental roads where the local governing authorities could not possibly find the necessary money out of revenue and for opening up and developing back country districts where new settlers are taking up land and the local authorities cannot possibly have any appreciable revenue yet. When Minister for Works, the member for South Fremantle (Hon. A. McCallum) agreed to give each local authority £2,000 a year for work on developmental roads. It was not possible to carry out his promise because the Loan Council could not borrow the necessary money to enable the State to provide their quota of 15s. in the pound. As there are 123 local bodies in the State, it will be seen that the grant would have meant the expenditure of about £300,000 a year. In future local governing authorities will have to depend upon themselves. Only in special circumstances will they be able to receive assistance from the funds at our disposal. The member for Geraldton (Hon. J. C. Willcock) said we would not have money to maintain our roads. Money spent in that direction in 1930-31 amounted to £55,216 and in 1931-32 to £42,177. I believe the reduction in the amount arose out of the alteration in the policy of the Commissioner of Main Roads. Instead of leaving the roads to be attended to by the local governing authorities, the Commissioner is now patrolling 1,530 miles

of roads and I believe those roads are in much better condition to-day than they were formerly. The member for East Perth (Mr. Kenneally) accused me of taking the traffic fees from the metropolitan area to maintain developmental roads.

Mr. Kenneally: I said that would be possible.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Act says distinctly that 25 per cent. of the fees collected shall be spent in the country districts.

Hon. A. McCallum: That has not been since the Act was in operation.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, but since the agreement was reached regarding the 22½ per cent. deduction. The Bill provides that the 22½ per cent. collected in the metropolitan area shall be spent within the metropolitan area for the construction of roads and bridges and shall not be spent on developmental roads in the country districts. When I spoke on the second reading, I stated that I hoped Federal aid roads money would not be spent in the metropolitan area in future. In some States that Federal money is not spent within 100 miles of the metropolis. We have not gone that far in this State, but instead of taking £24,000 and spending it in the country, that amount will now be available to do much needed work in the metropolitan area. I also suggest in the Bill that it shall be made retrospective for one year and if that is agreed to, it will mean that we shall have approximately £48,000 to spend on roads and bridges in the metropolitan area this year. The only reason for that is because of the amendment of the Federal aid roads agreement. When the Act of 1929 was passed, there was no provision in the Federal aid roads agreement for the expenditure of that money on the maintenance of roads. The money had to be made available somehow and it was not right to take it out of general revenue. It had to come out of traffic fees. If the Bill is agreed to, the existing position will not obtain, and we shall allow the country road boards to retain their traffic fees and the money I have referred to will be spent within the metropolitan area. It is said that the country road boards agree with the provisions of the Bill. Of course they do; they are getting something. I have already said that when the Federal aid roads agreement expires, and we require funds for the maintenance of roads, that money will have to be taken from

traffic fees, and that, irrespective of on which side of the House I may be sitting then, I will support any measure to take the whole of the traffic fees that are collected. The local governing authorities have fallen down on their job.

Hon. A. McCallum: What will happen if the Federal Government suspend their Act?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We will have to introduce another amending Bill. I do not anticipate that they will do that because the law is already on the statute-book.

Hon. P. Collier: We are breaking laws every day.

Mr. Angelo: Think of the gold bonus.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not think the Federal Government will take any such action, and the roads can be maintained only as a result of the expenditure of money drawn from people who use those roads. In view of the serious position confronting local governing authorities, I consider the proposal in the Bill is justifiable, and they should be allowed to retain their fees for the time being.

Question—put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### *In Committee.*

Mr. Angelo in the Chair: the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1, 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 24:

Hon. P. COLLIER: We are entitled to more information on this clause. The Minister said the provisions whereby a refund would be made to a local authority would apply in certain limited instances. The clause gives too wide a power to the Minister—a power that should not be given to any Minister. If it be urged that it will be exercised only on the recommendation of the Commissioner, that is a further reason why the clause should not be approved. The Commissioner would be able to make recommendations to the Minister, and he would be able to suspend the provisions of an Act which Parliament has endorsed. That would bring much trouble on the Minister. I would not suggest that the member for Katanning (Mr. Piesse) would do other than what was fair, but he has seven road boards in his district, every one of which might desire a refund of money paid. The life of the hon.

member would be rendered difficult because of the pressure that the seven road boards, all representing his electors, could bring to bear, and the Minister would find it difficult to resist such pressure. Other road boards might not make a request, and there would be dissatisfaction over the treatment meted out to one as compared with another road board. If it is desirable to authorise the Minister to do what he suggests is necessary, the wording should be restricted. The clause should be postponed for further consideration.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I do not like the clause. I appreciate the trouble that is likely to arise. The existing Act imposes an unconditional liability on local authorities to maintain developmental roads. There are instances in which the construction or reconstruction of developmental roads is necessary. For instance, a bridge may need repairing, and the cost may be beyond the resources of the local authority. In such an instance, it is proposed to give power to the Commissioner, with the Governor's consent, to recoup such expenditure to the local authority. However, I do not like the clause, and will agree to its deletion.

Clause put and negatived.

Clause 4—Amendment of Section 27:

**Hon. A. McCALLUM:** The same principle is involved here. The clause provides that where a local authority has failed to maintain a developmental road and the department have done the work, the Government may waive the claim. Will the Minister agree to the excision of this clause?

**The Minister for Works:** Yes.

Clause put and negatived.

Clause 5—Amendment of Section 31:

**Hon. A. McCALLUM:** This clause provides for expenditure to defray "the cost of and incidental to the provision, construction, maintenance and supervision of roads, whether main or development roads under this Act or not." That would admit of maintenance and construction being undertaken on any road.

**The Minister for Works:** That is right.

**Hon. A. McCALLUM:** Then that would nullify the whole object of the Act, which was to deal with main and developmental roads, leaving the by-roads as the responsibility of the local authority. What has

prompted the inclusion of the words "or not"?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** In the Albany electorate, for instance, a road was in a very bad state, and the settlers wanted to use it. There were seven or eight bridges on the road, and we stretched a point to repair a bridge. The cost was £1,000, and the rates of the local authority totalled only £1,300.

**Mr. Wansbrough:** That was the Kalgan bridge?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** Yes. We had to do that, but we did not want to declare the road a developmental road. The Act provides that the money can be spent for the construction of developmental roads but not for their maintenance. There was nothing in the Act to permit us to repair the bridge.

**Hon. P. Collier:** The bridge was really part of the road.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** Still, we could not repair it. Similarly we have made grants to boards to put roads in repair, though it was not legal to do so. The Mandurah bridge was falling down. We could not allow it to be washed into the sea, and yet we did not want to declare it a developmental road. There is only a short road on the far side and the road board should maintain it. We want to be able to spend money in exceptional cases on a road without declaring it a main or developmental road. It will not be necessary to apply this provision to other than the South-West portions of the State.

**Hon. A. McCALLUM:** The Minister is taking wide power to expend the money under any conditions whereas he intends to use the power only in isolated instances. If the work is to be restricted to bridge repairs, I would go that far.

**The Minister for Works:** We might want to spend some on roads.

**Hon. A. McCALLUM:** If bridge work is all that is required, why not restrict the clause to that? People want to get from one town to another, and it is only main roads that they use. Those are the roads for which this fund was established. It may be advisable in some cases, though not many: but to take the power as this clause says, for the construction and maintenance and supervision of this type of road is going altogether outside the functions of the Main

Roads Board. With a view to testing the feeling of the Committee. I move an amendment—

That in line 8 of paragraph (b) the words "or not" be struck out.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I should like to draw attention to an instance that has only just come under my notice. In connection with the cheese factory that has been established, a certain road requires to be constructed, and the estimated cost is £1,600. The settlers who are to serve that factory are practically isolated from it, and the Serpentine Road Board, which is the authority concerned, cannot possibly find the £1,600. The length of the road is only a couple of miles. As the member for South Fremantle knows, in connection with the expenditure of anything over £1,000, the approval of the Minister has to be sought; but if the amendment is agreed to that will not be so.

Hon. A. McCallum: If you use the funds for that class of work, you will have no main road work done.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Well, what are we to do? It is making it worse for the Commissioner and myself, but there are certain cases in which exception must be made. The road to the cheese factory is one.

Hon. A. McCallum: You could find the money out of unemployment funds.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Federal Aid roads money should be the only money spent on roads. We must have the power in exceptional cases to do what I propose.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	20
Noes	..	..	..	21
				—
Majority against	..			1
				—

#### AYES.

Mr. Collier	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Pantou
Mr. Hegney	Mr. Raphael
Miss Holman	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Kenneally	Mr. F. C. L. Smith
Mr. Lamond	Mr. Troy
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. McCallum	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Millington	Mr. Withers
Mr. Munnie	Mr. Cunningham

(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Mr. Barnard	Mr. Parker
Mr. Brown	Mr. Patrick
Mr. Church	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Davy	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Doney	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Ferguson	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Lindsay	Mr. Thorn
Mr. H. W. Mann	Mr. Wells
Mr. McLarty	Mr. North
Sir James Mitchell	

(Teller.)

#### PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Wilson	Mr. Keenan
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Latham
Mr. Corboy	Mr. J. M. Smith

Amendment thus negatived.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister has indicated that Subclause 4 is the validating clause, and whilst he has indicated some of the work it has been found necessary to start during the past month or two contrary to the provisions of the Act, he might also indicate to us all the works, if there are any others, that the clause will validate. There have been one or two bridges. I understood the Minister to say in reply to an interjection that the work on the Causeway was started without the authority of the Act and would be subsequently validated. Will the Minister tell us out of what vote the money for the Causeway is being expended.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I wanted this provision to validate the work on the Mandurah bridge, for the Auditor-General objected to the expenditure because it was not on a developmental road. The other point was that we granted £350 to certain local authorities and could grant it only for the construction of developmental roads. As many of the local authorities were prepared to maintain roads, we asked them to put up a suggestion. Those are the two points. As for the Causeway, it is in the traffic trust district and I think is mentioned in the Traffic Act.

Hon. P. Collier: But that is for maintenance.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, for the maintenance of the roadway and the decking.

Hon. A. McCallum: But you are building something new.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We are building a footway, and the money for that will come out of the 22½ per cent. if the Bill be passed. Some time ago I did something to the North Fremantle bridge and we had to charge for the tramway portion of it because that was outside the Act. We

billed the Fremantle Municipality, but found it was not a charge for them, and so the Metropolitan Traffic Trust paid it. Occasionally things like that have to be done. The Act also provides that the Commissioner of Main Roads is really in charge of the expenditure of the whole fund. There is nothing to say that he is to be told by Parliament what to do, unless we are using Loan funds.

Hon. P. Collier: But still he can only expend in conformity with the provisions of the Act.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is so, of course. The Bill provides for the taking of 22½ per cent., and also the 22½ per cent. from last year, which together will give us £48,000.

Hon. P. Collier: What is the estimated cost of the present work on the Causeway?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is £23,000. I suppose the Bill will validate that also.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: This deals merely with maintenance, and no one who looks at the work on the Causeway will contend that it is maintenance. There is in the Traffic Act no provision to spend money on that class of work. I must again refer to the action of the Minister in boarding that £24,000 for 12 months. Deputation after deputation asked him to create work, but he told them he had no money, while all the time men, women and children were going hungry and in want of clothes.

The Minister for Works: Perhaps it was the Commissioner of Main Roads who boarded it.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: What right had he to hold up £24,000 when it was badly wanted? That money should have been expended on the work for which Parliament voted it, and should have kept men in employment during last year. I want to voice my opposition to the work on the Causeway. It is like adding a couple of new brick rooms to an old wooden shanty. It is purely temporary work, and if the dredging is continued this work will have to be removed.

The Minister for Works: Only the portion over the channel.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: It would have been far better to make a decent job of the Causeway and allow the proposed bridge higher up the river to stand over. As it is, a substantial sum of money is being frittered away on a piece of temporary patchwork.

Moreover, work of this nature should come to Parliament before being put in hand.

The Attorney General: Do you not think a great deal of fuss is being made about the Causeway?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: You mean as to the width of the Causeway? When in England I noticed that there are all over the country bridges of the same width as the Causeway and carrying four or five times the volume of traffic. Some of the main bridges in London are no wider than the Causeway. As for outer bridges, the width of the Canning Bridge is the customary width of bridges in England. We understand from the engineers that the Causeway is not safe. If it is necessary to do work of this nature, a proper policy should have been laid down for a permanent structure. In any case Parliament should have been consulted in the matter. I regret very much that the Minister did not take that course.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member attacks me for having put away in some pocket the sum of £24,000, when men were in need of work, and then he attacks me for spending the money on employing a number of men. The traffic fees are paid into a trust fund. This particular amount was paid in together with other traffic fees and Federal aid roads money. The amount was not earmarked for any particular purpose beyond the maintenance of country roads. There is always some money in the fund, because we cannot incur expenditure at certain times of the year when the roads are swamped. Only now are we able to release this accumulated money. The cost of a new Causeway, taking into consideration all the improvements to the foreshore, would be £575,000. If we put up a permanent structure in the position of the old one it might have to be pulled down later owing to the channel of the river being discovered to be somewhere else. As soon as one tries to do something, other people try to set it aside. I think it is right we should do this work on the Causeway, and Cabinet thinks it is right to spend the money.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It cannot be right that Cabinet should do something which the law does not permit them to do. The question of the Causeway has been a subject of discussion for 20 years. It has been discussed more often than the new town hall. It is not unusual to have a clause in a Bill



validating some minor act of the Government. This, however, is not a minor job but a very important one. Even if the work had been done legally it should not have been commenced until the House had an opportunity to deal with it. It was not a question of finding work for a few men because there was any amount of other work to go on with. The Government had waited so long before commencing the work, that they could well have waited a few weeks longer until the House had met. We do not know that the widening of the Causeway by 10 feet is the best way to deal with the situation. In five years time the old structure may fall down.

The Premier: No fear! It is made of good jarrah.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Then what is all the trouble about?

The Attorney General: That is what I would like to know.

Mr. H. W. Mann: It has got to be widened for Cup Day.

Hon. P. COLLIER: So that is at the bottom of it! It would be a good thing if some people had to swim to the Cup. Is that why the work could not wait until the House met? There was no real urgency for it.

The Minister for Works: There is nothing in the Act to say that the House should deal with the matter.

Hon. P. COLLIER: An obligation is cast on the Minister to bring it before us.

The Minister for Works: Not unless loan money was used for it.

Hon. A. McCallum: There is no power to use any other money but revenue or loan.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister used other money and did so illegally.

The Minister for Railways: The residents of the metropolitan area are entitled to some consideration.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not say the work should not be done.

The Minister for Railways: Do you say we should be doing a bigger job?

Hon. P. COLLIER: It might have been better to spend double the amount and make the structure 20 feet wider, but we have no means of knowing.

The Minister for Railways: How would the House arrive at a decision?

Hon. P. COLLIER: If we were to accept blindly the advice of experts, we might as well hand over the expenditure of all moneys to them. This country is strewn with monuments to so-called experts. They have cost the State hundreds of thousands of pounds; indeed, I doubt whether a million pounds would cover the impracticable works undertaken by Western Australia on the advice of so-called experts. The Committee should examine very closely all works recommended by experts. Therefore I am sorry this particular work has been commenced. It could have waited until the House met and had an opportunity of considering it.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 6—Amendment of Section 33:

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I move an amendment—

That Subclause 2 be struck out.

This subclause provides that country road boards shall have the contribution, but that metropolitan road boards shall not have it.

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 10.51 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Wednesday, 14th September, 1932.*

	PAGE
Question: Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage Department	579
Bills: Pearling Act Amendment, 1R.	579
Brands Act Amendment, 1R.	579
State Trading Concerns Act Amendment (No. 2), 1R.	579
Government Ferries, 1R.	579
Health Act Amendment, 1R.	579
Inspection of Machinery Act Amendment, 1R.	579
Motion: Mines Regulation Act, to disallow regulations	579
Address-in-reply, ninth day	584

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