# Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 11th November, 1947.



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

## QUESTIONS.

### JUVENILE DELINQUENTS.

*As to Taking of Fingerprints.*

Mr. GRAHAM (on notice) asked the Minister for Education:

(1) How many children have been charged with having committed offences in each of the last three years?

(2) In how many instances, respectively, have fingerprints been taken prior to conviction?

(3) In how many of these cases have the children subsequently been found to be innocent?

(4) What are the reasons for the taking of fingerprints before conviction?

(5) Are the fingerprint records destroyed upon innocence being established?

(6) If not, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

I have had a return prepared giving the information required and I now lay it upon the Table of the House.

### BORE-CASING.

*As to Shortage of Supplies.*

Hon. F. J. S. WISE (on notice) asked the Premier:

(1) Is he aware that there is a serious shortage of bore-casing in Western Australia?

(2) Is he aware that quantities ordered for many months and available for shipment from Eastern States are being left on the wharves?

(3) Will he exert a special effort to stimulate the coming forward of supplies?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) No. Only 45 tons awaiting shipment.

(3) Yes, special efforts have been made and prosecuted over many months.

### GALVANISED PIPING.

*As to Securing Additional Supplies.*

Hon. F. J. S. WISE (on notice) asked the Premier:

(1) Is he aware that the shortage of galvanised piping of sizes urgently needed for the pastoral industry is becoming more and more serious?

(2) In view of his assurance in August last that he would press for additional supplies will he advise the House whether he has made representations and with what results?

(3) When may a reasonable supply of galvanised piping for purposes other than home building be available?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes. The quantity of piping available is allocated by Materials Control Section of the Secondary Industries Division. It is further limited by the amount of metal strip available for manufacture.

(2) Yes, representations have been made and assurances given that the Commonwealth Secondary Industries Division would do everything in their power to expedite all piping available to Western Australia; 600 tons was lost to Western Australia through the Tally Clerks' strike.

(3) When shipping becomes stabilised and regular, and metal is supplied in sufficient quantities to meet the demand, supplies will be improved.

## STATE HOUSING ACT.

*As to Increasing Penalties for Offences.*

Mr. STYANTS (on notice) asked the Premier:

Because of the continued activity by certain people in erecting buildings without a permit, or in excess of the amount allowed by their permit, and the small penalties being inflicted on offenders by the Courts, is it the intention of the Government to amend the appropriate Act to provide a more severe penalty, preferably along the lines of confiscating materials involved in the offence, without the option of a fine?

The PREMIER replied:

The matter is receiving the consideration of the Government.

## NORTH-WEST TRANSPORT.

*As to Subsidies to Air and Road Services.*

Mr. HEGNEY (on notice) asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) What aerial and road transport services north of the 26th parallel of latitude are being subsidised by the Government?

(2) What are the amounts of such subsidies?

(3) To whom are such subsidies paid?

(4) What action has been taken by the Government in connection with a subsidised road transport service from Meekatharra to Marble Bar?

(5) If the reply to question (4) is in the negative, will he take steps in the direction indicated to ensure a reduction in the cost of commodities and cartage to residents concerned?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

(1) No road or aerial services north of the 26th parallel are being subsidised by the Government. The Western Australian Transport Board since the extension of its jurisdiction to the area referred to under the 1946 amendment to the State Transport Co-ordination Act has exercised its powers to subsidise transport there out of the Transport Co-ordination Fund in the following directions:—

(a) From the 15th March, 1947, the aerial transport of perishables from south to north was subsidised to reduce the freight rate on vegetables from amounts ranging from 1s. 6d. per lb. to as high as 2s. 3d. per lb. at Wyndham, to a flat rate of 6d. per lb. The purpose was to reduce the cost of those essentials during the season that they are not produced in the northern areas. The subsidy ceased on the 30th June, 1947, for transport to areas that are now able to cater for their own needs and only applies to transport to Nullagine, Hall's Creek and Marble Bar, where production or other means of supply is not practicable at any time of the year. It is proposed to re-introduce the subsidy to the other places upon the seasonable occasion. To the 30th June, 1947, £1,815 17s. 7d. was paid by way of subsidy.

(b) It has been agreed to subsidise the air transport of fresh fruit for consumption by children in the Kimberley areas. The extent of the subsidy and the means of its application are at present under consideration.

(c) It has been agreed to subsidise the air transport of school children from the northern areas to the metropolitan area for educational purposes to the extent that one journey to and fro per year will be met by the subsidy. Although the subsidy has been agreed to, no payment in respect of it has yet been claimed.

(d) It has been agreed to subsidise road transport of essential commodities from Meekatharra to Wittenoom Gorge at the rate of £3 per ton to the extent of 40 tons per month at such time as the ordinary supply facilities through Roebourne are inadequate. This arrangement is of a temporary nature, subject to review from time to time. As yet no claims for subsidy have been made.

(2) The answer to this question is embodied in the answer to question (1).

(3) The funds that have been expended on the transport of perishables to the north have been paid to the airline companies who operate under Transport Board license and supervision. It is the Board's intention to follow the same practice with regard to other agreed subsidies on air transport. The question as to whom any subsidy will be paid on the road transport of goods from Meekatharra to Wittenoom Gorge will be decided by the Board in such

manner as will best ensure that the benefit of subsidy will be passed to the consumer.

(4) The Government has taken no action in connection with a subsidised road service from Meekatharra to Marble Bar.

(5) The question of the establishment of such a service is one for the Transport Board. Since the extension of its jurisdiction to the north the Board has made an inspection of conditions there. A visit was made to Marble Bar and the question of subsidising a service between Meekatharra and Marble Bar is under consideration. A major problem is to devise a system of subsidy that will react to the benefit of consumers without the establishment of an expensive supervisory organisation.

## STATE SHIPPING SERVICE.

*As to Construction of New Vessel.*

Mr. HEGNEY (on notice) asked the Premier:

(1) What is the latest information in his possession regarding the construction of the new vessel for service on the northern coast under the management of the State Shipping Service?

(2) Can he indicate the approximate date on which the ship will arrive at Fremantle from the Eastern States?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Construction is proceeding and it is anticipated that the vessel will be ready for delivery in Brisbane in March of next year.

(2) It is expected that the vessel will arrive at Fremantle late in March and be despatched northwards early in April, 1948.

## ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

1, Economic Stability Act Amendment (Continuance).

2, Law Reform (Contributory Negligence and Tortfeasors' Contribution).

3, Traffic Act Amendment.

## BILL—FISHERIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by the Chief Secretary and read a first time.

## BILL—UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA ACT AMENDMENT.

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 6th November.

**HON. F. J. S. WISE** (Gascoyne) [4.40]: This small Bill contains two principles, the first of which is to enable the Guild of Undergraduates to be an incorporated body, and the other to give the Senate of the University authority to make rules and regulations governing the scope of the activities of undergraduates, in conformity with the other authorities that the Senate has under the present University Act. The Guild of Undergraduates has, through its committee, undertaken very important work in the social lives of the students and catering for them in connection with both accommodation and entertainment. The previous Government gave to the Guild of Undergraduates a lot of encouragement in the taking over of what is now the hostel at the University.

The Guild has done excellent work in catering for visitors and has rendered splendid service to the students. With its added responsibilities the Guild now handles, in its various transactions, an annual sum approaching £20,000. The Bill is designed to give the Guild and its committee protection from claims, as individuals, and by giving it authority, as an incorporated body, to absolve the individual members from personal liability. It is a legal point well taken by both the Guild and the Senate in support of the Guild's request for the protection that his Bill will give. The second principle contained in the Bill is one that should be preserved to the Senate, and one that under the Act does not take from the Senate any authority it now has. The Bill was clearly explained by the Attorney General, who introduced it, and I support the second reading.

**MR. ACKLAND** (Irwin-Moore) [4.45]: When speaking during the debate on the Estimates of the Education Department I made some reference to Communism at the University and in the Education Department. I wish to take this opportunity of reviewing not the statements I made, but statements that have been attributed to me, and to enlarge on some of the things I said on that occasion. I mentioned that

some of the young teachers in the Training College—from the University—had absorbed Communistic ideas. That was even more true than I believed it to be when I made the statement. I also said that there was a reluctance, on the part of some teachers, to teach subjects having reference to loyalty and the Empire. Not for one moment did I mean—nor could anybody justly interpret my remarks to mean—that what I said was all-embracing and applied to all teachers in the Education Department.

Such a statement would be absolutely ridiculous, because we know there is as much loyalty among our teachers as is to be found in most other sections of the community, but there are some individuals who are not worthy of belonging to any organisation, either religious or industrial, and it is to such people that I made reference. My remarks were made in the hope that the Minister would see to it that such teachers carried out the school curriculum in its entirety, and to encourage him to see that the children have opportunity of showing their loyalty in some practical manner during school hours. I believe that that is not being done in all instances, and I know there are occasions when it is not being done today. I thought I knew the Minister well enough —I still believe it—to be certain that he holds exactly the same views as I do on matters such as this.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He did not seem to, the other night.

Mr. ACKLAND: What I stated was said with the idea of being helpful, and not the reverse. I must admit that I was greatly surprised at his apparent deliberate refutal of what I had to say.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Minister was quite justified.

Mr. ACKLAND: Candidly, it was a very definite knock-back for me.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You will become accustomed to that.

Mr. ACKLAND: The Minister said—

Reasonable credence could not be given to the suggestions.

Further he said—

There are no means of gaining close contact with the University since he had assumed office and he could not say whether there were any grounds for the statements.

That came from a leader to his newest recruit. Even if anyone thought that I was wrong in making those statements, I think the right course to adopt would have been to tell me quietly—

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: In the Party room?

Mr. ACKLAND:—and not do so in front of members in this Chamber. I know that we are not permitted to make a wager in this House—

Hon. A. H. Panton: I hope not!

Mr. ACKLAND:—but a man who could make statements of that sort could never have captained a successful sporting team, at any rate.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: That is under the belt.

Mr. ACKLAND: I feel very strongly on this matter. Since I made those statements and since I have seen the letters in the newspaper, I have been stopped in the streets by dozens of people, some of whom were quite unknown to me, and they have expressed considerable satisfaction that such statements were made in this Chamber. This morning I received a letter from somebody who lives in Agett-road, Claremont. I have shown this letter to two members, one on each side of the House, but I do not think it would be fair to mention the name of the writer, who is unknown to me. The letter reads—

It was with relief that I—and numerous other parents—saw you had raised in Parliament the long overdue matter of the Communism at the University. This has caused us much worry, some going so far as to say they would not risk sending their children there. The reply of Mr. Watts, therefore, is rather staggering. He is, I imagine, supposed to administer his garden of education wisely and intelligently—not sit back and watch the weeds choke the plants.

A senior student at the University was a part-time lecturer at a well-known local girls' school, and my daughter, a pupil, was astonished at the blatant Communism in her lectures. Later, on attending the University, many of her colleagues came home here, and almost without exception, the young men were rank Communists—and one was a popular lecturer there. That much abused and wrongly used term "Labour" which of itself has quite high ideals, was applied to the club which was not only communistic in outlook, but even, on occasion, indulged in Russian propaganda.

Mr. Watts says he has had no means of gaining close contact with the University—and yet it is the highest form of education—

and he is its Minister! The letters in the Press from the rather presumptious University Professors are illuminating enough.

Please do what you can to stir up interest in the matter. We don't want his blythe "It can't happen here" attitude to turn to a despairing "It has happened here!"

The letter is signed. I am quite convinced that it would be extremely difficult to put one's finger right on this Communism in the University, but people in the street know it and the Minister for Education should know it, too. Professor Murdoch's name has been used and his remarks have been quoted over and over again by the "pinks" and also by the "blood-reds" throughout the State, and they have used his name and words to further their own ends. We also had a most extraordinary article that appeared recently in one of the daily newspapers written by Professor Fox. Writing about the refusal to grant a referendum on the question of nationalising the banks, he said that the people were not fit to exercise an intelligent vote. To anyone reading that letter, I say it is one advocating totalitarianism, because that is what it would come to in the course of events.

We are all proud of our University. We have every reason to be proud of it. Situated as it is amid beauty and in ideal surroundings, I consider that to the young people who have the opportunity to go there, it should be an inspiration, but it is being marred by the insidious propaganda which is being carried on in the institution. Again I say I cannot place my finger on it, but with those people who have spoken to me in the streets, I have the same ideas. Admittedly it is natural and healthy for youths to be extreme in their ideas, extreme in everything they do. That is a sign of health, good spirits and keen intellect, but I also point out that we are paying the teachers in the University to teach their subjects. What they think privately is entirely their own concern. They have just as much right as I have to act and think as they please, but in this grand University of ours, we do not pay people to teach or by any means encourage them to use that institution with the idea of bringing about a way of life that is foreign and obnoxious to the people of this country. There is a Russian communistic influence at work in the institution. I had an instance of it in my own home; a young teacher came from the University to a country school and was an avowed Communist. We have before us this afternoon the letter I have read written by somebody I do not know.

In conclusion, I should like to make some reference to the Teachers' Union and to Mr. Sten, the Principal of the Teachers' Training College. I defy anybody to say I suggested that Mr. Sten or his colleagues were doing anything along communistic lines at that college. It would be ridiculous—it would be madness—for me to make such a suggestion.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Your remarks were so general that they left everybody at the college under suspicion.

Mr. ACKLAND: Mr. Sten belongs to the same organisation as I do. We have thought him fit to hold one of the highest offices in that organisation.

Mr. Needham: What is the organisation?

Mr. ACKLAND: The Returned Soldiers' League. The good name of any member of that organisation, and particularly the good name of the vice-president of it, is at least as safe in my hands as it is in those of the Minister for Education. We have had the spectacle in this instance of the Minister riding a white charger, with a lance at rest, tilting at something which does not exist. I assert that there is communism in the University and I believe every member in this Chamber agrees with me, but it would be very difficult for me to give actual proof, chapter and verse, as to what goes on there. I brought the matter up in the House hoping that the Minister would realise that he had some support in seeing that the few teachers in the Education Department—

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He did not agree with you.

Mr. ACKLAND:—who are not doing the job which they are paid to do, should do it, and also that the children attending our State schools should be given an opportunity to express their loyalty in some practical manner.

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL** (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth—in reply) [5.3]: I thank the Leader of the Opposition and other members for the assistance given by them to this Bill. Although the subject is rather foreign to the Bill, I feel

I should say a word on what was raised by the member for Irwin-Moore. I think all members, including myself, will sympathise with him in his desire that Communism shall not become a force in this country. I have had some little contact occasionally with the University and with the students and I feel that the hon. member need have no serious apprehensions as to the state of mind of the students of our University.

Mr. Rodoreda: He has found a mare's nest.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It would be a strange University if some young men did not hold what elder people would regard as extreme views; in fact, it would be a poor university in which there were no differences of opinion—and sometimes extreme differences of opinion—because that is the time of life when young men and young women are exploring the various ideologies and systems which are being presented to the world. It is sufficient for me to say that I think the hon. member can be satisfied that in our University the students are animated by a high tradition of duty and citizenship in their State and country, and that there is no movement or sentiment of any extent that need give serious apprehension to the people of the State.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

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

## BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT.

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 6th November.

**HON. A. R. G. HAWKE** (Northam) [5.7]: This is a very simple Bill. Subsection (1) of Section 99 of the Act provides for the establishment of districts, for their naming and for their abolition. The principal Act, however, contains no provision for the alteration of boundaries once these have been established. From time to time, the boundaries of local authorities have been altered and consequently the department now finds that certain shop district boundaries are out of alignment with certain road district boundaries. The passing of this measure will place the department in a position legally to overcome that difficulty. However, I am speaking to the Bill not because I oppose it but to take advantage of the opportunity to state a case for a further Bill to amend the Act. As this Bill is tied specifically to Section 99 of the Act, no other section of the Act could easily be amended by it.

Some months ago the then Minister issued a proclamation providing for the closing of shops in the Meckering shop district on Saturday afternoons. The decision of the Minister was made following the receipt by him of a petition signed by a majority of the shopkeepers in the district. At a later date, a petition was presented to the Minister requesting the holding of a referendum, or a poll, in accordance with the Act. The poll was held and a majority voted in favour of the Wednesday afternoon closing of shops and, of course, against Saturday afternoon closing. There are three towns in this district, namely, Cunderdin, Tammin and Meckering. The vote at Cunderdin and Tammin was strongly against Saturday afternoon closing, but in Meckering it was strongly in favour of it. The passing of this Bill would allow an alteration of the boundaries of that district.

The boundaries could be altered by putting Meckering into a separate district, in which event the majority of the people in Meckering would be strongly in favour of Saturday afternoon closing of shops. However, with the Act as it stands and even as it will stand after the passing of this Bill, no further referendum could be held in the Meckering shop district, if one were to be established, until a period of two years had elapsed from the holding of the recent referendum. That means that people in the Meckering district would have to wait for another two years and carry on with the closing of shops on an afternoon which they do not desire. I hope the Minister will consider this point, with the object of recommending the Government to introduce a further Bill to amend Section 100 of the Act, that being the section which declares that no subsequent referendum shall be held until a period of two years

has elapsed from the date on which the previous referendum was held.

If such a Bill could be introduced and passed through Parliament, then the two amendments of the Act—this one and the one suggested—would enable the Meckering district to be established as a separate shop district. It would also enable a referendum to be held there within a short time, at which referendum a majority of the people would vote for the shops to close on Saturday afternoon instead of Wednesday afternoon, which is now the practice as a result of the recent referendum. I hope the Minister will be able to decide this matter quickly because, if the Government is not inclined to introduce such a Bill as I suggest, I shall probably take action and introduce it myself. What I have said with respect to the Meckering district might also easily apply to a number of other country districts. If it does, that is a further argument why Section 100 of the Act should be altered while the Government is taking action to alter Section 99 for the purpose of taking legal power to alter the boundaries of any shop district whenever the Minister considers that such alterations are necessary. As I said, I have no intention of opposing the Bill. I give it my support and hope that what seems to me to be a very necessary supporting Bill will also be introduced at an early date.

**THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR** (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay—in reply) [5.15]: It is, of course, because of the very instances mentioned by the member for Northam that the Bill has been introduced to adjust the boundaries of the shopping districts, and, as a matter of fact, he did write me on the subject. These polls take quite a lot of preparation and involve a certain amount of expenditure, and it is necessary to ensure that the issue shall stand settled for a term of two years, at least, and that is the reason for the present provision. Meckering is in the Cunderdin-Tammin-Meckering Road Board area, and I am quite prepared to consider the representations made by the hon. member. I will definitely go into the matter, and, if it is possible, will do what he wishes, and I will so advise him. If it is not possible to do that, he can take the action he has intimated that he will take.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

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

## BILL—WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TRAMWAYS AND FERRIES.

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 4th November.

**MR. MARSHALL** (Murchison) [5.18]: This Bill is a parody of the railway measure which is also before the Chamber for consideration. While I think I can say, for those who sit on the Opposition side of the House, that we can in principle support a commission or a board of managers, what I dislike about the Bill is that it is only part of a measure that should be introduced for the purpose of co-ordinating all modes of transport. Up till recently, as is well known to members, we have had one man who has been in control of the railways, the Electricity Department and the tramways. While we can agree to some alteration in the method of control, surely it is not necessary to have five men to run the railways and three for the tramways; and I have yet to learn from the Minister how many officials will have to be appointed under Acts of Parliament which must be introduced in order to control the balance of the transport within the State. We are going to have a multiplicity of boards without any semblance of co-ordination between them. Every State of the Commonwealth, and all countries of the world are endeavouring, almost daily, to co-ordinate all modes of transport rather than have the constant overlapping which appears in the competition for trade in transport.

My great objection to the measure is that we will not know just exactly how many more boards the Government will bring into existence in order to give final political effect to its transport policy. At this stage of our existence, as a young State, and having regard to the difficulties which older and more advanced countries have had to face surely this Government has the opportunity to co-ordinate all modes of transport by altering the method of control of

the State-owned transport systems. To do that would be to display vision and foresight. It has to come. We cannot have railways in competition with the tramways of the city, and we cannot have our railways and tramways competing with privately-owned transport. Nor can we carry on with air competition against our railway system, or against competition by sea. All these different methods of transport must be fitted into their correct sphere in the economy of the State.

Here was an opportunity for a Government with vision to have tackled the position in a statesmanlike way, rather than to have done what it has which, of course, must ultimately be altered because it is not possible of economic success. That is my principal objection to these measures. The Minister gave us no real justification for the Bill. All he told us was something we already knew, and what the departmental officers and administrators knew long before the Minister came into this Chamber. I take strong exception to one of the Minister's utterances, and that was his comment upon the congested nature of our transport system by virtue of its patronage. He said that the trams are overcrowded and that people have to hang on to the straps. Well, can he tell me of any motor transport—privately as well as State-owned—today that does not have that experience, anywhere in Australia? Mr. Speaker, you have seen people queued up in the rain in Saint George's-terrace—women and children—waiting to get into privately-owned buses, and they have had to wait until their turn came.

Why specialise on State-owned transport and paint such a terrible picture of the overcrowding on trams? We know they are overcrowded, and, as a matter of fact, they always will be overcrowded at peak periods, and that applies to all modes of transport in Western Australia, as well as in the other States of the Commonwealth, and in most other parts of the world. But that is about the only justification which the Minister advanced, with this exception, that he claimed extensions should be immediately considered. I agree with that; no-one can disagree with it. But what provision in the measure is going to get over these difficulties? It is true that the trams are obsolete, but so are a good many of our omnibuses, and privately-owned buses as well. When I was Minister, I received requests from communities around this city to take over some of the privately-owned omnibus services because of their inefficiency, and obsolete buses. I venture to say that the Minister has received similar requests.

What I want to know is, where is there provision in this Bill that will overcome those difficulties? The extension of a tram or trolley-bus service depends upon the availability of sufficient capital. There is no provision in the Bill by which the commission can operate or perform that work, even if it can get the men and material to do it. In fact, it will be in no other position than that prevailing today. It will not be able to finance itself but will have to go to the Treasury. The measure even provides that the profits or revenue from the system shall be paid into Consolidated Revenue. The problem then will be for the commission to get it out of Consolidated Revenue. While we can subscribe to these grounds, if they can be called such—and there is some justification for the Minister's reference to these things—what we and the community want is an improvement in the situation. To put three men today where one was yesterday, with no greater facilities for improving the situation, gets us nowhere.

We can all agree that our trams are obsolete, in a sense, that there are many failings in their structural make-up, and there may be some shortcomings in the administration, and the Minister made some reference to that last point when introducing the Bill. He said that we find a No. 6 tram in front of a No. 4. That is so. We will also find a No. 6 in front of a No. 4 when the commission takes over, because it is unavoidable. We do find two or three trams with different numbers coming in all at once from different destinations, but it is unavoidable. That is the position. It is due to the fact that because of traffic bylaws and regulations we are not prepared to allow them to run through the city on their scheduled times. Obviously one must overtake the other. That anomaly appears in every city where trams are used. Incidentally, I want the Minister for Transport to get the Commissioner of Railways to submit some figures to him, and I want the information to be available before we discuss the Railway Estimates.

I myself secured some statistics from New South Wales to ascertain what the actual experience had been there, particularly in Sydney, from the point of view of the economical running of different modes of transport, exclusive of the railways. When I obtained those details I found that the trolley-buses were the most expensive, with the trams ranking second and petrol buses third. The Diesel-powered buses were the cheapest and most efficient. Those figures were challenged by the Commissioner of Railways and before I left office I suggested to him that he should check up on them. I told him he was entitled to communicate with the Director of Road Transport in Sydney to get a fresh set of figures if he so desired and to go into them with his departmental officers with a view to having some comparison with those I had obtained. I mention that because having regard to the rapid increase in the capitalisation of our transport facilities generally, the sooner we get down to a standard, the better.

I am afraid that if I had had many years ago the knowledge I now possess as to the cost and maintenance charges of the different modes of transport, I would have hesitated to introduce anything apart from the omnibus as an adjunct of the tramway system. We must realise that trolley-buses, like the trams, are static. They are not fluid nor are they flexible: they can run along their one route only. They are restricted in their efficiency to that extent. Apart altogether from the overhead cost of trolley-buses and the underwheel cost of the trams, both of which modes of transport must proceed along given routes, buses are more flexible and economical.

Mr. Needham: And more mobile.

Mr. MARSHALL: Buses can be used almost in any direction desired. I do not want to be misunderstood in this respect. For the shifting of a large volume of people quickly, the trams still hold their own but that applies only over a short distance of 2½ to 3 miles, which would be the limit. From that point of view the trams certainly hold pride of place except with regard to the railways. In the circumstances we cannot disregard their importance, but I do not think we ought to branch out into new spheres of transportation without having regard to the increased cost of capitalisation. From that point of view, the sooner we get down to a standard, so much the better from the point of view of efficiency and economical running.

There are a few remarkable provisions in the Bill, although in the main it does not depart to any great extent from the measure the Minister introduced dealing with the proposed alteration in the method of control of the railway system. At this stage I do not desire to discuss the powers of the Minister and those to be vested in the boards, commissions or directorates that will be set up if the two Bills before Parliament should become law. I shall do that when the measures are considered in Committee. When I do so, I suggest the Minister will not come out of it too well. The measure now under discussion contains a provision that will limit the Minister's right with respect to the control and management of the tramways along lines on all fours with a similar provision in the Government Railways Act Amendment Bill. I notice, however, that while the measures still prevent absolutely any interference by the Minister in the management or control of the railways and of the tramways, the clause in the Bill now before the House will prevent the Minister from having any say whatever with regard to fares. The commission will be able to fix fares at any amount desired without reference to the Minister at all.

I have placed on the notice paper a series of amendments and among them is one dealing with this phase. Generally speaking, while we subscribe to the Bill in principle, we say it contains features that are most objectionable. It is proposed to appoint three commissioners, two to be selected but all to be appointed by the Governor. Strange as it may seem, of the two representative commissioners one is to be selected by the industrial organisations concerned and the second is to be representative of the passengers. The Bill does not state how the commissioner is to be nominated or by whom, and there is no provision for his appointment. Had the Minister included in the Bill an ordinary type of clause setting out that two of the commissioners would be appointed by the Governor, one to be representative of the passengers and the other a qualified engineer—and a constructional engineer at that—it would have been all

right. The Bill does not do that. It merely provides for the two selected representative commissioners. There is no provision for the selection of the commissioner who is to represent the public, nor does it indicate the means by which the Minister can get any information from the public as to their wishes.

Mr. Needham: What about a referendum?

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes. The Bill also contains a clause similar to that in the Bill to amend the railway Act, the effect of which will enable the commissioners to delegate their powers to an executive committee constituted from the commission itself. I do not think the Minister could have given that matter very serious consideration. Here we have a proposal for a commission of three, two to form a quorum, and that commission is to delegate its powers to an executive committee constituted of its own members. That is a remarkable proposal. Three men can sit together, and yet delegate the whole of their power and authority to one of their number! That sort of thing is bad enough when, as under the railway Bill, we have a proposed directorate of five, who could delegate their powers to some of their number. When we get down to a small body of three commissioners operating in a circumscribed area like the metropolitan district—it is not like the railway system which is spread far-flung throughout the State—I cannot understand why the Minister desires the inclusion of such a provision. As to the other matters dealt with in the Bill, I tell the Minister now lest I forget it when I may get excited in dealing with the railway Bill, that he is using the tramway system under this legislation in order to provide the railways with authority to operate omnibuses.

I had proposed to move an amendment to that effect to improve the railway Bill. The Commissioner of Railways has no power or authority to run omnibuses under that Act, and Crown Law rulings say clearly that he has not that power, although he is taking it; either as an extension of or an adjunct to the railway system. So I advise the Minister that he had better bring down an amendment to the Bill he previously introduced providing the Commissioner with authority to run omnibuses either as an extension of or an adjunct to the railway system; otherwise, he will find that when the two Bills become law, if anyone lodges an injunction against the Commissioner, he will no longer be able to run omnibuses. All the other provisions of this measure simply give authority for a commission first to be appointed to take over all the power and authority which the Commissioner of Railways now has, and exercises over, our tramways. This measure, members will find, is divided into two parts and it is essential under the circumstances, because ferries come under this legislation as well as the tramways.

I notice, too, that provision is made in this Bill for the correct form of accountancy, namely, that the accounts shall be audited by the Auditor General, and that a quarterly statement of receipts and expenditure shall be published in the "Government Gazette." That is all to the good. Those are the chief comments I wish to make on this measure. I tell the Minister I am sadly disappointed in the Government in that it proposes to divide our transport at this juncture rather than to make a bold and courageous endeavour to bring down a strictly co-ordinating Bill in order to get a complete grip of air, sea, road and rail transport, and fit them into their correct spheres. This form of bitter competition, each one antagonising the other, is not the modern conception at all. Bills of this sort are fifty years old.

All nations today and all States in Australia—I think Tasmania has already done it—have one Act of Parliament, one board of control, under which they carry on all kinds of transport, and that is what we should be getting today. That is what we would have been getting if there had been no change of Government. Unfortunately, there was a change. Most of the provisions in both measures are those which afford a greater opportunity for discussion in the Committee stage. As I have just stated, we ought to be co-ordinating all modes of transport rather than be splitting them into separate units.

**THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS** (Hon. H. S. Seward—Pingelly—in reply) [5.50]: It is the intention of the Government to bring down another Bill to appoint an authority, such as has been indicated by the member for Murchison, to advise the Government on transport matters, but very obviously that power or authority could

not be conferred on either the Tramway or the Railway Department. They are, in a way, competing forms of transport and, in order to get an impartial and thorough recommendation, it is the intention to bring down a transport co-ordination Bill to provide for the appointment of an advisory committee thoroughly to examine the position, and to apportion the respective modes of transport to the different systems in order that overlapping and competition, where they exist at present, may be overcome. But the pressure of work in drafting and printing these measures has been such that it has not yet been possible to introduce that Bill. I give the hon. member an assurance that I will bring it down very shortly.

The hon. member also referred to various forms of transport, of which the Government is fully cognisant, and to which due recognition must be given. There is a sharp divergence of opinion amongst authorities on the value of trams in our transport system today. For instance, when I was in the Eastern States in May last, I interviewed the general manager of the Adelaide Transport Board, Sir William Goodman. I also interviewed the Chairman of the Melbourne Omnibus Company. Both these gentlemen, who are authorities on the question, are of opinion that the tram is the most efficient vehicle for transporting large crowds. Those gentlemen told me that they can move crowds of 60,000 or 80,000 people from the Melbourne Cricket Ground or the Adelaide Oval, as the case may be, far quicker by tram than by any other vehicle.

Mr. Marshall: For short distances.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. It was surprising to me, as I thought that with omnibuses we could get the crowd away by various streets and would thus be able to move them more quickly.

Hon. A. H. Panton: If there are suitable trams, people can get on and off more quickly.

Mr. Marshall: Some of them get off before they pay their fares.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is one matter that will have to be considered. Due recognition will be paid by the Government to all factors before we expand our present transport system. Then there is the question of trolley-buses, to which reference has been made. We have given serious consideration to that mode of transport. According to the latest reports, the authorities in New South Wales are discarding their trolley-buses, as they maintain that these vehicles are not suitable for the traffic. They are using double-decker buses. I do not think the double-decker would appeal to the people of Perth, but in New South Wales it is thought to be superior to other forms of transport. In Newcastle the authorities are using nothing else but double-decker buses.

Mr. Marshall: That is on long special runs.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Here there is an aversion to them, and they are considered neither suitable nor comfortable. These vehicles elsewhere are proving suitable and it will be necessary for us to take cognisance of that, particularly in view of the transport requirements of the near future. I will endeavour to get a report for the hon. member which will set out for him the costs of various systems in other States. Another matter requiring very close attention is the adoption of a particular mode of transport and of the type of fuel to be used. It would be very foolish if the Government were landed in trouble because our public transport was motivated by the one particular type of fuel. For instance, if that fuel supply was exhausted the whole metropolitan transport system would be immobilised. Serious consideration must be given to such factors, and we may be forced to adopt the use of electric transport for part of our system in order to utilise the electricity supply in this State, so that the entire transport system would not be immobilised at the one time.

This State requires an improved system of transport, and I agree that if this proposed commission does not give the improved system of transport required, the Government will immediately take action to see that it is changed to one which will give the desired results. That is the reason for placing a representative of the travelling public on the board. He will be able to keep the board up to the requirements of the people both as to the mode of transport, the area served and so on.

Hon. E. Nulsen: It will all be a matter of finance.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: This Government is not worrying about finance. We will endeavour to give effect to providing vehicles to the limit of our financial possibilities. In the short time that we have been in office we have ordered over 20 new buses, and out of the seven Bedfords ordered five have arrived. There are 20 other buses still to come.

Mr. Marshall: Have the 15 buses arrived from England for the South-West run?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They are not coming from England. One of those buses is operating from Collie—it started last week—and it is expected that the two others will be operating towards the end of this year; one to Pemberton and one to Margaret River. Ten A.E.C. buses have been ordered from Sydney but the difficulty in supplying these vehicles is caused by the shortage of bodies, but as soon as they arrive they will be put into operation. The Government is perfectly willing to provide the finance for the new vehicles and I consider that such vehicles will prove acceptable and pleasant to the public, resulting in extra patronage of our system.

The member for Murchison mentioned Tasmanian transport. The Tasmanian Government intends to nationalise road transport, which is something that this Government does not favour. Although it is not yet an accomplished fact in Tasmania I know that this is mooted. The bounden duty of this Government is to raise our transport system to that state of satisfaction that will appeal to the travelling public so that any other competing transport systems will either have to give an equal form of favourable transport or go out of existence. The House has my assurance that the Government will endeavour to have an efficient standard transport system throughout the metropolitan area as soon as possible, and will reduce the number of different forms of transport to a minimum, our object being to provide those vehicles which will give the most satisfaction to the general public. Any other matters raised can be dealt with in Committee, but I will endeavour to get the information required by the member for Murchison in order that he may be fully acquainted with the position.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

## BILL—PLANT DISEASES ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Council and read a first time.

## BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

1, Land Alienation Restriction Act Amendment (Continuance).

2, Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act Amendment (Continuance).

Without amendment.

## BILL—GAS (STANDARDS).

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 6th November.

**HON. J. T. TONKIN** (North-East Fremantle) [6.0]: When moving the second reading of this Bill the Minister said it was a sequel to the Fremantle Gas and Coke Company's Act Amendment Bill. It is very difficult to see how that can be so, because the Minister himself said that the provisions of the Gas (Standards) Bill were under consideration by his predecessor when the Bill was in course of preparation, and the Fremantle Gas and Coke Company's Act Amendment Bill did not come before the Minister's predecessor, but was suggested to this Government in the first instance. So it seems to me to be quite wrong to say that the Bill under consideration is a sequel to the other one, although I agree that the previous Bill should not be passed if this one is not passed, because they are very definitely closely related.

The Minister said that this Bill was modelled on the legislation of New South Wales and Victoria. That is true; but, unlike the Acts in both those States, this Bill is notable for what it leaves out and not for what it includes. For that which is in the Bill I praise the Minister. It is very necessary that standards of quality, purity and pressure should be established, because those which exist at present are, for all practical purposes, quite useless. But for that which is not in the Bill, I blame the Minister.

Mr. Marshall: Condemn him holus bolus!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: He has had recourse to the New South Wales and Queensland Acts and must have seen that those legislatures thought it necessary to provide something more than he has been prepared to provide; and yet he has introduced his Bill without making what I would regard as very necessary amendments, just as necessary as those he has included. He makes no provision whatever for price control or limitation of dividends or testing of meters, provisions which have been in British legislation since 1847. So we are 100 years behind the times and the Minister is prepared to allow us to remain there even though he now has an opportunity to make good the deficiencies of former years.

In not making the necessary provisions with regard to the control of dividends and prices and the issue of shares, the Minister is leaving himself open to the very charge he has made against myself and other members for Fremantle constituencies. He said —and rightly, too—that we neglected our opportunities. We did. There were opportunities of which I have no hesitation in admitting we should have taken advantage, but the fact remains that we did not. Now the Minister has had the matter brought under his notice and still he declines to do anything about it even though he is told quite plainly that the legislation in this State is 100 years behind that of Great Britain. He is content to let it remain so. The Minister can be characterised as one of those persons who are known as static.

The Minister for Works: There must be a lot of static persons about the House, if that is so!

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: He is as static as some of the members of the Madras Legislature, sometimes!

The Attorney General: I thought that static had to do with wireless.

Mr. Bovell: That makes a lot of noise!

Hon J. T. TONKIN: He is static because he gets to a certain stage and believes that that is where he should stay put. He argues this way: If a man neglects to cut sufficient wood for his wife this week, in those circumstances under no consideration should he cut any next week. The Minister says that because I neglected to do something in 1940, when there was an opportunity, I have no right to attempt to get it done now. I submit that that is on all-fours with the illustration I have just given.

The Minister for Works: Did I say that?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister did.

The Minister for Works: Oh! Doubtless you will be able to show me where.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: As another illustration of the same argument, because no steps have been taken up to now to widen the streets of Perth, because opportunities which have offered have been neglected, under no circumstances should we attempt to widen those streets from now on. Where would we get if we were to take notice of arguments of that type? Yet that is the type of argument the Minister used. Because we neglected to do in 1940 that which we should have done, we have no right to attempt to get it done now. Of course, that is just too stupid! In so far as I was responsible for not taking action before, I accept full blame; but I am going to attempt to put the matter right by getting it done now if I can. It would be much better if the Minister would do it because he has at his command facilities which are not available to private members; and the Bill, which is necessary, is one of a type which is not usually undertaken by a private member because it is to some extent technical and requires the advice of experts whose services are not available to private members. When a private member undertakes such a Bill he is confronted with a task which is made much more difficult because of the circumstances.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Those difficulties will not deter you!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I will do my best to overcome them, but it would be far better if the Government would recognise the necessity for making all these alterations to bring our legislation up-to-date, and would get things done. The Minister attempted to make some play with my use of the word "monopoly." He said that so far as he could see, there was nothing to prevent any gas company from starting up in competition with the one in Fremantle. Was the Minister serious?

Hon. A. H. Panton: I do not remember him smiling.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: He said there was nothing to stop any company from opening up at Fremantle. Here are his words—

> There is nothing whatever to stop another body from entering into competition with the Fremantle Gas and Coke Co.

Then he finished up by saying "certainly nothing that I know of." That statement shows that the Minister does not know very much about it at all.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: That is what I told him: that he did not know what he was talking about.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: In order to put the Minister right quickly, I will tell him the main reason that no other company can start up in competition with the Fremantle Gas and Coke Co. It is the very strong reason that it has not the statutory authority. Will the Minister agree that is a pretty strong reason? The Fremantle Gas and Coke Co., was enabled to start in the business because it was given an Act of Parliament which authorised it to do so: because it was given a monopoly.

Mr. Yates: It is necessary with that type of undertaking.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Of course! But the Minister believes that any person at any time can go to Fremantle and start a gas company in competition with the one there. Is that the reason the Minister is not introducing this necessary legislation? If so, now that he has been put right, he might be prepared to take different action. Of course, it would be contrary to public policy to permit a number of companies to be tearing up the public streets. In the early days of the gas companies in Great Britain —I think the first was established in 1812— the people believed that the way in which their interests could be safeguarded was to ensure that there would be competition. So it was the practice in those days not to give a single company sole right to manufacture gas in a single district. As a matter of deliberate policy, more than one company was authorised to supply.

But it was soon found that competition did not protect the consumers in the way it was expected to do. On the contrary, it caused a good deal of inconvenience which a different arrangement might have obviated. So from providing for competition the trend was to establish monopolies. But with that the people were careful to see that there was very strict control of those monopolies in the interests of consumers. It is that control which is lacking in this State. We have a monopoly all right and in that way we compare with Great Britain. But we have a monopoly without the necessary controls in the interests of the consumers. It has long been accepted by most people—but quite obviously not so accepted by the Minister—that the right of the public to regulate services in lines of business affecting the public interest is undoubted. The Minister does not subscribe to that but people generally do, because a franchise establishing a virtual monopoly and relating to a practical necessity of civilised life involves power to exact tribute from the community and that power is substantially equivalent to the privilege of levying taxes for private purposes.

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

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Levying taxes for private purposes got the Stuart Kings into serious conflict with Parliament. It is beyond the legislative authority of any Government in a free country, and yet monopolies that have been given a franchise are in a position of being able to levy taxes for private purposes, as I think I can show. As an example I will quote what happened in the matter of meter rent. The Fremantle Gas and Coke Company charges 9d. per month meter rent, as appears on every monthly account that it sends out. Ninepence per month means 9s. per year, and in ten years a consumer pays £4 10s. He goes on paying the 9d. per month even though the period extends over 40 years, and yet he never buys the meter.

The Honorary Minister: It is just the same with a telephone.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The company can vary the charge for its meter. It does not have to ask the permission of anyone, but can decide to charge 6d., 8d., or 9d., so long as it remains within the margin laid down in the Act of 1886. That margin, I understand, is such that the company can charge up to 15 per cent. per annum on the cost of the meter. In that provision alone the company is given the right to levy a tax upon its consumer community, for its own private purposes. I come now to the price charged for gas. Under the existing Act

the company is permitted to charge up to £1 per thousand cubic feet for gas. The present price is very much less than that, but the company may vary its price up to that maximum and, if it does so without improving the quality of the gas, it is levying a tax on the consumers. Up to the present there has been very little control—scarcely any—of the quality of gas distributed.

Even though the Act provides that the local authority may appoint inspectors to test the gas, I quoted the other night a letter from the Fremantle City Council, in which it stated that it had never appointed an inspector and that no testing had ever been carried out under the powers provided in the Act. I also quoted an illustration to show that, where the quality of the gas fell during one month, it resulted in a substantial sum being quite wrongfully taken from the gas consumers because, the gas being of a lower quality, it took more to do the same work than was previously the case and so, for the same heating power, people paid 20 per cent. more because the quality of the gas was poor. That resulted in a straight-out present to the company of a certain sum of money. People engaged in other businesses —a grocery business, for example—must have their scales tested and stamped to ensure that they do not sell an ounce or two under weight, but there is no such testing in the case of gas.

Although the Minister's Bill now provides that the company must declare the calorific value of its gas and will be under penalty if it fails to keep it within a reasonable margin of that declared value, it makes no provision regarding meters that will ensure accurate measurement of the quantity of gas used. If gas is still to be sold by the 1,000 cubic feet, of a certain calorific value, then the payment will be according to the registration by the meter of the volume of gas consumed. Who is to ensure that the meters will be accurate and that what they register can be relied upon? It is true that there is provision in the original Act for the testing of meters, but it has been of little value. There is power for the local authority to appoint an inspector of meters. Section 31 of the Fremantle Gas and Coke Company's Act, 1886, states—

> It shall be lawful for the local authority to appoint and from time to time remove and again appoint an inspector of meters to be paid by such local authority and such inspector shall have at all times on the application and at the expense of any consumer of gas supplied by the company a right to inspect and test the meters erected by the company on the premises of a person making such request after giving 48 hours notice of such intended inspection to the company.

That is worth nothing at all and the Fremantle municipality has admitted to me that it has never appointed an inspector to test the meters.

The Minister for Works: It could have done so.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, but it did not. We want the Government to ensure that it will not be left to the local authority that has to bear the cost of appointing an inspector, as that has been shown to be useless. We want something that will be effective. In Great Britain it was not left to the provisions in the private Acts of different companies to provide for the testing of meters. An Act was passed for that purpose. I quote from the Sale of Gas Act, 1859, Section 9 of which states—

> In England the justices in general or quarter sessions assembled, or the town council in boroughs adopting this Act at any meeting thereof, and in Scotland the justices or magistrates at a meeting called for the purpose, and in Ireland the town council or town commissioners of any such borough or town as aforesaid, shall determine and appoint on what days, at what hours, and what places each and every inspector shall attend with the said copies of models and stamps in his custody at each of the several towns and districts within their respective jurisdictions, as they shall deem expedient; and every such inspector so attending shall examine, test, and, if found correct, stamp all such meters as shall be required under the provisions of this Act to be so examined, tested, and stamped, and shall deface or destroy the stamp on any meter tested and found incorrect under the provisions of this Act.

So, as long ago as 1859 it was thought necessary for the protection of the consumers, in Great Britain, to provide for the proper testing and stamping of the meters to be used. From time to time I have heard complaints from consumers in Fremantle about the registrations of their meters, and they have had no redress at all. They have had to take what the company said was the registration. I have here the report of the Gas Industry Committee of Inquiry, dated December, 1945. Dealing with the testing of meters, the committee made this recom-

mendation to the Ministry of Fuel and Power—

(a) The fact that gas is now sold on a basis which combines volume and heating value and the measurement of the volume depends upon the accuracy of the meter;

(b) The variety of bodies exercising the statutory functions; and

(c) The difficulties associated with the application of legislation which is embodied in a number of Acts passed at intervals during the last hundred years, we recommend that the existing machinery should be completely overhauled and that the meter testing powers now exercised by the administrating bodies be transferred to the Ministry of Fuel and Power. If our recommendation is adopted the Ministry will no doubt consider the desirability of setting up one organisation to deal with both the testing of gas and the testing of meters.

The Minister's Bill provides that the Electricity Commission shall set up an organisation for the testing of the quality of gas, it being obligatory under his Bill —if it becomes law—for the gas companies to declare the calorific value of their product and then to adhere to that declaration. The Electricity Commission will appoint inspectors to test the gas. This recommendation is to the effect that under one organisation provision should be made for the testing of the meters as well as the testing of the gas, and I submit that that is what the Minister should do. He should bring his own legislation up to date and into line with modern times and provide for the proper testing of the meters as well. Of what value will it be to the consumers if the Minister makes it obligatory on a company to declare the calorific value of its gas, while leaving it free to double the price charged if it so desires? That will not result in the consumer getting any better deal; but will mean that the company may make a declaration as to the quality of its gas and, if it is of a quality better than that now being sold, may then put up the price, and the consumer will be in the same position as he is in now, as will also the gas company.

That is why it is necessary that the Minister should include in his Bill some provision for price control, once he fixes the quality of the gas, to ensure that the consumer will get gas of good quality at a reasonable and proper price. Monopolies in this kind of business are certainly not conducive to efficiency and there is any amount of room for improvement in the technique of gas manufacture. I do not know whether members have any idea of the principle upon which it is manufactured, or the means by which the heat is obtained from the gas consumed, but I think I can show what happens so that what I am about to say can be followed. The principle is that the gas which is supplied is either mixed with a quantity of air and then subjected to combustion in some secondary air, or it is not mixed with air in the first place and combustion of the gas takes place in air, which results in two types of heat being given off—radiant energy and kinetic energy. The radiant energy comes from the flame of the gas; the kinetic energy comes from the hot products of combustion. Both forms of energy are used in gas appliances. In the cooking appliances used, the type of energy is more kinetic than radiant energy.

There is nothing in the Bill to provide for the composition of the gas. Gas of a certain calorific value can be obtained in a number of ways with varying constituent parts. It has been recommended that, in addition to providing for the calorific value of gas, the only fair thing to the consumer is to provide for the specific gravity as well. I have looked through the Queensland and New South Wales Acts and have found no provision for a standard of specific gravity, but this report recommends that this is the most practical way of guaranteeing to the consumer that he is getting gas of reasonable quality. Of course it is not possible to lay down a hard-and-fast standard as to the composition of gas for the simple reason that the coal, which is the first thing used for the production of gas, is of such varying quality and, unless we could guarantee a standard of coal to the gas undertaker, it would be impossible for him to declare a standard of composition for his gas.

My reading leads me to the conclusion that it is possible to set down a definite specific gravity for the gas and, if that is done, the gas undertaker is controlled within reasonable limits so far as the quality of the product is concerned. And that is what we desire. More than 80 per cent. of the gas being sold in Britain today is of a declared calorific value of 450 to 500 B.T.U. I should like the Minister to tell me why it has been necessary to stipu-

late 550 B.T.U. in the Bill. If more than 80 per cent. of the gas supplied in Great Britain is of a declared calorific value within the limits of 450 to 500 B.T.U., why must the Minister provide a range of 100 B.T.U.? I can see no reason for it, even though in Britain there are some companies producing gas of a lesser calorific value than 450 B.T.U. and some of a greater calorific value than 500 B.T.U.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Some are 550, but as 80 per cent. of the gas produced is within the range of 450 to 500 B.T.U., I see no reason why we should require a larger range here.

The Minister for Works: You admit the possibility of its getting above 550 in certain instances.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There might be a satisfactory explanation and I should like the Minister to inform us what it is. Otherwise I think we can define the limits of 450 to 500.

The Minister for Works: Is there any harm in putting it at 550?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There might be.

The Minister for Works: Can you think of any?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, I have not sufficient knowledge of the industry or of the technique of manufacturing gas.

The Minister for Works: I have not, either. I have simply the assurance.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: But I am impressed by the fact that 80 per cent. of the gas produced in Great Britain is of 450 to 500 B.T.U. and there must be some reason for it. Why should we provide for a range up to 550? It might not be important, but again it might be.

I have not a great deal more to say on this Bill. As the Minister has not seen fit to include in it provisions that would bring his legislation into line with modern legislation elsewhere, I have introduced a Bill to make good the Minister's omission. Therefore I shall have a further opportunity of dealing with those aspects. The Minister's Bill does not take us a great deal further forward. True he will make the companies declare the quality of their gas and impose a penalty if they deviate very much from the standard they declare, but beyond that his Bill will do scarcely anything. There is no attempt to set down how the shares of the company shall be disposed of.

The Minister for Works: Did you expect to find it there?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Of course I did.

The Minister for Works: Would you not rather have expected to find it in the first Bill?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: This is a sequel. As it was not in the first Bill, it might have been included in this.

The Minister for Works: I cannot see much in that argument.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Of course not, but for all that it is very necessary. It has been provided in British legislation since 1847.

The Minister for Works: And left out of ours since 1866.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: And the Minister will leave it out till 1966.

The Minister for Works: How do you know?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister said so. I say it is necessary for the simple reason that this company is now to develop into something of very sizeable proportions. When it had a mere £15,000 of capital, it was not in a position to do very much harm, but now it is to have a capital of a quarter of a million, and a long time will elapse before the company will have to come to Parliament again for authority to raise additional capital. Consequently, it will be free from overhaul for a considerable time.

The Minister for Works: Are you sure on that point?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Absolutely! The reason why provision was made in the original Act, as in the various private Acts of Great Britain, when a company wanted to expand a step further and issue additional capital, was to give Parliament an opportunity to appoint a committee to investigate the whole ramifications of the undertaking, to see whether it had acted within the spirit of the statutes, whether it had behaved decently to consumers, and whether it was worthy of the power to further expand the capital, and also to give Parliament an opportunity to lay down any altered conditions it desired upon which the additional capital should be raised.

If the Minister will take the trouble to look at the English legislation he will find that almost invariably, when a company found it necessary to apply to Parliament for additional authority, Parliament fixed some new provisions with regard to the issue of the capital and embodied in the legislation the improvements that had taken place since the previous application was made. In that way the legislation covering the various companies was kept up to date. There is a great mass of legislation on the supply of gas—various private Acts amended from time to time and numerous public Acts. The latest one—and the one the Minister ought to refer to——is the Gas Regulation Act of 1920, which was introduced at the request of the gas companies. There is an eye-opener for the Minister. Instead of protesting against the provisions with regard to the raising of new capital, the testing of meters and the selling of gas of a certain calorific value, the gas companies asked for the Act of 1920. That was introduced and provided for the various matters I have mentioned.

If I may toboggan down the marginal notes, as was said of similar procedure some years ago, I shall be able to give the House an indication of what the Act contains—Composition and pressure of gas to be supplied; restriction on power to charge for thermal units; appointment of gas referees and examiners in connection with the testing of gas; power to prescribe tests; appeals to the chief gas examiner, remuneration and expenses of the gas referees; penalties for failure to comply with the prescription of the gas referees; forfeiture for faulty calorific value; power to make special orders with regard to the supply of gas; fees for the examination of meters; meters to be stamped; qualifications for the appointment as inspector of meters; accounts and returns; power to make rules.

Those are the main items embodied in the Gas Regulation Act of 1920 since which additional legislation on gas has been passed by the British Parliament, showing how soon it has been found necessary in the Old Country to enact fresh provisions to keep pace with the changing times. What the Minister seems to have overlooked in the gas-selling business is that it is of its very nature a monopoly, and monopolies, for the reasons I have outlined, should be subjected to very rigid control. Control of gas companies' dividends has been in operation in England since 1857. I think the figure fixed in that year was 10 per cent. on ordinary capital. Since then it has been greatly reduced, and some of the Acts provide that the return on the capital shall not exceed 4½ per cent.

Some of the British Acts provide a figure as low as that because investments in gas companies, which are monopolies, are regarded, not as speculations, but as sound investments with very little risk. That is why they fix a low return on the capital investment; but the Minister has made no attempt whatever to control the price of the gas to be supplied to the consumer, or to limit the dividends or protect the consumers so far as the quality of the gas was concerned. No provision has been made for testing or stamping meters or anything of that kind. He is content to allow this company to raise additional capital to the extent of £250,000 and offer it all to the existing shareholders without subjecting the company to any controls other than that it must declare the calorific value of its gas and the purity of the gas and adhere to those declarations under penalty. That is all that the Minister's Bill does. I submit it is not half enough, although it is very necessary that he should do that. In my opinion, the Government should have completed the job.

The Minister for Works: Which Government?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: This Government, because it is introducing a Bill dealing with gas standards.

The Minister for Works: I realise that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Instead of half doing the job, the Government should have completed it. In introducing the Bill, the Minister has actually shown a recognition of the need to do something with regard to gas companies. That is an admission of the necessity, but then the Government stops short. I submit that the other things I have mentioned are just as important and need to be included just as much as the provisions in the Minister's Bill. I hope the Bill will become law. I hope, too, that we might induce the Minister to agree to one or two amendments which I think ought to be inserted in the Bill, although the

Title, being somewhat restricted, and I suppose designedly so—

The Minister for Works: You know it could not have been designedly. You are well aware of that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am getting a little suspicious.

The Minister for Works: You might just as well withdraw what you said, because you know it is not so.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If the Minister is extending an invitation to me to attempt to put as much as I like in the Bill I will have a go at it; but I am very much afraid, having had a good look at the Title, that I cannot do so.

The Minister for Works: You have? What about including them in the Bill you are introducing?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I hope to test the position later and see whether it is possible to insert provisions in this Bill dealing with testing and stamping of meters.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Amend the Title of this Bill.

The Minister for Education: That looks like hard work to me.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I wish to refer to the Minister's statement that I seemed to be all out for nationalisation and that that was behind what I was saying. The English Committee of Inquiry, which made the report to the Minister for Fuel, recommended nationalisation of the gas industry. That committee was set up by the previous Government, not the present English Labour Government, but it made its report to the latter Government. The members of the committee were—

Geoffrey Heyworth (Chairman)
Stuart R. Cooper
J. R. Davidson
Gavin Martin
D. M. Newitt

They referred to the fact that it was not because of any theory which they held—perhaps I had better not paraphrase their words, but read what they had to say in case I might make a slip and misquote them. They said—

> The plan as outlined has been evolved out of the conditions and circumstances of the industry as we have found them, and not out of preconceived ideas or general theories. It is essentially one that stands as a whole; its parts are inter-dependent and additions are as likely to upset its balance as are deletions. The plan should be put into effect as a whole and not piecemeal, in order to avoid creating uncertainty in the industry. It should be reviewed at the end of ten years and the Act which sets up the regional boards should provide accordingly.

They recommended the nationalisation of the whole industry, not because they had any preconceived ideas about socialisation; they came to that conclusion as the result of the conditions in which they found the industry following on their inquiry. On this subject it will be interesting for members to hear a statement that the Honorary Minister made when this subject was under discussion in 1940.

Mr. Marshall: Who is the Honorary Minister?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The member for Subiaco. I was referring to the fact that the Fremantle Gas & Coke Co.'s Bill provided power for the local authority to take over the company, but I did not think there was much chance of that happening, nor did I think the Government would take it over. The Minister seemed to think that on that occasion I did not say much about it. He referred to the fact that in 1940 what I had to say I said in two minutes.

The Minister for Works: That sounds not at all unlikely.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is not how long a man talks; it is what he says when he talks.

Mr. Marshall: The Minister for Works speaks for hours and says nothing.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is very often the criterion. I am quoting now from "Hansard," 1940, page 1208. I was dealing with the price of shares at the time and said—

> I was given an explanation of the items and a guarantee by the manager of the company, speaking on the authority of the directors, that the capital would be raised by subscription by existing shareholders, they having the first right to subscribe. It is safe to say that no-one outside the present shareholders will get an opportunity to subscribe the new capital. The reason is obvious. The price of the £1 shares is 28s., and it is not likely that existing shareholders who, under the articles of association, have the right to subscribe the additional capital, will forego that right and make a present to outsiders of 8s. in the pound.

Hon. C. G. Latham: The company could issue new shares at a premium.

Mr. TONKIN: That is not likely, either. Even if it did, that would not benefit anyone outside. It would simply mean additional profit to the company, which would be paid in dividends to the present shareholders.

Mr. Fox: Would you call that gambling?

Mr. TONKIN: That is another question.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Do you desire notice of the question?

Mr. TONKIN: Anyhow, I would not be permitted to discuss it on this motion. I agree with the member for Guildford-Midland that the ideal would be for the municipal authority to take over the undertaking and I have no doubt that the time will come when it will do so. I regret that from time to time we are doing things that amount to making gifts to the company and increasing the value of the undertaking, which will have to be purchased eventually by the people.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Then why do it?

So the Honorary Minister felt at that stage that we should not be giving this company the right to have additional shares. To continue—

Mr. TONKIN: We have no option.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That is wrong; we have an option.

Mr. Patrick: The municipal authorities could buy now.

Mr. TONKIN: The only people who could buy the company out—

I was not permitted to complete that observation because Hon. W. D. Johnson interjected as follows:—

It is not a question of buying the company out.

I then went on to say—

—are the members of the Fremantle City Council, and they will do it.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: They could not.

Mr. TONKIN: The hon. member wants to impose this situation on my constituents. He wants to say, "We will not do anything towards increasing the value of the company's asset."

My argument then was that I had a number of constituents who were anxious to obtain a supply of gas. They could not get it unless the company had more capital and I could not expect them to provide it. I was in the unfortunate position of being obliged to agree to the extension of capital powers because I wanted my constituents to have gas, although I knew then that there should be some provision as to the conditions under which this capital would be issued, and also some control. I went on to say—

The company will expend what money it has available in such a way as to get the best return from it.

It would have meant no gas for my constituents, but gas for some of the people in the district where the consumers would be in a position to buy appliances consuming much larger quantities of gas and therefore yielding greater profit. Continuing with my quotation—

It will supply the people of Claremont and Cottesloe, and leave those of Bicton and East Fremantle without gas. I do not want that to happen. If the people of Peppermint Grove and Claremont are entitled to a gas service from the company, so are the people in East Fremantle and Bicton. But they will not get it unless the company is permitted to raise more capital, or the local authority or Government steps in and provides the additional service. We can leave out the last-named possibility. That is where I referred to the fact that there was not much likelihood that the Government would step in and take over the company. Continuing—

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Why?

Mr. TONKIN: Because, in the first instance, the hon. member would not agree to the Government stepping in and supplying the service.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: I would; I believe in it.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Did you say all that in two minutes?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister said I did.

The Minister for Works: All right. What does "Hansard" say? It says two minutes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Therefore the Honorary Minister is committed to the Government's taking over the gas undertaking because she said she believed the Government should do so. So she believes in the nationalisation of gas companies. This happens to be one of the times when the Honorary Minister is right. Her belief is in consonance with the recommendations of the Gas Industry Committee of Inquiry which, having made an exhaustive inquiry into the conditions of the gas industry in Great Britain, could come to no other conclusion than that the industry should be nationalised. I would have liked the Minister to include in his Bill a provision which would be an inducement to the local authority to take over the Fremantle Gas Co.

The Minister for Works: You know very well that the scope of the Bill does not permit it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Why could the Minister not have changed the scope of the Bill? He designed it and I have to take it

as I find it. The Minister is the author of it and he could have given it any scope he liked. It is just too stupid to bring a Bill into this House and say that he did not include certain provisions in it because its scope would not allow him to do so. Surely the Minister himself could have made the scope of the Bill wide enough to include such provisions.

The Minister for Works: I think I can answer that point.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I hope the Minister will, because his statement does not make sense otherwise. The Minister was in a position to frame any kind of Bill his Government would agree to. Perhaps that is the stumbling block. Perhaps his Government would not agree to conditions limiting dividends and fixing a price. That may be the explanation and, if it is, no doubt it is pretty sound from the Minister's point of view.

The Attorney General: That may have been the explanation why your Government did not do it.

Hon. A. H. Panton: We cannot be accused of nationalisation.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I hope that the Minister would have provided some inducement for the local authority to go beyond what is provided in the Act at present. This certainly gives the municipality power to take it over, but under conditions which would make it extremely difficult, and it would not have any idea of the price it would have to pay. Section 50 of the Fremantle Gas and Coke Company's Act provides—

> It shall be lawful for the mayor, councillors, and burgesses of the town of Fremantle, if they shall think fit, at any time after the thirty-first day of December, One thousand nine hundred and six, to purchase all the land, buildings, works, hereditaments, lamps, pipes, stock, and appurtenances of and belonging to the Company, in the name and on behalf of the corporation, upon giving to the directors six calendar months' notice in writing of such intention so to do, and upon such terms and conditions as shall be mutually agreed upon between the directors and the corporation; but in case of any dispute or disagreement arising between the directors and the corporation respecting such purchase as aforesaid, then it shall be lawful for the directors or the corporation, if they or either of them shall think fit, to require that it shall be left to arbitration to determine what amount of purchase money shall be paid to the directors; and in the event of such arbitration being required, the corporation shall name one person and the directors another; and if such two persons cannot agree upon the amount to be paid to the Company, then the same shall be referred to the umpirage of some third person to be appointed by such two first-named persons previously to their entering upon the arbitration; and the determination of such arbitrators or umpire, as the case may be, shall be binding and conclusive on the said parties and their respective successors and assigns.

In the final analysis, it would come to a question of one person who would say, "This is what you have to pay." But there is nothing there for his guidance. I have no doubt that such a person would take into consideration the length of time the company has been in operation, and the fact that it is a monopoly, and therefore has extensive goodwill. We would not get many local authorities who would buy out under those conditions. It is clear that even in those by-gone days, the legislature thought it necessary to make provision for this monopoly to be taken over at some time by a local authority. People in those days were not so socialist-minded as we are today, but even they saw the necessity for that provision.

We should bring ourselves abreast of the times and ensure that the local authority may take over this undertaking, at the structural value only, including the land at its fair market price today. That would mean that the local authority would have to pay a sum which would be equivalent to what it would cost the authority to buy the block upon which the building stands, and then establish on it an undertaking of that size and in that condition. If that provision were made, the shareholders would lose nothing because the company, out of its profits, has from time to time made provision for the depreciation of the plant. The shareholders would get the fair market value for the land and the ratepayers would not be paying an exorbitant amount. But under existing conditions there is not the slightest chance of the local authority buying out this undertaking. So it will go on!

Today the company has £250,000 worth of capital, and in 30 or 40 years' time it might have £500,000 worth. One can only conjecture as to what size it would grow if it gave proper attention to the technique of gas-making, endeavoured to improve its dis-

tribution and took advantage of the scientific knowledge in regard to the combustion of gases and so encouraged many more people to use gas, who today have no desire to do so. If it did those things it would open up a large field for expansion. The result of that would be to cheapen the cost of power, both to private consumers and industrial undertakings, with resultant benefit to the State. To leave the monopoly uncontrolled as to dividend and price, and with no inducement to effect improvements in technique because of the absence of competition, is not to render a service to the State but a distinct dis-service. I submit that the Bill does not go half far enough, but we have to accept what is before us and I hope the House will agree to it.

**HON. J. B. SLEEMAN** (Fremantle) [8.21]: I feel if I do not say anything that the Minister for Works will accuse me of not having done anything to help my suffering electors. I hope the few remarks I shall make will be relevant to the Bill, and not like those of the Minister who directed half his speech to another measure nicely tucked away at the bottom of the notice paper, where I hope it will stay until these two are passed.

Mr. Needham: What was the Speaker doing?

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: He was very lenient, as he is to the member for Perth and me. The member for North-East Fremantle has said pretty nearly all that I wish to say. I hope the Bill will get a speedy passage through the second reading stage. Notwithstanding what we may say about it now, it should be knocked into shape in Committee. I complain about things not in the Bill for the protection of the consumers. I point out to the Minister that in the Gas and Electricity Act of New South Wales, the following appears—

> A person desiring a supply of gas to premises a boundary of which is situated within twenty-five yards of any pipe of a gas company authorised to supply gas within the locality shall serve on the company a notice specifying the premises in respect of which the supply is required and the day, not being earlier than forty-five days from the date of service, upon which the supply is desired to commence.

It later provides—

> A gas company which refuses or willfully neglects to give or continue a supply which it is required to give or continue under this Act, shall, upon summary conviction, be liable to a penalty not exceeding forty shillings in respect of each day during which such refusal or neglect continues.

That is something I want to see included, in addition to what has been mentioned by the member for North-East Fremantle. In Fremantle there are large districts where the company will not instal mains. By the last measure before the House, the company has had its territory advanced to a considerable extent and is enabled to lay down mains in those new areas, but it has not put them in the suburbs of Palmyra and Bicton. Even in North Fremantle, which is part of the electorate of the member for North-East Fremantle, many people have not been able to get gas.

I want to know why the company was so anxious to go to the eastern boundaries of its territory before being prepared to put the gas into the fairly thickly populated places nearer home. The only reason I can think of is that there must be larger consumers in the new areas whereas in the other suburbs there are poorer working-class people who do not use as much gas. I hope the Bill will quickly pass through the second reading stage and then be knocked into shape in Committee, so that people in the various districts will have a good supply of gas.

**MR. MAY** (Collie) [8.24]: I have no intention of dealing with the technicalities of the Bill—I realise it is highly technical—but I am rather concerned with that portion which relates to the standards of heating, power, purity and pressure. Under the Bill, the minimum evidently is to be 450 B.T.U. and the maximum 550. I also appreciate that there is provision by which, in certain circumstances, the Minister may vary those standards. What makes me doubtful of what may happen under the Bill is the fact that the Minister in all probability would go for his information to some officer who, I feel, has not been particularly favourable towards Collie coal.

The Minister for Works: There is nothing unfriendly to Collie coal in the Bill.

Mr. MAY: That is to a certain extent true, but I want to make sure of the position of our native fuel. I know that at

the present time we are not in a position to use our native coal because the production is nowhere near the requirements. The Perth City Council produces gas of a standard of 450 to 480 B.T.U.

Mr. Triat: Supposedly!

Mr. MAY: Yes. With the Fox plant, we have been able to get gas from Collie coal of 320 to 340 B/T.U. But I want members to bear in mind that the higher calorific value obtained by the Perth City Council from Newcastle coal has been obtained only by reason of its having been boosted to the extent of nearly three-quarters of a million gallons of oil per year.

The Minister for Works: That is well known.

Mr. MAY: That is so, but the fact remains that no effort has been made to ascertain what calorific value could be derived from Collie coal by similar boosting with oil.

The Minister for Works: Quite so.

Mr. MAY: That is the point I want to make sure about in regard to the Bill. Should not this State make use of its native fuel by a process similar to that adopted by the manager of the Electricity and Gas Department in the treatment of Newcastle coal? Recently, Mr. Edmondson said that he was well aware, 25 years ago, that Collie coal could be gasified. But over that period no effort has been made by him to take advantage of the over-production of Collie coal to ascertain whether, with oil boosting, it could be brought to the same calorific standard as Newcastle coal.

The Minister for Works: There is another agent to be inquired into in addition to oil.

Mr. MAY: That may be, but not one single effort has been made by that gentleman, over that period, to use Collie coal by treating it the same as he has treated Newcastle coal.

The Minister for Works: That, I could not say.

Mr. MAY: I am sure the Minister will be willing to make provision in the Bill whereby some safeguard respecting our native fuel will be furnished. I am serious when I ask the Minister to take some steps in that direction because I feel that over the past 25 years, since Mr. Edmondson first discovered that Collie coal could be gasified, he has made no effort to replace Newcastle coal with our native coal.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: They sacked the man that tried to do it.

Mr. Hoar: What makes you think this Government will do it?

Mr. MAY: I am just hoping, and I feel sure that the Government will at all times give preference to any local product as against the imported article. I am asking now that the Government endeavour to take such action as will ensure that when the time arrives and we have sufficient Collie coal available, that fuel will be used. There will be plenty of time meanwhile to experiment by boosting the native coal with oil similarly to the method adopted at present with Newcastle coal. I hope that every safeguard will be taken in the future when sufficient production is available to use, whenever possible in any direction at all, our native fuel.

**MR. TRIAT** (Mt. Magnet) [8.32]: The member for North-East Fremantle dealt exhaustively with the Bill from a legislative point of view, and discussed meter rents and other essential matters I feel sure consideration will be given to those matters because the object of the Bill is to protect the consumers of gas. It is recognised throughout the world that standards of quality of gas, pressure and prices are essential. Western Australia, which is a small State from the standpoint of the production and use of gas, has passed very little legislation dealing with this problem. Now that the Fremantle Gas and Coke Co. proposes to extend its capitalisation to £250,000, it is for the representatives of the people to ensure that the conditions of supply of quality gas and prices charged shall be well established. As regards the question of meter rents, I must confess I could never understand the position. The custom in Western Australia is to charge meter rents not only for gas but for water supply and lighting.

Hon. A. H. Panton: And for telephones.

Mr. TRIAT: A telephone, of course, is a utility instrument made use of by people in connection with their businesses. The meter rent is charged to protect the producer as against the consumer. That is the object of

installing the meter. I certainly do not think the consumer should be called upon to pay meter rent, any more than the public should be required to pay for the scales in a businessman's premises. As I mentioned before, meters are for the protection of the concern that produces the gas. It is quite different with the telephone. I trust the provision for meter rents will be eliminated. To me it is obnoxious that people should be required to pay such a charge. The main point I want to make refers to the utilisation of Collie coal. I believe the Government has every intention of making Collie coal available for the production of gas when sufficient supplies are available.

The time will come when the coal will be produced in sufficient quantities to meet that objective, but the Bill provides that the calorific value of the gas shall be 450 B.T.U., which puts Collie coal out of the running. Coal of 450 B.T.U. will be used to meet the demand of any concern using 25,000,000 cubic feet of gas, but when the consumption is greater than that, the B.T.U. of the gas will be raised to 550. I do not know why Western Australia should place such a high calorific value upon the gas. The question stressed by the member for North-East Fremantle concerned the quality of gas that is paid for by the consumers there. If they consume a 450 B.T.U. gas, they should not pay the price that is applicable to a 550 gas; and if they get a 350 gas, they should not pay the price for a 450 gas. What they require is a quality gas passing through their pipes with sufficient heating value to enable the people to make proper use of their kitchen utensils. There are many big gas concerns throughout the world that do not operate with gas of a B.T.U. value of 450. I will quote one undertaking in a city that is 18 times as big as Fremantle, and it has a capital of £1,799,738, and its gas is around the 360 B.T.U. mark. If that is good enough for a city as large as that, it should be quite suitable for any town in Western Australia.

The Minister for Works: There must be something about the low calorific value; otherwise all centres would go in for that type of gas.

Mr. TRIAT: I do not know enough about it to express an opinion, because I am not an expert, but I shall quote for the information of the House some undertakings that operate on B.T.U. values 400 and under. They include the following:—

| | Consumers | B.T.U. |
|---|---|---|
| Larne Co., Antrim | 1649 | 400 |
| Dunkald Co., Lough | 2200 | 400 |
| Port Glasgow | 5013 | 375 |
| Kennoway, Fife | 2360 | 340 |
| South Oxfordshire | 631 | 320 |

That information is taken from the "Gas Journal Calendar and Directory," 1946 edition. Next I will quote a privately-owned undertaking in Dublin, Ireland, to which I referred earlier as having a capital of £1,799,738, and which supplies the needs of 119,836 domestic users and 908 industrial users with a gas that has a declared value of 360 B.T.U. per cubic foot. The number of consumers served by this undertaking is four times greater than the consumers who draw from the supply in Perth and 18 times greater than the number of consumers using the Fremantle Gas and Coke Co.'s supply. Yet they get their supply on the basis of 360 B.T.U. as against the higher B.T.U. value in Western Australia. If it is suitable for Dublin, I cannot see why Fremantle should not be brought within the same calorific values. I hope the Government will give that matter consideration.

As time goes on and the Collie fields are fully opened up and production is increased, there will be wonderful opportunities for the use of that product in the expansion of Western Australia and the provision of amenities for the people. It may mean an alteration in the retorting methods adopted, but I cannot express an opinion on that point. I do hope that Collie coal will be used for heating on a basis that will make it available for industrial purposes. I am of opinion that those associated with many industrial activities, such as cake-making, have no desire to use a gas of 550 B.T.U., and one of lower value would be quite suitable. Certainly, it is impossible for such people to pay the higher rate for the quality of gas that is consumed at present, and I trust the Government will look into that phase. My desire is to ensure the utilisation of our native fuel and certainly I do not wish Newcastle coal to be brought to Western Australia when we have plenty of good coal within the State. I am afraid, however, that many of the Minister's advisers have not much sympathy with Collie coal.

As mentioned by other members, it is strange that the possibility of making gas from Collie coal has been within the knowledge of one man in particular but, when the matter was brought forward at a conference of the Gas Panel, I do not know that that person said that he knew of it but, in an article appearing in the Press later on, the statement was made.

Hon. E. Nulsen: But the Fox plant had demonstrated it.

Mr. TRIAT: Yes; when Mr. Fox demonstrated it, then a lot of people seemed to know all about it. Now there are many people who believe that gas can be obtained from Collie coal. With regard to the other parts of the Bill, I would like an explanation regarding some of the machinery clauses. For instance, it is provided that an inspector who is to look into gas matters must have certain qualifications. What are those qualifications? Where will he get the necessary education and training? We should have this information so that we shall be able to determine what qualifications the inspector will require. If the Bill is amended in certain directions, it should prove satisfactory, and I shall then support it.

**MR. FOX** (South Fremantle) [8.42]: The Fremantle Gas and Coke Co.'s undertaking is a public utility and I do not know why it should be owned by a private company at all. All utilities that are of great importance to the people as a whole should not be in the hands of private enterprise. We might as well hand over the railways to private enterprise, but I cannot see members on the other side of the House agreeing to private enterprise taking over the railways. We would never get private enterprise to take over the railways and treat the cockies as they are at present. It would be run as a business proposition in much the same way as the Fremantle Gas and Coke Co. is conducted.

Mr. Leslie: You would not have the railways if it were not for the cockies.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: We would not have them if there were no Government.

Mr. SPEAKER: Let us leave the cockies alone and get back to gas.

Mr. FOX: This concern has reached such a magnitude that, as time goes on, its value will still further increase from the standpoint of goodwill, and the goodwill of anything is created by the presence of the people in the district where the commodity is available. If the people did not exist, the undertaking would not be of any use at all, just in the same way as the owners of public houses are able to charge high rentals for hotels because of the presence of a large population in the respective districts served. The gas company is in exactly the same position. The goodwill is built up by the presence of the people in the district, and I want to see included in the Bill some provision to enable the Minister to fix the value of the plant so that the people, if they so desire, may take it over at a reasonable valuation. Personally, I cannot see any possibility of that at present, owing to the franchise applying in the Fremantle municipal district.

If we could do away with plural voting, there might be some hope of carrying it out. I look forward to the creation of a Greater Fremantle, and when that time comes the vote will be on a better basis because the gas company serves not only Fremantle but as far as Claremont and Palmyra, and also caters for several Government institutions in the Fremantle district and beyond. I know the expense they will incur will be very large. They will have to carry pipes over a big area before they can serve a great many people; but with the member for Fremantle, I believe that we should have something in the Bill to make it obligatory on the company to serve those who are nearly in the heart of Fremantle and who have not gas at present.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: And who have been waiting for years.

Mr. FOX: Yes. I know it is difficult to supply gas at present because the meters and stoves are not available. I do not see that there is any great urgency for this Bill. As far as connecting more houses is concerned and also in the matter of meters, I am in perfect accord with members who have spoken on those aspects. One can have a meter for 40 years and it remains the property of the company, though the householder may have paid for it over and over again. It is the same as renting a house. One can occupy a house for 40 years and pay for it two or three times and then when one is a week behind with the rent it is possible to be thrown out. I support the second reading, but hope that when the

Bill is in Committee we shall be able to make amendments that will be of some service to the suffering gas users of the city of Fremantle.

**HON. A. R. G. HAWKE** (Northam) [8.46]: I would not have spoken on this Bill except for some of the statements made by the Minister when introducing it. I am not so much concerned about what he said as I am about the impression he created in the minds of some members. At the time the Minister made the statement which caused some of the concern, I was reading certain other papers and consequently did not hear what he said. I tried to get him to repeat afterwards, by way of interjection, what he did say, and what he intended to convey, but he refused to co-operate with me.

The Minister for Works: Would you not have refused in similar circumstances?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: So it has been necessary for me to check by other methods available, just what he did say so that I might be in a position to clear the air in regard to what was stated on that occasion by him, and also by me by way of interjections. I think the impression gained by some members from what the Minister said on the point was that this Bill was drafted and approved by me for introduction into Parliament before I left office on the 1st April of this year. However, I have had an opportunity to check what the Minister said, and he certainly did not say that or anything like it. He said, in effect, that the action to initiate this Bill had been taken by me. I have not very much quarrel with that statement except to say that it is not actually correct.

I did not take any action to initiate the introduction of this Bill, or any Bill for that matter, because at the time I left office the stage had not been reached when a Bill was ready for my consideration, let alone consideration by Cabinet. The Minister has been good enough to hand to me the departmental file and I think the air will be cleared completely if I quote from page 48 which contains the minute from the Under Secretary for Works, Mr. Williams, to me and in respect of one paragraph of which I note approval on the file. Here is the minute—

1. The matter of introducing legislation with a view to controlling gas production and establishing standards of gas quality, pressure, apparatus, etc. as well as providing general control throughout the State, has received attention following the receipt of complaints about the quality of gas supplied by the Fremantle Gas and Coke Company under its Statute of 1886

(2) Mr. F. C. Edmondson, Manager of the Electricity and Gas Department of the City of Perth, who is considered to be the most competent to supply helpful and professional advice, has submitted proposals and has conferred with the Solicitor General in the matter of suggesting legislation to bring about the desired effect. Apparently the provisions of the Victorian Gas Regulation Act are such that the new State legislation might readily be modelled on this Statute which appears to cover all of the points likely to arise.

The final paragraph of the minute reads—

(3) I recommend that the Solicitor General be requested to draft a Bill along the lines of the Victorian Act wih such modifications as Mr. Edmondson may suggest, and submit such typewritten draft for your consideration.

It was the last paragraph of the Under Secretary's minute that I approved. So the only approval on the file in my name is an approval that the Solicitor General be requested to draft a Bill along the lines of the Victorian Act, with such modifications as Mr. Edmondson might suggest, and this was to be submitted to me in typewriten form for consideration. That all happened on the 7th March of this year, one week before the general State election, at which the Labour Government was defeated. I did not see any further reports and recommendations or typewritten draft Bills before vacating office on the 1st April. I have no serious complaint to make about what the Minister said on the point, which was that the action to initiate this Bill was taken by me, except to say that no action to initiate this Bill or any particular Bill, was taken by me.

Perhaps it would be more correct to say that no final draft Bill ever came before me for my consideration. Consequently, I was never in the position to consider a final draft Bill, let alone reach the stage where such a Bill might be forwarded to Cabinet with my comments and recommendations as to what type of measure the Government might finally introduce to Parliament, if it did eventually decide to introduce a Bill at all. I think that brief explanation will clear the air and establish in the mind of each

member an exact idea of just what did occur.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am glad the member for Northam—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The second reading has been carried.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: You did not submit the question, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier: Yes, it was carried.

Mr. Marshall: You are in Parliament now. What is the matter with you?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We do not require any advice from you! I apologise to the member for North-East Fremantle. I intended to reply to him.

*In Committee.*

Mr. Brand in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Interpretation:

Mr. TRIAT: Would the Minister tell me the names of the members of the State Electricity Commission?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have not the names before me, but I can quite easily search them out. It is not a question I had anticipated. Mr. Dumas is chairman, and Mr. Edmondson is deputy-chairman, then there is Mr. Lowe, and Mr. Richter, representing the employees, Mr. Goff representing the consumers; and I think there is another one.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Mr. Taylor.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, Mr. Taylor.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: We cannot very well agree to the Electricity Commission appearing in this interpretation clause unless the Minister can tell us who they are. Surely he has come prepared with the names! If Mr. Edmondson is concerned, I take it that he cannot be regarded as an independent person. He is the seller of the product with which this measure deals; yet we are going to say that he is to be on the Commission.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think that the objection is a very foolish one.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Not as foolish as you are!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have now had time to collect the names of the members of the Electricity Commission. They are Messrs. Dumas, Edmondson, Taylor, Goff, Lowe and Richter.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 3 to 7—agreed to.

Clause 8—Power of Commission to inspect works, etc.:

Mr. TRIAT: Can the Minister tell me what qualifications are required under Subclause (2) of this clause?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is not provided in the Bill and it is not in any schedule.

Mr. Triat: It is in the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not saying that the hon. member's question has not substance in the Bill; but as to Subclause (2) this is just a precautionary move to protect the public by ensuring that only a qualified man carries out the inspections. As to what his qualifications might be, I can hardly be expected to be in possession of that information at this juncture, but I will secure it for the hon. member.

Hon. J. B .SLEEMAN: It is no use the Minister supplying the information after the clause has been agreed to. We want the information now, before we pass the clause. I do not think the Minister knows anything about the Bill that he has introduced and, before I agree to passing the clause, I want this information.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 9—Heating power:

Mr. MAY: Is the Minister prepared to comment on my remarks on this clause? I think there should be a safeguard for our native coal.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Members will notice that no coal of any kind is mentioned in the Bill, and none is especially favoured. I naturally favour the local product, but it must first be shown that Collie coal can produce gas as cheaply as can Maitland coal. There is no bias on my part or that of the Commission against Collie coal or its use. When it is proved that Collie coal is suitable, it will be used, provided that the

cost factor is satisfactory. We have now in this State a Fuel Technologist, Mr. Donnelly, who is an expert in this matter. He was instrumental in setting the B.T.U. standard as high as 550. As the member for North-East Fremantle said, in many cases in the Old Country a standard of no higher than 500 is favoured, yet here a technician from the Old Country raises the standard to 550. All that must be done is to keep within the limits of 450 and 550.

Mr. May: Which at present excludes Collie coal.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is so, but the people in the Fremantle area would not be satisfied with a standard below 450.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: This clause touches a vital principle in the use of local products. As the Minister has assured the Committee, the calorific value prescribed in the clause does exclude Collie coal. Anticipating an improved technique and an attempt on the part of the company to provide a commodity of an assured standard, there is a possibility that Collie coal could be used in this or any other gas undertaking in the State.

The Minister for Works: Obviously!

Hon. F. J. S WISE: That could be achieved by a simple amendment, and I would suggest that instead of prescribing that the calorific value shall not be less than 450 B.T.U. gross or more than 550 B.T.U. gross, we should leave the matter open, in case Collie coal can be used in this undertaking upon a better technique being adopted. That would require the clause to read as follows:—

> Every undertaker shall, within 14 days of being or becoming an undertaker to which this Act applies, declare in manner and form prescribed the standard of calorific value of the gas to be supplied by such undertaker, such standard to meet with the approval in writing of the Minister.

If the clause were amended in that way and all reference to a particular calorific value omitted, in future any coal that in the opinion of the Minister, on the advice of his technical officers, was of a standard suitable for the manufacture of gas, could be approved. Would that not be a better approach to the matter?

The Minister for Works: Collie coal is not expressly excluded.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It cannot reach 450 B.T.U.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for Mt. Magnet can probably assure the Chamber that experiments already made with Collie coal show that it is capable of reaching ordinary standards. I understand that under some new process—introduced from Germany, I believe—it can now be made to produce gas of a high calorific value. If I allowed a low standard of gas to be used, it would not be fair to the people of the Fremantle district. After a lengthy investigation of this point, those most competent to decide said it was best to lay down a standard between 450 minimum and 550 maximum. I would not mind tampering with the maximum, but would not lower the minimum and permit gas of an inferior standard to be manufactured.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Collie coal is excluded, as it cannot reach 450 B.T.U.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Every coal is excluded until it reaches the necessary value. If Collie coal is good enough it will qualify, and that applies to all coal.

Mr. MARSHALL: While we have a standard B.T.U. requirement—which I think is essential—the arguments used by representatives of the Fremantle area are to the effect that they desire a higher quality of gas. The member for North-East Fremantle stressed the fact that when an inferior quality of gas was supplied the same price was charged for it. This clause should contain provision that, while we retain this standard, if the gas falls below the prescribed standard the price shall automatically fall accordingly. Then no one could complain, and that would protect Collie coal. I can remember the suggestion that we should use only Collie coal in our railway system. While it is not as good as Newcastle or English coal for the production of steam, we have been able to get along with it and have been very glad to have it available. In time I think the problems associated with it will be solved and we will be able to use nothing but Collie coal. The point is that we shall exclude Collie coal by specifying the high B.T.U. standard.

Mr. STYANTS: In the first place I considered that the Collie coal industry was adequately protected under the clause because discretionary power is given to the

Minister to permit of a gas of lesser calorific value than 450 B.T.U.

The Minister for Works: The application there is to the suppliers.

Mr. STYANTS: I thought that if some undertaker wished to supply gas from Collie coal, the Minister would have discretionary power to say it could be supplied at less than 450 B.T.U. Now, however, the Minister conveys the impression that he will not permit Collie coal to be used until the gas can be brought up to 450 B.T.U. If that is so, I am opposed to the clause. I cannot agree to placing an embargo on Collie coal until it can be brought up to 450 B.T.U. by boosting with foreign oils. I should like the Minister to say whether my original interpretation was correct.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I can see the possibility that the clause as worded might permit of the use of Collie coal of lower value than 450, but that was not the intention. The Minister's discretion is to apply, not to the type of coal out-turned at Collie, but to the calorific value of the gas manufactured by a supplier. There might be a breakdown of machinery or inability to get the best type of coal and the Minister might think it fair to the supplier that the minimum B.T.U. content should be reduced somewhat. That is not quite what is intended, though it could be made to accommodate the point raised by the member for Kalgoorlie. Much depends upon the type of coal used by suppliers. The quality of gas at Fremantle has been unduly low, but I am given to understand that this is due to the quality of coal received from New South Wales. If we deliberately use Collie coal before it has qualified for use for gas-making purposes, we shall lower the standard generally and get a somewhat low quality gas. I prefer to include the use of Collie coal, but first of all it needs to justify itself.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I should like the three legal gentlemen on the Government bench to examine this clause and I think they will agree with the interpretation of the member for Kalgoorlie. My reading of the clause is that unless the Minister gives approval, the calorific value must not be less than 450 B.T.U., but that, with the approval of the Minister in writing, it may be less. The point should be clarified.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: The proof of the pudding is in the eating. The Minister implied that if Collie coal were used, we would have inferior gas. Nothing could be worse than the gas we are getting at present. Good gas can be made from Collie coal. I saw a demonstration at Midland Junction and was amazed at the results. A kettle of water was boiled in eight minutes, which an expert said was one minute quicker than could be obtained with Perth gas. If Collie coal can give such results, there can be no objection to its being used. Collie seems to be able to produce coal for gas that can boil a kettle and do the cooking better than can imported coal. We do not mind so long as we get gas of good quality.

The Minister for Works: On behalf of the Fremantle people, you are prepared to take the risk?

Mr. MAY: Is the Minister prepared to safeguard a State industry by making the requisite provision in the Bill? The amendment indicated by the Leader of the Opposition would meet the circumstances and I appeal to the Minister to accept it. This is the only opportunity we shall have to legislate for this commodity. The Minister has gone a long way round in his explanation, but has not indicated a readiness to provide any safeguard for gas made from Collie coal. I would be prepared to move the amendment indicated by the Leader of the Opposition.

The Minister for Works: No amendment is necessary, according to the member for Kalgoorlie.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The Minister said it was.

Mr. MAY: I hope the Leader of the Opposition will move the amendment.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: If the interpretation of the member for Kalgoorlie is correct, there will be no need for the amendment.

The Minister for Works: I agree.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Yes, but the Minister does not include the possibility of Collie coal being used.

The Minister for Works: I have said that that was not the intention and I admit faulty drafting.

Hon F. J. S. WISE: Does the clause mean that the Minister may approve of a lesser standard that would include Collie coal?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I am firmly convinced in my own mind that the view expressed by the member for Kalgoorlie on this clause is the correct one. I took some interest in the question because I wanted to make sure that the possibilities of the development of gas from Collie coal would not be made over-difficult by this measure. In consequence, I discussed the matter with the Director of Industrial Development and with the Fuel Technology Bureau. They suggested certain amendments which have been incorporated in the measure. They were quite certain, however, that the clause as it stood was satisfactory for the future prospects of gas from Collie coal when the necessity arose. I take it their satisfaction was derived from the interpretation, with which I certainly agree, that if the worst came to the worst and the circumstances warranted it, the Minister was given discretion to declare that 450 B.T.U's need not be maintained. I have no doubt about it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I agree with the explanation given by the Minister for Education; but clearly that explanation was not in accordance with the intention when the clause was drafted.

The Minister for Works: You are quite right.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN:: The marginal note shows that this clause was derived from the New South Wales legislation, and there the important point is that this discretionary power is reposed in the Minister for the benefit of consumers and nobody else. We have to consider two points: Whether the discretion will be used to the advantage of the consumers or to the advantage of the producers of coal. The point does not arise in New South Wales, because in that State there is a satisfactory standard of coal of a high B.T.U. value. The point there is that the consumer shall get good quality gas. Here we are concerned with two matters: The consumers' interest and the State's interest, insofar as these are involved in the production of coal.

The discretion given by this clause will depend entirely upon the view which the Minister takes of the two interests. If he administers this clause and has uppermost in mind the interest of the consumers, then he will not exercise his discretion in favour of gas undertakings which want to declare a standard less than 450 B.T.U. But if he has the interest of the Collie coalfields in mind, then he can exercise his discretion in their favour. There are two points to be considered: First, the gas undertaker shall declare his standard of calorific value, which shall be not less than 450 B.T.U's, unless the Minister gives approval. The second is that, having declared a standard of calorific value, that standard can subsequently be altered if the Minister agrees.

I can imagine that a gas company which was desirous of using Collie coal would say to the Minister, "The declared standard will not permit of the use of Collie coal because we have declared 450 B.T.U's; but we have evolved a process which will enable us to supply a satisfactory gas from Collie coal, although it will not reach 450 B.T.U. We therefore suggest that you approve of an alteration of our declaration to enable us to use Collie coal of 400 B.T.U. instead of 450." Under the clause the Minister could exercise his discretion in that way. It is clear that that was not intended, because the New South Wales Act, upon which this Bill is based, provides—

> The standard of heating power of the gas supplied by a gas company shall be not less than 550 B.T.U's. gross, provided that if the Minister is satisfied that it would be to the advantage of persons supplied with gas by a gas company, he may by notification published in the "Gazette" vary the standard.

Consequently it is clear that the New South Wales Legislature had in mind the interests of the gas consumers and nobody else. Here there will be a conflict between the interests of the consumers and the interests of the producers. No-one would urge that we should force gas companies to use Collie coal before the technique was sufficiently developed to enable gas to be economically derived from that coal. If, through scientific investigation and experience, it becomes possible economically to use Collie coal for gasification, then, even although it involves a lower standard than 450 B.T.U's, we ought to agree to an alteration of the standard, but that brings us again to the point with which I was dealing tonight, and that is that people should get the gas they pay for. If the Minister had included a provision in the Bill that the price shall be

fixed, then upon any alteration of the calorific value of the gas there would automatically be an alteration in the price. We have no guarantee of that as the Bill stands. I agree that the Minister may, under the Bill, use his discretion in any way he desires to admit the use of Collie coal or to exclude it, according to which interest he wished to benefit.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for North-East Fremantle has got on to the problem which has been worrying me, whether I shall oblige the collieries or the greater number, that is, the consumers of gas. We have had several spokesmen from Fremantle who are perhaps more entitled to be heard on this subject than other members. One has expressed himself in precisely the same terms as I did a little while ago in answer to the member for Kalgoorlie. I would very much like Fremantle members, one after the other, to declare precisely where they stand as to the line which they consider should be taken, as it might influence my attitude. As soon as I strike a technical subject of this kind, which is beyond my competency to solve, I vastly prefer to consult our own technical officers before reaching a decision.

My natural leaning is towards Collie coal if that can be used, but it must be satisfactory for the purpose. The member for Mt. Magnet has a greater knowledge than I have of this matter and knows that much research has taken place in connection with Collie coal and its gasification properties. I understand certain experiments have been made within the last couple of months or so but I am not sure of the result, although I have been told on a number of occasions that Collie coal now permits of the production of gas up to, and slightly over on occasions, 450 B.T.U. If any member has more information on the subject than I have, I shall be glad to hear it; otherwise my inclination is towards the clause as it stands.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I feel there is a possibility of the use of Collie coal being cut out. That is something to which I am entirely opposed. I would prefer an amendment on the lines suggested by the member for Murchison, namely, that consumers should pay for the B.T.U. value.

Mr. MARSHALL: Let us forget Collie coal for a moment It is obvious that the Minister did not have Collie coal in mind when the Bill was drafted. Provision is made by this clause for a standard quality of gas to be supplied on a declaration by the supplier. There may be two or more suppliers and each might be using the same class of coal; but, on the other hand, one supplier may be using coal of a certain quality and the others a different coal. Therefore they would make declarations that the calorific value of the coal was anywhere between the minimum of 450 and the maximum of 550 B.T.U. The point made by the member for North-East Fremantle was that the quality of coal might fall far below that originally specified when the price of the gas was fixed by the supplier. In other words, the company might let the standard fall to 415 B.T.U. and charge the same price as if it were 450 B.T.U. But according to the member for North-East Fremantle it fell much below that, but they still paid the old price.

The original intention of the clause was to get a minimum value for a given standard. Even imported coal varies in quality. It seems to me, from the statements made by the hon. member, that the objection by the consumer is not so much to the quality of the gas as it is to the fact that he has to pay the price fixed on a standard of 450 B.T.U. when he is getting gas of a calorific value of less than 200 B.T.U. We can now bring Collie coal back into the argument. Let us assume that that coal will give us all a surprise in the course of time and will conform to the minimum standard provided here. But irrespective of the gas it produced, the Minister could fix a price which would vary automatically with the calorific value of the gas supplied.

The member for North-East Fremantle does not get anywhere with this clause, and neither will the consumers in his electorate benefit from it. It is of no use saying there shall be a minimum standard, and then drop below it. They will still be paying, until an inspector discovers that it has fallen below the minimum, the price fixed for gas of 450 B.T.U. To overcome the difficulty, the Minister ought to report progress and consult his experts. They are the men who know. The price should be fixed automatically so that when the gas falls below the

standard, the undertaker must reduce the price. If that were done, we need not fear any quality coal.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for North-East Fremantle and the member for Murchison have brought the cost factor into the question. We agree that it is important. The member for North-East Fremantle thought we had no means of controlling the price of gas. I understand, without being too sure, that the price of gas in Western Australia is controlled by the Deputy Prices Commissioner. If it is not, or if the Federal law ceases to operate, we can control it by Section 11 of the Profiteering Prevention Act. The definition of "commodity" in that Act, includes "firewood or other fuel" and also these words—

> Any public utility, and in particular without limiting the generality of this expression, the supply of light, heat, and power.

That, without any doubt, embraces the price of the commodity now under discussion. The member for North-East Fremantle is competent to take action under this particular statute if the price gives dissatisfaction to those who consume the gas. The member for Murchison suggested that I might report progress. The Minister for Education has some information which will obviate the need for doing that.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I was firmly convinced from discussions with departmental officers that the difficulty with regard to Collie coal would not arise under this clause. I was of that opinion because Collie coal is capable of being lifted to such a British thermal unit as is mentioned in this measure. However, I was not prepared, without checking the matter to say so earlier this evening.

I took the opportunity of communicating with the Director of Industrial Development, who has been closely following this business and who is well versed in this very technical matter. He informed me a few moments ago that the standard of 450 to 550 B.T.U. appearing in the Bill is there at the suggestion of the Fuel Technologist, because there is no difficulty whatever, providing the necessary implements and plant are available, about boosting Collie coal to that extent. It can be enriched with methane, which is a German process as mentioned by the Minister for Works. There is the question of providing the means for doing it and the need for ascertaining whether it can be done economically, but technically it offers no difficulty whatever at the present juncture. It would, however, certainly be undesirable to supply, either for domestic or industrial purposes, gas which was less and continually less than 450 B.T.U.

Mr. May: Why is that?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Because it would not provide the necessary heat to make it economical to be produced and sold. The heat it would provide would be so much less than that which could be economically expected that it is unlikely it would be desirable, except possibly in some small centres.

Mr. May: Would the Newcastle coal reach that standard without being boosted with oil?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: It has to be boosted, but not to the same extent. The point I want to clear up is that there is no reason why the provision in this measure referring to B.T.U. limits of 450 to 550 should prevent the use of Collie coal in the future.

Mr. TRIAT: I am dumbfounded to hear the Minister for Education make that statement! He got his information from Mr. Fernie. He said that with low-grade gas we could not get heat.

The Minister for Education: No. Gas of 330 B.T.U. would not produce as much heat as gas of 400 B.T.U.

Mr. TRIAT: Mr. Fernie's information must be incorrect because the State Engineering Works at Midland Junction, with a gas of less than 300 B.T.U. produced a temperature of 1410 degrees Centigrade, and melted steel.

The Minister for Education: That was not for ordinary domestic use.

Mr. TRIAT: The Bill mentions 450 B.T.U.

The Minister for Education: I was referring to ordinary domestic use.

Mr. TRIAT: It is nonsense. Mr. Fernie never saw the plant operating at Midland Junction. I am not at all disturbed as long as we use Collie coal. The member for Fremantle said that gas made from Collie coal boiled a kettle one minute quicker than did the Perth town gas. It raised the temperature in a stove to 650 degrees Farenheit in five minutes, which is 250 degrees too hot to

cook anything. With a 50 per cent. turn of the cock it held 450 degrees Farenheit consistently, which again is too hot. Yet that gas is no good to the Fremantle people or the Perth people. It is no good because it cannot be utilised with the rotten plants we have. They are antiquated. They came here in the nineteenth century. Only a portion of the coal is converted into gas; the balance goes to coke. We import 750,000,000 gallons of oil from America to boost our gas.

The Minister for Education: No oil is mentioned in my suggestion.

Mr. TRIAT: This Bill will apply to the Perth City Electricity and Gas Department as well as to Fremantle.

The Minister for Education: I did not mention boosting Collie coal with oil.

Mr. TRIAT: It has to be boosted with tar, or something else. The calorific value is not in Collie coal, and it is not in Newcastle coal either. Why does not the Minister confer with experts like Mr. Donnelly?

The Minister for Education: The Bill was referred to him.

Mr. TRIAT: I would take some notice of him because I believe he is an expert. I do not care what is done, so long as a good class of gas is produced. The suggestion of the member for North-East Fremantle is sound. If we have to pay so much for gas of 500 B.T.U. we should pay proportionately less for gas of 450 B.T.U. The price should be graduated. I do not know sufficient about gas to argue with the Minister, but when he gets advice from his technical officers he should be in a position to make the situation clear.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I move—

That progress be reported.

Motion put and negatived.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Earlier in the discussion on the clause, the Minister gave the Committee to understand that unless Collie coal, or any other coal, could in the production of gas, reach the 450 B.T.U. minimum, such coal could not possibly be used under the Bill if it became an Act. In the subsequent debate, it was shown very clearly that the discretion given to the Minister in the clause will enable a lower standard to be declared. Now the Minister for Industrial Development, in his latest speech, tells us that Collie coal, with the application of modern methods, will produce a gas that will have no difficulty in reaching the minimum of 450 B.T.U. If all that be so, then I would like to have some explanation, either from the Minister for Works or the Minister for Industrial Development, of why the Minister, under the proposed legislation, is to be given discretionary power to declare a lower minimum standard than 450 B.T.U.

Is it proposed to give this discretion to the Minister to meet a period of possible emergency, or is it proposed to give him this power to meet a very small town gas supply where it is considered it would be quite in order to establish a lower minimum standard than 450 B.T.U.? Unless some clear-cut explanation can be given of why the Minister should have this discretion, it seems to me that the Committee is getting more confused the longer this debate goes on. I hope I am not adding to the confusion, but there have been contradictory arguments put forward from the Ministerial bench.

The Minister for Education: They were hardly contradictory.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The Minister for Works was contradicting himself, because at one stage he said that no coal from Collie or anywhere else could be used to produce gas unless it reached the minimum B.T.U.

The Minister for Works: You are only partly correct when you put it that way.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I am sorry I am only partly correct, but I have a clear impression of what the Minister argued at the time. Subsequently, it was solidly established that the Minister had, under the clause, discretion to establish a standard that could be lower than 450 B.T.U. The Minister for Industrial Development has told us very emphatically that Newcastle coal has no difficulty in reaching this minimum in the gas it produces, and that Collie coal will have no difficulty in reaching this minimum in the gas it produces. If all that be true, I now want to know why the Minister will require to have a discretion to enable him to declare a lower standard than 450 B.T.U., when, if we take notice of what has been said by the Minister for Industrial Development, both Newcastle and Collie coal will have no difficulty in reaching the standard for gas

set out in the clause. If the Minister still requires this discretionary power to meet a possible emergency, or to meet a situation that might arise in a very small town which establishes production to supply gas to the consumers, that might be the explanation for it. However, until the Minister explains it very clearly, I think, in view of what the Minister for Industrial Development said, we have some cause to be a bit confused about the whole business.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It will be obvious to the member for Northam that the information supplied by the Minister for Industrial Development could not possibly have had any bearing upon the construction of this Bill, because it was but ten minutes or so ago that he went to the telephone and got some special information from a source that has been mentioned, so that we now, with reasonable certainty, know that Collie coal will lend itself to the production of a high-quality gas by the use of some recently discovered method. The hon. member wished to know also just exactly those occasions when I would be required to use my discretion as to whether it would be desirable to lower the standard of 450 B.T.U.

Mr. Triat: What would be the price paid then?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: In the case of Perth, that is hardly likely to be necessary, and I should say with some certainty that when the Fremantle Gas Company's new buildings and plant are available, the position will be improved. When that plant is installed and is in proper running, it is not anticipated by anyone that they will be able easily to raise the minimum of 450 B.T.U. There are two other companies which come under the Act, and that number may increase. At present there are Geraldton and Albany. Their plant and means of getting coal of good quality are not as favourable as in the case of the other two, and discretion would have to be used in the case of those if and when their consumption should go beyond 25,000,000 units for any particular year. I do not know exactly what circumstances might crop up over the years that would require the exercise of discretion, but I have named the quality of coal, and now mention the smaller supplying units. Obviously, I have discretion allowed to me to reduce the standard for any reason that appeals to me as being sensible.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: The more we discuss the matter, the more confused we appear to be. I gave members an opportunity to get out of the difficulty in order that they might secure expert evidence. The Minister for Works can get it, because the Government has experts. He said that Collie coal could not go beyond 350 B.T.U.

The Minister for Works: Who said that?

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: The Minister himself said it earlier in the discussion. I do not think the Minister knows what he says, half the time. Then the Minister for Industrial Development told us that, in the opinion of experts, there would be no trouble in getting over 450 B.T.U. It does not matter whether it is 350 or 450 or 550, so long as it will do the job. People want gas that will enable them to cook and, when I saw the demonstration, the coal produced more heat than is provided by gas in Perth. We should report progress to enable some expert advice to be obtained. If we could hear the Minister for Lands he might give us another version.

Mr. MAY: Could the Minister inform the Committee the value of Newcastle coal without its being boosted with oil? That would give the Committee some idea of its value in relation to Collie coal.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This is a technical question and I have not the information at hand to reply, although I could easily obtain it. Newcastle coal, I understand, lends itself to treatment by means of oil to a vastly greater degree than does Collie coal, which is a brown coal.

Mr. STYANTS: Those members who are afraid, first, of Collie coal being left out are protected by the wording of the clause. They are protected on the second point by the information of the expert quoted by the Minister for Education. Mr. Fernie is of the opinion that Collie coal can be boosted up to the necessary B.T.U. standard. I understand from the Fremantle members that they are not particularly concerned about the high calorific value of the gas provided, but they are concerned at being charged for a 450 B.T.U. standard when they are only receiving 350 B.T.U.. I do

not think we can deal with the price of gas in this clause. The price, if asked for today, will be useless unless there is some means of adjusting it later. It might be too generous in 12 months or it might be insufficient. Perhaps provision could be made for the price in some later part of the Bill or in the measure which the member for North-East Fremantle is proposing to introduce.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 10—agreed to.

Clause 11—Pressure:

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I would like the Minister to explain this clause.

The Attorney General: It is the plainest clause in the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I face a hopeless position. I do not know any more about it than does the member for Fremantle, which is saying as much as a man can say. All I can add is that the clause is necessary. There is no sense whatever in having high quality pure gas if there is insufficient pressure to allow it to burn in the consumer's apparatus.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It seems to me that the Committee has reached the stage at which progress should be reported. The Minister has indicated that he cannot give the information asked for tonight, but would he ascertain why he sets out in the Bill the minimum standard of pressure which is provided for in Queensland and New South Wales only for other than the peak period? The New South Wales legislation provides for a pressure capable of sustaining a 2 in. column of water between the hours of 5 a.m. and 9 p.m. and 1½ in. between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m., obviously allowing for a low pressure during the time the peak load is off. The Queensland legislation is similar, although there is a difference of an hour. It provides for the balancing of a column of water of 2 in. between 5 a.m. and 10 p.m. and 1½ in. between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. This Bill provides for a constant pressure over the whole 24 hours, a pressure that in New South Wales and Queensland is required only for the middle of the night, when very few private consumers would be using gas.

Progress reported.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1947-48.

*In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the 6th November; Mr. Perkins in the chair.

*Vote—Police, £390,623* (partly considered):

**MR. STYANTS** (Kalgoorlie) [10.20]: In introducing the Estimates of the Police Department, the Minister outlined the strength of the Police Force and the per capita cost to the State, which I think is particularly low at 12s. 7d. When we realise that the police protection in this State is only one in 814 of the population, we have reason to congratulate ourselves on being a particularly law-abiding community. There are many countries in which a much stronger force is required to maintain law and order. I think that generally the work done by the Police Force is to be commended. It would compare favourably with that of similar bodies anywhere in the world. I have been in the Eastern States and cannot help but contrast the position there with that which exists here. In some of the eastern States, at all events, the police do not receive the appreciation of, or assistance from, the public in the detection of crime which is given in this State; and I think that the remarkably good work performed by our police is responsible for the high esteem in which they are held by our people.

The lectures by police officers in the schools, which were commenced some years ago, comprise, to my way of thinking, a commendable portion of their duties. Such contact does away with the old bogey that so many parents used to raise with refractory children whom they told that the policeman would be after them, thus terrifying them. These lectures bring about a certain amount of desirable friendship between the police and the children in addition to imparting considerable information of value to the youngsters. The broadcasts given by the A.B.C. to schools—though this does not come particularly under the Police Department—are of great advantage. The children are taught respect for the law and warned against vandalism and cruelty to animals. The police, acting along those lines, do great work. I do not know wheth-

er this is done by the police, but I think that one of the matters that could be taken into consideration by them when they are visiting the schools, is the exhibition of all types of explosives likely to be picked up by children, particularly detonators, with which people are careless.

Only within the last fortnight two boys on their way to cricket practice early in the morning, picked up a detonator with a fuse attached, and although they lived in a mining community, they did not recognise what it was. They tried a match on it, with the result that one boy had three fingers shattered, and the fingers had ultimately to be amputated. If the police could exhibit in the schools all classes of explosives likely to be dangerous, the children would be given some idea of the folly of handling them and would be able to recognise them should they pick any up in the street.

A feature of the police report that struck me this time—it is something that I had not noticed before—was the indication it contained that the females of the community are much more law-abiding than the males. We find that of those apprehended and summoned, males comprise 94.01 per cent. and the females 5.99 per cent. Here are some of the offences listed—

| Offences | Males | Females |
|---|---|---|
| Offences against the person | 89.68 | 10.32 |
| Offences against property | 93.84 | 6.16 |
| Forgery and offences against currency .. | 83.33 | 16.67 |

The report sets out the whole of the charges coming within the legal category and shows that the females are much more law-abiding than the males. That may be something for our sociologists to inquire into with a view to ascertaining the reason. Personally I think it is better not to enact a law at all than to pass one and then not police it because, if laws are not enforced, contempt for them is engendered in the mind of the public, which is not a satisfactory state of affairs. The principal matter with which I wish to deal under this Vote relates to traffic. Parking seems to be one of the major problems with which the police have to deal in the city. I have often tried to secure a definition of parking.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It has varying definitions.

Mr. STYANTS: There is parking of motor vehicles and parking of human beings, which I think is somewhat different. I have been told it is. I have looked into the Act to see if I could find a definition of the term, but was not successful. It is very confusing to drivers of vehicles not to know exactly what the term means. Does stopping for five minutes in the street, or overstaying the 15 minutes, provided a driver is sitting in the vehicle, constitute a breach of the parking regulations? I think it might be as well if a definition were obtained from the Police Department. With regard to business vehicles, a man driving a delivery lorry for a firm has to carry certain goods to a given place in the city. He frequently has to park his vehicle a long distance from the point of delivery of the goods; and even working at top pressure, he finds that more than the 15 minutes allowed are required. Yet the police frequently take action against these men and they are fined in the courts. I think that is unfair. Where it can be shown that a person has to deliver goods and has not loafed away his time in doing so, no prosecution should be launched.

There has been a considerable improvement in the parking space owing to the vigilance of the police in taking action against those monopolising the available area for hours on end. I believe that if the parking regulations were strictly enforced in the city block, it would be possible to allow a parking time of 30 minutes, instead of 15, and there would not be any congestion. Until three months ago there was severe congestion owing to certain persons leaving their cars for a considerable period in the places with a restricted parking time. It was almost impossible for other people to find a spot to leave their vehicles while they conducted business transactions, and they frequently had to drive around the city block two or three times to find an opening from which somebody had just withdrawn. Under the conditions now existing, it would be possible to increase the parking period to 30 minutes instead of 15 minutes, and it would give a person some opportunity to do a certain amount of business. The period of 15 minutes is totally inadequate. One scarcely gets into the place of business before having to leave to move the vehicle.

The Minister might see the Commissioner and ascertain whether he can keep the place reasonably clear and at the same time provide an allowance of 30 instead of 15 min-

utes. The police have dealt with jaywalking in the last six months, and there has been a definite improvement. There has been formed in this State, for some time, what is known as the National Safety Council. I have noticed that there has been a considerable amount of hoarding and newspaper advertising undertaken by that council. Funds are provided by the Commonwealth Government for the National Safety Council throughout Australia, and in my opinion there are many hoardings and much advertising which represent just so much waste money. I have seen big hoardings of about 10 feet square alongside a road where it would be almost impossible, or at least highly inadvisable for the driver of a motor vehicle to read them because of the traffic.

I do not suppose that one motorist in 500 reads the big advertisements which appear in nearly all the newspapers, and which cost so much. In any case, it is my conviction that all the posters and advertising in the world will not influence the type of driver we want to influence. Such steps will not have any effect on the reckless and dangerous driver. Unless a hoarding is put up at a turn in the road, we will not get even the careful motorist to observe it. The only type of driver that the newspaper advertisements or hoardings will influence is the man who generally does not need to be influenced at all—the careful type. If the money spent on this advertising were used for the purpose of putting more police patrols on the road and imposing severer penalties for offences against the traffic laws, it would have a more salutary effect on reckless and dangerous drivers.

The great drawback, as far as the council is concerned, is that it has no disciplinary but only persuasive powers. I hope that more patrols will be put on the road. I believe the average dangerous, reckless or drunken driver can only be got at through his pocket, and by punishing him severely for his offence. It is of no use appealing to him through posters or newspaper advertising. I noticed that in August last Mr. Rodriguez issued a warning from the bench. He was acting as coroner and said that in the six months he had been so acting, he had sat on approximately 100 inquests, the majority of which were caused by traffic accidents. He gave the warning that he would have to impose much heavier penalties if the rate continued. Unfortunately, the rate has continued.

It would be no great exaggeration to say that the dead and injured of our people are very often strewn across the roads. During the war period, 1939-1945, there were more people killed and injured in Australia in road accidents than there were by enemy action. From 1939 to 1945 there were 9,013 killed and 13,328 injured. For the year ended June, 1947, there were 1,266 killed and 26,247 injured in Australia. These figures represent a colossal amount of damage not only to the people concerned, but material damage. One has only to go into the casualty ward of the Royal Perth Hospital to get some idea of the amount of suffering, and the cost to the people of this State. Some of those involved in these accidents are crippled for life, and many of the accidents could have been avoided with a little care. In some cases the trouble has been caused by mechanical defects which, perhaps, could not be avoided.

If we take the number of accidents in the metropolitan area for the 12 months ended June of this year, we find that there were 6,161, which is at the rate of 118 per week, or 17 per day. In that number there were 64 persons killed and 665 injured. It would be hard to estimate just what the material costs were, but if we take each life lost, at a conservative estimate of £1,000 value to the State, we find that we have lost in human life an amount of £64,000. If we take the amount of material damage done in the 6,161 accidents and we assume that 561 of them were accidents involving damage to only one vehicle, that leaves 5,600 where two vehicles were concerned. The insurance department of the Royal Automobile Club estimates that the average damage in car accidents is £25 per vehicle. Taking that estimate we get an annual cost of approximately £140,000 to £150,000. In addition to the cost of repairing these vehicles, there is the loss in production while they are out of working order.

We find, according to the police report, that there were 63 male and only one female driver involved in these accidents. Allowing for the much greater percentage of male drivers, it will be found that even in civilian life, the same as was the experience in the Army, the females are equally as competent

as and much more careful drivers than the males.

Mr. Triat: They are generally more sober.

Mr. STYANTS: Yes, and that certainly has a bearing on it. I come now to the matter of drunken drivers. I have stated many times in this Chamber that, in my opinion, any drunken driver is a potential killer. He is a menace not only to himself but to all other users of the road. Some of the most inadequate penalties are inflicted by the courts. I remember, not so very long ago that a man, who pleaded guilty in Fremantle to driving a vehicle whilst under the influence of liquor, was fined the amazing sum of £1. There was a still more ridiculous case in Kalgoorlie, where two brothers went on the spree. They admitted being under the influence of alcohol and having resisted arrest, but when brought before the court they were let off with a caution.

In a Perth court recently a dangerous and reckless motorist, who had been pursued by the police over a number of city intersections at a speed of 50 miles an hour, was fined £5. It must be very disheartening to the police in a case of that kind, when the magistrate inflicts such a small fine, and it is not doing justice to the public of the State. I was struck by the recommendation and comments of the Commissioner of Police on drunken drivers. In his annual report he suggested that the law should be altered to provide for the automatic cancellation of the driver's license, in the case of a drunken driver, for a much longer period than is at present provided. I recently asked in this House what the Government intended to do about the matter, and the Attorney General replied that it is receiving the attention of the Government. I hope something will be done, as it is only by strict measures being taken and adequate penalties being provided that we will clean up the chaotic condition of our traffic in the metropolitan area.

Some indication of the attitude adopted by magistrates towards such offenders was given recently when in Perth—within the last month—a magistrate sympathised with a man charged with drunken driving—his second offence within a short time—because he was compelled by law to cancel the man's license for a given period. It does not matter whether the cancellation of the license means depriving a drunken driver of his livelihood. For a pedestrian or other member of the public it is often not a matter of livelihood, but of life and death. It is beyond me why a magistrate should exhibit any sympathy towards such an offender. Earlier in this session I asked some questions regarding accidents in which taxi cars had been involved in the metropolitan area during the previous 12 months. It had been suggested to me, by one of the traffic police, that the information might be illuminating.

I asked how many accidents involving taxi cars had occurred in the metropolitan area for the year ended the 30th June, 1947, and the answer was 482. I asked what percentage of the number registered was represented by the above figure, and the answer was 152.25. In effect that would mean that each taxi car operating in the metropolitan area is involved, on an average, in one and a half accidents every twelve months. I then asked what was the percentage of privately-owned motorcars involved in accidents in the metropolitan area over the same period, and the answer was 18.47. While it is admitted that taxi cars are on the roads for greater periods and do a greater mileage per vehicle than do the privately-owned cars, it does not establish the fact that there is any fair relationship between the percentage of 152.25 for taxi cars and 18.47 for private cars.

I asked how many prosecutions for speeding had been instituted against taxi drivers in the metropolitan area over the same period, and the answer was 31. I say, without fear of successful contradiction, that we could get 31 prosecutions against taxi drivers in Perth in 24 hours. Members who drive cars round the metropolitan area—as I do—know that the greatest offenders against our speeding and other traffic laws are taxi drivers. They weave in and out of the traffic and cut street corners on the wrong side of the road. In my opinion, they are the greatest offenders against the traffic laws in the metropolitan area and I am at a loss to know why the police were able to institute only 31 prosecutions against them in 12 months. While the police are prepared to allow taxi drivers to do that sort of thing, they will keep on doing it.

One frequently sees in the Press where a taxi car has been involved in an accident, and I believe the police should be given to

understand that they must not adopt the attitude that there is one law for hire vehicles and another for private motorists' vehicles. That is the only interpretation that I can put on the present state of affairs—one law for the taxi driver and another for the private motorist. Many of the trivial charges against motor drivers do not involve the safety of other road users or pedestrians, but taxi drivers jeopardise the safety of both these classes of people. I hope that in future the police will exercise stricter supervision over taxi drivers than they have up to the present. If more police patrols were put on the roads—I know the Commissioner intends to have more patrols as soon as he can get the motor cycles—that would be a great deterrent to those who are constantly breaking the traffic laws. I come now to mechanical defects.

I have been impressed by the number of occasions on which drivers, involved in accidents, plead that there was something wrong with the steering gear, or some other mechanical defect. Whether such pleas are correct to the extent contended, I do not know, but in all types of vehicles there are latent defects that are not known to the driver and which, as a layman, he could not detect. No doubt they are responsible for a certain proportion of accidents. According to the report of the Commissioner of Police, about 123 persons applied for drivers' licenses and were refused on account of defective eyesight but, with the use of spectacles, they were able to pass the requisite test and were granted a license. As one who worked in an occupation where perfect eyesight was essential, and where the vehicle was running on a set track, I can speak from experience.

Locomotive drivers have to pass an examination every two years and are not permitted to wear spectacles while at work. If a driver cannot see certain coloured flags and lights at distances up to 500 yards, he is taken off the footplate on the ground that his sight is defective. It is impossible to see clearly with glasses when they become clouded with steam and fog. In my opinion, not only the spectacles of the driver but also the windscreen and windows of a sedan car become clouded from the breaths of the passengers on a cold night. I am doubtful whether a lot of road accidents are not caused through defective vision in drivers and the fact of their wearing glasses that become blurred.

I am pleased that the Minister has taken up the matter of the overloading of motor vehicles. This has been occurring for many years and before the war the authorities were taking action. A man with a 30-cwt. truck would often carry a 3-ton load, thereby evading the payment of the correct license fee. Now that there are vehicles on the road carrying very heavy loads, I observe that the Minister recently issued a warning of the intention to start a campaign against those carrying eight or nine tons over the registered capacity and thus causing damage to bridges and road surfaces.

The only other question I wish to deal with is related to accidents, and that is the matter of motor headlight regulations. If the brakes of a motor vehicle give a retarding force equal to about 40 per cent. of the weight of the vehicle, they are regarded as satisfactory. If they give a retarding effect of 50 per cent., they are classified as good. Cars with good brakes—that is, with 50 per cent. retarding effect—will stop in certain distances at certain speeds. There are different sets of official figures that vary a few feet one way or the other, but the figures I propose to give have been taken out by an expert. The following are the figures:—

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Car speed 20 (miles) | 25 | 30 | 35 | 40 |
| Stopping distance 27(ft.) | 42 | 60 | 82 | 107 |

The reaction of the average driver from the time of seeing danger to his first application of the brakes occupies 1.02 seconds, and the stopping distances are—

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Car speed 20 (miles) | 25 | 30 | 35 | 40 |
| Stopping distance 56(ft.) | 79 | 105 | 134 | 167 |

Thus it is clear that the headlights must show at least 167 feet in front of the car. There are many drivers, however, whose reaction is much slower than the average of 1.02 seconds. They would take probably 1½ seconds, which would be equal to 200 feet at 40 m.p.h. Traffic officials who have made a study of this matter say that the headlights should show objects clearly at 200 feet in advance of the car. Under the local traffic regulations gazetted in August, 1936, the top of the main beam of light must be not higher than three feet at 75 feet ahead of the car. A car is permitted to travel on country roads at a speed of 40 miles an hour, and the stopping distance is 167 feet, but if a driver is observing the headlight regulations, his headlamps, three feet high, will throw a beam not more than

75 feet in front of the car, and that beam will hit the road long before the possible stopping distance of 167 feet is reached.

This fact is recognised by most people, particularly officials of the R.A.C., who erect warning signs on the roads—cat's eye signals—because they are placed at a greater height than three feet from the ground. Had this not been done, the cat's eye signals would be useless. The regulations of 1936 quoted "the main beam of light," but no definition of the term was given, and, owing to its indefiniteness, a considerable amount of confusion has been created. On the 18th November, 1938, another regulation was promulgated, which altered "the main beam" to "any beam of light." It is known to those who have studied headlighting arrangements that there is not a set of headlights in this State that conforms to the regulations.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: And if they do, they are dangerous.

Mr. STYANTS: Yes. They do not conform to the regulations because every lamp sends its rays of light almost vertically. According to the regulations, at 75 feet, with the lights three feet above the ground, it is impossible to keep the beam down because the ray is thrown upwards. Some alteration should be made in the headlighting regulations because a lot of accidents are caused through glaring headlights.

There should be a regulation making compulsory the use of a dipping device, either down or sideways to the left, on every motor vehicle. Quite a number of vehicles have a dipping device, though it is not compulsory, and quite a number have none. In New Zealand, a regulation was promulgated in 1939 requiring a dipping device of four inches in every 10 feet, and that regulation has operated successfully. Most cars in England have a dipping device that I think could well be adopted here. This consists of small mechanical means whereby the headlights may be dipped to the left, thus showing the driver of the vehicle the left side of the road, with which he is particularly concerned, and also deflecting the beam from the eyes of the oncoming driver.

Just before the war, experts introduced a device known as polaroid glass that they thought would eliminate all glare if installed in headlight covers and windscreens. At that time, however, the cost was prohibitive, and I understand that since then the process of making polaroid glass has become even more expensive. A study of the regulations, I believe, would convince most people that motorists cannot safely travel on country roads at permissible speeds if their lights are adjusted to meet the requirements of the official tests. But what does take place under the present regulations is that the owner has his headlights focussed so that they pass the regulation as far as the metropolitan area is concerned; and he alters the focus, where it is easily adjustable, as soon as he gets out of the metropolitan area if he is going on a long country journey. In effect, that is what takes place. I hope greater study of this headlight trouble will be undertaken by the Traffic Department. As I have said, I believe the police are doing a very good job, particularly in general work, but their control of traffic in the metropolitan area is open to improvement.

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 11.2 p.m.*

# Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 12th November, 1947.



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