

## Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 8th September, 1925.

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

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE.**

On motion by Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (for Hon. V. Hamersley), leave of absence for six consecutive sittings granted to the Hon. G. W. Miles (North) on the ground of urgent private business.

**MOTION — METROPOLITAN WATER SUPPLY, SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE DEPARTMENT.***Select Committee's Report.*

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, ordered that the consideration of the report of the select committee on the Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Department, received and ordered to be printed on the 10th of December last, be made an Order of the Day for the next sitting.

**BILL—GROUP SETTLERS' ADVANCES.**

Report of Committee adopted.

**BILL—WEST AUSTRALIAN TRUSTEE, EXECUTOR, AND AGENCY COMPANY, LIMITED, ACT AMENDMENT.***In Committee.*

Hon. J. W. Kirwan in the Chair; Hon. J. Nicholson in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Amendment of Section 21:

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I move an amendment—

That in line six of proposed Subsection (d) the words "fifty thousand" be struck out, and "seventy-five thousand" inserted in lieu.

This amendment is in accordance with the recommendation of the select committee.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Title, preamble—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

**BILL—TRANSFER OF LAND ACT AMENDMENT.***In Committee.*

Resumed from 3rd September; Hon. J. W. Kirwan in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Offices of Commissioner and Registrar may be held by one person:

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Since we last considered this Bill in Committee I have discussed the matter with the Minister for Justice and others. I am assured it is the intention of the Government to safeguard the positions of existing officers. The desire is to improve the work of a very important department, and it is intended to give the Bill a trial to see how it works. I would point out, however, that the introduction of this measure is a departure from the system that has been in vogue for many years throughout the States of the Commonwealth. It has always been found to work better when there are separate officials occupying the positions of Registrar of Titles and Commissioner of Titles. If the Eastern States have found it advantageous to keep the positions separate, it is questionable whether we will find that the duties can be satisfactorily carried out by one officer instead of two, as in the past. I foresee that as the work of this department grows, there will be greater need to keep the offices distinct. I do not desire to be unduly obstructive, and if the Ministers feel that this provision is necessary, I will not proceed with my objection.

Hon. J. EWING: Although apparently Mr. Nicholson has been convinced by the Ministers that the Bill is necessary, and that all the required adjustments will be made, it is obvious that he is still of the opinion

that the measure is not a good one. Apparently Mr. Nicholson has been satisfied that the officers' rights will be conserved. The present Registrar of Titles is an excellent officer who has been in the service for 20 years. What will happen to him? I am also concerned about the Solicitor General, Mr. Sayer. With all his multifarious duties, how can he carry on?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: But this proposal will relieve him of some of his duties. That is the point.

Hon. J. EWING: I did not understand the position. That puts a different complexion on it, and removes the objection I had to the proposal.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Progress was reported to enable Mr. Nicholson, as a representative of the legal fraternity, to go into the whole question, to satisfy himself that the interests of all concerned were safeguarded. The Government have good reasons for making the alteration and I would be the last to agree to an injustice to anyone inside or outside the Public Service. It must be recognised, however, that certain conditions operate in the Eastern States that may not be applicable in Western Australia. It may be that at the end of 12 months we shall find that the Bill will not operate as we anticipate, and should that happen, the matter will be reviewed again. No one, in such circumstances, will be more keen than the Minister for Justice or myself to bring amending legislation before Parliament again. The object of the Bill is to relieve the present Commissioner of Titles, Mr. Sayer, of one of his onerous duties. Country members in particular will appreciate the difficulties operating at present regarding the work of this department and will welcome the change. No injustice will be done regarding the officers holding the respective positions to-day. The present registrar has been consulted and his position will not be affected unless it be by way of advancement. He will not be retired.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Those who have had experience with the department concerned will appreciate that it is high time the proposed change was made. I do not know, however, that there is any such appointment as our Commissioner of Titles in the Eastern States.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Yes; there are equivalent positions.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: At any rate, it is high time the Solicitor General was relieved of part of his onerous duties.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

## BILL—MAIN ROADS.

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from 3rd September.

HON. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.55]: I congratulate the Government upon bringing forward the Bill, which is one that has been sought by various conferences of local governing bodies who realise the necessity for legislation dealing with our main roads. About a year ago a road board conference met in Perth and delegates brought under the notice of the Minister for Works the necessity for such legislation. The Minister asked what form they would like the Bill to take. After prolonged debate, the consensus of opinion was in favour of a Bill following the lines of the Victorian Main Roads Act, with modifications to suit Western Australian conditions. Such a Bill received attention by Ministers prior to those now in office, the great bone of contention being the funds necessary to carry out the functions of the legislation. Those who have frequented the office of the Minister for Works will have noticed a map hanging on the wall in his office. Upon it are marked the various main roads and developmental roads that it was proposed to take into consideration when the Government were bringing down legislation to deal with this question. I give the present Government credit for having attempted to devise ways and means to bring this legislation into force. The question as to what form the Bill should take naturally exercised the mind of the Minister for Works, and when moving the second reading of the Bill in the Legislative Assembly, he particularly emphasised the desire expressed by the road board conference that legislation along the lines of the Victorian Act, with modifications to suit local conditions, should be introduced. Naturally those modifications play an important part in the Bill before hon. members. The Victorian Act is carried out by a board appointed by the Government with full powers and free from political control. That Board is also vested with power to

borrow money. It has been said that an Act on these lines in Western Australia cannot be worked satisfactorily. That may or may not be true, but I am convinced of this, that the Bill as it now stands provides that a Board shall be appointed and that it shall consist of five members, two to be appointed by the Government, and to be public servants, one to be appointed by the municipal authorities, and the fourth by the road board authorities with the Chief Engineer, to be appointed under the Bill, and to be chosen by the Government, as chairman of the board. Members will have noticed in the "West Australian" of yesterday that the Minister for Works tried to justify his actions in regard to the appointment of the board, and endeavoured to prove that the personnel will be as indicated in the Bill, and that it will be entirely free from political control. Those who read the statement cannot come to any conclusion other than that with three public servants on the board, and two only to represent the local bodies, the weight of influence will be on the side of the Government all the time. I am not in favour of the clause as it stands; it does not appeal to me as being the best that could be framed. If the Minister had decided upon three members from outside the service, and two from the service, there would have been reasonable grounds for favourable consideration. The board will be vested with great powers; it will combine all the powers contained in the Public Works Act, Municipal Corporations Act, and Road Districts Act so far as they relate to the securing of gravel and other material for road construction. The Board will also decide how the work shall be carried out, whether by the engineers, the local authorities, or the Department of Roads and Bridges, or whether the local authorities will be given an opportunity to quote for the work. When we remember what the Bill provides in the way of funds for the board to deal with, members will ask themselves whether the board as proposed should really be entrusted with the power it is proposed to give it. It is set out that large sums of money will be necessary for the handling of the work the board will have to carry out, and that it will have to raise funds for the main roads trust account. It is intended that the whole of the traffic fees shall go into this fund, as well as all the money granted by the Federal Government, and

such proportion of the tax imposed on the unimproved capital value of land and all moneys appropriated by Parliament for the purposes of the Act. This means that the metropolitan-suburban area will contribute something like two-thirds of the money, and half the money that will be raised as the result of the halfpenny in the pound tax on unimproved land values. That being so there naturally arises in the minds of members the question, how are the local governing bodies going to construct and maintain all the subsidiary roads when these avenues for the raising of revenue are closed to them.

Hon. E. H. Harris: They will have to further tax the ratepayers.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: They are already doing that, and it must be borne in mind that the ratepayers expect something in the way of comfort from the roads and footpaths towards the construction of which they contribute largely, and also that 90 per cent. of the ratepayers do not use the roads for vehicular or motor traffic. But although the roads would be used and are used extensively by motor lorries and motor vehicles generally, and in so doing grind the roads to powder, no assistance in the way of a subsidy, and no assistance from traffic fees will go their way. Further, the local ratepayers, besides paying their rates and taxes, are contributing in other directions. The money that is being granted by the Federal Government comes out of the pockets of the ratepayers. It will therefore be acknowledged that a tremendous burden is being placed on the ratepayers. I wish that I could have complete confidence in the Minister for Works' administration of the measure to the satisfaction of the people. I admit candidly that my confidence in this respect has been shaken. It has been stated outside that since the Bill passed the Assembly last session a big sum of money has been spent in various localities from the Federal grant, and also from funds provided by the State Government. A few weeks ago I asked that a return be prepared showing what had been done during the recess in the way of road construction and the districts in which the money had been expended. The return has been supplied, but it is anything but satisfactory. The first item relates to the metropolitan district, but the area in square miles is not given. The amount raised from vehicular traffic was £3,143 and from motor traffic £29,709.

There is nothing in the return to show what has been spent in the various electorates, not even around the metropolis, but I am informed that in one particular district, no less than twelve miles of road have been constructed since the Bill passed the Assembly last session, and that that district is included in the electorate represented by the Minister for Works. To me that is astonishing, and when I asked for the return I hoped that the Minister would be able to submit a statement which would have permitted me to deny the correctness of what was told to me. At any rate the Colonial Secretary will have an opportunity to deny that statement, if it is not correct, when he replies to the second reading speeches. If what I have been told is correct, how can hon. members be expected to give the Minister the power he seeks to obtain under the Bill, the power to control huge sums of money which will go into the main roads trust account?

Hon. W. H. Kitson: What do you wish us to infer?

Hon. J. DUFFELL: What I have already stated. I trust that what I have said about the construction of 12 miles of road in the Minister's electorate will be proved to be incorrect.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: Why not?

Hon. J. DUFFELL: That is a pertinent question, and I shall not let it pass without a reply. Why not? Several members of this Chamber on Wednesday last paid a visit to the Churchman's Brook reservoir to note the progress that was being made there, so that they might be able to give the House the latest details of the work when debating the report of the select committee later on in the session. The hon. member who interjected was one of the party who made the journey, and he will bear out the fact that along part of the road we were able to proceed at no faster pace than about three miles an hour, and that even then we were taking risks. That journey was over part of one of the main trunk roads of Western Australia. I refer to the Albany-road. I can thoroughly recommend that road as a sample of a bad road. The Federal grant is for main roads and developmental roads. I do not wish to imply that the 12 miles of road constructed are not main or developmental roads, but they are not of the same importance as the Albany-road. The latter road

can only be reconstructed as the result of Government moneys, and it should receive proper consideration. The Minister for Works takes strong exception to piece-meal jobs, but in the case of a road of such importance as the Albany-road he looks in the other direction. Another peculiar feature of the measure is that the Minister contends he will not have any power or authority to spend moneys, or to proclaim main or developmental roads, unless with and by the advice of the advisory board to be created under the Bill. Undoubtedly that advisory board will be largely dominated by the Minister. Many illustrations could be adduced to show that political influence has worked in certain directions without being for the good of the people as a whole. That being so, I ask the Council to think seriously before agreeing to pass the Bill as it has reached us from another place. While Mr. Stewart was speaking I interjected that the Bill should be referred to a select committee. To-day I am still more convinced that that is the proper course. The select committee would be in a position to obtain first-hand information from the local governing bodies throughout the proclaimed areas, and then to submit to this Chamber the consensus of opinion of those boards. Someone has been going around amongst members trying to induce them to support a joint select committee of both Houses on the Bill.

Hon. E. H. Harris: The other House refused to allow a select committee to be appointed.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: It must be borne in mind that the Bill has already been dealt with in another place. The Legislative Council is quite able to deal with measures as they come along here in such a way as will be for the good of the whole people, and without referring to another place for assistance. What is underlying the suggestion of the person I refer to?

Hon. J. R. Brown: This is not a party Bill.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: It is not in accordance with the best traditions of government for someone who is not a member of Parliament to go around endeavouring to bring about a joint select committee, or any result of that kind. If anything of this nature occurs again, I shall name the individual responsible and ask for an explanation.

Hon. J. Nicholson: But you are not blaming the Minister, are you?

Hon. J. DUFFELL: No. I am blaming the individual.

Hon. J. Nicholson: He must have done it on his own account.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Pigs may fly, but they are unlikely birds. I fully agree that this is not a party Bill. Not that it would make any difference to this Chamber if it were a party Bill. We have demonstrated time and again that no matter what the measures are that come before us, if they are for the good of the whole people, they will receive every consideration. It is immaterial to us what Government may be in power—National, Labour, or any other. This not being a party Bill Mr. Brown will have an opportunity of expressing his views on it just as freely as I or any other member. The proposal is to create a trust account by the imposition of a tax on a commodity imported from abroad. I do not pose as a legal authority; perhaps Mr. Nicholson will enlighten us later as to the legality of the proposal. Our State Government propose to place a tax of 3d. per gallon on motor spirit coming from another part of the world. The proposed method of collection, if legal, is excellent. The Government suggest that the wholesale dealers in petrol shall pay a license fee. The Minister for Works said there were only four of those wholesale dealers, but according to a booklet sent to members there are some half dozen more. Amongst them are included Eastern States firms. Now, what will be the position with regard to petrol that comes here from the Eastern States, where there are large handlers of motor spirit—Couch, Calder & Co., for instance? How are the Government to know who is receiving the petrol here? The Bill provides that the wholesale dealers in petrol shall pay the tax to the Government in four quarterly instalments based on the quantities of petrol sold by them. In that connection the Bill proposes to empower departmental officials to ascertain the correctness of the returns, and to inspect books and documents to that end. The taxation will mean a large sum annually. Exception has been taken to the proposal by people who use petrol for stationary engines on farms, for motor launches, and for aerial work. These people claim that as they do not interfere with the roads, they should be free

from the tax. The ramifications of the measure will indeed be far-reaching. As regards the board to be created under the Bill, the proposal is that two members shall be elected by the local authorities, and that three shall be appointed by the Government; and as the Government are to appoint the chairman, it is doubtful in the extreme whether the board would give satisfaction to the people under the present Government or any other. If the Bill were referred to a select committee, that body could travel about from place to place and ascertain the opinions of the various local authorities. I understand there is to be an adjournment of this Chamber for a week a little later, and that period would afford an opportunity for doing a considerable part of the select committee's work. Notwithstanding what the Minister for Works has said I am convinced that under the Bill as it stands he will have the first and the last say as to the method by which roads are to be constructed and maintained. I have been surprised to see a number of telegrams and letters received by members from various local authorities, the majority of whom are totally opposed to the Bill as printed. I think those local authorities on further consideration would see that some good could be made out of the Bill. At present it is impossible for local authorities to construct main roads or developmental roads out of the limited funds at their disposal. In the Metropolitan-Suburban Province the local authorities find it exceedingly difficult to carry out necessary works on the diminishing amounts they are receiving under the distribution of traffic fees. At first I thought that distribution would have been of distinct advantage to all local authorities, through the smaller bodies receiving assistance from the larger and more important bodies. Taking all things into consideration, I think the House would be well advised to refer the Bill to a select committee.

HON. E. H. HARRIS (North-East) [5.33]: I cannot but think that some such Bill is required. Change brings about change. Many years ago, when the railways were first being constructed, transport was immediately removed from the roads to the railways; but with the development of the internal combustion engine and the improvements in motor vehicles, we have reverted to the roads. Roads now require to be made capable of carrying the heavier and faster

traffic of to-day. With any innovation, the most desirable thing is to consider it from the financial side. That has been exercising the minds of many of the local authorities since the Bill was first brought forward. The Bill provides that the fees to be collected shall be paid into a main roads trust account. Up to the present the local authorities have collected the fees under the Traffic Act. They are concerned at the prospect of the whole of the fees being paid into this trust account, and they feel that main roads may be proclaimed throughout their districts and therefore constructed and maintained by the Government, whereas the local authorities themselves will be called upon to construct and maintain the developmental roads.

Hon. A. Burvill: Maintain, not construct.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Immediately the measure reached the hands of the local authorities of the eastern goldfields, they sent down telegrams of protest, urging that the Bill should be opposed. I agree that we should have such a Bill, but I think the measure might be considerably modified with advantage to those local authorities in remote districts. The local authorities wear no blinkers, and so they immediately noted the provision that traction engines over seven tons in weight are required to pay very heavy fees. In the Kalgoorlie municipality there is a road roller exceeding seven tons in weight. It is on two wheels, which means a tax of £42. Then, further, provision is made that if any substance other than petrol be used for power for such engines, an additional 20 per cent. of the fee will be charged. At Kalgoorlie they are using wood in the tractor, and therefore there will be another £8 8s. to be paid. So, the municipality will be taxed by the Government to the extent of £50 8s. for using a machine for road construction purposes. That, of course, is absolutely absurd. Immediately the fees are collected by the board through the police, as provided in the Bill, each of the respective local authorities will be called upon to pay taxes on all vehicles used in the construction or maintenance of their main roads. Another objection urged is this: the payment of the licensing fees for all classes of vehicles will involve the municipality of Kalgoorlie in an annual loss of £1,200, without any apparent compensating advantage, inasmuch as there will be no guarantee of any expenditure upon roads within its boundaries.

Hon. J. J. Holmes interjected.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Yes, and his advice might be of value to the district, but they cannot see any compensating advantage for the £1,200 they will lose. I am quoting Kalgoorlie, because this illustration was sent along by the municipality. Each of the other bodies voicing their protests will be in a similar position. The Minister, when moving the second reading, told us that the estimated traffic fees would amount to £90,000. He pointed out that the Bill would operate only where proclaimed. I should like the Colonial Secretary to tell us whether that estimate of £90,000 covers the whole of the local authorities in the State, or whether it has application only to those districts in which the Bill will be proclaimed. Western Australia is too big to stand as one area. In my view it should be sub-divided into five or six areas. Then those local authorities having common interests could work in conjunction with one another and pool their fees, while the respective boards could work in conjunction with the metropolitan board. If the whole of the money is to be put into one fund, several disadvantages will arise. For instance, there is a vast difference in the cost of maintaining roads in a wet as against a dry area. The amount spent on the construction or maintenance of roads in certain districts would be practically nil, while in other districts the local authorities would not have sufficient funds to attend to small necessary jobs. Another important matter is the power proposed to be vested in the Minister. With the possible changes in Governments and Ministers, there would be a greater likelihood of continuity of policy if, as far as practicable, the whole system were removed from Ministerial control and the power vested in a board. Engineers are referred to in the Bill. I should like the Minister to say whether the two representatives to be appointed to the board by the local authorities may be laymen or whether they must be engineers to act in conjunction with the engineers appointed by the Minister. It has been suggested that the Bill should be referred to a select committee. It would be highly desirable to adopt that course in order to get first-hand information from the local authorities interested in the measure. From such an inquiry it might be possible to obtain suggestions that will help us to overcome the difficulties presented by the Bill. Reference has been made to a joint select committee, but I point out that last session an-

other place declined by 27 votes to 15 to refer the Bill to a select committee. A few days ago the same House also refused, by a large majority, to refer the Traffic Bill to a select committee. If another place is not prepared to have the measure investigated, we might consider appointing a select committee from this House. The Bill is capable of being improved considerably, and I hope that in Committee it will be amended and made a useful measure. I support the second reading.

**HON. J. M. MACFARLANE** (Metropolitan) [5.47]: I agree with the remarks of the two previous speakers and particularly with those of Mr. Duffell, who has closely investigated the matter. The Minister must agree that the criticism has not been hostile to either him or the Bill. The House recognises that such a measure is necessary, but at the same time it should be framed on lines of which the country approves. Road traffic has increased considerably in late years by reason of the advent of motor trucks, motor cars, and such like speedy vehicles. The construction of roads, therefore, has become a matter of much greater importance than it was formerly. In a large State like Western Australia roads cannot be constructed without imposing upon the small population a very heavy impost. I regret the necessity for supporting a measure that will impose a further burden on the people. The Minister has said that no extra taxation is contemplated, but the raising of £165,000 of new revenue certainly means extra taxation, no matter by what name it may be called. When the Bill was before us last session, people were alarmed about its provisions, and they now want to know what sort of a measure is to be tacked on to the schedule of fees we then passed. There is still a good deal of opposition to the Bill, chiefly on the part of local authorities, and the proposal to refer it to a select committee should receive the support of the Minister, in order that we may evolve a satisfactory measure. If the Bill passes the second reading stage, I hope the Committee stage will not be taken hastily, because the public should be given an opportunity to voice their opinions. The clause to which I most strongly object is that dealing with the constitution of the board. The Minister said the type of board in Victoria would not be acceptable to the Government. I maintain that we want a

board more free from Government control and political influence than the one proposed in the Bill. Judging by the proposed personnel, one can only conclude that the board will be another Government department. Upon it will be two members appointed by the Government and the Minister will be in control, so that the board will be as nearly as possible a Government department. Again, a sum of £190,000 will be handled by the board, and the people who have to find the money do not want a repetition of the experience they had of the Government's handling of the traffic fees. A few months ago I attended the Kelmscott show and the Lieutenant-Governor, in declaring it open, referred to the bad state of the Perth-Armadale-road. It was pointed out, however, that the worst section of the road is a sort of no man's land. It comes within the Gosnells road district, and as the local board receive practically no revenue there, they decline to spend on that section any more money than is actually received by way of traffic fees. The Armadale board have endeavoured to get the Gosnells board to put the road in repair, but without success. The road needs to be reconstructed, but the people using it continue to suffer the disabilities arising from its disrepair. Had the Minister been alive to his responsibility, he would have taken action to put the road in a proper state of repair so that it would be safe for the travelling public. Consequently, unless the main roads board is made an independent body, similar conditions will arise in various parts of the State, and there will be no just and equitable division of the money available for main roads. The tax of 3d. per gallon on petrol is to be drawn from all and sundry. Commercial motors are using a considerable proportion of the petrol, and surely there should be some discrimination between vehicles used for commercial purposes and those used for pleasure. Apparently, the Government desire to kill the opposition offered to the railways by motor vehicles, and to suppress the opposition to trams by motor buses. The people who have provided motor bus services for the convenience of the public feel that they have already experienced quite enough difficulties at the hands of the Government. Motor trucks, as a rule, are heavy vehicles and should pay a heavy fee, but I believe these vehicles augment rail-

way traffic to a considerable extent. Before the Traffic Act came into operation, the city of Perth received a little over £5,000 a year from traffic fees, and when it was deprived of that amount of revenue the council found it necessary to increase the rates by 3d. in the pound. Since then the council have borrowed something like £100,000 to construct modern roads that should stand for many years, and on those roads a maintenance charge of 1s. 3d. per yard for seven years is being paid. If those roads come within the scope of the Act, it would be only fair to recognise the special circumstances and give the city council some consideration in respect of them. The Bill does not take cognisance of the fact that Perth and some of the larger towns have well organised staffs and plants which could undertake the construction of main roads. The local authorities so equipped will receive no consideration for that. It would be a good thing to exclude the city of Perth from the Bill, or to keep a separate account so as to ascertain what its proper position will be under it.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Do you mean Greater Perth?

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: Yes. I do not say that the city should not contribute quite a big proportion of its revenue towards the maintenance of country roads. Money has to be found for the work, and I admit that the city receives great advantage from the construction of good roads in the country. But that is not the point I wish to make. The city has to pay such a heavy penalty that only by keeping a separate account would it know what its rights and privileges were. For this reason I must support the idea of referring the Bill to a select committee, with a view to ascertaining what the position of Greater Perth will be. Mr. Stewart clearly showed that country centres were as much alarmed as is the city of Perth. The towns and their environments are always the most expensive to maintain. The local authorities are reasonably afraid that the road board areas will have the money spent upon them to the disadvantage of the towns and their environments. People who motor through the towns know that the condition of the roads is better when they approach them, and not so good when they get away from them. I trust that if a select committee is appointed a fair repre-

sentation will be given to the towns, and that when the Bill comes up for final consideration, it will confer advantages not only upon the towns, but the country districts as well, so far as good highways are concerned.

**HON. A. BURVILL** (South-East) [6.3]: I support the Bill, which provides not only for main roads, but for developmental roads. It has been asked for by various road board conferences for many years, and has been looked forward to by those local authorities. I have attended several of those conferences. The main idea has been to have a main roads Bill modelled on the Victorian Act, which would have to be adapted to the requirements of this State. From every point of view developmental roads are of especial importance in this State. We are differently situated to Victoria, which is somewhere about a twelfth of the size of Western Australia, but whose population is nearly five times greater than that of this State. Furthermore, Victoria has been settled for many years, whereas this State is not yet settled. In many of our districts railways have been running for some years, but there are still insufficient developmental roads. What we want more than anything else is a network of developmental roads. They are of more importance in opening up the country than main roads. I cannot find in the Bill a proper definition of a main road. Members have asked where the main roads are to end. The impression has been created that they will end as soon as they reach the border of a municipal authority's report. I should also like to know where a main road will end in a seaport like Albany. Would it go to the jetty, or the railway station, or end at the boundary of the town? Dealing with developmental roads, Clause 22 says—

An investigation as to whether the road or proposed road will serve to develop or further develop any district or part of a district, or will serve to develop any area of Crown or private land by providing access to a railway station or a shipping wharf, or to a road leading to a railway station or a shipping wharf.

Hon. E. H. Harris: You may liken that clause unto a piece of elastic.

Hon. A. BURVILL: It may be misleading. A road may end at the boundary of a township or the wharf, but the Bill speaks of it leading to the wharf. I hope



the Minister will further explain this clause.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You do not propose that the Bill should go over the end of the wharf?

Hon. A. BURVILL: The road may not go anywhere near the wharf. In the case of Albany the road may end five miles from one jetty, or three miles from another. This will make a big difference to Albany and to other coastal towns. If the road does not go through a country town it will also make a big difference there. The key to the position is where the money is to come from and who is to pay it? According to the Minister's speech it will come from four sources: the land tax or from loan funds, the petrol tax, the loss of subsidies to road boards, and license and traffic fees from motor and horse drawn vehicles. A petrol tax would be a fair tax. Something has been said about petrol that a farmer would use on his farm, but the quantity would be infinitesimal as compared with the gain to be derived from good roads.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Are you satisfied with the definition of petrol?

Hon. A. BURVILL: The term "petrol" ought to be definite enough. It does not cover kerosene.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Are you quite sure?

Hon. A. BURVILL: I think it would meet with the wishes of most people. A farmer uses on his farm machinery that is driven by kerosene, and very little petrol would be required for the starting up of such machinery. With regard to subsidies, it appears that a sum of £90,000 will be raised from traffic fees, £75,000 from petrol fees, and £25,000 from Loan funds. I asked if this meant that the road boards were going to receive no subsidy, and I was answered in the affirmative. This will be a serious blow to the road boards. There are 111 road boards on the list, and the amount of subsidy that each can get is £300, that is to say if they tax themselves sufficiently. I take it they will lose about £33,300. If we make allowances for those that will not get the full amount we can assume there will be a loss to road boards of £33,000. A sum of £25,000 will go to the loan fund, so that the Government appear to be making rather a good bargain. For road boards with a small revenue and a large area of Crown lands there will be great difficulty in making ends meet,

unless they get a subsidy or something equivalent to it. It is too much money to take from them. I asked for a return showing the license fees, and a map showing the size of the road board districts, and the fees that would be derived from motor and horse-drawn vehicles. The map is now hanging on the wall. It shows that many of the road boards and municipal councils are to lose all their fees as well as the subsidies, and that altogether too much money will be taken from them. It is intended under the Bill that when developmental roads are made they are to be handed back to road boards for maintenance. The moment a good developmental road is built in any district it will be used not only by the local traffic, but by traffic from elsewhere, such as from an adjoining district or town. If the road boards are to lose all their fees, and have their roads used by traffic from other districts, they will be worse off than if they had no roads, seeing that they will have to maintain them when they are built, and will have no money with which to do so. It is no use building a road unless it is maintained. It is also intended that the Commissioner of Police shall collect the motor fees and license fees, etc. That would be a good provision, with one alteration. At present the police have to regulate the speed of the traffic, and see that the vehicles are lighted at night time. It would be of advantage if the police also collected the fees. Clause 27, paragraph (b), says—

All fees paid each year for licenses or transfers of licenses or registrations in the proclaimed area shall be chargeable with the cost of collection, and subject thereto shall be applicable as provided in the Main Roads Act, 1924.

I should like to see that altered, so that the road boards may know exactly where they stand. I understood the Minister to say that in certain cases fees were to be handed to the road board in the meantime, less the cost of collection.

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

Hon. A. BURVILL: Before the tea adjournment I was dealing with the cost of collection by the police officers. Whatever percentage is allowed the police should be stated specifically in the Bill, whether it be 5 per cent. or some other amount. We should also set out whether the money col-

lected should be handed to a road board trust fund, or to the road boards direct. I know some road boards pay their officers so much on account of collections, and the same thing could apply to the administration by the police. I do not agree with the Minister's suggestion that the whole of the fees collected throughout the State should be pooled. It would be better if those fees were pooled according to districts rather than for the whole State. I understand that the legislation will be administered in districts which will be extended later on. That being so I think the fees should be pooled according to districts from the inception of the legislation. I will show what this means. Take the metropolitan area for a start. According to the tables and maps to which I have referred, the license fees collected in respect of horse-drawn vehicles in the metropolitan area totalled £3,943, while the fees from motor-driven vehicles totalled £29,518, or a collection of £33,462 in all. Immediately outside the metropolitan area is the Armadale-Kelmscott district with an area of 276 square miles. The fees collected by the board amounted to £134 for horse-drawn vehicles and £328 on account of motor-driven vehicles, making a total of £462. Then the Perth Road Board immediately outside the metropolitan area collected £202 on account of horse-drawn vehicles, and £197 on account of motor-driven vehicles, giving a total of £399 collected over an area of 46 square miles. Then there is the Rockingham Road Board which collected £37 10s. for horse-drawn vehicles and £156 for motor-driven vehicles, giving a total of £194 in that area of 172 square miles. It is apparent to anyone travelling in those districts that while a lot of the traffic goes through them, the license fees are paid in the metropolitan area. I consider that a proportion of those fees should be paid to the several districts. Then there is the Bunbury Road Board, where the collections on account of horse-drawn vehicles total £72 15s., while £62 16s. is collected on account of motor-driven vehicles. That gives a total of £135 11s. in an area of 77 square miles. Then the Dardanup Road Board with an area of 208 square miles collects £106 on account of horse-drawn vehicles and £174 on account of motor-driven vehicles, giving a total of £280. In the town of Bunbury itself fees collected on account of horse-drawn vehicles amount to

£95, and motor fees £634, giving a total of £729 in an area of just over three square miles. It must be manifest that the vehicles licensed in the Bunbury town area use the roads in the Bunbury Road Board area, yet they pay nothing towards the upkeep of the board's roads. Thus will be seen the disparity between the fees paid, for it shows, particularly in regard to motor vehicles, that only a short time is spent in the town, the greater part of the traffic being over the road board areas. There is also a great disparity between the horse-drawn vehicles and the motor vehicles. One difference is that the horse-drawn vehicles do not travel such long distances as the motor cars, and generally remain in the road board area where they are licensed. There is very little overlapping in the traffic with other road board areas. The Narrogin Road Board collects £242 10s. from horse-drawn vehicles and £243 11s. from motor-driven vehicles, giving a total of £486 collected in that area of 625 square miles. As against that the town of Narrogin itself collects £38 on account of horse-driven vehicles and £314 10s. on account of motor-driven vehicles, giving a total of £352 collected in their area of four square miles. It will be seen that many vehicles, licensed in the town of Narrogin, use the roads of the Narrogin Road Board, yet they pay nothing toward the upkeep of those roads. The same position arises in other road board areas surrounding towns. The Bill should be amended to deal with this position by pooling the fees in districts. I will give some illustrations regarding the Albany and Plantagenet Road Boards and the town of Albany itself, in order to illustrate the fact that there are developmental roads and main roads. In the town of Albany they collect £455 on account of license fees, of which about £400 is in respect of motors. In the Plantagenet Road Board district fees collected in respect of horse drawn vehicles total £330, and in respect of motor driven vehicles £467, making a total of £797, collected for the area of 2,714 square miles. The Albany Road Board collected £147 on account of horse drawn vehicles and £106 on account of motor driven vehicles, giving a total of £253 for their area of 3,309 square miles. I have taken these figures from last year's calculations, not from the traffic fees introduced last session. These fees have not been completed, and it would

not be fair to take their estimate against the several districts, because the figures were produced with the idea that the Main Roads Bill would become law last session. Probably there will be an increase. I will take the position regarding Albany itself. There is one motor vehicle there used for hauling firewood. It takes 3-ton loads, and, as the vehicle itself weighs  $1\frac{1}{4}$  tons, the total weight of the vehicle loaded is  $4\frac{1}{4}$  tons. That truck is licensed in Albany, but it has to go over the roads of the Albany Road Board in order to collect the wood. I am told that the motor travels at from 15 to 20 miles per hour and that cuts up the road. The license fee to be paid to the Albany Town Council is £17 per year, yet nothing is paid to the Albany Road Board whose roads it cuts up. Thus the road board is at a great disadvantage and this explains why I think the fees should be pooled in districts. It would be more effective if that were done rather than the pooling for the whole State. I am aware that in the summer time there is an interchange of motor cars all over the State, but it is different from what generally happens during the rest of the year. Then there is another point. The Main Roads Bill will affect some road board districts more than others. Some road board districts will have small strips of main road in their boundaries, whilst others will have longer stretches. Therefore, the loss of the motor fees may not be such an injustice in some areas as it will be in others. If we take the Albany Road Board area it will be seen that there are 14 miles of the Perth road in that area, and also 28 miles of the Albany-Bridgetown main road. Thus in that road board area alone there are 42 miles of main road. The Government will take over that stretch and maintain it. There is another side of the question, however, and that relates to developmental roads. The Albany Road Board area contains one that extends from Albany through to Bremer Bay, a distance of 120 miles. When that developmental road is made it will have to carry a lot of traffic because I do not think the railway will go through that district. The maintenance of that road will be too much for the road board without a subsidy. In addition to that there are roads up to 20 and 25 miles long that have to be attended to besides the other developmental and main roads. I suppose there would be 300 miles of roads besides the main roads, and the one developmental road I have

referred to. On top of that out of every four acres in the 3,309 square miles, three acres still belong to the Crown. Thus hon. members will realise what the position of the board will be if it is compelled to carry on under such conditions. Should the board lose the subsidy and the whole of the license and motor fees, they will be unable to continue. The subsidy should still be retained by the road board, and the fees obtained from horse-driven vehicles should also be left to the board. If that were done it might be possible for motor fees to be pooled, and to be handed over to the road boards. This is a matter that I think might be dealt with by the select committee. The road boards, at their annual conferences, have repeatedly asked for a Main Roads Act with modifications, and they have stressed the method of management that should be in force. The Bill before us savours too much of handing over the management to the Public Works Department. So far as I can see the board to be appointed will have a majority of nominees of the Government, and this must result in what we might call an extended Public Works Department. It must also prove expensive for the country as well as for the local authorities, because it will not be possible for that board to get the good results that would be obtained, were the work to be done by the local bodies. When the Minister for Works addressed a recent conference he told them that he would give the local bodies more control. The Bill, however, takes away control from the local bodies and gives it to the department. The Victorian Act does not do that; it does the reverse. It would be far better if we had a board composed of three men, similar to that which exists in Victoria. Mr. Stewart gave certain figures relating to costs in Victoria, but there was one matter that he omitted, and it throws a great deal of light on the Country Roads Act of Victoria. It is that no less than 118 miles of roads have been built in that State through the Country Roads Board Association under the supervision of the country road boards. The roads built by the association itself totalled only  $6\frac{1}{2}$  miles. That is a system that should exist here. We can rest assured that the work done in Victoria is highly satisfactory, otherwise the system would not be permitted to continue. I have been a member

of road boards for some years and it appeals to me, as it would to anybody else who has also been associated with local governing bodies, that this is the best and the most economical way of building roads and afterwards maintaining them. Road boards have all the necessary machinery, and though there may be a few that have not complete plants for road construction, these bodies are gradually acquiring such plants. Moreover, if the road boards are permitted to carry out the work, it will be done free from political control and the question of day labour and contract will not come into it at all. The boards have no political axes to grind; their desire is to get the best possible results in the most economical way. If it is found that the work can be done more efficiently by day labour, then it is carried out in that way. Repairs are almost invariably effected by day labour and constructional work is generally done by contract. Better results would have been obtained if the money already spent on developmental roads had been given to the local bodies to expend. There are always a certain number of unemployed in the country districts, or perhaps the local bodies find it possible to utilise the services of men who are engaged in developing holdings. In this way, a service is done the district by giving these people a chance to earn a little money that is afterwards used by them for development purposes. At any rate, any unemployment that might exist in a country district should get the first look in. I hope that the select committee, if it be appointed, will look into this aspect of the question. The Bill requires to be amended in many directions, but the two main points are, who is to provide the money and what form the control shall take. I hope the select committee will investigate both.

**HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [7.53]:** I support the second reading of the Bill because we are all agreed that it is many years overdue. I do not consider, however, that the Bill before us is likely to meet the requirements of the country, nor do I think anybody who takes the trouble to look into the proposed measure will agree that it will be of any use as it is at present drafted. It needs to be thoroughly analysed, and if that is done then possibly we shall have the groundwork for a good Bill. The dominant

factor should be that those who use the roads should pay for the upkeep. The Bill goes further. Take the tax on petrol. First of all it is questionable whether we can impose such a tax. Assume we can, we do not stop at the taxation of petrol used in connection with the traffic on main roads; we tax the whole of the petrol that is sold in the State. Take the man who uses tractors on a farm and who never uses a main road. That man is consuming petrol, and under the Bill he is supposed to pay for the upkeep of roads. It is the motor traffic on the roads that does the damage, and therefore it should be the motor traffic that should pay for the upkeep. It is now proposed to penalise the primary producer by imposing a tax of 3d. on every gallon of petrol he uses for the subduing of the forests and bringing land into productivity. That will be another check upon the development of this State. We talk in this Parliament, and outside, about the disabilities under which we labour through Federation. One who takes the trouble to investigate must come to the conclusion that at least 50 per cent. of our difficulties are brought about by our own silly legislation that imposes taxation on those who are trying to develop the country and that lets off those people who rightly should pay taxation. If ever there was a Bill that should go before a select committee it is the one we are now discussing. We want a main roads Bill, but we do not want one of this description. It is proposed that the Bill should apply to the whole of the State. Nothing could be more preposterous.

**Hon. W. T. Glasheen:** It provides for the proclaiming of areas.

**Hon. J. J. HOLMES:** That is what the Bill says, but the Minister at any time can proclaim the whole of the State as coming within the provisions of the Bill. When the hon. member has been in this House as long as some of us he will hesitate before he agrees to place too much power in the hands of Ministers. With regard to the northern part of the State, unless the Government wake up and do something for the North, it can never be brought within the provisions of the Bill. If I can help it the Bill will never apply to the northern part of Western Australia. We have heard about municipalities with an area of a couple of miles and we have been told of

road boards that cover an area of 34 miles. Let me draw attention to some of the areas controlled by road boards in distant parts of the State. The Meekatharra Road Board has an area under its control of no less than 106,887 square miles. The Wiluna Road Board controls 88,000 square miles, and going to the North Province which you, Mr. President, and I have the honour to represent, commencing at Carnarvon, and finishing at Wyndham, we have there a territory covering 408,000 square miles, controlled by 10 roads boards. This huge area is to be brought under the provisions of the Bill and is to coincide with the municipality of Busselton that covers only  $1\frac{1}{2}$  square miles. Every day we realise that the legislation of the south does not fit the North. We have had evidence of that time after time. Take the amendment of the Licensing Act which provided for the closing of hotels at 9 p.m. We exempted the northern portion of this State. We had to do so. Take the Vermin Act of 1919. We did not leave the Government to define areas by proclamation under that Act. We defined them ourselves, setting out that the Act should apply only to the southern portion of the State. A similar course should be adopted in connection with this Bill. Mr. Baxter's Vermin Bill provided that every pool and every watercourse must be fenced off from the rabbits. Could anything be more absurd? A station in the North with a frontage of 100 miles to a river in fencing off the rabbits would fence off the sheep at the same time. So we found that a measure for the South could not be applied to the North. I hope the House will assist me on this occasion as on that, to define the areas here. Imagine 20,000 sheep hanging along a fence by a northern river, and probably 50,000 rabbits waiting at the same time, and somebody coming along to open the gate, and the sheep and the rabbits rushing in together. How are the rabbits ever to be got out again once they get in? In the case of the Federal road grant representing £100,000 a year, and supplemented by the State Government to the extent of another £100,000, the great North about which we hear so much—I am not referring just now to the present Government, who during their few months of office have done something for the North—last year got £10,000 out of the total expenditure of £200,000. It costs pretty well £10,000 to send inspecting officers over the area to see the work that

is to be done. Even the Federal Government had to recognise that what is applicable to the South is not applicable to the North in connection with the two questions upon which the people of the Commonwealth are unanimous—protection and a White Australia. With respect to the north of this State the Federal Government had to grant exemption in favour of the pearling industry and of coastal shipping. Let this Chamber deal with the areas under the present Bill. I would commence with the Metropolitan, Metropolitan-Suburban, and West Provinces, and see how the Government got along with them until next session. If in the coming year there was a proposal for further extension the House would grant the Government any extension that might be justified.

Hon. J. Ewing: At that rate it would take a long time to get to the Leeuwin.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Then the hon. member might well support this Bill.

Hon. J. Ewing: The question is very difficult.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: It is. The hon. member once said that I never spoke without hitting somebody. If I wanted to hit anything at this opportunity, I would hit the southern part of the State in respect of the enormous amount of money it has got out of the Commonwealth and State road grants, a proportion so large that the Federal Government intervened. I think the action of the State Government in spending that money wrongly has had something to do with the Federal Government setting up a Public Works Department of their own to see that the money they vote for this State is spent in the proper direction. While the southern people have the votes and can pull the strings, the great empty North was given only £10,000 for roads last year and only £10,000 this year. Now let us turn to the Bill. According to the drafting of the measure it would appear that unless the whole State is brought within the provisions of the Bill, none of the Federal grant can be used for the construction or maintenance of a road outside the proclaimed area. That is how the Minister proposes to catch us: "Unless you give me authority to bring the whole State within the provisions of the Bill, the Federal grant will be spent only in the area you allot to

me." The proviso to Subclause 1 of Clause 29 says—

No moneys received from the Government of the Commonwealth under the Roads Development Act, 1923, or any Act amending that Act, shall be applied or used to or in connection with any road which is not a main road for the purposes of such Act . . . .

If we limit the area as the Minister proposes, and extend it by proclamation, then the Federal money can only be spent within the limited area; which means that all the road boards outside that area will get nothing at all. Is that a position which should be tolerated?

Hon. J. Ewing: It is most unfair.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Traffic Bill should be read in conjunction with this Bill; indeed, the two Bills should have been in one measure. Fortunately this House inserted in the Traffic Act a section providing that the Act should remain in force until the 31st December, 1925, and no longer. If ever this House did a good service, it did one on that occasion. Under the Traffic Act the roads and motor vehicles of the North are placed on exactly the same footing as those of the South. In the North there are hundreds of miles of bush track on which no money has ever been spent, and on which no money can be spent. Yet the same motor license fee is charged in the North as is charged here. Broome is situated about 250 miles from Derby. Quite recently a bush track was opened from Broome across to Derby, in order that the Broome people might see the Derby people, and vice versa; they had never seen each other before. A cricket match was got up, and the Derby cricket team was conveyed a distance of 250 miles over the bush track to Broome. The cricketers were conveyed on a motor tractor, and by that action the tractor became a licensed vehicle carrying passengers, and the fee payable was about £50. Surely that is an absurdity! Shearers begin at Derby in March, and work south. They want to work south from Derby to Broome, and thence to Port Hedland. If they are to be transported by one of these vehicles over a bush track, then if the proprietor fails to get two trips in the year, the license fee will amount to £5 per passenger. When the thing is analysed it becomes reduced to an absurdity. I am raising these points to show that we cannot make southern legislation fit in with northern conditions.

These are matters which the select committee would have to look into. We all agree that we want a Bill, but we do not want this Bill. There is a suggestion to allocate land tax. I presume that refers to the land tax already in force; or is a new land tax proposed?

The Colonial Secretary: No.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The suggestion is to give to a board dominated by the Minister for Works, who will have on that board three representatives out of five, power to make the allocation. Last session this Chamber gave the Government an increased land tax on the understanding that half the increase was to be rebated off railway freights, so as to adjust matters for the producers, who were paying the increased land tax. What happened? The Government collected the land tax for the full 12 months of the year, but they allowed the rebate only for the last two months. That is how the revenue was swollen.

Hon. H. A. Stephenson: High finance.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The manner in which the rebate was applied is something to which I have referred previously but would like to refer to again. The general reduction of railway freights included one of 5s. per ton off cigarettes. There was 5s. a ton off whisky and 5s. a ton off beer. In order to assist the primary producers, as was intended, the whole of the reduction should have been taken off the goods carried for the production of wealth, not off whisky or beer, or cigarettes.

The Honorary Minister: How much of the tax was off liquor?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I do not know, but I know that every successive Treasurer collects all that he can. If the Honorary Minister has the figures as to what has been collected, he should give them to the House; if he has not those figures, he does not know his job. Let me mention one other of the difficulties of the North. When in Broome recently, I found that about a thousand coloured people on Sundays and holidays were all over the country with firearms, blazing away at anything and everything. I inquired why it was so, and was told that it could not be stopped, that the police could not prevent it. On coming south, I made inquiries. I was told by the Police Department that it was the duty of the clerk of the court to issue gun licenses. I remarked that he could not leave his court to chase those fellows

around. Then we turned up the Act and found that the last Gun Act was passed in 1885, and that it provides that anywhere beyond the radius of five miles from any municipality anyone and everyone can carry a gun. The nearest municipality to Broome is that of Carnarvon, a thousand miles away; so we see the absurdity of fixing a five-mile limit from any municipality for the carrying of guns. Here again I ask the Minister to look into the matter, and bring about an amendment of the Gun Act, if not for the whole State, at any rate an amendment that will apply to the North, and prevent coloured men carrying firearms with impunity anywhere beyond five miles from a municipality. The Bill provides that the Act shall apply to any portion of the State proclaimed; in other words, the Minister can make it apply to the whole State. The board is to consist of five members appointed by the Governor. Three are to be Government nominees, while two are to be elected in accordance with the provisions of the Municipalities Act and the Road Boards Act. When it comes to voting strength, even if the whole of the area be included, two men from Perth will secure the job; so we shall have three Perth men nominated by the Government, and two Perth men elected by the people of Perth.

Hon. J. Ewing: It might happen.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: It is exactly what will happen. Then each member is to be appointed for a term not exceeding three years. Assuming that we start off with the metropolitan area only, and extend the boundaries of the jurisdiction of the board, there will be no vote taken for three years, and so the people outside the metropolitan area will have no representation on the board during that period. And those gentlemen, although elected under the provisions of the Municipalities Act and the Road Boards Act, may be removed from office by the Governor at any time. So much for the Bill's granting of additional power to local authorities. In the event of absence of a member of the board, the Governor may appoint some other officer. Already the Government will have three members of the board out of five, and they are to be allowed to appoint another. Following on that, any question arising out of a meeting of the board is to be decided by a majority of the votes of those present. Although the Government have three representatives on a board of five, the chairman is to have a cast-

ing as well as a deliberative vote. As to the appointment of officers, engineers, inspectors and so forth, I do not see that the board come into it at all. It is provided that the Governor shall appoint the chief engineer of main roads, and may appoint an assistant engineer, inspectors, and other officers for the purposes of the Act. In another part of the Bill it will be found that on the recommendation of the board the Minister shall do so and so. But when it comes to the appointment of officers, it is provided that the Governor shall appoint the chief engineer of main roads, and may appoint the others. I should have thought the first duty of the board would be to appoint all officers for themselves; because in these modern days it is of no use whatever trying to run any concern of importance unless we have a well trained, efficient staff with the right men in the right places. Yet here we have a board appointed to carry out innumerable duties, and when it comes to the appointment of officers, that is to be undertaken by the Governor. Clause 14 provides that all main roads and material thereof and all things attached thereto, all ornamental trees and shrubs and, subject to the Forests Act, the timber on main roads, shall be vested in the Minister. Why do we bring the Minister in here again? Surely if the board are to construct the roads, the materials should be vested in the board? It is considered essential that the Minister should send out some one to do the necessary lopping of the trees adjacent to the roadside, or is it the duty of the board to do that? Clause 15 provides that the power of any local authority over any main road shall not be deemed to be taken away by this Act, but the exercise of such power shall be subject to the control and direction of the Minister. What does that mean? It is all camouflage. The first portion declares that the powers shall not be taken away from the local authority, but the next portion declares that they shall be. Clause 26 prescribes that no matter what is done by the board or the chief engineer or inspector or other officers for the purpose of executing the Act, the board and its officers shall not be subject to any liability in respect thereof. This means that if they build a road about a foot higher than it ought to be, and so flood the adjoining property and ruin the owner of that property—as is quite likely to happen at, say, Jandakot—no action will lie against the board. Is the House likely to agree to a provision such as that? In para-

graph (a) of Subclause 2 of Clause 27 is provided that all fees collected shall be paid into the Treasury to the credit of the Main Roads Trust Account, and that the cost of collection shall be a charge against such fund. Imagine money collected at Hall's Creek or Wyndham, and exchange paid on it in sending it to the Treasury in Perth; then, when the money is allocated for work away in the far North, further exchange has to be paid in sending it back. But the main point is that the cost of the collection shall be a charge against the money collected. I must take the House back to what has happened for generations past in the city of Perth. I have drawn attention to it time after time, but nothing seems to have been done. We went to the trouble and expense of amalgamating the Federal and State Taxation Departments, but here in the city of Perth we have the City Council with a full staff collecting the municipal rates, and we have in James-street a whole hive of men attached to the Water Supply Department going over the same ground. And we shall find that when this new authority gets into the hands of the Minister there will be another department, State-wide, to do the work the road boards are doing now. The municipality of Perth values the properties and strikes the rates. The staff at James-street cannot do anything until the municipality have first done their job. Then the water supply officers send along to the City Council to know the valuation of each property and the amount of rate, after which the Water Department make out the assessments. But while this is being done the owner of a property has appealed against the city valuation and has had his assessment reduced. He gets his refund from the municipal council, but he then has to start out to get his refund from the Water Supply Department, because the Water Supply Department based their assessment on the original figures. Here we have two great bodies collecting taxation and two sets of officers carrying out duties that could be better done by one staff, because they would handle all the business at the one time. Under the Bill the cost of collecting the fees is to be deducted from the tax before there will be anything available for main roads.

Hon. W. T. Glasheen: It would cost a lot more to collect in the North-West than anywhere else.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Yes. We have had as many as four Government officers

going North on the one steamer, one to audit Government accounts at Port Hedland, and another to audit police accounts at the same place. Things have improved, I admit. That sort of thing had its advantage, however, because it helped to make the State Shipping Service pay. Clause 30 provides that licenses shall be required for the sale of petrol after the 1st July, 1925—already we are in the month of September—and we are likely to strike trouble here. How do the Government propose to overcome the difficulty resulting from a number of people importing petrol? More people than ever before are importing petrol, not only from overseas, but from the Eastern States, and I do not think petrol is as well under control as it was. How the Government propose to trace the petrol to the point of consumption, I am not clear. Even the Minister who introduced the Bill was not satisfied, because he has put on the Notice Paper a page of amendments which he proposes to move to the Bill. I note with pleasure that he proposes to exclude petrol used for aeroplanes, hydroplanes, or on Government railways, but a lot of other exceptions will have to be made. Take the tractors and station vehicles that do not use the roads.

Hon. A. Lovekin: The Government cannot prevent anyone from importing petrol.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: People should be encouraged to use our beautiful Swan River, and yet every gallon of petrol used on a river boat will have to bear the tax imposed under this measure. The money obtained will be devoted first to paying the officers employed, and then to making roads.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Importers might use the petrol, and there would be no sale. How could a tax be imposed on that petrol?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: That is one of the difficulties to be overcome. It will require all the wisdom of a select committee to solve that problem. I hope the problem will be solved, and that we shall be able to make the measure a good one, but I am not prepared to allow increased taxation running into something like £200,000 a year to be handed over to a board controlled by the Minister. That is not in keeping with the proposal to give additional powers to the local authorities. The Minister, in an interview with the Press, said it was necessary to have a Minister representing the Crown. I agree with that, because the Gov-



ernment will contribute to this fund, but the Minister did not make it clear why it is necessary to have three of the five members of the board Government officials, one having an additional vote. I repeat that we want a Bill to deal with main roads. I think this Bill contains the groundwork of a good measure, but it will require a lot of consideration to make a good measure of it. I support the second reading and declare my intention to vote for the referring of the Bill to a select committee.

On motion by Hon. G. Potter, debate adjourned.

## BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX ACT AMENDMENT.

*In Committee.*

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

*House adjourned at 8.40 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Tuesday, 8th September, 1925.*

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

## QUESTION—KING EDWARD MEMORIAL HOSPITAL.

Miss HOLMAN asked Hon. S. W. Munsie (Honorary Minister): 1, What was the income of the King Edward Memorial Hospital last year? 2, What was the cost of upkeep? 3, Is the institution self-sup-

porting? 4, What amount has been spent on upkeep and repairs since the inception apart from the £10,000 allocated to the hospital by the British Red Cross? 5, What is the length of the training term? 6, For what hours per day do the nurses sign on? 7, What salary, if any, is received by nurses training in the institution? 8, How many midwifery cases were dealt with during the last year? 9, How many were attended without medical assistance? 10, How many mothers were lost? 11, How many trainees can be accommodated? 12, How does the institution compare in standard of efficiency with others in Australia? 13, Is it a fact that for this most important branch of the nursing profession, i.e., the midwifery branch, trained nurses are required to pay a premium of £15, serve six months, and receive no salary, for the purpose of securing a midwifery certificate?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE replied: 1, £3,762 11s. 2, £4,742 15s. 7d. 3, No; last year the nett cost to Consolidated Revenue was £980 4s. 7d. 4, £1,832 1s. 3d. 5, In the case of trained general nurses, six months; in the case of other trainees, 12 months. 6, The nursing staff are on duty 10½ hours per day—six days per week. 7, Trainees receive no salary. 8, 900 cases. 9, 861 cases were confined without medical assistance at the time, but the honorary medical staff visit the hospital daily, and see all patients. 10, Only one; this case was admitted in a diseased condition which was responsible for death five hours later, and before parturition. 11, Seventeen. 12, It is considered that the institution compares very favourably with others. 13, Yes; the question of the continuance of these fees is receiving consideration.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Wilson, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Mr. Lamond (Pilbara) on the ground of ill-health.

## BILL—PRIMARY PRODUCTS MARKETING.

*Second Reading.*

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet) [4.39] in moving the second reading said: This measure has been the subject of much discussion