

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 1st September, 1925.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY—PRESENTATION.

MR. SPEAKER: I desire to announce that, accompanied by the mover and another member of the Assembly, I waited on His Excellency the Governor to present the Address-in-reply to His Excellency's opening Speech; and I have received an acknowledgment in the following terms:—

Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly: I thank you for your expressions of loyalty to His Most Gracious Majesty the King and for your Address-in-reply to the Speech with which I opened Parliament (Sgd.) W. R. Campion, Governor.

QUESTION—LAND FOR SELECTION.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON (for Mr. Thomson) asked the Minister for Lands: 1, What is the average number of applicants for each piece of Crown land thrown open for selection? 2, In view of the apparent shortage of Crown lands, have the Government had any estates suitable for subdivision placed under offer? 3, If so, are they considering the purchase of any with a view to meeting the demand?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, There were approximately 1,008 blocks approved during the six months ended 30/6/1925. Of these 186 were dealt with by the Land Board, who considered 1,656 applicants. 2 and 3, Some offers of estates are under consideration; surveys of large areas of Crown lands are being carried out; and classification of vacant country is proceeding.

QUESTION—SOLDIER SETTLEMENT.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON (for Mr. Thomson) asked the Minister for Lands: 1, In view of his statement made at Kalgoorlie, and published in the "West Australian," that it was the intention of the Federal Government to close down on soldier settlement, could he state the reasons for the action of that Government in so doing? 2, How many returned men have undergone the necessary training and possess qualifying certificates enabling them to come under the scheme if the same is continued? 3, In view of the fact that those who have qualified and have not been able to obtain holdings will be deprived of the benefits of the scheme, will he make representations to the Federal Government to permit these men to come under the scheme before the same is closed?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, No such statement was made or published in the "West Australian." 2, 1,831 with qualifying certificates. 3, Soldiers have been placed on the land by the State under the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act, the Commonwealth rendering financial assistance to meet State losses. The £796,000 proposed to be allowed to the State, subject to agreement, towards its losses, is the final payment intended to be made by the Commonwealth.

QUESTION—WATER RESERVOIR, WONGONG.

Mr. BROWN asked the Honorary Minister (Hon. J. Cunningham): Has he under consideration the advisability of constructing a tram line from Wongong, on the South-West railway line, to the proposed Wongong reservoir for the purpose of carting pipes, cement, etc.?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM replied: Yes, this matter is under consideration in conjunction with other means of transport.

QUESTION—PUBLIC SERVICE APPOINTMENTS.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Premier: In view of the appointment of professional officers recently made or now under consideration, will he advise if (a) all applications have been invited by advertisement?

(b) on what dates and in what publications (both Australian and the United Kingdom) have these advertisements appeared?

The PREMIER replied: (a) No. (b) A schedule giving the desired information is tabled to-day.

QUESTION—GROUP SETTLEMENT COMMISSION.

Publication of Report.

Mr. TEESDALE asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Do the Government know who gave the Group Settlement Commission's findings to the Press before they had been submitted to the Premier? 2, Have the Government taken any steps to correct the damaging and exaggerated statements affecting group settlement as cabled to the London Press which appeared the day after the report appeared in the local papers?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, No. 2, The statement published in the "Times" newspaper which was forwarded by a Perth correspondent was only brought under the notice of the Government by last mail from England. The full report of the Royal Commission has been forwarded to the Agent General.

BILL—CITY OF PERTH.

Introduced by the Minister for Lands and read a first time.

BILL—WATER BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

HON. J. CUNNINGHAM (Honorary Minister—Kalgoorlie) [4.38] in moving the second reading said: This, although a small Bill, is of great importance to the farmers of the State. It has been found necessary to devise some scheme whereby certain agricultural areas can be supplied with water. Members are fully aware of the great difficulties that have been experienced by farmers for some years past in respect of water conservation in the drier areas. In many directions it is not possible to carry out extensions from the goldfields water supply mains on an economic basis, either by reason of distance from the main,

or of the contour of the country. To supply those areas we propose to install what will be called district water supplies; that is to say, a good natural rock catchment is sought where a large dam or reservoir can be erected. I need hardly point out that we have been very fortunate in finding rock catchments in the wheat areas, more especially in areas in close proximity to extensive salt lakes. It is remarkable that adjacent to salt lakes we have some of the very best agricultural land. But owing to the proximity of the salt lakes, it is rarely that the farmers have been successful in securing fresh water supplies by boring or by well sinking, and so some other means must be adopted to provide adequate water supplies in those areas. It is proposed to lay pipe lines from each reservoir to an economic limit in the surrounding farming country. As these schemes will cost a considerable sum of money, it is necessary to have legislation enabling rates to be levied and collected. It is proposed to do this on a basis similar to that of the agricultural extensions from the goldfields water main, and to raise the money on country lands, on the area or on the unimproved capital value. At present, under the provisions of the Goldfields Water Supply Act Amendment Act, 1911, we have provision only for rating on the area. Existing boards dealing with water conservation and reticulation of agricultural areas have now, after years of experience, found that it is very desirable to provide for rating either on the area or on the unimproved capital value. During the last four or five years many petitions and deputations have been received by the Government from people in and around the Lake Brown district, the country north of Kununoppin, Trayning, along the Dowerin railway, the Wongan Hills, and other localities, asking that Mundaring water be supplied to the various districts named. I had those requests reported on and estimates prepared. In those proposed schemes the water rates the farmers would have to pay range from 1s. 2d. to 1s. 11d. per acre per annum, or from £60 to £103 per thousand acres per annum. But none of those proposed schemes were recommended or adopted, for the reason that all the goldfields water that can be carried in the 30-inch main is required in districts where it can be delivered at much less cost to the settlers and less risk to the de-

partment. And, further, sufficient goldfields water could not be supplied to the areas represented by the deputations without enormous expenditure in mains, in addition to which we would have to supply pumping stations on some of the branch pipe mains. It was also considered that from £60 to £103 per thousand acres is more than the farmers can pay in lean years, if not in average years.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They could not pay it.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: It is remarkable that when these deputations come along they agree to almost anything and are ready to enter into any guarantee whatever, so that they may get the necessary water supplies.

Hon. W. D. Johnson. It is pretty difficult to collect it sometimes.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: No doubt. Whenever a deputation comes along, the people appear to be satisfied with almost any proposition that is placed before them, if they can only get a promise that the water will be provided.

Hon. G. Taylor: The member for Guildford can give you advice upon that.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: I realise the position. These people have been handicapped for lack of water. They have tried on many occasions to make provision for themselves, but the porous nature of the country and the poor catchment and bad holding ground have made this impossible. Fortunately there is no necessity to convey at a loss water from the goldfields water mains over long distances to areas north of Nungarin, Kununoppin and Trayning for the reason that local supplies can be arranged for those districts. These works will be known as district water supplies. Last year I made available various sums of money to enable surveys and investigations to be made of all the rock catchments in the areas I have mentioned, so that estimates for district water supplies could be prepared and compared with goldfields water supply extensions and other propositions. Plans and estimates have been got out for the following work—in the Lake Brown district—Wadouring rock catchment of 160 acres, Barballin 272 acres, Knungagin 90 acres. This will comprise one district water supply, known as the Lake Brown district. We have been fortunate in some of the districts, where it has been a problem to know what to do to provide water, in having these

natural rock catchments. In the No. 2 water supply district of Narembeen, there is Wadderin rock 119 acres, south-east of Corrigin, there is Gorge Rock 25 acres, and Kondinin rock of 70 acres.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You want to be a Moses.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: In the early development of our goldfields the rock catchment supplies were of material assistance to our pioneers and prospectors.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Of course!

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: It was largely due to the utilisation of these natural resources that the goldfields were successfully opened up.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Yes.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: These small water supplies stand as a monument to the foresight of those who were in control in years gone by. Each of these district supplies consists of a reservoir to conserve the run-off from the large rock catchment. There will be a reticulation system to serve the surrounding agricultural lands, and a water service for the towns, the railway sidings and engines, within a payable distance. My endeavour has been to keep the water rate below 1s. per acre. We can successfully do that. There are many extensions from the 30-inch main into the agricultural areas. In the case of the extension of the Belka area, the rate is up to 1s. per acre. We rate at present by special agreement on the area, but there is an alternative proposal in the Bill whereby we can rate on the unimproved capital value. Estimates have been prepared, and the rates work out well below the figure. Each district supply will be self-contained, and practically safe from any breakdowns. The supply will therefore be reliable. The revenue to cover all the expense is easily collected by water rates. The works will give to farmers an ample supply of first-class water for domestic and stock requirements. A good deal might be said on the health, cleanliness and comfort points of view. Early in April I spent some nine days in the wheat areas of Lake Brown, Bruce Rock, Narembeen and Kondinin. In many cases where dams and tanks had been constructed by farmers I found that the roads had been utilised for catchments, and that the water had been used for domestic purposes. Roads are not conducive to the best water supply, but the farmers were forced to connect their dams with the roads so that they might get an artificial catch-

ment. In the event of a district water supply being constructed, the water will be pure because it will be drawn from a clean rock catchment. People in many parts of the wheat areas are obliged to drink water that comes from dirty catchments. No doubt the disinclination of people to suffer the discomfort of rural life may be traced to the absence of a good water supply. This, too, prevents people from going into the country, and has a tendency to drive people who are there into the city.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I think they are anxious to get out.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: The desire of all parties is to do everything possible to make the conditions of life in the country such as to enable people to live there instead of having a desire to return to the city.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We are a big family here with that idea in our minds.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: For some years past farmers have had to cart water upwards of 20 miles so that they might continue their farming operations. The loss to settlers through having to encounter these difficulties must be enormous. When we consider the number of horses employed, as well as the number of men engaged in this work, we must realise that it represents not only a distinct loss to the farmers, but also a loss to the State. I also noticed in travelling through the country the scarcity of stock. In the Lake Brown district farmers cannot, through lack of water, stock their holdings. This means extra work for them. Instead of having sheep and stock to eat off their self-sown wheat and oats, and keep the rubbish down on the fallow, they have to employ men or work themselves in turning in this growth. This herbage could well be turned into mutton and wool, with advantage to the people of the metropolitan area as well as profit to the farmers. In the event of our being able to supply water to these districts, each thousand-acre holding should be able to carry between 200 and 300 sheep. If we allow that number of sheep per thousand acres, taking the 700,000 acres included in the four districts, they should have a carrying capacity of 175,000 sheep. Shortly after taking control of the agricultural water supplies I made a trip through the Bruce Rock district. I was informed that in the area controlled by the Bruce Rock police station only 15,000 sheep were grazing. It was explained that farmers could not

stock their holdings because of the scarcity of water.

The Minister for Railways: They have to burn the feed.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: Yes. If stock could be carried in these four districts, there would be additional freight for the railways and the farmers as well as the State would also benefit. There are no water supplies of any consequence outside the goldfields water supply area; therefore it is essential that an adequate supply should be furnished. The Mundaring water cannot be economically supplied to the areas under notice. The rate per acre would be too heavy, and the farmers could not meet the expenditure, even if the Government were prepared to make the connections. Other States have spent millions of pounds in constructing large gravitation and other forms of water supply for farmers and pastoralists. This is regarded more as an insurance against drought and dry seasons than as a revenue collecting proposition. South Australia has spent upwards of nineteen million pounds on such works, and is satisfied with 1 per cent. interest on the capital outlay. Here there is no necessity to follow that example as the farmers are willing to pay a fair price for the water. There is no doubt that given a clear statement of the proposition, the farmers will petition for the work to be carried out. Farmers with whom I have come into contact have expressed their willingness to pay for the water in the event of the Government undertaking the construction of a district water supply. In the salmon gum and gimlet country the land is flat and porous. Although the farmers get sufficient rain for wheat growing, it is not heavy enough to give a flow-off for storage purposes. Many thousands of pounds of Agricultural Bank money have been spent in the construction of tanks, which are useless for the storing of water. Unless additional money is spent in lining the tanks and making them fit to hold water, as well as covering them to prevent evaporation, they can never be any good.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Nearly all of them hold water.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: No. Thousands of pounds have been sunk in holes in the ground that will not hold water. The excavations are made to hold water, but owing to the extremely porous nature of the country they have failed to hold water.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But that is not general.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: The only course is to expend more money in lining those tanks. In reply to the Opposition Leader's interjection, I may say that the difficulty was pretty general in the districts I visited this year.

Hon. G. Taylor: Have the settlers in those districts any sheep?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: No. Sheep cannot be kept there. I was even assured on many occasions that farmers cannot keep more than the required number of horses to work their farms. They cannot afford to run an extra horse because of the water difficulty. Coming to the Bill now, I will take it clause by clause. Clause 1 is merely the title. Clause 2 provides for the necessary further definitions as to what comprises country land and holdings. Clause 3 provides for the owner or occupier of land to furnish tanks for the storage of water. This clause is similar to the section in the Goldfields Water Supply Amendment Act, 1911, under which lands are rated as country lands on extensions from the goldfields water supply main.

Mr. SPEAKER: I ask the hon. member to say what the Bill deals with, and not to mention the clauses seriatim.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: Very well; I understand these clauses can be dealt with in Committee.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Say what you want to say without mentioning the number of the clause.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: The Bill also provides for the rating of lands separately owned or occupied or used for the purposes of a separate farm, and this provision is similar to the corresponding section of the Goldfields Water Supply Amendment Act, and sets out how the ratebook shall be kept. I do not know that it is necessary for me to go on detailing the provisions.

Mr. SPEAKER: I ask the hon. member not to do that. It is absolutely necessary that only the principles of the Bill shall be dealt with on the second reading. All details and matters affecting clauses are properly subjects of discussion in Committee.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: As regards the rating, the Bill provides to rate lands at 1s. maximum rate per acre with a maximum of £50 per 1,000 acres. If the rating is on the unimproved capital value of

the land, it is proposed that the rate shall not exceed 2s. in the pound, with a maximum rate of £50 per 1,000 acres. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir James Mitchell, debate adjourned.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [5.7] in moving the second reading said: The principal objects of this measure are to provide for compulsory voting and for joint rolls in behalf of the State and the Commonwealth. The Bill also includes several amendments which have been found necessary since the principal Act was last amended. These amendments, which I shall refer to later, will assist in carrying out the electoral law. As hon. members know, there is practically a consensus of opinion in favour of the amalgamation of State and Federal electoral rolls. The State and the Commonwealth have the same franchise and the same qualifications, and practically the same districts.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, we have not.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: In many instances we have. The fact that in some we have not is one of the difficulties, but we shall be able to obviate it. There is a striking similarity between the qualifications, and everyone seems agreed that it is a matter of slight difficulty to amalgamate the Commonwealth and State rolls, and so convenience a great many people.

Mr. Sampson: It is a difficult problem.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I do not think so. The difficulties that exist have come about owing to the boundaries of State and Commonwealth divisions and subdivisions not being co-terminous. If in the beginning there had been close co-operation between the State and Federal Electoral Departments, the scheme could have been accomplished without any difficulty. As a fact, however, unless some agreement is arrived at, the position will become worse with each Redistribution of Seats Act. The joint rolls already exist in three other States as a working system, and have been found

very satisfactory indeed. The system secures a higher percentage of enrolments. South Australia, Victoria, and Tasmania have joint rolls with the Commonwealth. We are all interested in electoral matters, and we know that considerable confusion exists in the minds of the people regarding the two rolls. The qualification is the same in each case, and it frequently happens at election time that people confidently attempt to vote, but only to find that their names are not on the roll. They call out their names to the returning officer, and on being told that the name is not on the roll reply, "I am positive I am on the roll. I filled in a card seven or eight weeks ago and handed it to Mr. So-and-So, and he has put it in." Then the intending voter will go on to say that he has a receipt. He goes home for the receipt, and on returning with it and triumphantly producing it he is told that it is not a receipt for an enrolment entitling him to vote at this particular election.

Mr. Thomson: Is the system going to be administered by the Commonwealth Government or by us?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: By the Commonwealth Government. However, the amalgamation affects only the rolls. Our electoral machinery and everything that the Chief Electoral Officer and his subordinates have to do in connection with elections remain entirely unaffected by the amalgamation.

Mr. Thomson: Will it effect much saving?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: A slight saving. However, that is not the paramount consideration. The paramount consideration is to put an end to the confusion which now exists regarding enrolment, and there is also the need for a better roll than is obtained under present conditions. A comparison of State and Federal rolls covering practically the same area shows in some instances a difference of five, six, or seven per cent.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Will the amalgamation cover the Upper House rolls also?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That is not proposed at present.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What is the good of doing this, then?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: We have at present different rolls for the Upper

and Lower Houses, and shall continue to have them.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: Let us have the same qualification for the Upper House and we will have the same rolls.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I think most people prefer to take one step at a time. A tentative arrangement was made as the result of negotiations between the State and Commonwealth Governments, but it was found necessary to have legislation in order that a satisfactory joint roll might be brought about. It is anticipated that from the amalgamation a much more satisfactory enrolment will result, thanks to doing away with the disparity between the two rolls, amounting, as I have said, to from 5 to 7 per cent. The advantages will be common units of registration, a card which will place an elector on the joint roll, and a joint card in respect of alteration of address. There will be one electoral roll for both Governments in a registration area. That will do away with the misunderstandings and heart-burnings that now result from people finding themselves, contrary to their expectations, off the roll at exciting and interesting periods. People on the roll will be eligible to vote for State and Commonwealth alike. Another matter to which I may draw attention is that in the case of people who are qualified to be on the roll, but who, owing to a clerical error on the part of some official, have been mistakenly struck off the roll, the qualification will remain upon their making a statutory declaration that they are still entitled to be on the roll. In such a case the elector will be permitted to record his vote, subject to signing a declaration. That system has worked very advantageously elsewhere. Moreover, the united resources of both departments will be utilised to make the joint roll perfect as far as humanly possible. The Commonwealth authorities have what is known as a habitation index. Such an index is kept in the metropolitan and gold-fields centres and also in some country towns. The indexes are kept up to date by Commonwealth employees such as the postmen, who notice the alterations in addresses of people coming to or going from their rounds and every such alteration is notified to the Electoral Registrar. For that the postmen receive a small fee. I think it is 1½d. per unit. Those alterations are re-

corded in the habitation index and a card is left with any person who has moved into the area where a postman has notified the Electoral Registrar accordingly, and endeavours are made to follow up those persons who have left such an area. The roll is altered as the result, and thus it is kept up to date and comparatively perfect. In addition to the habitation index, the Commonwealth have various electoral agents in different parts of the State. Every postmaster is an electoral officer. Then the State authorities have their own agents scattered throughout the country. Those agents include policemen and others. Approximately there are 2,000 of these electoral agents throughout the State, each doing his part, great or small, in keeping the electoral rolls as nearly perfect as is humanly possible. With all these facilities combined to keep the joint electoral roll up to date, it can safely be said that that joint roll will be as accurate as it is possible to make it. There is the advantage that during the past four or five years both the State and the Commonwealth have had in operation the law for compulsory enrolment. As a considerable number of people have been made alive to their responsibilities through the aid of a gentle reminder in the form of a summons that has cost them a shilling or half a crown or some other small fine, it has been found that people recognise the necessity for notifying changes of addresses to the Electoral Department. From this standpoint alone the position today is much more satisfactory even without the amalgamation proposal. The State roll will be used as the basis for the joint roll and any person on either the State or the Federal roll at present, or who has sent in a card asking to be enrolled, will have his name placed on the joint roll.

Hon. G. Taylor: On application?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Not if his application is now in for either the State or the Federal roll.

Hon. G. Taylor: And the names now on either roll will be placed on the joint roll without any further application?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, because those persons will already have submitted claim cards at one time or another. In order to make the scheme successful it is necessary to have the franchise as nearly the same as is possible, and where the franchise is practically manhood and womanhood

suffrage, there is not much difficulty in bringing that about. Some slight difficulty has arisen regarding qualification. For instance, if a man desires to have his name on the State roll he must have been in the State for six months, but to be on the Commonwealth roll he must have been in Australia for six months but need only have been in the State for three months. It is proposed to alter our qualifications for enrolment so that the conditions will be made uniform. The Commonwealth law also allows half-blooded Australians to be enrolled upon application being made by such people. It is also proposed to make our conditions uniform by including such a provision in the Electoral Bill. Those Australian half-bloods will then be enrolled where previously they were not allowed to exercise the franchise. Many people of this description own land and pay taxes. There is no reason why they should not be enrolled. Of course there are many wild aboriginal half-castes who will not make application and it is not expected that those people will be enrolled. When we allow other half-castes to produce wealth and pay taxes it is only right that they should be allowed to be enrolled. Thousands of people of this description have been brought up in the missions and they are comparatively well educated and in every way capable of recording a vote intelligently.

Hon. G. Taylor: You are referring to the aboriginal half-caste?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes.

Mr. Mann: What about the children of Asiatic parents? I refer to children born in the State and educated here.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I think they are Australian citizens and have a right to be enrolled.

Mr. Latham: If the Asiatic father is not naturalised they are not Australian citizens and are not entitled to be enrolled.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, they are. I am not too sure regarding the naturalisation law, but any person born in Australia is entitled to the rights of Australian citizenship and to be enrolled. Any person entering the State at the age of 14 or 15 years whose parents become naturalised, also become automatically naturalised. I am not too sure about the law on this question.

Hon. G. Taylor: You are not right there.

Mr. Mann: If there is no provision in the Bill to meet the case that I refer to, will you make such a provision?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If the hon. member deems it necessary he can move an amendment and it will be considered then.

Mr. Mann: Will the Minister support such an amendment?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The matter can be thrashed out in Committee.

The Premier: An Asiatic has a vote for the Legislative Council.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No.

The Premier: Yes, if he has property.

Mr. Marshall: From the results, I should say that the Asiatics have a vote there.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The existing law provides that any person in a charitable institution supported by the State, shall not be allowed to be enrolled. Under the Federal Act, they are allowed to exercise the franchise. I consider that people who have lived for many years in the State and done their share in the development of the country, but have reached a time when they are unable because of misfortune or ill-health to maintain themselves and have become inmates of a charitable institution, should not have their rights of citizenship taken away from them. That matter will be dealt with. The agreement which it is proposed to make with the Commonwealth is based on the Victorian agreement which is the latest and, from the State standpoint, the best. The terms of the agreement are that there shall be appointed the same registrars and the boundaries of electoral districts will be made coterminous. The Commonwealth agree that for Commonwealth divisions which are subdivided into subdivisions, it does not make any difference to the representatives personally, and the Federal authorities have therefore agreed to make the Federal boundaries coterminous with the others. There is another aspect, however, that some of our State electoral districts overlap the boundaries of two Federal divisions. It will be necessary in such instances to have two special sub-districts in one State electoral district, in order to make this provision apply. The Victorian agreement also provides for the preparation of joint forms, and the introduction of joint cards and claims. The State Chief Electoral Officer has the right to inspect the claims,

and so on. The Commonwealth are to bear all the expense, except that involved in the printing and binding of forms, and the payment of special allowances which are paid in Victoria to the police officers for special canvasses for some specific purpose or other. In those instances the Commonwealth have agreed to pay half the expense. The State, on the other hand, agreed to make available the police for inquiries if necessary. The Victorian agreement also provides that it may be terminated by 12 months' notice on either side. Disadvantages arise when our electoral boundaries are not coterminous. The Leederville electorate is the worst off in that regard and it will be necessary to have three subdivisions in order to enable the joint roll system to operate. While that may lead to some little delay and confusion on polling day, if we think it is so unsatisfactory that the provision of more expense would be warranted, there is nothing to prevent the State printing a special roll for that occasion.

Mr. Latham: A Redistribution of Seats Bill might overcome that difficulty.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, if a Redistribution of Seats Bill is introduced in either the State or Federal Parliaments, there is provision for cognisance to be taken of the existing boundaries, and it is agreed that provision is to be made to have the boundaries coterminous. The Commonwealth have a redistribution of seats only after a census. The last census was in 1921, and the alterations in the Commonwealth boundaries were made as the result. There will be no further census until 1931, and therefore it is not expected that there will be any alteration of the electoral boundaries before 1932. On the other hand, it is anticipated that there will be an alteration in the electoral representation in Western Australia before that period, and therefore in any Redistribution of Seats Bill cognisance has to be taken by the State of the existing Federal electoral boundaries, and we are to endeavour to fit our boundaries in with the Federal boundaries.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Just to save a few pounds we are to make the alteration whether it should be made or not.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No. There is no difference in Leederville, for instance, regarding the community of interests of the people on one side of the street

and those on the other side. The Leeder-ville electorate has now between 11,000 and 12,000 people on the roll, and with this provision in our Act, we shall be able to alter the boundaries of that electorate, parts of which are now included in the Fremantle and Perth Commonwealth divisions.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I hope the House will not agree to anything of this sort.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Anything of what sort?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Fixing our State boundaries, just to suit the Federal boundaries.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: We do not say that we will alter our boundaries just to suit the Federal boundaries. We will not do it unless it can be conveniently done, and unless Parliament thinks that it should be done. That is all we provide in the agreement. If we can conveniently alter our boundaries so as to make them coterminous with those of the Federal provisions, we will do so, but not otherwise. There is no necessity to alter our boundaries because of this provision, where, for instance, we find that such an alteration would affect one of our electoral quotas.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Do not have anything to do with it.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It is expected that there will be a considerably greater enrolment under the amalgamation, and that is the paramount feature. There will also be some economy; during next year the State will probably save £500, while the savings over the next four or five years should be £800 to £1,000 per annum. The arrangement for the time being concerns only the Assembly rolls; the Council rolls will not be concerned.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What about our electoral officials in the country?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There will be one registrar for each district, but there will be no duplication. That is where the economy will be effected. There are only 10 Council divisions and if we had a registrar for all of them, it would mean one-fifth of the total number of registrars at present required for the Assembly districts.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I am speaking of the Assembly rolls. Will the officers in charge of our work in the country be sacked?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I do not think we have any officers exclusively employed on electoral work, except in Perth and Kalgoorlie.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is one at Northam.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Is he not also clerk of courts?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: He is almost exclusively engaged on electoral work.

The Minister for Lands: There is not such an officer in the important town of Fremantle.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If the official at Northam is exclusively engaged on electoral work, he will continue to be so employed. What will become of Part 3 if the Act deals entirely with the procedure for joint rolls. Three other States have already agreed to a similar amalgamation, and these provisions have been drawn up as a result of the experience thus gained. Therefore it is not expected that there will be any necessity for us to amend those provisions. The Bill looks rather formidable, but its provisions have been found necessary for the successful amalgamation of State and Federal rolls elsewhere, and there should be no cause for us to amend them.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We shall show you.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If the Leader of the Opposition can suggest any improvement, I shall be glad to accept it, but I hardly think he is serious when he says he will show the necessity for amendment.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: It will mean a lot better roll for the State.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, ours is a better roll than the Commonwealth's.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I consider our roll better than the Commonwealth's, but if we had on our roll all the names that appear on the Commonwealth roll and are not on ours, our roll would be almost perfect. The State roll will form the basis for the joint roll.

Mr. Davy: What about the people on our roll that ought not to be there.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If the hon. member can show who they are, we shall have them removed. We take all reasonable steps to keep the rolls clean. The Commonwealth habitation index should prove advantageous to the State, particularly as applied to the metropolitan constituencies. When a letter is delivered and it is found that the

person to whom it is addressed does not appear in the habitation index, a claim for enrolment is obtained, and this has proved effective in keeping the roll up to date. The person making the alteration receives 1½d. for each one.

Mr. Richardson: It does not work too well.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If there is need for any serious amendment to these provisions, the proposal for joint rolls will not be practicable. All the provisions set out in the Bill are deemed essential for a system of joint rolls.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Parliament can do what it thinks right.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I agree. This matter has been on the tapis for 10 or 15 years, but it has not been adopted because of the difficulties involved. The amendments embraced in the Bill, however, are designed to overcome the difficulties. Another feature of the Bill is the inclusion of provision for compulsory voting. The Commonwealth has already passed legislation of this kind, and as various other countries also have systems of compulsory voting, it is considered that we might with advantage adopt the principle. In regard to enrolment, we at present throw the onus of responsibility upon the individual. Under the pain of a fine he is compelled to get his name placed on the roll, but that is as far as we go. If it is necessary as a matter of civic responsibility that a man should be compelled to enrol, the logical sequence is to compel him to exercise his vote.

Mr. Thomson: How about a man outback?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: We shall have postal vote officers, and no disability will be imposed upon people who are unable to cast their votes. A sufficient excuse will be accepted. When an election takes place, the people who do not exercise their vote will receive a notification from the electoral registrar, and will be given an opportunity to explain their reason for not voting. If the reason is satisfactory, there will be an end of the matter.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Oh, lor'!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That is the practice regarding compulsory enrolment. We have not undertaken a campaign of prosecutions under the compulsory enrolment provisions, and this provision for compulsory voting will be enforced gradually. The very fact of compulsory voting being the law of the land will weigh considerably

with many people who otherwise might be inclined to be apathetic.

Mr. Mann: It does not have the effect of compelling people to get their names on the roll.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Whenever compulsory enrolment has been adopted, it has operated strongly in that direction. I should say it has caused an additional 15 per cent. of the people to enrol.

Mr. Mann: Not on a population basis.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, on a population basis. The hon. member has not studied the point or he would not have made that remark.

Mr. Davy: Why should people be compelled to vote if they do not wish to?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Why should they do anything they are disinclined to do? Why have any restrictive legislation at all?

Mr. Davy: This is not a restrictive law; it is a mandatory law.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: We have many mandatory laws.

Mr. Davy: And you have to be able to justify each one of them.

The Minister for Lands: The worst of all is that enforcing the payment of taxes.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Organised society is based on compulsion. Education is compulsory.

Mr. Davy: But that can easily be justified.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If we are justified in bringing compulsion to bear in that direction, surely we are equally justified in making it mandatory for the people to exercise their vote when the men whose duty it is to pass restrictive legislation are before them for election.

Mr. Davy: We can make them vote, but why do it?

Mr. SPEAKER: Members are discussing now a Committee phase of the Bill.

The Premier: That is the main principle of the Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER: The main principle cannot be discussed by interruptions, and I ask members to refrain from interrupting.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: While most of the interjections are helpful to a member who is trying to elucidate these matters, the points raised can certainly be discussed thoroughly in Committee. We have education which is compulsory; we have health laws and quarantine laws, both compulsory. We compel people to pay taxes.

In fact, there is an obligation on the whole community to obey every law that we pass. We have also got to the stage that municipal by-laws compel people to build a certain class of house in a certain locality. Then again, a man may not walk up the street without proceeding on one particular side of the footpath, and any person who attempts to break any of the laws that are made will soon find himself haled before the court.

Mr. Richardson: Those laws are all brought in because they interfere with someone else.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The people who pass restrictive laws are the people who are elected to Parliament. If the laws that are passed are to be held in respect, surely the people should have no objection to being compelled to obey them.

Mr. Davy: Can you tell us one reason why people should be compelled to vote?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, there is one outstanding reason, but there is no need to repeat it. Members of Parliament are elected for the purpose of making laws, which are upheld with all the force and majesty of the law. Therefore, if members of Parliament have authority to pass these laws, the people who elect members should be compelled to exercise the franchise. By the process of evolution extending over the last thousand years, democracy has secured adult suffrage to-day. In Australia we have reached the stage where every person over the age of 21 years has the right to be enrolled. But the franchise is not exercised to the extent that we should expect. There is a lack of interest displayed at election time, and it may be said that since the granting of adult suffrage, elections have not awakened that interest that was displayed when people were fighting to obtain the privilege which is now theirs. In Australia we won it so easily that people now do not seem to value it, at any rate not more than to the extent of one-third of those who are entitled to vote. Members know what led up to the war of American independence.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You are on dangerous ground now.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: One of the principal reasons why the richest country in the world does not belong to the British Empire to-day is because people had no representation in the Parliament of their country. That was the cause of the Ameri-

can revolution. The Leader of the Opposition will not dispute an historical fact whatever he may do in regard to anything else. The natural corollary to compulsory enrolment is a compulsory representative vote of the people. To-day the people are so apathetic respecting citizen rights that they will not exercise the franchise and therefore it is time we adopted compelling or coercive measures.

Mr. Mann: Do you think you can compel people to take an interest in their country if they do not desire to do so?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Experience proves that where compulsory voting is in force, they do so.

Mr. Richardson: At any rate, it is worth trying.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No one likes to be elected to Parliament by a minority. The member for Perth has talked about compulsory voting and the effect it has. Even in his own electorate at the last election, barely half the people on the roll voted. Those that did vote, of course, cast an intelligent vote, and I suppose the hon. member thinks so, too. At the same time, everyone will agree that it is a very unsatisfactory position when so few people actually go to the poll, and that the member who is returned should represent only a majority of the 50 per cent. that voted. I am not reflecting on the hon. member; probably if it had been 100 per cent. poll he would have been returned just the same. The fact remains that he was elected by perhaps 26 per cent. or 27 per cent. of the electors whose names appear on the roll.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Over 60 per cent.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Not 50 per cent. in the Perth electorate voted at the last election. In regard to the whole State the percentage of voters was 61.

Mr. Richardson: I think the Government were returned on a minority vote.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: In order to give the Opposition a chance to reverse the vote, we intend to provide for compulsory voting and the people will have the opportunity of returning our friends opposite.

Mr. Davy: They have the opportunity now.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If the Bill becomes law the obligation will be on them to vote.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: This has been a failure in Queensland.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: Then is that why they got a 91 per cent. poll?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: This went through the Commonwealth Parliament two years ago.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: It has not yet been tried.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No, but it went through almost without debate. Both parties had it on their platform. Compulsory voting is in existence in the Commonwealth, in Queensland, Belgium, Holland, Spain, Uruguay, Austria and in certain Cantons of Switzerland. In all those countries it has had a successful trial.

Mr. Thomson: What has been the result?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I have the figures here and I will make them available when we reach the committee stage. The result has been generally to increase the vote by about 25 per cent. bringing it up to 85 and 90 per cent. In that way it will be seen that it should be possible to get a better expression of opinion. We have heard it said that this is an unwarranted interference with the liberty of the subject, and all that kind of thing, but that interference with liberty we prate about is comparatively non-existent in civilised communities. We have to submit to the law for the purpose of carrying out civilisation. Whilst it may not be satisfactory to some people to have to submit to restrictive Acts of legislation, the laws are there and we have to conform to them whether we like them or not. I will give the figures I have relating to other countries when the Bill is in Committee.

Hon. G. Taylor: Now is the time; let us have them.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The percentage of non-voters in those countries, Commonwealth, Spain, and Uruguay excepted, according to the list I have here, is as follows: In Belgium 2 per cent. That means that under the system of compulsory voting 98 per cent. recorded their votes. In Holland the percentage of non-voters was 12. In Queensland 92 per cent. of the electors recorded their votes. In Austria 15 per cent. were non-voters and the number of non-voters in the Swiss cantons was 20 per cent. In those instances, however, the issues were of comparatively no importance, and moreover

the system of compulsory voting there was not strictly enforced. When we compare the figures I have quoted with ours, it will be seen how we suffer by the comparison.

Mr. Davy: Do you think we shall get a better class of man in Parliament by compelling people to vote?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I know that we are all concerned about remaining here.

Mr. Marshall: Taking into consideration the result of the West Perth election, I should say we do need a better class of man in Parliament.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Compulsory voting will be much more satisfactory from the public standpoint. If the people do not respect a law, it cannot be carried out.

Mr. Davy: This will increase their disrespect.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No, it will not. The majority of the people will be represented by the majority in Parliament, and so the people will have more respect for the laws than they have to-day.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Let us pass this and go to the country at once.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There is no desire to go to the country at the present stage. We are getting on all right, without bothering the country.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: We don't want to have the whole 50 members over this side!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There are two or three other sections which it is sought to amend. There is in the Bill a provision that persons of the nomadic class, persons who have no fixed address, particularly men following pastoral occupations, shall not necessarily be deprived of their franchise. It is proposed that, so long as such persons remain in the State division in which they are enrolled and retain their qualifications, they shall be allowed to keep their names on the roll, even though they are moving about within the division. Such persons do a big share of the productive work of the country, and they ought not to be denied their franchise simply because they live in a tent and move about from station to station. Within this category are boundary riders, commercial travellers, farm hands, kangaroo hunters, prospectors, relieving officers, seamen, shearers, station hands, surveyors, survey hands, and chain-

men. People in those avocations are continually changing their addresses. However, under the Bill they will be allowed to move about, so long as they do not go beyond the division for which they are enrolled.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: A man will be allowed to go away and stay away until election day, when he will be free to come back and vote.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If he wanders away to the other end of the State he will not be allowed to vote, even though he comes back on election day. He must notify alterations of address, and he must not go beyond the boundaries of his division.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: How can you strike a boundary rider off the roll?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If he continues to live in the same division, why strike him off? We shall have a pretty good check on his movements.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: How are you going to check the movements of a boundary rider in Kimberley? Let us have clean rolls.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I hope these people will have the right to exercise their franchise, notwithstanding that they have to shift five or six miles from one station to another.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Which electorate will be affected?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Not any particular electorate.

Hon. G. Taylor: Under the Federal Act a man at Osborne Park votes for the Fremantle division, while under the State Act he votes for Leederville. What are you going to do about that?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Our divisions are not as large as that. Anyhow, there are not many boundary riders at Osborne Park. Very few city dwellers, save commercial travellers, will come under this provision.

Mr. Davy: A commercial traveller always has his one address.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No, he starts out on a 12-months' tour, and has no particular address.

Hon. G. Taylor: Very few of them do that.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Well, why should not a commercial traveller exercise his franchise?

Mr. Marshall: What about cattle drovers, who are always on the move?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: As a rule they cannot be on a roll. I know one who is on the roll for Geraldton. I do not think he puts in more than three weeks in the year at Geraldton; Still, his home is there, and so he is not struck off the roll.

Hon. G. Taylor: Under the Act Geraldton is his domicile?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, he lives there when he comes down. The Bill contains also a provision in respect of postal voting. No doubt the postal voting provisions have been scandalously abused.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Yes, a man in your electorate voted 13 times.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Even that is not incredible. Most of the postal voting abuses have taken place on polling day, when postal vote officers have gone around the electorate taking votes from people who were not really sick.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is not sufficient justification for wiping out postal voting.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It is not proposed to wipe it out altogether, but it is proposed that there shall be no postal voting on polling day. I myself have known abuses of the postal vote system, for I have been asked to send postal vote officers to people who wished to save themselves the trouble of going to the poll. It has been done all over the State.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I was referring before tea to small amendments which it was thought advisable to introduce in order to create machinery for the more satisfactory conduct of elections. The Commonwealth have a provision whereby anyone who was on the roll but who had through some mistake been taken off it, though still retaining the necessary qualifications, could by making a declaration that this was the case, exercise his vote, and if after investigation it was found that he was entitled to these qualifications and to remain on the roll, his vote was counted. This has worked satisfactorily on the occasion of Commonwealth elections. Some people who have lived in the same house for years have through some

inexplicable cause been removed from the roll, but, on making the necessary declarations, they have voted and their vote has counted. This also appears in the Victorian Act, and has removed a lot of grievances. We could well adopt it here. If a blind or illiterate person goes into a polling booth and desires to vote, the returning officer goes with him to the box, and the scrutineer accompanies him to see that the vote is carried out in the manner desired by such person. In the case of a postal vote for such people, no such provision exists. As it appertains in the case of the polling booth it is thought that the provision might also apply in the case of a postal vote, so that the illiterate or blind person may if he pleases nominate some person to see that the postal vote officer enters the vote in the way indicated.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We are getting on.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Someone must have got on years ago. This has always been the law in connection with votes recorded at polling booths.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is a different matter.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The presiding officer is regarded as a man of unimpeachable character, but I do not know but we can always say the same with regard to postal votes. If the provision is necessary for the one case it is necessary for the other. People who are blind or illiterate are very often suspicious. If they desire to do so they can nominate a person to see that their vote is recorded as they wish. To a certain extent the present system of recording the votes of blind people has destroyed the secrecy of the ballot. When they vote the presiding officer writes his name on the ballot paper. It is thought that is not necessary. Everything is safeguarded. The scrutineer is there and the ballot paper is marked as the voter requires. There is no necessity for the presiding officer to scrawl his name upon the paper. The vote can be distinguished when the counting comes on. It is desired also to alter the law regarding candidates' expenses. The expenses originally allowed to a candidate were up to £100, but in view of the changed value of money this was thought to be hardly sufficient, and the Bill increases the amount to £150. Some two or three years ago a candidate was so honest that he admitted having spent over £100, and he was fined. It is thought that £150 will be a fair amount.

The Premier: Needless to say the candidate was defeated.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There are several minor amendments to the Act which I will explain in Committee.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: If they are vital you ought to tell us what they are.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: One of these amendments is that instead of the Treasury officials taking the £25 in connection with the nomination by telegram, this will be taken by the Chief Electoral Officer at the Electoral Office. A candidate must go to that office to get the form to nominate by telegraph, and he might as well deposit the money there as go to the Treasury.

Mr. George: There is no provision for getting the money back.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It is returned to the candidates securing the necessary number of votes.

Mr. George: You never get it back.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There are other things that Ministers will be able to do instead of their being done by Executive Council. They are only administrative departmental matters. I have mentioned all the important features of the Bill and move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir James Mitchell, debate adjourned.

BILL—GOLDFIELDS WATER SUPPLY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

HON. J. CUNNINGHAM (Honorary Minister—Kalgoorlie) [7.37] in moving the second reading said: This is a small Bill, which provides for increasing the maximum rate on areas from 5d. to 1s. per acre, and as an alternative to rating them on the unimproved capital value.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Does that apply everywhere along the scheme?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: Yes. Under the Goldfields Water Supply Act, 1911, Amendment Act the first schedule provides that a rate may be struck not exceeding 5d. an acre. This is too low now. Since the Act was amended in 1911 and this rate was struck many new extensions have been made, and special agreements have been entered into. The rate per acre varies from 4½d. to 1s. The object of the Bill is to bring

these rates into line, and embody all the areas under the rating set out therein. There are extensions from which it is not possible to supply water at 5d. an acre. Supplies have been given to farmers under special agreement at rates ranging up to 1s. an acre, which is the maximum provided in the Bill. A rate of 1s. represents £50 on 1,000 acres. One extension in the Belka area is rated under a special agreement up to 1s. per acre.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is a long way from the scheme.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: Some extensions have recently been constructed not so far removed from the scheme as the Belka area. There are five extensions in the Walgoolan district where the rating ranges from 6d. to 10d. per acre. Under the unimproved capital value rating the maximum would be 2s. in the pound.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: By Jove!

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: It appears high.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is scandalous.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: There is a proviso whereby the rate in any one area shall not exceed £50, a similar maximum being provided in the other case.

Mr. Thomson: Is it the intention to raise all the rates to that?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Every one.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: No. We may rate on the area or the unimproved capital value. In many districts a man may be holding 1,000 acres of first class country, and the farmer adjoining him may own 400 acres of first class country, and 900 acres of second and third class land. The farmer holding the 1,000 acre block is in a better position through the reticulation from the goldfields main, so far as wealth production is concerned, than the man holding the 1,300 acre block. It is intended to make a more equitable distribution of rating. We must take into consideration the size of the area served by the reticulation from the main. We hope to even up the rates that are paid by the various property holders connected with the scheme.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: Will this apply to Great Southern extensions?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: If it applies in one district, it must apply generally.

Hon. G. Taylor: We shall exempt Beverley.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: I have brought down the Bill in order to make further extensions from the scheme without its being necessary to enter into special agreements. If the House takes into consideration that it was deemed desirable and necessary in 1911 to introduce a similar amending measure, there will be very little opposition to the passage of this Bill. No doubt every Bill brought down must meet with some opposition, but those who are here to represent the farming industry directly will realise the importance of the measure now before the House. The utmost possible assistance by way of water supply must be rendered to farmers in proximity to the 30-inch main. We are not proposing to put up the price of water. By special agreements some holdings are already rated at 1s. per acre. The farmers in question do not grumble. They are quite satisfied, and they pay the rates. Under the parent Act settlers have the right to petition for extensions, and they are consulted before an extension is made. It is remarkable that the settlers who have entered into agreements do not take the maximum quantity of water allowed. They seem to realise that it is necessary, not only in their own interests, but in the interests of the scheme as a whole, to be careful in the use of the water; and that is a very commendable state of affairs. I have under consideration at present two new extensions—the Bodallin North, representing 27 settlers and covering 27,364 acres, and the Goomarin-Talgomine, representing 36 settlers and covering 43,000 acres. The rate in these new districts will be 1s. per acre, and the settlers are petitioning for the extensions under the conditions I have already stated, by way of special agreement, and subject to guarantees. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Sir James Mitchell debate adjourned.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 25th August.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [7.50]: I am sorry the Minister for Works is not here to-night, because this highly important measure was introduced by him. The Bill affects a great many peo-

ple. Last year we passed a Bill of this kind here, but in another place the clauses were deleted from the measure and only the schedule was passed. There is great dissatisfaction with the way in which the tax operates. It is claimed that much injustice has been done, and the Minister has had a good many deputations of protest. To some of these he has already given consideration, though of that we do not see much evidence in this Bill, which does not propose to amend to any great extent the Third Schedule, the schedule imposing the tax. The House should take into consideration, and the Minister most particularly should take into consideration, the protests which have been made and the objections which have been raised by people in various parts of the State to the operation of so much of this measure as was passed last year. Some attempt should be made by the Government to meet the objections. The people know what they are paying, and know what they are getting for what they pay, and it is right that their protests should be heard. True, the Minister did discriminate last year between people using vehicles for the transport of goods by hire, and people who used vehicles of their own. In this Bill he proposes to discriminate further. But that does not remove any of the great disadvantages which the law has worked. I am astounded at the amount of money some people have to pay on motor vehicles. I know that in the past they have got off with light fees, but to-day they are paying heavy fees and are not getting improved roads. The roads are no better than they were. Of course there has not been time to do anything yet, but I fear there never will be time to do anything with the small amount of money available in this way. The roads will, I think, get worse and worse.

The Minister for Lands: Do you mean that the extra revenue obtained will make the roads worse?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, because nothing will be done. All through this Bill the Minister makes mention of the Main Roads Bill. What happened last session to the Main Roads Bill was that it passed this House and went to another place, and there was withdrawn by the Government—I do not know why. Under the Main Roads Bill income is to be obtained from several sources. Of course that meas-

ure cannot be discussed now, but it does provide for traffic fees. Part of the money will go to some of the local boards. It is provided that outside proclaimed areas the traffic fees will be returned to the local authorities. But the Main Roads Board will get money from the tax of 3d. per gallon on petrol, and will also get the money from the Commonwealth grant, and an equal amount contributed by the State Government. From those sources, together with a tax of 1½d. in the pound on land, the revenue is to come. The Main Roads Bill merely provides that the Minister shall be assisted in the administration of that measure by a board of his own officials, with one representative of the local authorities, I think. To all intents and purposes the board will be a mere adjunct to the Public Works Department. The money now being spent by the Public Works Department, money contributed in part by the Federal Government and in part by the State Government, will be still administered in the same way by the Minister for Works. Under this measure he will have a special tax, which will be new money; and I suppose he will endeavour to get some land tax. I would like to point out to the Premier that when he proposed this tax last year it was understood that the Main Roads Bill would be gone on with, and that the 1½d. in the pound upon the lands of the State would be contributed to the main roads fund. After withdrawing his Bill in another place—we did not know before we agreed to his tax that it was to be withdrawn—the Premier said, "I will return to you by way of reduction of railway freights the amount of this additional taxation which was to go to main roads."

The Premier: That is not quite correct.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It will be interesting to hear from the Premier what he is going to do for main roads from that taxation. If the House would like me to do it, I could read the whole speech delivered by the Minister for Works last session.

The Premier: I remember it very well.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister in introducing the Bill said that there would be a tax on land, and that this would be provided for in a taxation measure to be brought down by the Treasurer.

The Premier: That is so.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Treasurer did that.

The Premier: That was not necessarily that halfpenny.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I should like to read the Treasurer's speech.

The Premier: You can do so, and you will not find any confirmation of it there.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: What are we to believe? The Premier sat here and heard the Minister for Works make the statement in question, and applauded him when he made it. The Premier brought down the Bill to increase the land tax by this halfpenny, and then says he did not state that the revenue so derived would go towards the main roads fund.

The Premier: I did not say that at all.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But the Government said it.

The Premier: The Minister said there would be a halfpenny in the pound tax for the purposes of this Bill.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: And the Bill was before the House at the time.

The Premier: It was not.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It had passed this House, and it passed on the understanding that this halfpenny would be available. That was the understanding on which members opposite voted for the increased land tax. Not one of them would have done so had it not been for that understanding. The Minister for Works told one of those members would get up towards maintaining main roads. Not one of those members would get up to-night and say that he would have supported the Premier in his proposed increased taxation had it not been for the promise that the money should go towards improving roads. What is to be done about it?

The Premier: Do you want the whole tax back? Do you want a halfpenny for this, and a halfpenny for railway rates?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I think we could do with both. Under this Bill owners of vehicles have to pay the petrol tax, and they have to pay license fees under the Traffic Act. People owning horse-drawn vehicles will also pay under the Traffic Act. That will be the new money available to the Minister under the Main Roads Bill. If that is to be the only money, we might as well consider whether it is worth going on with the Main Roads Bill or with this measure either.

The Premier: We are contributing on a pound for pound basis with the Commonwealth grant.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But the Premier knows he is spending it all and would spend it just as well under the Public Works Department as he will under a board consisting of three of the Minister's officials and one member representing the local governing authority. The position will not be changed regarding the Federal grant. I do not want the impression to be gained that this Federal grant is to be additional money; it is not. It will be spent in the same way as we are spending funds now. The local authorities will be deprived of the traffic fees that they have collected hitherto. Those fees were not on the present scale until last year, but still they did collect fees. What is the Premier going to do regarding this increase of a half-penny in the land tax? Of course he said something about the reduction in railway freights.

The Premier: I can take it back from the railway freights.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not know that it would make much difference.

The Premier: We might as well divert it for this purpose, because I am assured the reduction has been of no benefit to anyone.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier cannot get away from the fact that he received the tax for 12 months and reduced the railway freights for two months. Of course, this year the reduction will operate for the whole 12 months.

The Premier: But it is of no value so I can take that money for the purposes of this Bill.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier cannot go back on his word. Of course the reduction must be of some value to someone, but I do not know that it has been of much value because it is so infinitesimal. Will the Premier tell us whether the money he has taken from the land owners has been paid to the Railway Department? Of course that has not been done. The railways last year made a profit, after paying interest and sinking fund, of £62,000.

The Minister for Railways: But for many years the railways were run at a loss.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I spoke about last year.

The Minister for Railways: But when a concern makes a profit, you are entitled to endeavour to overtake some of your losses.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the Minister were on this side of the House he would adopt a different attitude. He should turn up his speeches in "Hansard" about freight reductions.

Mr. Richardson: There is a difference now.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If this money is not to go towards the purposes of the Main Roads Bill, we ought to be told so. We have seen to night how cheerfully the Honorary Minister in charge of water supplies could present Bills that provide small taxes up to 2s. in the pound respecting land for which water supplies are drawn from the goldfields water scheme. I do not suggest that the Premier will contemplate increasing the land tax this year. He has burnt his boats in that regard. The Minister for Works told us he had made his speech on the Bill last year, and I recommend hon. members to read that speech before we go into Committee on the measure. They should also read what he said on the Main Roads Bill, because that measure has a bearing on the Bill before us. I recommend the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall) to read the Minister's speeches carefully, because this question affects his district seriously. There is no member sitting on the Government side of the House who is not concerned with this Bill. We ought to see that the people get some adequate advantage from the money they have to find.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: How do you propose to get those advantages without taxation?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The hon. member knows that we cannot get the money except by way of taxation, but he also ought to know that when we impose taxation the people should have some return for it. It will be competent for hon. members to amend the schedule to the Act, and the Bill contains a clause dealing with the schedule and providing an alteration. I commend the Minister for Works on that account, for he has brought the holders of pastoral lands and sandalwood getters into line with the man farming in the agricultural districts. The member for Murchison might look into this question to see if the sandalwood getters are not placed at a disadvantage. I think they will have to pay a little more under this Bill. There is a slight reduction from 1s. 6d. to 1s. in the fees to be paid by the heavier type of vehicle, but apart from that there is no other alteration proposed in the rate of tax to be paid on a vehicle of any description. There

is an increase proposed respecting jinkers or whims. I know it is difficult to meet the wishes of all sections of the people, and I also recognise that a special type of vehicle like a jinker or a whim may be used in Perth once or twice only in 12 months. That would be for the purpose of moving some heavy girder or machinery. Yet on such a vehicle a tax of £14 or £15 will have to be paid. A suggestion will be made to the Minister when this part of the Bill is being considered in Committee, with the object of overcoming that difficulty. The Minister has also included an improvement on the old proposal by restoring the right to the farmer to use a vehicle exclusively on his farm without having to pay a license fee.

Mr. Teesdale: That also applies to the pastoralists.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is so, so long as the vehicle is not used on the main roads. It would be ridiculous to make such a man pay a licensing fee, as was stipulated last year, on a vehicle that never left the farmer's land. I am afraid we have drifted into a tendency to impose all sorts of conditions and taxes upon people with very little thought or consideration. This tendency will have a final result in stagnation. It will mean just a little wilting in enterprise and a set-back to industry and cause trouble to people who can ill-afford to experience it and who have difficulty in getting work. That is the result this legislation is likely to lead to. The Minister for Works is a very difficult man to handle and if we could take the measure through Committee in his absence, with the Premier in charge, we might make it a very good Bill. Practically speaking, the Minister has told us he cannot be convinced; I believe him when he said that.

The Premier: Not on this particular Bill.

Mr. Mann: He said that when speaking about the Arbitration Act Amendment Bill.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I say it for the Minister in respect of this measure.

The Premier: He has an open mind on this Bill.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: He had a very open mind when he proposed that the fine to be imposed on a man who does not pull up his motor car when signalled by another man driving or riding a horse, would be not £20 but £50.

The Premier: That is the maximum.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But it shows what was in the mind of the Minister when he jumped the fine from £20 to £50.

However, I do not quarrel with the Minister on that, because I do not like motor cars very much, and I think the motor car should give way to the horse every time.

The Premier: That is why the maximum fine has been increased. We have given the horse precedence.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The alternative for not stopping when a man on horseback holds up his hand is three months' imprisonment.

The Premier: That is rather light.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Bill is essentially one to be dealt with in Committee and I hope the Premier will not take the Bill through that stage in the absence of the Minister. I hope the Premier will not expect the House to go into Committee on the Bill for at least two or three days. The people who are to pay under this Bill should be heard. I believe those people hoped for some measure of relief under the Bill, but there is no such relief provided.

The Premier: There is, in many directions.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No, the schedule has not been altered to any degree and the clauses in the Bill have little to do with that. There is no proposal to reduce the tax on any vehicle. The Premier knows that the tax collected is to be taken from the local authority and is to be administered by the department. In those circumstances the local authority should have an opportunity to consider the measure before we pass it finally. I shall not oppose the second reading, but I hope we shall be given an opportunity to amend the Bill in Committee. The House should recognise that any danger to the Government attaches to the second reading. If we could defeat the Government on the second reading of one or two Bills, it would be a serious matter for them, and they would have to change places with us. But Government supporters can with perfect safety vote with us to improve some of the clauses without endangering the existence of the Government. If we wind out every one of the clauses the Government would not go out of office, but if we did not pass the second reading, they would.

The Premier: I doubt whether we would.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We would see that the Government changed places with us if the House rejected the second reading. No self-respecting Government could remain on the Treasury benches for a minute after the defeat of a measure of this kind.

The Premier: I would not put it in that way.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: In order that the Premier might be spared any embarrassment, I shall vote for the second reading.

The Premier: I knew you would save us.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I shall stand by him now, if, in return, he will help us to do justice to the people who under this measure will have to pay.

The Premier: There will be an opportunity to consider it before it is put through Committee.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then I have not another word to say.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [8.17]: When the Bill was before us last session I suggested that it be referred to a select committee. I again strongly recommend the Government to adopt that course.

Mr. Panton: We had a select committee last session.

MR. THOMSON: To deal with only the schedule of fees. I desire that the balance of the Bill be referred to a select committee. Grave dissatisfaction exists regarding the measure, particularly in the country districts. There are five road boards in my electorate and I have had a letter from each of them protesting against the provision that will deprive them of more than one-half of the revenue they are at present receiving from traffic fees. The Minister doubtless will say that the country districts have nothing to fear until they are proclaimed under the measure, but the country road boards will not be able to raise any objection against being brought within the scope of the measure. I shall be reluctantly compelled to vote against the second reading. I am not so optimistic as is the member for Northam (Sir James Mitchell) that, after the passing of the second reading, we will be given an opportunity to make remedial amendments that will be beneficial to the country districts. The Main Roads Bill and the Traffic Bill should be one, because they are bound up in each other. The Traffic Bill is a taxing measure to provide money for the construction of main roads. From the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition and the reply given him by the Premier, it seems that we are going to be faced with an additional half-penny tax on the unimproved value of land to provide

for the construction and maintenance of main roads.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, the Government cannot do that.

Mr. THOMSON: I am not so sure of it. I gathered from the reply of the Premier that that is his intention. I was certainly under the impression, when the taxing measure was before the House, that the proceeds of a half-penny of the land tax were to be devoted to main roads. I hope the Premier will make it clear that it is not the intention of the Government to impose an additional half-penny tax. Regarding the principle of constructing main roads, we should adopt the practice of years gone by when the Government supplied a monetary grant to road boards and saw that the roads were constructed to specification before paying over the money. That would be preferable to the direct taxation proposals embodied in the measures now before Parliament. When the road boards asked for assistance for the construction of main roads, they did not contemplate that it would take the form proposed in this Bill. I hope that in Committee we shall be able to convince the Government, and some of their supporters who represent country districts, that the provisions of this measure will impose an undue hardship upon country road boards. One road board that I know of has 220 miles of roads, of which only 14 miles is main road. Under this measure the whole of the traffic fees collected by the police in behalf of that authority would, when the area was proclaimed, be taken to construct the 14 miles of main road, while the rest of the roads went short.

Mr. Clydesdale: The same applies to the metropolitan area.

Mr. THOMSON: The metropolitan area is quite a different proposition. It has not the miles of main roads that some of the country road boards have.

Mr. Clydesdale: It has the traffic, though.

Mr. THOMSON: That is so. The Minister said that country road boards need have no fear, as they would not be affected for some time. Yet we are asked to pass a Bill which will enable the Minister to proclaim any such road board an area within the Act. I hope the Minister will agree to accept an amendment on the following lines:—

Provided that only such portion of fees collected under this Act shall be retained by the commissioner or main roads trust as will not be greater than the proportion of main roads

to the mileage of other roads in any district proclaimed outside the metropolitan area.

The road boards in my district view with considerable alarm the proposal of the Government to take the whole of the traffic fees collected. One road board under the new scale collects fees to the amount of approximately £2,000. If the Government take that amount, more than half their revenue will be gone, and they will not be in a position to maintain the hundreds of miles of roads in the district. That applies to all the road boards in my district, and I feel sure it applies to the whole of the road boards in the country. The Bridgetown Road Board is the one I referred to as having 220 miles of roads, of which 14 miles are main roads. To maintain the 14 miles of main roads, the whole of their traffic fees will be confiscated to the main roads trust when that district is proclaimed an area under the Act. Thus the Bridgetown board will have over 200 miles of subsidiary and developmental roads to maintain out of their own revenue, which will be quite impossible. In quite a number of districts the main roads are used only by touring motorists, and a great number of people outback will not get the facilities they require.

Mr. Sampson: It will be a great burden on those who have to find the money.

Mr. THOMSON: Quite so. No doubt some of the provisions in the Bill are necessary, more particularly those relating to motors carrying passengers and running in competition with the railways. They should pay a higher rate of fee than has been charged in the past. Still, I strongly recommend the appointment of a select committee to frame a scheme that will give a greater measure of satisfaction to country residents. I recognise the difficulties confronting the Government to deal with heavy motor traffic. I recognise that the Road Boards Association year after year has passed motions asking for the introduction of a Main Roads Bill, but in all the discussions I have never heard suggested proposals such as are embodied in this Bill. Last year the association decided to accept the Bill, but since then it has received such a volley of protests from affiliated boards that it is now somewhat dubious about the measure.

Mr. Sampson: It has protested against the personnel of the board.

Mr. THOMSON: And against the whole of their fees being handed over to a trust and expended without their having any say

in the matter. There are many provisions in the Bill to which I object. The Minister has intimated that he will accept a slight reduction in the fees provided for vehicles engaged in the cartage of ore and mining requisites. It seems to me that also those who possibly, for a short period only, may be carting their wheat in motor vehicles, say for about three months, should have the cheaper rate. If the Government will not accept that suggestion I hope they will adopt the proposal made by the member for Avon (Mr. Griffiths) that those vehicles should be licensed for three months, provided of course that the vehicles are not used during any other part of the year. All Bills that are coming before Parliament now are more or less taxation measures. We had the land tax increased last year and we have now placed before us a proposal to give the Government power to increase taxation in connection with the supply of water.

Mr. Marshall: Do you infer that good roads mean increased taxation?

Mr. THOMSON: I want the Government to do what was done in Victoria. In that State a certain amount of money was placed at the disposal of those in charge of road construction, and the present generation is only paying interest and sinking fund.

Mr. Clydesdale: But you can put Victoria in one corner of Western Australia.

Mr. THOMSON: That is not an argument against the principle. Are you going to place on 370,000 people a greater burden than is shouldered by those living in a small but closely settled State, where there is considerably greater wealth, and where there is not such a big mileage of road? The Government in Victoria introduced legislation which provided funds for the construction of the roads and those living in the districts concerned are paying interest and sinking fund only on the expenditure. In the Bill now before us we are asking everyone in the State to construct main roads over thousands of miles, and then we say, "We are going to impose upon the present generation a high tax on vehicles and a tax on petrol, to pay for this work which will be beneficial to future generations."

Mr. Clydesdale: The roads will be worn out long before then.

Mr. THOMSON: Those who will be here in 10 years' time may be in a better position to pay than is the case with us now.

The Premier: We are passing on to posterity now a greater indebtedness than any other State of the Commonwealth.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But we are handing over also a big asset.

The Premier: The other States have also something to back them up, but you cannot pass everything on to the children.

Mr. THOMSON: The Premier made a suggestion the other day with which I agree, that the metropolitan utilities such as water supplies and tramways should be placed in the control of boards or trusts. In that way the Government would reduce their indebtedness. We are developing a great country and the position is that if we increase the burden of taxation upon the present generation, we shall make it impossible for them to carry on. If the Bill is brought into existence many people who may not be using the main roads will be forced to contribute by way of one or the other of the taxes. I intend to vote against the second reading of the Bill. I do not expect to be successful in helping to defeat it, but I protest against it because in its present form it is not satisfactory. We have had evidence of that from many quarters. There is great dissatisfaction in the country; in fact local authorities view it with considerable alarm. Therefore I hope the Government will agree to the proposal to refer it to a select committee. Such a proposal cannot possibly do any harm and it will certainly do good.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [8.40]: The necessity for an amendment to the Traffic Act and for the introduction of a Main Roads Bill has long been recognised. We have the two Bills before Parliament at the present time, and it has been correctly stated that they are like Siamese twins in that one cannot be discussed without the other. The importance of constructing main thoroughfares is generally recognised, and the Minister is to be commended because of his efforts to bring this about. We are aware that the recommendations of the various organisations interested in the provision of good roads have not up to the present received consideration. However, it is possible even now that their wishes may be carried into effect. The importance of the control of traffic cannot be over-estimated. All over the world the growth of motor

transport has necessitated a revision of legislation relating to the control of roads, and it is in fact a modern problem that is exercising the minds of the people everywhere. The growth of bus traffic in our own State has been considerable in the last couple of years. That was inevitable, remembering what has been taking place in the big centres of the world. In what is known as the "City" of London tramcars are to-day an unknown quantity; the motor bus is the only vehicle by which large numbers of people are moved about above ground. As the Premier is well aware, the conveyance of passengers by means of tramways is obsolete.

The Premier: In big cities, not in all cities.

Mr. SAMPSON: We are being asked for tramways extensions, but I question whether it would not be wiser if fleets of motor buses were employed instead.

Mr. Withers: And you will import fuel and do away with the consumption of coal.

Mr. SAMPSON: The maintenance of roads would not impose heavier expense than would the provision of tramway tracks. Motor buses are the accepted transport of the future, and I hope tramway extensions will not be decided upon if motor buses can do what is necessary. In the Eastern States traffic moves very much faster than it does in this State. I am not an advocate of speeding on the roads; indeed, I support those magistrates who deal severely with speed fiends.

Mr. Hughes: Including medical men?

Mr. SAMPSON: At Port Augusta in South Australia there is displayed at a busy crossing over the railway a sign declaring that motor traffic must not proceed at a speed exceeding 20 miles an hour. Between Tweed Heads, on the boundary of Queensland and New South Wales, and the next railway town there is a distance of 19 miles representing a section that has to be covered by motor car. Along that stretch the speed is limited by regulation to 30 miles per hour. In the car in which I travelled, although the speedometer was always close up to the 30, that mark was not once exceeded. So it seems wise that a reasonable speed should be prescribed. Had the speed limit for that section been, say, 20 miles, the chances are the motor driver would have travelled considerably over 30 miles per hour. Where

regulations are unreasonable there is a distinct inclination to break them. In Perth we have a regulation prohibiting the passing of a stationary tram car. At first sight it appears to be a good regulation.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: It is quite essential.

Mr. SAMPSON: Yet when one looks into it, one sees that it tends to encourage fast driving; for as the tram car approaches the point where it is bound to stop, the motorist behind the tram car is encouraged to speed up to avoid the threatened delay. I am not saying it is the right thing to do, but undoubtedly the inclination is there.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: There is nothing wrong with that.

Mr. SAMPSON: In Adelaide a vehicle is allowed to pass a stationary tram car, provided the speed attained in doing so is not greater than four miles per hour.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: But their streets are three times as wide as ours.

Mr. SAMPSON: Not all of them.

Mr. Panton: And they have a different class of tram car. From an Adelaide tram car, you can see all round.

Mr. SAMPSON: But that is not the reason for the regulation. After noting the method in Adelaide, I am inclined to think that system provides for the safety of the public better than does our own in Perth. Coming back to the provisions regarding main roads, we recall that the main road trust account is a fund provided from motor license fees, from a portion of the land tax, from the proposed petrol tax and from money from the Federal Government. This fund is to be administered by the Minister for Works. When the Bill was before us last year it was suggested that there should be an independent board to control the fund, but that suggestion did not meet with approval. I regret it. If this were out of political control it would be better for all concerned. I do not wish to criticise the Minister's judgment, but I say that no matter what Government may be in power it would be an improvement if this measure were controlled by an independent board. That was the recommendation from the Road Board Association, the Good Roads Association and from another body. The arrangement by which the Commissioner of Police is to collect the license fees will receive general support. Prior to the police taking up this work a large num-

ber of vehicles were not licensed, and I believe there are still some for which no fees have been paid. Many people think we have too much legislation in respect of motor buses. There are regulations determining time tables, fares, stopping places and all manner of things. Competition should provide the best means of determining the fares, the stopping places, and also to a large extent the routes to be followed.

The Minister for Lands: The stopping places for tram cars are prescribed by law.

Mr. SAMPSON: But the tram car is an inflexible vehicle. It cannot move about as buses do. It must go along a prescribed track and, consequently, it must stop at the intersections of streets. The flexibility of the bus could be used for the benefit of the public to a greater extent than it is. There are too many regulations and too much legislation altogether in regard to motor buses and their routes. I am glad to see that the provision for the insurance of passengers and the driver is to be mandatory. The insurance provides for protection up to a certain sum. In my view the full insurance amount, not a minimum as expressed in the Bill, should be provided for each bus. It is prescribed that only 25 per cent. of the usual fees shall be charged when a horse-drawn vehicle is used for the carting of produce from the owner's farm and the carrying of goods on the return journey. That is a very proper provision, but certainly it ought to be extended to motor vehicles as well. I cannot understand why, since the horse-drawn vehicle is to receive special consideration, the motor vehicle, engaged in the same class of work, should not also be considered. The Minister pointed out that the owner of a motor lorry was able to make several trips. The more trips he makes, the better it is for the State.

Mr. Teesdale: And the worse for the roads.

Mr. SAMPSON: The more traffic there will be for the railways. If on account of owning a motor lorry a farmer can cart his wheat in two weeks instead of six, he should be encouraged to do so, for he will have so much more time in which to carry on other work.

The Minister for Lands: Of course the farmer's motor lorry would not wear out the roads as much as that of the other man.

Mr. SAMPSON: If consideration is given to one, then why not to the other?

Mr. Panton: Will the motor lorry travel at the same pace?

Mr. SAMPSON: I know the Premier would like to do this; indeed he could not consistently adopt any other course. The Minister for Works would agree that logically there is no other course to adopt than to give consideration to the motor vehicle that is already given to the horse-drawn vehicle. A heavy charge is levied upon what are known as demonstration plates. These are used by motor salesmen when demonstrating their cars.

The Minister for Lands: There is a charge on the motors as well as on the plates.

Mr. SAMPSON: The charges for motor car demonstration plates throughout the Commonwealth are not uniform. I will quote the rates applying in the other States for demonstration plates. In Western Australia for a set of two plates—a car requires one at the back and one at the front—the charge is £5; in New South Wales, £1; in Victoria, there being no limit to the number that may be used, the charge is £5; in South Australia it is £2 per set, and in Queensland the first set costs £5 and every other set £1. A firm using 10 sets in this State would have to pay £50, in New South Wales £10, Victoria £5, South Australia £20, and Queensland £14. In this State the cost would be more than double that in any other State.

Mr. Sleeman: Are they not all amending their legislation now?

Mr. SAMPSON: Not so far as demonstration plates are concerned, although the traffic authorities are said to be considering an increase in the other fees. A private person will possibly do 20,000 miles in a year and pay a fee of £6 or £8, but traders must pay £5 for a very few hundred miles.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: They are all over the State.

Mr. SAMPSON: They will pay this for road use, and the cars are afterwards sold and license fees are paid in connection with them.

Hon. G. Taylor: They try most of their cars in Harvest-terrace.

Mr. Marshall: This savours very much of the Automobile Club.

Mr. SAMPSON: The hon. member would not desire that our rates should be higher than those of the other States. I am glad the Bill is before us, and am anxious to help in every way to make it a good Bill. I am sorry the Minister has not agreed to accept

the suggested alteration with regard to the personnel of the advisory board to be appointed under the Main Roads Bill, but I hope that at the third reading stage he will do so.

§.

MR. E. B. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [9.7]: I regret that the Minister for Works is absent on other public business. Had he been present to-night he might have decided to withdraw the obnoxious proposals interfering with the collection of license fees and their retention by the local governing authorities. These fees are to be taken from the local authorities and spent on main roads, whenever one is to be constructed in any part of the district. In many cases the proportion of main roads to other roads is very small. If a road board has one main road running through its area all the licensing fees from farmers' and other people's vehicles and motors are to go to the central fund to be spent on main roads. Most of the main roads are largely used by people who live outside the district. To the local people the important road is that running between the farm and the nearest siding. That is where they want the work done, and where the real work of the country is carried on. A wheel tax is a tax upon industry that cannot be avoided, though I do not favour it, but the only justification for the imposition of a tax on the farmer's wagon which carries the wheat is that the fee obtained is to be spent on the road used by that wagon. When the Government go more thoroughly into the subject I am sure they will agree that license fees paid by local people shall be spent on the roads that the vehicles use. Unless this is done road boards will be left with their offices and their staff, and only about half their revenue. We are told that roads from Perth to Albany and Perth to Fremantle are to benefit by these fees. I urge upon the Government not to interfere with these fees but to leave them in the hands of the local authorities. If they decide to give a portion of the fees to the central main road board I suggest they should adopt the proposal put forward by the leader of the Country Party and take from the main roads only the proportion of the fees that is equivalent to the proportion of main roads to the whole of the roads in the district. I admit they would not get very much if they did that but anything

more than that would be wholly unacceptable to all our local road boards.

Hon. G. Taylor: The main roads would not be in good order.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: And they should not be kept in good order at the expense of the license fee from the farmers' wagons. That should be kept by the local road board. The only justification for the tax of 3d. per gallon on petrol is that the money is going to be spent on the roads and it will be fairly divided amongst the motorists. It will fall equitably upon those who use the roads. I have before me a cutting from yesterday's "West Australian." I congratulate the Premier upon the case he put up opposing the Federal Government's proposal to impose a tax of 2d. a gallon on petrol.

The Minister for Lands: It is on cases or tins.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The protest is a very effective one. The petrol that comes to this State is in tins or cases, and such a tax would fall heavily upon the State.

The Minister for Lands: There will be works at North Fremantle in the course of the next six months.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: This protest is addressed to the leader of the Labour Party, Mr. Charlton. The Premier said—

I therefore desire to urge for your consideration that the whole of the great influence which you are able to wield should be used to assist this State in its effort to avoid the imposition of this additional handicap to its development.

That is quite right. Since I have read this eloquent and proper protest I have no enthusiasm for the proposal for a State tax of 3d. a gallon, although I admit that this would be spent on our own roads, and would not be nearly so objectionable as paying an impost to go into the Federal Treasury.

The Premier: I felt that they could not stand a motor tax very well otherwise.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: Should the Federal Government persist in the obnoxious proposal, no doubt the State Government will consider the advisability of proceeding no further with their tax. I hope the Federal tax will be withdrawn, or better still, that both of them will be withdrawn and that these new petrol taxes will not be imposed. We have local road board subsidies to be withdrawn; the boards will suffer there. I wish to draw the attention of the Government to the manner in which the collection of traffic fees is being administered, and I hope that

the Minister in his reply will let us know where the money is going. All I know is that it is being taken away from the local authorities in the country, and is being spent in Perth, or spent by the Government. A charabanc has been running for some time between Narrogin and Perth, a heavy vehicle which doubtless does some damage to the roads. It starts from Narrogin on Monday, and gets back there on Saturday night, and spends Sunday there. Thus Narrogin is its real domicile. The charabanc used to be registered in Narrogin, and the fee paid to the Narrogin municipality, until the Minister for Works introduced this new traffic legislation. Then not only were the fees largely increased, but it was ordered that the vehicle belonging to our district must be registered in Perth, and that the fee must be paid to the central authority in Perth. The total fee payable on the vehicle in question has been increased to £45 17s. 6d. per year. The items are as follow:—Fee for power weight, 72, £13 15s., paid to the municipality; passenger vehicle license, £2, paid to the municipality; conductor's license, 2s. 6d., paid to the municipality; fee for passengers, 30s. each for 20 passengers, £30, paid to the Government. Of a total of £45 17s. 6d. the metropolitan municipalities receive £15 17s. 6d., while £30 goes to the Government. So far as I know, the £30 goes into revenue. If that is not so, I shall be glad to learn from the Minister where it does go.

The Minister for Lands: No money from motor fees goes into Consolidated Revenue.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I am glad to hear it is so, but I hope the Minister will look into the matter. If the amount goes to the metropolitan municipalities, I say it is outrageous that not a penny of the amount should go to the municipality of Narrogin and the several road boards affected after the vehicle has passed the Causeway, over a distance of 120 miles. I take it the same conditions apply to all other charabancs running into the country districts. The Government should see that the license fees are more equitably apportioned, and that the country road boards receive their fair share.

MR. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington) [9.21]: Many points of interest in connection with this Bill have already been dealt with. I should have been much more pleased with the measure if one defect in the prin-

cipal Act had been put right in this Bill. I refer to the fees for drivers' licenses. It never occurred to me when I was Minister controlling the Traffic Act that all the revenue which came in from it would not be applied for the purposes for which the allocation of fees was put forward; that is to say, in the metropolitan area for the improvement of roads, and outside the metropolitan area to assist the road boards to attend to their part of the work. By some peculiar arrangement for dealing with cash in the Treasury, an arrangement which I do not understand and never have understood, the drivers' license fees are practically collared and become a part of the Consolidated Revenue. I hold that the collection of license fees in connection with vehicles carries with it an obligation. If one person does damage to another, he will, if he is a fair-minded man, repair that damage. If the users of vehicles damage the roads, it is right that they should pay fees commensurate with the amount of use they get from the roads. The fees are fairly heavy, being calculated on the basis of the probable damage; and those who pay the fees claim quite properly that the money should be applied to repair damage to roads. Why the fees for drivers' licenses should not come in the same category I have never been able to understand. I was in hopes that when this Bill came forward the Public Works Department and also the Minister would have provided for that matter in the measure. It is not too late to do so now. I suppose the drivers' license fees amount to anything between £5,000 and £8,000 per annum.

The Minister for Lands: How many drivers do you think there are in this State?

Mr. GEORGE: Probably 20,000.

The Minister for Lands: That would mean only a little over £2,000, at half-a-crown.

Mr. GEORGE: The fee is 5s. I understand. If the amount were only £2,000, or say £300, still that money honestly belongs to the same fund as that into which license fees for vehicles are paid. I hope the Minister will even now recognise that that is a fair way of putting the position. The defect is one that might well be remedied in Committee.

The Minister for Lands: What about the police?

Mr. GEORGE: The police do not get the license fees, any more than they get the fines imposed for breaches of traffic regulations. I should like even those fines to go towards the improvement of roads throughout the State, for which purpose the funds provided are totally inadequate.

The Minister for Lands: The payment of the police comes from the Treasury, out of Consolidated Revenue.

Mr. GEORGE: Yes, but 10 per cent. of fees collected in the metropolitan area is credited to the police and is paid into Consolidated Revenue. There are many good things in the Bill. One feature, however, that I should like to see altered is with reference to the power given to the Commissioner of Police to call upon the owner of any vehicle out of repair to show cause why the license should not be cancelled. So far I agree with the provision, but there is nothing to say that a refund of a proportionate part of the license fee shall be made in such circumstances. I contend a corresponding refund should be made. People may be prevented by circumstances from putting a vehicle into proper repair at once, and may thus be compelled to discard it for the time being; and during the suspension of license there should be a refund of license fee. I am pleased to see that conditions are being tightened up as regards drivers under the influence of liquor. With regard to the power to prohibit the driving of a vehicle or motor lorry with a load projecting more than a certain distance beyond the side of the vehicle, I agree that there should be some limit to the width of loads, and that it is right to forbid projection over the sides. Anyone driving about the metropolitan area must observe that a number of lorries carry loads that are unsafe, loads that in fact constitute a danger to other users of the road. I am glad that in this connection something more is going to be done than the principal Act permits. Regulations, I see, may be prescribed; and that is all right, but in one respect I think this provision should be tempered with some common sense. It is proposed that a fine not exceeding £20, or imprisonment not exceeding one month, may be imposed. That seems harsh for the breach of an ordinary traffic regulation. For example, if a perambulator that is being wheeled along the footpath should happen to be a little on the right

side instead of being on the left side, that would be a breach of a regulation. The answer to my argument is, of course, that no magistrate of common sense would think of applying such a penalty in such a case.

The Minister for Lands: That is a maximum penalty.

Mr. GEORGE: I only mention these cases to show how the thing can be brought down to an absurdity. If there should be two perambulators abreast proceeding in the same direction, that would be a breach of regulations.

The Minister for Lands: But the penalty proposed is a maximum penalty.

Mr. GEORGE: Certain offences, which can easily be defined, should carry such drastic penalties as those here proposed, but when those penalties apply for breach of any regulation, that is going further than, in my opinion, we have a right to do.

The Minister for Lands: The matter is left to the common sense of the magistrate.

Mr. GEORGE: Quite true; but there is the risk that a man might find himself brought before a magistrate on a petty charge. The person making the charge might not be so highly endowed with common sense as magistrates are, and as, of course, all politicians are. That provision might reasonably be amended. The proposal to obtain a kind of general covering insurance for the owners of motor buses is quite right, but there should also be some examination as to fitness to drive motor buses. I refer also to general fitness to hold such a position. On all charabancs and buses I should like the driver to be placed in such a position that he cannot be subjected, whether he likes it or not, to a constant flow of conversation from numerous passengers. There have been instances where accidents have been only narrowly averted more by good luck than good management, because of this tendency. I notice that a clause has been inserted regarding the calculation of the horse-power of any steam-propelled vehicle. I presume that formula has been submitted to the Chief Inspector of Machinery (Mr. Matthews), and if that is so, I shall not debate it at the present time. At first sight it seemed to me that the provision might lead to considerable charges being levied under this heading. For example steam tractor engines are propelled by their own steam. It is provided in calculating the horse power that

consideration of the area of all the tubing has to be taken into account. That might lead to a very high fee being charged. As to the petrol tax, I shall have something to say at a later stage if I am in the Chamber. On the whole the Bill has considerable merit and as it is a machinery measure, I hope the points I have referred to will receive some consideration.

MR. LINDSAY (Toodyay) [9.33]: I am sorry that the Minister for Works has seen fit to bring this Bill before Parliament again. When we were dealing with the measure last session I moved an amendment the effect of which was to remove the Commissioner of Police from the position of licensing authority for the State. The Minister accepted the amendment and left the Commissioner of Police as the licensing authority in the metropolitan area. I see that the original provision has been reinstated in the Bill. As to the fees imposed, I have not found a great deal to object to. We recognise that roads are required and we are prepared to pay for them. Our problem in the country districts, however, is that we want to pay for the making of our own roads and not for those of the other people. We are prepared to find the capital to make our own roads, and I believe that the local governing bodies are more capable of carrying out that work than is the Public Works Department. I say that, if we are to judge from the work done in connection with developmental roads by the Public Works Department. I have had a number of interviews with the Minister. I mention that to his credit, because a great many mistakes in the early stages have been rectified. A majority of the road boards in my electorate tendered for the construction of the main roads and they have been able to do the work cheaper than the Government did it in the past. The reason is plain. The road boards have plant and the necessary staffs to deal with road making. In addition they have efficient labour. By the use of their road making machinery and their expert knowledge, the roads have been most efficiently constructed. The fact that the road boards have bought the plant, the capital cost of which has been high, has necessitated increased taxation. To that end we had a re-valuation made of the land in my district. In the last three years the average increase in valuation has been over 200 per cent. In my own instance, it was over 300 per cent. Although there was an agitation at the start

against this move, we have settled down now and are satisfied with the result. Not only did I experience an increase in the valuation of my land to the extent of 300 per cent., and other people to the same extent or less, but on top of that the road board increased the rates from 1½d. in the pound under the old valuation to 2¾d. in the pound under the new valuation. Thus, the road board instead of receiving £1,000 in revenue three or four years ago, now receive something like £4,000. The result is that the road board is able to construct a much greater road mileage than formerly because of the increased revenue. Although there has been no serious objection to the increased traffic fees, I made certain statements in reply to the Minister for Works last session when he told hon. members that the increased taxation would amount to £50,000 in the metropolitan area and £20,000 in the country districts. I explained how the increased taxation would affect the country districts and as a result some modifications were agreed to. To show how the increased taxation under the heading of traffic fees applied to road boards in the wheat belt, I have particulars regarding one showing an increase from £910 last year to £1,240 this year. In another instance the increase has been from £665 last year to £1,420 this year; in another, from £567 last year to £1,297 this year; in another from £390 last year to £527 this year, and in another from £486 last year to £1,166 this year. Thus the increase in taxation has mounted up and, generally speaking, it represents about 30 per cent. of the revenue compared with the total taxation. With this increased taxation and the increased rates, I am prepared to say that the road boards in my electorate will have constructed their proportions of the main roads long before the Government can pass the Main Roads Bill and do that work themselves. We can do the work more cheaply and more effectively than the Government. Therefore I say those road boards should be allowed to collect their own taxation. It is a most serious question to the boards. We know that another Bill is to be introduced which is to apply to the whole State. I agree that some road boards are not in the same position as those in my electorate, because they have a greater mileage of main roads within their boundaries. Therefore, it may be said, we should be called upon to pay a proportion towards that extra cost. That will have to be done, but

we do not wish to have any of that money back in order to make our own main roads. We ask the Government to leave us alone to collect our own taxation and spend it on the efficient work my board is capable of carrying out. I have received letters from each of the local governing authorities in my electorate protesting against the collection of the tax being taken away from them and given to Perth. I voice that protest more appreciatively because I have been for 16 years a member of a road board. I agree with that protest and hope the Minister, who I am sorry to see is not present this evening, will agree to amend the Act in that respect. The Bill refers to proclaiming an area. If the Minister were here I would ask him what he means by a proclaimed area. The Bill provides that the Commissioner of Police shall be the authority for the whole State, but that he shall operate only within the proclaimed areas. Outside of those areas the Minister will return the tax to the local governing authorities less the cost of collection. We do not know what that cost will be. At any rate, I would like to know from the Minister what he means by a proclaimed area, and I hope that he will never proclaim any area within my electorate. We have been told that road board conferences have favoured the introduction of a Main Roads Bill. I have been an executive officer of the Road Board Association for many years. We have certainly discussed a measure of that description, but in the wheat belt we are not so much concerned with the main roads as with the construction of roads to take our produce to sidings. With us it is not the main roads that are necessary to make a living, but the subsidiary roads. I recognise that the agitation for good roads comes largely from people who own motor cars. I have no objection to an increase in the fees charged to motor owners because they are the people who use the main roads and who should pay for them. When the Road Board Association were considering the introduction of a main roads Bill we endeavoured to find out how similar legislation in Victoria had affected the shire councils there. We received a book published by the Chairman of the County Council Association of New Zealand. That gentleman had been to Melbourne and had inquired into the problem and subsequently reported

against it. I read the book carefully and found out that although the shire councils in Victoria did not cover large areas, their districts were more closely settled than ours and their valuations were much higher. I found also that those shire councils were receiving four or five times the revenue our road boards were receiving. It amounted also to 30 per cent. or 40 per cent. of the total revenue, which was going for interest and upkeep of the roads. The councils did not provide the capital cost of the roads for which the Government found the money. The councils paid a certain proportion of the upkeep and interest charges. Even so, those shire councils found a larger proportion than they appreciated. Better main roads are necessary, not because railways are running through the country, or because sulkies and wagons are using the roads, but simply because of the heavy motor cars and lorries. We should consider that point of view when discussing main roads. If my road board were left alone to collect its own taxation, within a very few years our main road would be constructed. When travelling through my electorate during the last three months I found that over eight miles of our main road had been made and gravelled to a standard equalling the Commonwealth developmental road requirements. That shows that before long our work will have been completed.

The Minister for Lands: And then you will have to start over again.

Mr. LINDSAY: If the Government take the money away from my road board we shall not be able to start in the first instance. It has been suggested that we are afraid to tax ourselves. In order to show how increased taxation has applied in my district, I will give my own experience, for the correctness of which I can vouch. In 1921-22 my rates and taxes amounted to £14 10s. At that time our valuation was 10s. an acre. I agree that that was an erroneous one, for to-day my valuation is 33s. an acre.

The Minister for Lands: But your land is worth more than that.

Mr. LINDSAY: I admit that it is. However, at that time the rate of tax was 1½d. in the £, while the vermin tax was ½d. in the £. To-day the board rate is 2½d., and the loan rate is ¾d. in the £, while the vermin rate is 1d. in the £. I am in the fortunate position of not hav-

ing to pay vermin rate, but had I done so I would have paid £10 under that heading alone. However, it will be seen that in that short time my rates have increased from £14 10s. 11d. to over £40. Yet we are not growling about it. I merely want to show members that when they declare we desire that somebody else should pay for our roads, they are not correct in that statement. We are quite prepared to tax ourselves in order to make and maintain roads. One member has said that the Government should retain control of the revenue from drivers' licenses. I do not agree with that. I do not know just how many drivers there are, but I take it there must be at least 20,000 motor vehicles in the State. The driver of a private motor car pays 5s. per annum, the driver of a car for hire pays more than that, and the driver of a motor lorry pays 10s. So the probability is that the amount received in drivers' fees is something between £5,000 and £10,000. I fail to see why Consolidated Revenue should have the advantage of that money; rather ought it to go into the main roads fund. To my surprise the Minister claimed that it cost a lot to collect those fees. As a matter of fact, the collection is done by the local policeman, and in the easiest way; for, meeting a man in the street, he demands the fee and gets it. I am sorry the Minister for Works is not here to-night. I realise that we on this side have not much chance to amend Bills, but I admit that the Minister has accepted suggestions offered from this side, and I conclude that, had he been here to-night, he might have accepted some of the suggestions thrown out. When the Minister has replied to the debate, I will decide whether or not to support the second reading. If he will not agree to amend the boundaries of the areas, I am afraid I shall have to oppose it.

On motion by Mr. Griffiths, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.50 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 2nd September, 1925.

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

BILLS (3)—THIRD READING.

1. Ministers' Titles.
2. Public Education Endowment Amendment.
Transmitted to the Assembly.
3. Real Property (Commonwealth Titles).
Passed.

BILL—ROMAN CATHOLIC GERALDTON CHURCH PROPERTY.

Second Reading.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.37] in moving the second reading said: The object of the Bill is to make the Roman Catholic Bishop of Geraldton a corporation sole. In law a corporation is an artificial body created either by Royal Charter or by Act of Parliament. Its existence is unaffected by changes in the members constituting it, and hence in legal phrase it is said never to die. There are two classes of corporations—corporations aggregate and corporations sole. This first may consist of several individuals, such as a municipality, whereas in the second the power is vested in a single person occupying an official position. In this case it is the occupant of the position who is given the authority. The need for the Bill was emphasised by the death of the first Roman Catholic Bishop of Geraldton. The official position which he occupied had not been created a corporation sole. Consequently the church was faced with the legal expenses and fees involved in the transfer of the whole of the church property to the new bishop. Apart from