

# Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 26th August, 1913.

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

## PAPERS PRESENTED.

The Minister for Works: By-laws of the Wagin Water Supply.

By Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): 1, Papers *re* charges against officials of Dorre Island Lock Hospital (ordered on motion by Mr. McDonald). 2, Report of Government Labour Bureau for year ended 30th June, 1913. 3, Reports and papers *re* the murder of J. C. Thompson (ordered on motion by Mr. Holman).

## BILL—BILLS OF SALE ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by the Attorney General and read a first time.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Heitmann leave of absence for one fortnight granted to Mr. Dooley on the ground of ill health.

## BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Roads Closure.
- 2, Fremantle Harbour Trust Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Legislative Council.

## BILL—RIGHTS IN WATER AND IRRIGATION.

### Report Stage.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. D. Johnson): I move—

*That the Committee's report be adopted.*

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington): Before this motion is put, I would like a little information from the hon. the Minister. I have a letter from him which I received this morning in which he asks the hon. member for Bunbury (Mr. Thomas) and myself to arrange for a deputation to meet him to explain certain resolutions passed at the conference at Bunbury of those who will be affected by this Bill. I take it that the Minister is in earnest in trying to get the best possible Bill and I ask would it not be better to defer the consideration of this report until the deputation have waited upon him. I have not yet had an opportunity to talk the matter over with the member for Bunbury but I have no doubt we will be able to arrange the deputation. It of course rests in the Minister's hands.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (in reply): In regard to the matter of the conference which sat at Bunbury, judging by the report of the proceedings the members of the conference had evidently not studied the Bill. It was proposed that four gentlemen should be deputed to put the amendments into shape and submit them to me. If they were submitted to me, it would naturally follow that I would have to reply to them and we would probably take a long time to reach finality. My desire is to meet the representatives of the South-West who are interested in the Bill to discuss the matter with them and to give me an opportunity to explain to them what the intention of the Bill is, and if as a consequence of that deputation amendments are necessary, we can have them inserted in another place. I do not think there is any need to delay the passing of the measure from this Chamber to another place because if amendments are agreed to we can have them inserted in another place just as might be done if the amendments are not agreed to and the conference still desire to have them made. I do not think there need be any delay in the matter. I might say that I am prepared to go to Bunbury, as that will be more convenient to representatives of the South-West, so that we

might discuss the Bill. When reading over the letter I did not notice that reference was made to a deputation to me from the association. That word is wrong and the reference should have been to a representative deputation from the South-West. I do not wish to limit the deputation to the association at all; I want the deputation to be as representative as it can be. As I have stated I will see that any amendments which are agreed to so far as I am concerned are inserted by the representative of the Government in another place.

Question put and passed; the report (after recommittal) adopted.

## BILL—MINES REGULATION.

### *Second Reading.*

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. P. Collier), in moving the second reading, said: In common with other measures which have been under discussion in this House during the past week or two, this Bill is again brought forward with the object of giving Parliament an opportunity of reconsidering its decision last year. The Bill is practically identical with one which passed this Chamber last session, but which failed to obtain the concurrence of another place. It was then urged that sufficient time had not been allowed for the discussion and consideration of the important amendments involved, and there may have been some grounds for that contention as unfortunately the Bill did not reach another place until very late in the session. However, I am pleased that that body will have ample opportunity of giving very full consideration to the Bill and its merits on this occasion. Those who are more closely concerned with regard to this amending Bill have availed themselves of the opportunity, during the period that has elapsed since its introduction last session, to freely criticise some of its provisions, and there have been some who have declared that if the Bill becomes law it will impose such harassing conditions and will so hamper and retard the mining industry as to practically

constitute a calamity. I am not much concerned with predictions of that kind, because we know well that for centuries past whenever an attempt has been made to introduce industrial legislation with the object of improving the conditions of those employed in industrial life, there have not been wanting those who have predicted that the result would be that the industry concerned would have to close down, and that ruin generally would overtake the country. If we go back only a short period, even to the early part of last century, when an effort was made to reduce the hours of child labour in factories, we find that it was then declared that if such legislation were given effect to the cotton mills in Lancashire and other parts of England would have to close down. This has been so, even coming right down to the history of industrial legislation in Australia, in regard to which we know very well that when the question of legislating for a minimum rate of wage was first mooted in the Commonwealth, it was then freely prophesied that the result would be disaster to the industries concerned. The same argument has been used against factories legislation, against workers' compensation measures, and other legislation of a similar kind, whenever it has been introduced from time to time, but we know that these predictions have not been fulfilled, for, side by side with the regulation of an industry by legislative enactment, that industry has gone on and increased production has taken place. The national wealth has increased enormously, and individual wealth also, and those engaged in or controlling the industry, the employers of labour, we find are to-day making larger profits generally speaking, than they ever did before. There is great need for a Bill of this description, inasmuch as there has not been an amendment of the existing Act since 1906. During the intervening period the various mines of the State have been deepened considerably, until to-day most of the big mines on the Golden Mile are at, or approaching a depth of 3,000 feet, and with the increasing depth of the mines those who have had experience know that the danger becomes greater and the conditions

more unhealthy. So that it is essential that we should keep pace with the increasing depth of the mines by providing greater safeguards than were necessary a few years ago. The Bill was explained very fully last session, and I only intend at the present time to deal with some of the more important amendments, leaving the minor ones for explanation when the Committee stage is reached. It is proposed to enlarge the scope of inspection by making provision for the appointment of three classes of inspectors, namely, district inspectors, special inspectors, and workmen's inspectors. The district inspectors will be on all-fours with the inspectors who are employed at the present time, that is, they will be appointed by the Public Service Commissioner under the Public Service Act, and their duties will be similar to those performed by the inspectors to-day. The provision for special inspectors will enable the Minister to appoint temporarily whenever required inspectors whose duty it will be to deal with, examine, and report upon special questions regarding technical skill, and training; for instance, it will enable us to appoint a medical officer for the time being as an inspector to inquire and examine the miners with regard to their health. A duty of special inspectors will also be to attend to sanitary matters if necessary, and we will also be enabled to appoint inspectors to examine the air with regard to noxious gases and fumes in the mines. Some few years ago the Government Analyst made an exhaustive examination and reported upon the noxious gases in the mines in Kalgoorlie, but he was only permitted to do so by the consent of the mine-owners. It was only by their permission that such an examination was carried out, but under a provision such as that contained in the Bill we should be able to appoint special inspectors, and they will have all the powers of the existing inspectors of mines. There has been an increasing demand year by year for the appointment of workmen's inspectors. This demand has come from those engaged in the mining industry. I would like to draw attention to the fact that the appointment of workmen's inspectors was recommended by the Royal

Commission which inquired into the ventilation and sanitation of mines in 1905, a body which I think cannot be held to have been partial in any degree, or which might have been regarded as a body which would unduly favour the workmen's side of the question. That commission consisted of Mr. Montgomery, the State Mining Engineer, Dr. Jack from Queensland, Dr. Black, the then president of the Central Board of Health, Mr. Hewitson, a mine manager on the Golden Mile, Mr. Mann, the Government Analyst, and Mr. Fergie Reid, and Mr. Carr, representatives of the miners' union. After a complete examination of witnesses and an investigation of all the phases of the subject that commission recommended the appointment of workmen's inspectors. The duty of these inspectors will be more particularly to keep a check upon some of the more dangerous mines than it is possible to do at the present time. Our inspectors have in many cases a large area of country to travel over, and it is impossible for them to examine and inspect mines sometimes, more frequently than once in every three months, but if power be given for the appointment of workmen's inspectors they will be able to at any time visit and inspect mines where it is thought there is danger. It is not intended that these workmen's inspectors shall in any way attempt to harass the mine managers or be unduly interfering. They will be under the control of the district inspectors, and will not have power to take action, but will have to report to the district inspector. It is provided that the appointment shall only be made from candidates who have had five years practical experience underground, and the appointments will be for a period of two years, subject to regulations that may be passed from time to time as to the control of the districts in which they shall work. This is not by any means a new provision. It is the universal practice in coal mines all over the world to have check inspectors appointed by the men. In France there are check inspectors appointed and they are responsible to the men only, and I believe if the House agrees to this pro-

vision, we shall have done something to minimise the risk of accident without in any way imposing a hardship on mine owners. Another important amendment is that which will permit of the Minister appointing one of his officers, the Government Geologist or the Assistant Government Geologist, or the State Mining Engineer, to inspect, examine and to sample any mine for official purposes. There is power in the present Act to inspect and report on a mine for the information of the Minister and the department, but no power is given to sample that mine. I think it is essential that this increased power should be given. I believe that if we had had that power, and it had been exercised in years gone by, perhaps Western Australia would not have earned the bad name which it obtained in some quarters in recent years. Unfortunately there are those connected with mining who are not above making false statements or indulging in tricks which will deceive the investor to the advantage of their own pockets, and wherever it is suspected that operations of that kind are being carried on it is important that the Government should have power to send an expert officer to the mine to investigate, and if necessary, sample it. I think it will be within the memory of every individual here that a good deal of that kind of thing took place during the recent Bullfinch boom, and that that had a detrimental influence upon mining in Western Australia. As a matter of fact I have been told by those who have visited London since that time that it is practically impossible to obtain capital in England for any mines in Western Australia.

Hon. J. Mitchell: This Bill will make it even more difficult.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I would inform the hon. member that in my opinion one hundred Bills of this kind would not do anything like the harm that was done to the mining industry by that short boom at Bullfinch a few years ago. If I may be permitted to say so, they would not do half as much harm as the famous Budget speech delivered by the present leader of the Opposition, and which was cabled home, and which had

the result of inducing investors in England and elsewhere to put their money into Bullfinch properties.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Your opinion is not worth very much.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It may not be worth very much, but in this particular case I am backed up by the opinion of influential mining gentlemen in London, who bitterly complain of the fact that they were misled by the Budget speech the hon. gentleman made.

Hon. Frank Wilson: But I have been in London since then.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Then the hon. gentleman did not visit those quarters where the criticisms came from.

Hon. Frank Wilson: But they entertained me.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Perhaps so; they were too courteous to tell the hon. gentleman what they thought of that speech. Nevertheless what I have related has been asserted by those who are in the position to know.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You need not worry.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am not worrying, but that and other things which took place during that short and wild period did more harm to mining in Western Australia than a score of Bills of this nature can possibly do.

Mr. George: You need not pile it on.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: My remarks were drawn by the leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Do not pile it on to the industry.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I have information in my possession which has been obtained within the last few months, but which I am not disposed to make public—information which amply justifies provisions of the kind contained in this Bill, which will enable a Government officer to have the power to sample mines if necessary.

Mr. George: You should not keep us in the dark.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member is thirsting for information, but it is one of those instances where he will have to wait for it. It is also pro-

vided in the Bill that stopes shall not be carried to a greater height than 10 feet. If we look through the accident list as published in the report of the Mines Department we will there find that a large proportion of the accidents are caused by falls of earth mainly in stopes, and I believe in many cases, or in most of them in stopes which are exceptionally high, consequently the difficulty of inspecting them and ascertaining the risk and the likelihood of danger is very remote indeed. I have had reports submitted by inspectors of mines in which it is pointed out that stopes are carried in some cases to 60 feet wide and 30 feet high, practically a great gallery almost the size of this Chamber, and I will leave it to anyone to say whether it is wise for anyone to be working in places like that where they have no knowledge of the danger which exists overhead. At the present time the height is usually limited by the inspectors to 14 or 15 feet and I believe only on rare occasions is a greater height than that attained.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Why do you want the legislation then?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is like much other legislation: because a few break away it is necessary to pass legislation to control the few although the many do not require it.

Hon. Frank Wilson: The inspectors have the power.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: They have not the power, and if the hon. member reads through the Act he will find that the inspectors have not the power.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You said just now that the height was limited.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The inspectors endeavour to insist upon limiting the height and there is a general desire on the part of managers to limit the height. In 1908, out of 40 fatal accidents, 15 were caused from falls of ground; in 1909, out of a total of 34 accidents, 13 occurred through falls of ground; in 1910 out of a total of 29 fatal accidents, ten were caused by falls of ground; in 1912, out of a total of 35 fatal accidents, 14 were due to falls of ground, and those who have had experience of mining know

that in most cases these accidents were in stopes which are generally carried to an unreasonable height, therefore it is provided in the Bill that stopes shall not be carried to a greater height than 10 feet. We intend to limit the height of rises to 20 feet unless the inspectors are satisfied that the result cannot be attained by winzing. If there is one part of mining more than another which is disagreeable to the men employed in a mine it is working in rises. There is not one man as far as I know who will voluntarily go into rises, but they go there because they are practically forced to do so, for they may lose their positions in a great number of cases if they do not go. Unnecessarily there is a large amount of rising indulged in. Certainly if there is any class of work more than another injurious to the health of the men it is that of rising, therefore I consider that Parliament would be justified in preventing it altogether except in such cases where it is absolutely essential it shall be done, and in which cases permits can be given. It is also provided in the Bill that if possible such a catastrophe as that which occurred in Tasmania last year in the Mount Lyall mine, where a number of men lost their lives because there was only one entrance and one exit to the mine, when that mine became on fire and there was no possibility of escape, shall be prevented. To obviate that, it is provided that the mine owner shall construct, as soon as practicable, after the opening up of each level, one or more passage-ways for men from each level to the one above it and to the surface, independent of, and separate from, the main shaft or other principal entrance to the mine, and such passage-ways shall be maintained in good order and kept unobstructed, and at all times ready for use as a means of entrance into, and exit from, the mine. I think it will be admitted at once that we should not take a great risk of accident in a shaft if a cage is hanging up; that men should not take a great risk, if there is a large number of men shut down below without an opportunity of escape, therefore in the Bill the clause which I have just read is provided, and that is to be

enacted in order to overcome any danger of that kind. With regard to the arbitration sections, it is intended to repeal them in this Bill and substitute what is called a miners' regulation board. At the present time, if a dispute occurs between the owner or the manager and the inspector of mines it is referred to what is known as the arbitration court, consisting of one person appointed by either side with the chairman who it is prescribed shall be a mining engineer, a Supreme Court judge or warden or police magistrate. It is quite conceivable that a Supreme Court judge or a police magistrate may be an excellent judge of law, but will know very little indeed of the technicalities of mining. It seems rather absurd to refer technical questions of dispute between inspectors of mines and the management and matters of that kind to one who has no experience of mining, therefore it is intended to repeal the sections in the present Act and substitute the miners' regulation board. A somewhat similar board to this was recommended by the Royal Commission on Ventilation and Sanitation in 1905, and also by the Royal Commission which sat in 1911. The board will consist of any number up to seven members, to be appointed by any side to any dispute, and three official members to be appointed by the Government. It will be their duty to inquire into the many matters which crop up from time to time in the administration of the Act, and to decide whether any difference of opinion exists. I may cite one instance in which the question of what is reasonably practicable has created no end of trouble to the Mines Department. In one section of the Act, it is laid down that the management shall take all precautions that are reasonably practicable to safeguard the lives in their charge, but we have never yet been able to satisfactorily solve the problem of what is "reasonably practicable." If we have a board of experts to express an opinion on this and other matters of a technical nature, then I say greater satisfaction will be given, not only to the management and the Mines Department, but to

the men concerned as well. What might be regarded as a revolutionary innovation, is that which provides for the abolition of the night shift. It is one of the clauses that has been bailed with a great deal of opposition from those concerned, but as I have stated previously, I fail to see why the men engaged in the dangerous and disagreeable occupation of mining should have to follow the eternal grind of night shift, year in and year out, when it is not necessary in other occupations of life. It is absurd to say that the industry cannot be carried on without working three shifts. The same might be said of other industries. At the present time there may be some difficulty, in fact there would be, in keeping the output up to what it is at the present time if we prevent working night shift, but it is provided that the clause shall not come into operation until the 1st July, 1914. That will give ample time to the management to provide increased accommodation on the surface and make other arrangements which will enable them to keep up the tonnage which they are putting out at the present time. Perhaps this has come at a very opportune time from the fact that the Great Boulder mine, one of the largest and most important mines on the Golden Mile, recently abolished the night shift system—only a month or two ago—following the lead of one or two other mines in this State. This provision will have a beneficial influence; it will allow the mines eight hours in the 24 to cool down, for the smoke and the fumes to clear away from the workings; it will go further and do more to solve the problem, the great difficulty that we are all concerned in at the present time and have been in the past, that is the problem of how to minimise the risk of miners' phthisis in the underground working of mines. The provision will allow the underground workings to cool down for eight hours in the 24 and will do more for ventilation in the mines than any other provision which is inserted in the Bill. I believe, in the interests of the mine owners themselves it will be a profitable proposition. If we picture to ourselves that for some three or four months in the year

when the temperature is hovering between 100 degrees and 110 degrees, men living in little hessian houses in the intense heat having to go night after night and work underground without having had proper sleep or rest, it must be admitted that men working under these conditions cannot, in fact I am sure they cannot perform within 25 per cent. of the work that is done on the other two shifts. For that reason alone any loss the management may have to incur through a provision of this kind will be more than compensated by the increased efficiency of the men employed. For my part I am prepared to say that mining or any other industry must go by the board practically altogether if it is impossible to carry on without profit by forcing men to work in the dead of night year in and year out. It has not been found necessary in order to successfully and profitably carry on other industries to work through the night, and there is no reason why it should be required in regard to mining. If it be thought that the time allowed, that is, to the 1st July, 1914, is too short to enable the management to cope with the altered condition of affairs, it may be possible that a compromise could be effected whereby a little increased time would be extended to them, but I hope that this House and this Parliament will agree to this provision. Another question which has occupied the public mind a good deal already is that with regard to the employment of foreigners in the mines of Western Australia. I regret it is necessary to introduce legislation to prevent or prohibit those concerned giving undue preference to aliens in our mines, because undoubtedly for the past few years a preference has been extended to foreigners over the Britisher. I have had an examination made during the past three or four months by inspectors of mines, of aliens employed in different parts of the goldfields, and I was astonished to find how the number had increased. From my personal experience of the mines on the Boulder some years ago, I knew that the foreigners employed were comparatively few; at the present time out of a total of 3,000 men

employed underground in the Boulder mines, between 500 and 600 are foreigners. I find from a recent examination in the Youanmi mine in the Murchison district that of 78 men employed underground, 14 were foreigners, or 17 per cent.; in the Ida H. Mine on the Mt. Margaret Goldfield, of 52 men employed, 22 were foreigners or 42 per cent. of the total; in the Sons of Gwalia, which has been famous for a long time for the employment of this class of labour, of 303 men employed underground in March last, 221 were foreigners, or equal to 72 per cent. of the whole.

Mr. George: How many are there employed there to-day?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The total is somewhat less to-day because a very rigid examination has been made by the inspector of mines, and also because of the fact that the mine is under new management and the new manager is not quite so partial to the foreigner as was his predecessor.

Mr. Foley: Hear, hear.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is contended that these foreigners are employed because it is almost impossible to find British labour, but if that is so, it is remarkable that some managers have been able to carry on throughout without the employment of one foreigner. And if some managers do find it difficult to collect a number of British workmen within a short space of time, it is only because of the fact that the Britishers have left the districts which are famous for the employment of foreigners, knowing very well that they are not wanted where the foreigner can be obtained. To continue the results of the investigation. On the Lake View and Star, Limited, of 237 men employed, 53 were foreigners, equal to 22 per cent. of the total; on the South Kalgurli, of 156 men employed, 19 were foreigners, or 12 per cent.; on the Associated, of 149 men employed, 28 were foreigners, or 18 per cent.; on the Associated, of 149 men employed, of 262 men employed underground, 74 were foreigners, or 28 per cent.; on the Great Boulder Proprietary, of 295 men employed, 52 were foreigners, or

13 per cent.; on the Ivanhoe Gold Corporation, Limited, of 442 men employed, 46 were foreigners, or 10 per cent.; on the Golden Horseshoe, of 666 men employed, 170 were foreigners, or 25 per cent.; on the Oroya Links, of 163 men employed, 18 were foreigners, or 11 per cent.; and on the Kalgurli, of 178 men employed there was not one foreigner at all. These figures make a total of 3,081 men employed underground, of whom 717 are foreigners. That is the result of examination in 12 mines only. On many other mines in other parts of the State no examination has yet been held. We have no quarrel with those men as men, but I say that it is essential that we should restrict the employment of a class of men who do not make good Australian citizens, who do not assimilate our ideas and customs, and do not become part of our community. They live very often in these mining towns shut off entirely to themselves, and in many districts where a large number are employed there is a portion of the district known as "little Italy." If we are going to preserve the mining industry of Western Australia to the Britisher it is absolutely essential that some check should be placed on managers in giving preference to the employment of foreigners.

Mr. O'Loughlen : Your regulations have had the effect of driving thousands into the timber mills in the South-West.

The MINISTER FOR MINES : That is only shifting the difficulty from one industry to another, and we may yet have to make regulations to meet the difficulty in other portions of the State as well.

Hon. Frank Wilson : Drive them into the sea.

The MINISTER FOR MINES : There is no question of driving them into the sea, but if our mines and timber forests and other industries are to be controlled and carried on by foreign labour of this kind, it would be just as well for Western Australia if they were to be shut up altogether.

Hon. Frank Wilson : Rubbish !

The MINISTER FOR MINES : Of course the hon. member would not do anything of the sort; he would be quite prepared to utilise this foreign labour so long as good profits could be made. There is one industry on the goldfields operated almost entirely by the labour of this class of man, and the person who controls that industry is not altogether a stranger to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. O'Loughlen : And he boosts for the good old British flag.

The MINISTER FOR MINES : Yes, and I have frequently noticed that those giving preference to the foreigner are those who shout loudest on Empire Day and about Empire; they talk of loyalty and of training the minds of the young children to respect the flag and the Empire, and yet they turn their own countrymen out of employment to make place for foreigners.

Member : They are good patriots so long as their pockets are not affected.

The MINISTER FOR MINES : That is so very often; it is a fact, at any rate, that the number of foreigners has been increasing steadily and rapidly of recent years. It is regrettable that it should be so, and I sincerely hope that Parliament will agree to this provision to limit the number of these men that may be employed in our mines.

Mr. Taylor : Or in any other dangerous calling.

The MINISTER FOR MINES : Yes, or in any other dangerous calling. I do not think the proportion provided for, viz., 1 in 10 is unduly high. It does not come within the scope of the figures I have read, and all those mines would require to dispense with the services of a fairly large percentage of foreigners, if a provision of this kind were given effect to. But when it becomes known that a fair and reasonable opportunity is given to Britishers to get employment, there will be no difficulty in obtaining efficient British labour. One of the provisions of the Bill which has been more keenly contested by the mine-owner than any other clause, is that which provides for the abolition of



what is known as the contract system. It would not matter so much if it were a genuine contract system, but the system as we know it on the goldfields is something original and new, obtaining in no other industry and in no other part of Australia, and it works out in the direction of securing the maximum amount of work very often for the minimum amount of pay. It has a speeding-up effect, which, I believe, has been responsible in a large measure for the condition of health of many men in the deep mines of the State, and I believe it would be in the best interests of all concerned, certainly of the men, if the contract system as it now obtains were prohibited altogether. For the last two or three years there has been practically no contract work on the Murchison and North Coolgardie Goldfields because the men there did not wait for legislative action, but took the matter into their own hands and decided not to undertake contract work. Although they had a pretty difficult fight at the beginning, they eventually succeeded, and those mines are being carried on to-day just as successfully, and, so far as I know, at no greater cost, than when the contract system was in operation. Therefore, I hope the House will agree to this provision, and that in future we will have men working in our mines on wages only. It is also intended to reduce the weekly hours from 48 to 44; it is not a very great reduction certainly. We know that in many industries carried on in different parts of Australia the 44 hours week prevails, and if there is one avocation which justifies shorter hours, it is the unhealthy and uncongenial occupation of mining. Therefore, we have provided that the week's work shall consist of not more than 44 hours. Power is also taken to provide by regulation for the granting or cancellation of certificates of competency for mine managers, mine surveyors, and mine foremen. These certificates are issued in several of the Eastern States, and certainly the man who holds such a responsible position as that of mine manager, and has charge of the work, and very often the health, of hundreds of men, should first pass some examination in regard to competency. The

Bill, by regulation, will afford an opportunity of doing that. Those are the main features of the measure. As I said, there are many amendments of a minor character, but important in their way, which will, I hope, obtain the sanction of the House, and which can be better explained in Committee. I have no doubt whatever that the Bill will receive the generous consideration of this House, and I am hopeful that when members of another place come to deal with it, and they have ample time and opportunity, they will view it in a different light from that in which it was viewed last session. It will be contended that a Bill of this character will have the effect of increasing the cost of operating our mines, with a consequent decrease in the profits. Well, for my part, whilst I am anxious to have nothing in the nature of legislation which would unduly hamper or harass the industry, I am still more anxious to see that those who are following that very unhealthy occupation should have the most adequate protection that Parliament can afford. I believe Western Australia cannot do too much for the men who have carried on the mining industry in the back country. The hon. member may protest, but it is a fact nevertheless that they have lifted this State, in the space of 18 or 20 years, from obscurity to the prominence which it now enjoys, and they have been responsible for winning a very considerable amount of wealth from the ground.

Mr. Monger: I give them every credit for that.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I know the hon. member does, and I hope that credit will be translated into actual sympathy by his support of this Bill. Parliament cannot do too much to protect the lives and health of the men who are following the dangerous occupation of mining, or who are engaged in any other dangerous occupation. I commend the Bill to the favourable consideration of the House and have much pleasure in moving—

*That the Bill be now read a second time.*

On motion by the Hon. Frank Wilson debate adjourned.

## BILL—TRAFFIC.

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 21st August.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex): I had not the pleasure of listening to the Minister for Works when he was introducing this measure, but I have been able to glance through the report of his speech, and from it one gathers that this measure is practically the same Bill as was introduced in the last session of Parliament, a Bill, I think, which all hon. members welcomed to a certain extent, notwithstanding that in Committee we endeavoured to amend it in accordance with our judgment to better its conditions. All are agreed that a consolidating measure of this description, in regard to different provisions of the Municipal Corporations Act, the Roads Act, the Cart and Carriage License Act, and the Width of Tyres Act, which are the measures embraced according to the explanation of the Minister, is desirable. I think we can also state that in our opinion uniform regulations throughout the State with regard to all these matters, the width of tyres, the control and regulation of traffic, the speed of motors, which is a very vexed question indeed, the control of traction engines on our roads, and the fees to be charged, are highly desirable also. At the present time the regulations of the different local authorities vary considerably, and confusion is the result, and I think it would be in the interests of the State to have uniform regulations in future. The very notices that we meet with regard to the speed of motor-cars seem to be absurd. We run into one district and we find we are not to exceed four miles an hour. Four miles an hour for a motor-car! We run into another district where we can proceed at 12 miles an hour, which seems to be about the limit of the ideas of local authorities with regard to the speed of motor-cars. The question of the maintenance and upkeep of main roads is of the utmost importance, although I realise the difficulty of the Minister in defining what constitutes a main road. It has been a vexed question with many officials, and I am satis-

fied we have not come to that stage in the history of local government that will enable us to correctly define what a main road is, but I have no doubt that the Minister may, by arrangement with the local authorities, decide that certain roads shall be main roads and come under the regulations for which this measure will provide in the future. The Minister referred to the matter of local authorities competing for licenses by reducing the fees, and it is a matter which must be objected to by all concerned. I think it is most reprehensible; although I do not know to what extent it is practised, yet it cannot be countenanced for one moment that certain local authorities should reduce fees to induce owners of vehicles to register in their district rather than in the one in which the owner of the vehicle resides. Therefore, the provision in this Bill compelling licenses to be taken out in the district where the owner resides, or in the case of business vehicles in the district where the business is carried on, is a very commendable one, and is one which I think will receive the support of members when we get into Committee. The question of the Perth-Fremantle road has been referred to by the Minister with some bitterness of tone and feeling, and I am not surprised at it because it has been a bone of contention for years past. Numbers of Ministers have had anxious moments and considerable irritation in trying to get what should be the best highway in Western Australia put into decent repair. It is the entrance to our State, practically. Visitors to Western Australia, and people passing through, are mostly motored over this road, and they get their impressions from their feelings, and the jolting of their anatomy. The city of Perth should contribute something towards this work, and I think the Minister is justified in saying that Perth has shirked its responsibility to some extent in the past, and certainly has shirked its responsibility with regard to the maintenance and upkeep of the Causeway connecting Victoria Park with the city.

Mr. George: What about Fremantle?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: It is just as big a sinner. They all shirk their re-

sponsibilities. Under the Bill the Minister seeks to remove the fees from licenses in the metropolitan area and settle them in himself. Last session, I notice, one hon. member, in speaking in opposition to this Bill, cited Adelaide as a city which collected the whole of the license fees, and he thought Perth should be in a similar position. It was rather an unfortunate illustration, as I was recently in Adelaide and motored on roads which might be termed main roads, leading from Adelaide into the suburbs and the country, and I do not think I ever travelled over worse roads in my life than those roads are to-day, showing that something is necessary and must be done to put this state of affairs right, not only in Western Australia but also in South Australia.

The Minister for Works: The worst roads are in Sydney.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I have not been in Sydney for some time. I would like to refer to the Legislative Council, and the Minister's charge against that place in introducing this Bill. I cannot agree with him that he took a correct attitude in this respect. It is quite certain that the Bill was lost in another place through the action of the Minister who had charge of the measure, and who moved its discharge from the Notice Paper. I am pleased that for once the Minister for Works was called to order from the Chair for his words reflecting on the Legislative Council, when he charged that Chamber with not being representative of the people.

Mr. Munsie: A true charge, too.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Certainly that Chamber represents people who have to pay for the upkeep of our roads, and I say they are just as representative as we are in the Legislative Assembly so far as this measure is concerned. The Minister said he would not go down on his knees to get any legislation passed. I do not think any one would wish him to go down on his knees, but we do expect him to give due consideration to the opinions of others, even if enunciated in another place and not on the floor of this House. I know that often he does not attach much force and weight to opinions expressed

from this side of the House, but I recognise that the people outside feel they are just as well represented, and that their wishes connected with legislation are just as well safeguarded by members on the Opposition benches at present as they are by those on the Government side of the House.

Mr. George: More so.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: So far as the municipalities and local governing bodies are concerned, they represent the property owners who provide the rates and taxes, and I am quite satisfied that members in another place, although they represent larger areas, are just as much the true representatives of those people as the hon. members opposite. What did the Legislative Council do, on the occasion referred to, to arouse the ire of the Minister for Works and make him so condemnatory in his remarks? After minor amendments had been put into the measure in another place, principally moved by the Minister in charge of the Bill, the Colonial Secretary, they came to Clause 5 of the old Bill, which is Clause 4, I think, of the present measure, and struck out that clause with the provision that inspectors appointed could only be dismissed by a local authority with the approval of the Minister.

Mr. George: That is in now.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes, but it was struck out on a previous occasion. The amendment was carried against the wish of the Government and against the wish of the Minister who had charge of the measure. Then they came to what the Government regarded as a vital feature of the measure. It was a test as to whether all traffic and the issuing of licenses in the metropolitan area should be under the control of the Minister or the municipal authorities. It was Ministerial control *versus* municipal control, and the provision was thrown out on those grounds. It was thrown out, and the Minister then petulantly had the Bill discharged from the Notice Paper and would have none of it, and the country was by that action deprived of what I think, and what most hon. members think, was much needed legislation. There was to be no

compromise, notwithstanding the fact that legislation consists for the most part of reasonable compromise. It was hardly a wise act of a Minister of the Crown who wishes to get legislation passed.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Why should he allow them to do just as they liked?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: A Minister of the Crown should endeavour to pass useful legislation in the interests of the whole country.

Mr. Dwyer: Why do you protest so much on behalf of the Council?

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Because it represents his party.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Because I want to see fair play given to another place, just as I would expect fair play from the members there, and to give due courtesy and due consideration to their opinions. I am prepared to give every consideration to the honest opinion of any member, whether in this Chamber or another.

Mr. Dwyer: Gratitude for favours received.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: What does the hon. member mean? Why does he not say what favours have been received? Why these senseless interjections that have no relevancy? I have never received any favours at the hands of another place.

Mr. George: Take no notice of him; you are only lowering yourself in doing so.

Mr. Dwyer: I meant, of course, political favours.

Mr. George: Why do you not say what you mean?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The principle I was arguing when interrupted by the member for Perth is new, and there is room for very much difference of opinion as to whether the metropolitan area shall be taken out of the control of the local municipal authorities and handed over to the Minister, so far as these licenses are concerned. I confess at once that under the circumstances I have a considerable amount of sympathy with the Perth City Council. We are crying out for decentralisation always. Ministers say "decentralise," but they are centralising all the time. Every action of theirs goes towards

centralising power to themselves, until they become so unwieldy and so cumbersome that they will not be able to do their duty even moderately well, let alone supervise these things.

Mr. Swan: They will not bring you to the rescue.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I venture to think that this time twelve months the people will bring me back to office, and I will have such a mess to clear up as to even astound the hon. member, and those who sit around him. This concentration of power in Ministerial departments is open to a lot of criticism, and I question whether we have been right in passing this clause of the Bill.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): There is no objection to it; it is the taking away of the money they object to.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Are we right in taking away these powers from the council, and vesting them in the Minister? I question whether we are right in interfering with all the details which concern the issue of licenses. Why should Perth and the adjoining municipalities be treated differently from outside areas? The only reason they put forth is that we have a certain principal main road which no one will take charge of and expend money upon. But if we are going to treat outside areas differently and still leave the control of these matters in their hands, why should we not do the same thing in regard to the city of Perth and adjoining municipalities? It seems to me very simple to do so. At any rate we are entitled to give due weight to the opposition evidenced in another place, and by the main municipality in the State, namely, the city of Perth, to the objections voiced against this proposal.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: You were taking another view of it a little while ago.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I am trying to discuss the Bill from every aspect. The hon. member perhaps will give his opinion on it later. He can take any point of view he likes, but surely a reasonable member will endeavour to view it from all points, and endeavour to come to a correct conclusion. Although this matter

does not affect us as a party, yet we are here to do our duty by those parties who will be affected by the legislation. It seems to me that instead of curtailing the powers of these local authorities we should rather try to increase their responsibilities and powers in order that we may get more efficient work from them and more efficient administration in local affairs. The Greater Perth movement had been on the tapis for years past, for two years, at any rate, ever since our friends came into power. A Bill was promised by the Premier to create a Greater Perth. Is it dead? What has become of that Bill? Would it not have solved this difficulty if it had been introduced and passed? Is the promise going to be carried out, or are we to understand that the Government are not to be held to the promise any more than they are to be held to definite promises to introduce certain Railway Bills which have not seen the light of day? It seems to me my friends opposite will make promises galore on any and every subject, and subsequently please themselves as to whether or not those promises shall be carried out.

The Attorney General: That is absolute misrepresentation.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. SPEAKER: The discussion is out of order entirely. The Attorney General is out of order, and the leader of the Opposition is not in order.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I am merely answering the Attorney General.

Mr. SPEAKER: You are not justified in answering him; you are only justified in speaking to the question.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I submit with all respect that I am speaking to the question.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member was speaking very closely to the question of the Greater Perth scheme.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: But surely if that is going to solve the problem—

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, it is a pertinent point, apropos of the question; but in discussing all these alleged promises of railways and other things the hon. member is entirely off the question. The hon.

member was closely discussing the question, and only the question, until he was led off this discussion by interjection. There is no reason why such interjection should be answered.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Well, I pointed out that the introduction of the Greater Perth Bill had been promised by the Premier. I asked a pertinent question as to whether, if that promise were carried out, it would not solve the difficulty in regard to these licenses in the metropolitan area.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): No, the area is not large enough.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I cannot agree with that.

The Premier: It has no bearing on the point.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes it has. Instead of allowing the local authority to take charge of the business which they have carried on heretofore, the Minister proposes to take it entirely out of their hands, to appoint his own inspectors, his own officers to issue licenses, to collect the fees, and, having collected them, to pay them into the Treasury; and then, in his discretion and judgment he is to hand them back again to the different local authorities. The outside areas are to have the credit of every penny which they collect. They are to pay their collections into their ordinary revenues, the same as they do to-day and have done from the beginning.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): Some of the outside districts may be twice the size of the metropolitan area.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: They may be ten times the size. Therefore I say the Greater Perth scheme would overcome the difficulty, and, instead of the Minister having to take revenue from Perth and distribute it to the outside districts, the Greater Perth authorities would collect the lot and there would be no difficulty. It seems to me the position is that we are going to build up another big sub-department under the Minister to manage the details of traffic, and any member who has had experience in municipal affairs—the Honorary Minister has had a number

of years of that—will realise, if he has had to attend to the details of the office, that in a place like Perth there is an enormous amount of detail work transacted in regard to the issue of licenses, complaints of the conduct of the license holders, cancellation of licenses, and the collection of the fees. I have a vivid recollection of being chairman of the general purposes committee of the Perth Municipal Council seventeen years ago, long before it was a city. We sat every week, and every week we had complaints to inquire into as to the conduct of drivers of cabs and other vehicles. We had to deal with the licenses, suspend them or cancel them. The Minister is going to get all that detail work and carry it out with the assistance of his officers. There were complaints as to overcharges and the misconduct of the drivers. These complaints were brought before the committee appointed to inquire into them, and the traffic inspector was the man who made the inquiries and came before the committee and stated the case; and if the defendants could not answer these charges satisfactorily their licenses were dealt with. Is that work going to be done by the Minister? Of course not. If he is going to hand it over to his inspectors, I ask is it wise to put the power into the hands of inspectors as to the final granting or cancellation of licenses? The inspector is really the man who has to lodge the complaints. The man who has to issue the licenses and have the power of refusing to issue the licenses should not be the very man who brings the complaint as to misconduct. Therefore, I contend it will not be a proper tribunal. It is very necessary that care should be exercised in regard to the character of applicants for licenses. We found it a most difficult matter to learn the true character of men who were applying for licenses, and we required to have our inspector all the time making investigations with the assistance of the police to be sure that we were not granting licenses to people of bad character. Some of them, unfortunately, crept in and had to be dealt with subsequently when found out. The general purposes committee inquired into the

charges and took action. We are going to take this work on for approximately £1,300, the amount of fees to be collected in Perth. The Minister did not have the exact figures as to how much is collected in the adjoining municipalities, but I presume it is not very much. I presume the main centre is in Perth. This £1,300, after all the expenses of collection and all the trouble of administration, is to be returned to the municipalities and become part of the general revenue of those authorities. It is not to be returned to the city of Perth, but to be distributed, according to the Minister's judgment, throughout the different local authorities in the metropolitan area.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): Where they have main roads.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: No. According to the judgment of the Minister, it goes back, and there is no guarantee that the money will be expended on main roads. The position, so far as the city of Perth is concerned, and so far as I recollect the occasions on which we have had this question before us, is that they have no power to expend revenue beyond their boundaries. Members will agree that there is only one main road which may be designated a main road leading out of the city of Perth, which comes within the boundaries of the City, and that is the Mount's Bay road. Under Clause 23 the Minister will collect this £1,300 and he will allot it, I presume, mostly to the other authorities. That is evidently the object.

The Minister for Works: Do you really think it is only £1,300 or are you trying to misrepresent?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I am taking the Minister's word.

The Minister for Works: The sum of £1,300 is only that of Perth. Why not take all the rest?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I am taking Perth. The Minister has admitted that very little will be collected by the other municipalities.

The Minister for Works: The individual body will collect little, but take the aggregate.

Hon. FRANK WILSON : Throughout the State ?

The Minister for Works : No, in the Metropolitan area; take the lot.

Hon. FRANK WILSON : Perth is the one regarding which there is most complaint. These fees must be returned and there is no guaranteeing that the fees will be spent on the main road, if the Minister has come to an understanding with the local authorities, which he will have some difficulty in doing, as to which are and which are not main roads. A street cannot be a main road and therefore the only main road, as far as Perth is concerned, is that which runs down to Crawley. The other districts have possibly a number of roads which may be termed main roads. The position is that to get this money spent on main roads, after discovering what a main road is, which will take some time and difficulty the Minister can say "If you spend these fees I have collected on your behalf on these roads which I call main roads, I will grant you a subsidy pound for pound or something of that sort to allow you to have more money than you otherwise would have to expend on these roads." This will concern the outer districts and the country also. Is it not possible and very probable that the amount that is to be returned to the city of Perth under this distribution scheme will be so small that they will wash their hands of the whole concern. that they will neither take part in the administration of the Act, if the Minister wishes them to do so, in the control of licenses, or in the inquiries I have referred to, or spend any money on the only main road and principal main road which we want maintained in the interests of the State. Would it not be better to specify by Act of Parliament what should be termed main roads in the metropolitan area? If we can do it subsequently by arrangement with the local authorities, we can do it, after consultation with the same authorities, now in the Bill, and would it not be better in the same Bill to decree that all fees paid shall be paid to the Government as collected, subsidised pound for pound, and

that the roads specified in the Bill shall be maintained out of these funds ?

The Minister for Works : That is exactly the Bill.

Hon. FRANK WILSON : It is in a different way; would not this be more simple ?

The Minister for Works : The only difference between your suggestion and the Bill is that you want to specify the main roads.

Hon. FRANK WILSON : I would like to have them defined and to allow the local authorities to still control the whole thing with their machinery exactly as they are doing now, obviating the necessity for creating another big department which it must grow into with inspectors and collectors and officers to issue licenses but simply compel people to pay these fees into the Treasury so that they may be subsidised by the Government as the Minister intends and have the main roads to be maintained defined in the measure.

Mr. Swan : Would you say there is only one main road in Perth ?

Hon. FRANK WILSON : I have said there is only one main road in the city of Perth proper. That is the road running around the river side.

Mr. Dwyer : Nearly every road in Perth is a main road.

Hon. FRANK WILSON : If the hon. member says so he must be right and I must be wrong. If he does not know the distinction between a street and a main road he had better go to the Supreme Court and get a definition from one of the judges.

Mr. Dwyer : I will give you a definition of a main road later on.

Hon. FRANK WILSON : The Minister could not do it, and he has tried hard and has had the Crown Law authorities and all his expert officers to assist him. I could not do it during my term of office and yet the hon. member is going to do it as easy as falling off a log. I am only throwing out this suggestion of what appears to be a simpler method of dealing with this much-vexed question. I have had it to deal with and it seems to me to be a simpler way of dealing with

it as I have outlined than the suggestion contained in the Bill, which, to my mind, will be very expensive and may ultimately grow to such an extent that we will not collect sufficient license fees to pay for the cost of administration. The power to recover under this Bill the damages caused by extraordinary traffic, is reasonable. I have seen roads cut up, indeed, I have cut them up, by jinkers hauling heavy logs the end of which trailed on the road, and certainly traffic of that description and heavy goods motor traffic should be forced to contribute something additional for the damage done, but the fee for licensing bicycles and tricycles which has been again introduced into this measure and which we condemned pretty strongly last session, seems to me to be as absurd as it was on that occasion. Why the Minister will insist upon taxing bicycles which are used largely by young people, school-children, working men, clerks going to and from their work; why we should penalise them because they go on a couple of rubber tyred wheels in the shape of a bicycle instead of walking on the pavement, I cannot understand. Why not tax the perambulators?

The Minister for Works: So you did.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: We never did. Why should we tax a tricycle on which a child runs along a footpath? What are we coming to next? Surely we can allow those people who are living in the suburbs and who travel a mile or two to their work—tramway employees who have to finish at the car barn and who have to come early in the morning from their homes in the suburbs—surely we should allow these people to have the benefit of this means of locomotion without being harassed by having to pay a tax of even 2s. 6d. per annum proposed to be put on them by this Bill. I would suggest to the Minister that there is a clause which I think it might be well to introduce into this measure and that is one to make pedestrians, motor cyclists, and the drivers of waggons and drays more careful than they are at the present time to give way and keep on the proper side of the road.

While motor car drivers are sometimes guilty of travelling at an excess speed and perhaps endangering the lives of those besides themselves who are using the roads, and are everlastingly being summonsed and fined when they do travel at a speed which endangers the life and property of others, still on many occasions, we find the road blocked by some stupid driver of a big waggon who will not give way, although probably signalled to do so. Sometimes the wrong side of the road is taken by a motor cyclist because it is smoother and he will not cross over, and a motor driver has to wait or attempt to pass him on the wrong side, which would make him liable in the event of an accident. I would like the same thing to apply to those who are using the roads as pedestrians who will not get out of the way at all, although signalled to do so.

The Minister for Works: There is a provision for that.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Some drastic clause should be proposed to compel them to use the proper side of the road and not to obstruct the traffic of others, even though those others are riding in a motor car. As far as I am concerned I am sorry that I cannot afford a car, but occasionally I do get a ride in one, and my experience has been that some people take a delight in blocking motor cars and preventing them from passing, and thus they are not only liable to cause an accident, but to endanger themselves as well as those using motor cars.

Mr. Carpenter: You do not feel like that when you are walking.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes.

Mr. Carpenter: No.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: As long as the driver of a motor car gives due notice before coming up so that pedestrians can pass to one side, no one feels or ought to feel annoyed, but many people will not take the slightest notice; they walk on the road feeling sure that the driver will not take the risk of running them down.

Mr. Lander: You can see that every day in Perth.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes. I have referred to the danger of a big sub-



department growing up. There will be inspectors in each of the districts, licensing officers in the metropolitan area, inspectors of Government roads, and all these are to be charged for against fees collected, I presume. How much will there be left for the maintenance of roads, the main roads? How much will be returned to the municipalities? It seems to me that even though the suburbs and local authorities and municipalities, adjoining Perth collect as much as Perth proper does, some £1,300, the whole of this money will be expended in administration on these inspectors and officials who are going to run the department.

Mr. Harper: It will not pay for them.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: All these duties were carried out previously by the municipalities or the local authorities. I am very much afraid it will be as cumbersome and costly as I have indicated and will leave a very small balance indeed to carry out the necessary work which the Minister is seeking to do. I hope it will not be so. I commend to the Minister for Works my suggestion to legislate directly as I have outlined, instead of adopting this cumbersome method of creating another sub-department to an already over-burdened and very largely over-burdened Public Works department.

Mr. Dwyer: The Minister seems to thrive under it.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: It is not a question of him thriving, but of the State.

*Sitting suspended from 6.13 to 7.30 p.m.*

Hon. H. B. LEFROY (Moore): The Bill that we now have before us was very fully discussed during last session, and I listened very attentively to what fell from the Minister for Works with regard to the measure as it has now been presented to us. He dwelt upon the fact that the principal features of the Bill were contained in alterations affecting the Width of Tyres Act, and also stated that one of the main principles of the Bill is the question of the maintenance of main roads. The Minister informed us that the license fees would in future be collected

by the different bodies and used for the maintenance of main roads. There is nothing in the Bill that I can find which provides that these license fees should be used for that special purpose. The Minister may have had it in his mind to direct that these fees shall be used for this purpose, but I can see nothing in the Bill which gives him the power to ask that these fees shall be used for that special purpose, and he leaves us to suppose that the Bill does directly provide for this. It distinctly states that these license fees shall form part of the ordinary revenue of the local governing body, excepting in the case of municipal bodies around Perth. I think the Minister seems to have lost sight of the fact that the Bill does not provide for what he says. It may be the intention of the Minister to subsidise the different bodies with an amount equal to the licenses collected, but there is nothing which gives the Minister the power, either in the Bill itself or the regulations, to use this money for the maintenance of main roads.

The Minister for Works: That will be fixed up when we pay the subsidy. It will be paid only provided they do certain things. It is a question whether it would be wise to put it in.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: The Minister in introducing the Bill said one of its special features was that these license fees should be applied to the maintenance of main roads, but it does not appear as a feature, although it may have been in his mind. I am pleased to think that they should be directed to that purpose, and I think it is a wise thing that they should be. The Minister states that there has always been a difficulty in deciding what shall be main or minor roads. There may have been a difficulty in the early days, but when the Roads Board Act was first introduced in this State about 40 years ago—and we have been working under these Roads Boards Acts ever since their introduction—it was provided that there should be main and minor roads, and that main roads should be gazetted as main roads and minor roads as minor roads. Probably this has become too cumbersome now that roads have multiplied to such an extent,

and there may be difficulty, but I think that difficulty might well be got over. If it is the intention of the Minister that these fees should be used for the maintenance of main roads, I think it should be definitely provided what main roads are. In my opinion, they are roads which run direct to a railway station or a siding where there is a considerable amount of traffic, and minor roads are spur roads which junction in with these roads running directly to a siding or railway station. I do not think there will be any difficulty, if the matter is taken in hand, in deciding what are main and minor roads. The Minister also stated in introducing this Bill, that in the past these license fees have not been collected in many cases by the roads boards. I have always found that the roads boards are very jealous with regard to these license fees and are most energetic in their collection. The roads board I represent collected fees last year to the amount of £250 for cart and carriage licenses. I think that is a very considerable amount, and shows to the Minister that certain roads boards at any rate are diligent in the collection of these fees.

The Minister for Works: Some of them may be.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: For my own part I know of no roads board by which these licenses are not collected. I would like the Minister to point out where these roads boards are, because I thought that roads boards all wanted revenue and were desirous of collecting it in every way they can legitimately do so. The Minister provides in this Bill that a traffic inspector should be appointed with the approval of the Minister. We argued that point during last session, and I think it is a pity that the Minister should introduce a provision such as this. In most instances the traffic inspector will be the secretary of the roads board. The appointment of a secretary does not require the approval of the Minister, but where a secretary is appointed as traffic inspector it is proposed that his appointment must have the approval of the Minister. I think it was pointed out by the Minister, when introducing this Bill, either this session or last

that he desires the Minister should have control over these appointments, so that he might be quite sure what sort of person is appointed as traffic inspector, because inspectors may be appointed to whom the roads boards might give the direction not to be diligent and zealous in the collection of these license fees. I think that that is a reflection on the roads boards. If we are to have these local bodies as self-respecting bodies, in my opinion they should be given power, and power should not be taken from them. If we wish local bodies to be self-respecting, as they should be, we must not take powers away from these bodies but give them as much power as rightly can be given to them. If we take powers away from a body it at once feels that it has not the confidence or respect of those who administer the Act. I say that the proposal of the Minister will tend to bring about a serious difficulty; it will not only tend to lessen the self-respect of the boards themselves, but it will lessen the power they have in their districts. I am sorry that the Minister should introduce a provision such as this in the Bill we have before us. My opinion is that the roads boards should be given every possible power. We recognise that the Minister, who for the time being administers this measure, will have the control, and I am sure the roads boards are willing to bow to his decision, but at the same time I think the Minister should not endeavour more than is necessary to clip the wings of these local bodies. If that sort of thing is indulged in, these local bodies are not likely to be the use to the community which it is intended they should be, and which they ought to be. I think that it is a very wise thing that we should have the various existing Acts consolidated. The Cart and Carriage License Act has been in use for very many years. The width of Tyres Act has been in existence since 1895, or about that time, and no doubt the circumstances of the State at the present time demand that there should be some alteration in these Acts. I think it is well that these different Acts should be embodied in one consolidating measure, and instead of

having three or four different statutes to deal with the local bodies will have only one Act, and consequently it will be much easier for them to administer their affairs than if they had to refer to several measures. I think that there are some of the old provisions which might be left in this Bill. For instance there is no provision made here for the names of owners of carts to be placed on the vehicles. It is a wise provision because one sees at once to whom the cart belongs. This Bill does not provide for the use of discs, which the drivers could be called upon to produce. I think it was a useful provision in the old Cart and Carriage License Act, that every cart should have the name of the owner and the roads board district in which the cart was used, as well as the number of the license, painted upon it.

Mr. Dwyer: Would not that be a matter for regulation?

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: I do not think there is any power to do so. At any rate, the matter is so important that it should not be left to regulation.

Mr. Dwyer: Yes, I see it is provided in Section 24 of the existing Act.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: The matter is important enough to be provided for in the Bill. I think both Houses are united in the opinion that this Bill is a wise one and that it will serve a useful purpose; at the same time I trust that when it is in Committee members on this side will be able to induce the Minister to agree to certain amendments which will have the effect of making the measure more workable. It is certainly a good thing that we should have uniform regulations. It is very troublesome that there should be regulations existing in one roads board district, another set of regulations in another district, and so on throughout the State, and it would be not only of benefit to the roads boards, but to those who have to use the roads to feel that they could go from one district to another and have the same regulations to travel under as they had in the district whence they came. Again, in regard to this Bill, there is a provision dealing with the weight to be carried on wagons or carts. This I think

may become troublesome in some districts. It would not affect people in more settled districts, where heavy loads are not carried, but in large pastoral districts difficulties are bound to arise. In these pastoral areas wool has to be carted a considerable distance, hundreds of miles very often, and it is incumbent upon those who have to cart that wool to put as much as possible on their wagons. Hon. members opposite, as well as hon. members on this side, know perfectly well that wool is carted from far distant stations, and that loads are made up of ten or twelve tons. Under this Bill, if a pastoralist desires to carry 10 or 12 tons of wool on his wagon, he will have to use tyres 8 inches wide. I think that is ridiculous, and the same thing may hold good in some of the agricultural districts, where people may want to carry large loads of wheat. We know very well that the more work we can do with our horses the better it is for us, and that the more furrows we can work with the plough the more economical ploughing will be. And we know that the greater weight we can put on a wagon the more economical will be the carting. I think in certain cases the Bill will prove troublesome and harassing to those who want to cart heavy loads.

The Minister for Works: You admit there must be a restriction.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: I think there should be some way of getting over the difficulty that I have been speaking of.

The Minister for Works: You are not arguing that the width of tyres should not be regulated.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: Certainly not. I was in this House in 1895, when the old Width of Tyres Act was passed. We all welcomed that measure; we were then representatives of country districts in this House and the measure was introduced in the interests of the roads. We all knew that the wider the tyres the better would the roads remain. If we could possibly have tyres a yard wide, of course it would be so much better for the roads, because the wagons then would become rollers.

Mr. Brown: With 8 in. tyres you can carry 12½ tons.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: There are certain provisions in the existing Act which are worthy of alteration; for instance, the time is coming when tractors will be largely used. They are being used in connection with farming in all parts of the world. They are only starting now but in a short time they will be generally used, not only on the roads but also for the hauling of farming implements. One of the provisions of the measure before us is that if a tractor is travelling after sundown, a man must walk 100 yards in front of it to warn people who may be on the road that the tractor is approaching. The Minister will recognise that that is an unnecessary provision. It must have come from Victoria, where the country is much more settled than it is here. It is absurd to provide that it would be necessary after sundown for a man to walk 100 yards in front of a tractor to warn people that it is coming along. We might include some provision in the Act to meet the case, but we do not want to reduce the thing to an absurdity. All that is necessary is that the tractor should be provided with proper lights and then I am sure there will be no danger to the public. I think it will be more reasonable to say that a man should walk in front of motor cars in the City to warn people of the danger. There is certainly more danger to the public from motor cars than there would be from a motor tractor. The tractor travels slowly, and with proper lights nothing more should be necessary. I mention these matters because I would like the Minister to think them over. I am sure his sole desire is to see that we have a workable measure, one that will be of benefit to the individuals concerned and to the public. Surely the Minister does not desire to harass the owners of vehicles in the interests of the general public. I am sure that all he desires is to see that the public are protected. I hope members will give careful attention to the Bill and that the Minister will agree to the suggestions which may come from members on this side of the House, so that the Bill may be made more acceptable than it would be if it were allowed to pass as it stands. I welcome this

Bill as a measure consolidating a number of old Acts, many of which were passed years ago, and the consolidation must prove of benefit to the country as a whole.

Mr. DWYER (Perth): There are a few important principles at stake in this measure to which I propose to briefly refer. The first is that which deals with the codification of existing legislation on the subject of roads and traffic generally, and I think there can be hardly two opinions as to the necessity and advisableness of a codification of this kind. It is wearying and distressing to have to wade through a number of Acts of Parliament, and then compare each with the other before being able to arrive at a final stage as to what the legislation is in regard to this particular topic of road and vehicular traffic. If the Bill were to go no further than to consolidate all the provisions in the existing Acts dealing with traffic, and bring these provisions up to date, so as to meet all our present day requirements—if the Bill went no further than that, I think it would accomplish a big object, and one for which the Minister would deserve the thanks of the community. When we consider that no fewer than, I believe, half a dozen Acts, have contributed to the drafting of this Bill, it will be seen that it must have been a labour of great importance, and that the drafters of the Bill, inasmuch as they have effected a very fair measure of codification with regard to traffic legislation, deserve our thanks. From that point of view I hope the Bill will succeed, and from that point of view I hope the Bill will be passed through this Chamber and through another place. Now a smaller principle which the measure deals with is in regard to motor cars. We have been accustomed, from time to time, to find speed limits specified in places in regard to motor travelling, but when we go to older communities we find that the system adopted there is, not to fix the speed, but to make the owners or drivers of the cars responsible to an extent for any accident. To this extent: that the mere occurrence of an accident throws the onus on the driver or owner of the car of showing that he has not been negligent in driving that car, and

that he has observed proper precautions consistent with the traffic through which he was passing. I think this is a necessary piece of modern legislation. Also I find the Bill deals with another aspect of motor cars. Up to the present our legislation has failed to supply means of dealing summarily with persons who use motor cars illegally. We have provisions dealing with the illegal use of horses, cattle, etcetera, but as regards motors there were no such provisions. I find however, that now the illegal use of a motor car, for instance the taking possession of it by a person to whom it does not belong, and his driving off in it against the will or without the knowledge of the owner, has been considered in this Bill, and I hope those provisions will be agreed to. In dealing with this measure, the leader of the Opposition went I think, rather out of his way to enter into a defence of the Legislative Council; and when I interjected at the hon. gentleman, suggesting that his defence of the Council was really a proper and due acknowledgment of favours which his party, and he as leader of his party, had received in the past, the hon. member seemed to be entirely nonplussed for a while---

Hon. Frank Wilson: That was not what you said.

Mr. DWYER: What I said will be in *Hansard*. I said that the hon. member was moved in his defence and advocacy of the Council by a sense of gratitude for favours received. I cannot for the life of me imagine why the leader of the Opposition should have been nonplussed at my stating this. The remark was made in perfect innocence, and I am quite sure I had no intention of imputing to the hon. member that he had received any favours other than political favours from members of another place. Rightly or wrongly, I believe that measures which the hon. member as leader of the Government had charge of, were always received more sympathetically and had a better chance of being passed into legislation in the other Chamber than have measures introduced by the present Government.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member had better not pursue that line of discussion.

Mr. DWYER: Very well, Mr. Speaker. I was endeavouring to explain for the satisfaction of the leader of the Opposition, in case he had not already understood it, the reason that actuated me in making the interjection, and endeavouring to suggest that there was no reason why he should have been so alarmed at my remark. Now I have said that the principles of this measure, insofar as they deal with traffic regulation generally, and insofar as they deal with the consolidation and codification of the existing law as regards traffic, are commendable, and deserve the support of both sides of the House. There is, however, I submit, embodied in the Bill a departure in legislation and a departure in principle. This departure in legislation and in principle I cannot agree with. We have here set out for the first time a new principle in legislation as regards one district in the State, the district exhibited here on the map, embracing all the country from Midland Junction to Fremantle, and a good way beyond, to Cockburn Sound, which is termed in the Bill the metropolitan area. This departure in legislation is this: that we are to have a sort of dictator of the road, a dictator of the traffic, a czar in fact, established under this measure with supreme powers. That departure in legislation I object to. It is bad politics, it is unwise. I say that the Minister for Works cannot be charged with temerity in placing this provision in the Bill. He will have so many hungry mouths to feed over and above the receipts which he will get, and apparently he will endeavour to satisfy them all; but, I venture to say, unsuccessfully, because in endeavouring to please all he will please none. But there is another principle at stake. A few nights ago the Minister for Works himself said that Ministers should only spend money which Parliament have a right to criticise.

Hon. Frank Wilson: When did he say that?

Mr. DWYER: Two nights ago. According to the rules of the House, I can-

not read out anything that has been said here this session.

Hon. Frank Wilson: But you can state it.

Mr. DWYER: I have stated it. Here we have thrown into the hands of the Minister a large portion of municipal revenue, or what constitutes at the present time municipal revenue, an amount which is bound to increase and grow into a very large sum in the course of time. Now, our legislation should not have particular reference to the present time. We should go beyond our present surroundings and look into the future, and see what the effect of our legislation will be in the years to come. I venture to say that the few thousands which may be received under the Bill immediately after it has passed into law will increase in the next twenty years to £15,000, £20,000, or £30,000. What is to become of all this?

The Minister for Works: The Minister for Works will get it.

Mr. DWYER: It will develop into a huge trust fund, and the Minister for Works, as he himself says, will get it. The amount will be increased by a subsidy from the Government, and it will form an immense fund over which the Minister will have absolute power and control. He will be able to write blank cheques and deal out largesse all the way from Midland Junction to Cockburn Sound. As I say, the Minister cannot be charged with temerity after having introduced these provisions. But while I have every confidence in the present Minister for Works, I have no assurance that he is going to be there all the time. I have indeed an assurance that he will not live for all time, and notwithstanding the high confidence I have in the ability of the present Minister and his fairness, his justice, and his impartiality, I do think—

[Mr. Monger coughed.]

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I do not know whether the hon. member was very bad, but if his conduct was wilful I must draw attention to it.

The Minister for Works: It was an accident.

Mr. Taylor: It was just a spasm.

Mr. SPEAKER: I hope the spasm has passed.

Mr. DWYER: I think, Mr. Speaker, it was only the hon. member's way of signifying his dissent from my expression of confidence in the present Minister for Works. But notwithstanding what the member for York may think, and notwithstanding what crude and antediluvian methods he employs of signifying his dissent, I will again renew my expression of confidence in the present Minister for Works. Still, I say it is against the principles laid down in our legislation and in our Parliament from time immemorial that we should place in the hands of any Minister of the Crown—it is against the modern trend of legislation and Parliamentary control of public funds and of all Ministerial actions, that any Minister should have at his disposal large funds to deal out just as he pleases.

Mr. Heitmann: He has now.

Mr. DWYER: We have Parliamentary control over them. But here we give him absolute power to deal with the funds at his own sweet will and pleasure. We have all the various municipalities round about the heart of this community, the heart of Western Australia, and if there should be a Minister for Works who takes a dislike to one particular portion of the community he can punish that portion, while if there is another part on good terms with him, he can reward that part.

Mr. George: On a point of order, is the hon. gentleman correct in pointing out the possibilities of political tergiversation in a Minister?

Mr. Heitmann: You are like a jumping-jack—sit down.

Mr. SPEAKER: There is no point of order involved.

Mr. DWYER: I think I am quite within my rights, in fact, I would be wanting in my duty if I did not endeavour to point out what may be the possible effect of any proposed legislation which is placed here for our discussion and deliberation. It may be said, of course, that that portion of the metropolis which I myself have the honour of representing will suffer most. Be that as it may, I am not contending against this portion of the Bill for that reason: because there is a bigger principle at stake than that of a few pounds less to Perth and a few more

to Subiaco or some other portion of the district. I object to this principle being introduced into the measure, for the reason that it is unwise, that it is against our ideas of what should be a ruling principle in politics, and that it will be placing in the hands of a Minister for Works a power which he may wield to influence votes in the community. For that reason it has my strongest disapproval and condemnation.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What about the roads definition?

Mr. DWYER: I am coming to that. If my friend will have patience I will touch upon that. Now another somewhat objectionable feature of the measure is that—this deals also in a sense with the clause I have referred to—it will inevitably lead to a duplication of officers and of staff. That is also bad policy and bad principle. At the present time we have nearly all the traffic regulations administered by the employees of municipal councils or roads boards, as the case may be. It may be right that supervision should be exercised over these; but if we take away from these gentlemen part of their duty and place it in the hands of the Minister for Works, the Minister will require a fresh staff of employees, and so the work which is being done at a minimum of cost to-day—because it is part of the duties of the officers of the municipalities—is bound to cost the country a very considerable amount if the Minister has power to appoint his own officers, and does appoint them, as distinct from the municipal staffs. Of course the Minister can exercise discretion as to whom he appoints, and I say that if the Bill is carried in its present form it must follow, as night follows day, that there will be a separate staff of traffic inspectors under the Minister for Works. I defy any hon. member who reads the measure to say that the trend of it is not in that direction.

The Minister for Works: Which clause?

Mr. DWYER: The Bill provides for it. There is another principle in the measure which I just wish to refer to in passing. It gives the power to the local authorities outside the metropolitan areas to appoint traffic inspectors, but the Minister must

approve of those appointments, and then in a subclause it says that none of those inspectors so appointed shall be dismissed without the approval of the Minister. Surely that is rather inconsistent. A person who has power to appoint should also have power to dismiss. When the clause says in the first portion that the local authority has power to appoint subject to the approval of the Minister that is fair and reasonable enough, but once the appointment is made by the local authority, then that authority should have the right to dismiss, and the Minister should not have power to say to the local authority, "You cannot dismiss that man; I want him kept here." We must have regard to the ordinary course of events, and to take out of the hands of the local authority the right to dismiss one of its officers is not following the right principle.

Mr. O'Loughlen: We have that principle in the Health Act.

Mr. DWYER: In this case I object to it. If a bad thing is done once, that does not justify us in repeating it. Two wrongs do not make a right.

Mr. George: It is put in to protect the inspector from being dismissed by interested parties.

Mr. DWYER: This portion of the Bill prevents the local authority from dismissing people whom it appoints, and I say that is not right. If they have power to appoint with the approval of the Minister, they ought to have the right to dismiss. It is right for the Minister to approve of the appointment in the first instance, but once he has approved of an appointment, he should leave to the local authority the right to dismiss. He still has a check over the local authority to this extent, that he can refuse the right to appoint a successor.

Mr. George: The Minister becomes an appeal court for dismissed officers.

Mr. DWYER: He acts as an appeal court if he retains the right to approve of an appointment, but the dismissal should not be subject to the Minister's approval.

Mr. Lander : They try to shift a policeman for collecting licenses in some cases.

Mr. DWYER : The policeman is not appointed by the local authority, and his Minister has power to deal with him under the Police Act. It is said, and admitted on all sides, I think, that one of the main defects or omissions is that there is no attempt made to define main roads, which it is said are impossible of definition. I wish to make a suggestion to the Minister in charge of the Bill that the difficulty in defining main roads has been largely due to the point of view from which main roads have been looked upon up to the present time. They have been simply looked upon in terms of where they lead to and where they start from. They are never looked upon in terms of the people using them, the traffic on them, and the places whence the traffic comes and whither it goes. The leader of the Opposition, whilst he apparently endeavoured to be friendly to the Perth City Council, was on the other hand, endeavouring to practically exclude that body from all rights under this Bill. He said that there was only one main road in the City of Perth. If that were determined upon by the Minister for Works in charge of this Bill for the time being, the result would be that Perth would get practically nothing. I say that almost all roads in Perth, certainly most of the roads, are being used by traffic coming from all parts of the State, and if an attempt is to be made to define main roads, then those roads must be considered in the terms of the persons who use them and the places whence the traffic comes. I will give a concrete illustration of how a definition may be arrived at. It is well known that in dividing the country for electoral purposes instructions are given to a commission that certain things have to be taken into consideration such as community of interests, geographical position, and the number of votes. A similar provision could be made in the case of roads. A commission could be appointed which would decide which are main roads and which are not,

and the commission would receive instructions that in defining main roads they would consider, not only the places whither the roads were directed, and whence they came, but also the quantity of traffic on the roads and the places whence it came. If they took into consideration all those factors they would be able to define without difficulty which are main roads, and which are not.

The Minister for Works : In 12 months' time what would you do ?

Mr. DWYER : Revise the list periodically. A main road to-day might not be a main road to-morrow.

The Minister for Works : Would you have public servants on the commission ?

Mr. DWYER : Certainly, if you can get them. The Minister's interjection brings me to a solution of the metropolitan difficulty. I have pointed out what a difficult task it must be to any Minister to distribute these funds, and what odium he may bring upon himself through the distribution of his bounty. I would suggest that the way out of the difficulty is to appoint a commission of three or even five persons who would distribute the fines received under this Act. Take that distribution away from the Minister, leave it in the hands of a board, and let the board consist of civil servants who would say which are main roads and which are not, and if there is any municipality aggrieved let it go to the Minister as a court of appeal. That, I would suggest, is an easy way of getting over the difficulty in regard to main roads. Whilst I will vote for the second reading of this Bill I will oppose and vote against Clause 23, because I think it is against all our best principles of legislation. I have touched on the main principles of the Bill, and the details I will refer to as the measure goes through Committee. I do not at all approve of a tax on bicycles because the bicycle is a man's means of getting to his work in quicker time.

The Minister for Works : The motor car is the same.

Mr. DWYER : The motor car partakes of the nature of a luxury whereas the bicycle is a necessity. Besides the



motor car does great injury to the roads, and the man who uses a car is much better able to pay the fees under this Bill than the man who simply uses the bicycle to take him to and from his work. I hope the Bill will receive favourable consideration at the hands of this House and another place, but I also hope that the defects apparent on the face of the measure will be removed, particularly that stain upon an otherwise very useful and exceedingly well framed measure which places the Minister for Works in the position of a dictator over the traffic in the metropolitan area and a dealer out of largesse and bounty at his own sweet will to the local bodies constituting that area.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington): I intend my remarks upon the second reading to be rather few, because I consider this is essentially a measure for the Committee stage. I am at one with the member for Perth with regard to the question of the funds being in the hands of the Minister, and I think it would be well for the Minister if some means could be found by which he could be relieved of that particular duty. As the member for Perth has said, no matter how well and fairly the distribution of fees is carried out, the task will give people the right to make charges that the funds are being used for political purposes. So far as this State is concerned, we have managed to steer clear of the methods of Tammany Hall, and although no one is suggesting for one single moment that we are likely to get anything like that from the present Minister for Works or his successor, it is just as well not to include a provision which will allow of charges of that kind being made.

Mr. Bolton: Who is to be his successor?

Mr. GEORGE: I do not know; we have not fixed that up yet. I cannot agree with the protest of the member for Perth against the dismissal of an inspector being subject to the approval of the Minister. We all know perfectly well that a dismissed employee or one aggrieved likes to have a court of appeal, and the appeal court established for the railway

servants, although in some cases it may not have worked satisfactorily, has certainly done more good and more to allay trouble than was thought by some of us at the time it was established. I may tell the hon. member for Perth (Mr. Dwyer) that an inspector who has to carry out the duties specified by this particular measure will have to be absolutely fearless. Whether a big man or a little man is concerned, he will have to do his duty and if he does it he will bump up against someone or other who may have sufficient influence to work the oracle and get him dismissed from his position.

Mr. Taylor: We had better employ Jack Johnson at once.

Mr. GEORGE: The Minister will practically become a court to which such a person can appeal in case he has not been fairly treated. Without an appeal of this sort the measure may become a dead letter. Reference has been made to the width of tyres. Many vehicles belonging to pastoralists and farmers seldom use the roads; perhaps some of them do not use the roads more than once or twice a year, and to insist upon them being fitted with these extra wide tyres will involve the owners in an expense which they should not be called upon to bear. I remember the 1895 Act and the question then came up of the weight of a load being governed by the size of the axle, and I am still of opinion that that is the fairest and best way of dealing with the question. The person who is likely to carry heavy weights, puts in an axle accordingly, but under this Bill the size of the axle is not to be taken into account.

The Minister for Works: A big axle may not be a strong axle.

Mr. GEORGE: It may not be a strong axle; it may be constructed of bad material, but the axles made are pretty reliable.

Mr. Taylor: The weight they carry is determined by the size of the axle.

Mr. GEORGE: If a 2¼, 2½ or 3 in. axle is adopted, the wheelwright will tell the purchaser the weight which can be fairly carried. I certainly think, and I

know many practical men agree with me, that the best course would be to adhere to this system. There was some trouble of course when this system came into force. The width of tyres had to be increased according to the size of the axle and a good deal of expense was incurred by men who could not well afford it. Now we have the proposal under this measure with regard to the width of tyres. The width of tyre may have been considered good enough to carry a certain weight before, but under this measure the same weight might require a wider tyre and that would mean obtaining new wheels. As far as Perth and Fremantle are concerned, this measure will put to expense a great number of men who have been working for years as carriers getting an honest living and doing good service to the State and who have not had a chance of getting more than a fairly good living. This matter should receive further consideration. Regarding the speed of motors, the hon. member for Perth spoke about placing the responsibility on motor drivers, but I think he overlooked the fact—if I did not misunderstand him—that there is a clause previous to the one he referred to, which states that regulations can be made to limit the speed of vehicles, and I do not see how the two things can go together. They appear to me to be in conflict.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: The Minister said he would not put a speed limit on.

Mr. GEORGE: That is what I am puzzled about. The Minister told us so, but the Bill in one part states exactly what the Minister told us, while in a previous clause it states that regulations will be made to limit the speed of vehicles.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Regulations can be made.

Mr. GEORGE: We cannot discuss the details of the clause, but the hon. member will find that what I have stated is correct. When the Bill reaches the Committee stage, I hope the Minister will consider the point. While the desire to make people conform to the law is right and there should be penalties for disobeying the law, I think the penalties in this measure are rather on the strong side. Some of the penalties go as high as £50, and some as high as £10, and, on a second offence a

man may lose his license. While we want an Act which will protect all the interests of the State, we certainly do not want one containing penalties which will impose unnecessarily severe disabilities on a large proportion of the people, and prevent them from using their vehicles. Regarding the question of carrying under license, the driver of a vehicle will be required not only to carry a driver's license, but a license for the vehicle. This would be very irksome and troublesome not only for farmers, but for contractors and others who are engaged in carrying on work in and around Perth. The schedule of charges too, I think, requires revision.

The Minister for Works: Does it require to be increased?

Mr. GEORGE: No, the charges require to be decreased. On the whole I think the Bill is a good attempt to grapple with a knotty question and it is one of those measures which both sides of the House, irrespective of party, should desire to make acceptable all round, and I shall be very glad if, after passing this Chamber, it becomes law, because I am convinced it will do good. But the Minister will do well to consider the question of funds. As pointed out by the hon. member for Perth, the proposal will place the Minister in a very invidious position.

The Minister for Works: I have not an alternative yet.

Mr. GEORGE: An alternative may come, but the proposal in the measure will lay the Minister open to a charge of patronage and all manner of evil things to which political life is heir.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: That was a most unfair statement by the hon. member for Perth.

Mr. GEORGE: I do not think he intended that it should be a reflection on the Minister, and I do not think he intended to be unfair. The hon. member said it was a very invidious position, and if the hon. member for Subiaco does not realise it, the Minister does, because he said no alternative has yet presented itself. Anyone who occupies a position of responsibility such as the Minister for Works, does not want to place himself in the way of being shot at by every scurrilous indi-

vidual who has not a seat in Parliament and is perhaps wanting one. The Minister has not explained whether he has a solution of the difficulty regarding main roads or not. As far as Perth is concerned, it is difficult to say which are main roads and which are not. The main road to Fremantle is not the only one in Perth. There is a main road going to the south-west, passing over the Causeway, another goes to Guildford and there is the road to the North Beach. These are main roads in one sense of the word, and the difficulty is to say what shall be defined as main roads. It is easy to define a main trunk of railway, but I do not know how it will be possible to define the main roads of the State.

The Minister for Works: The difficulty is they will vary it each year. You may have a main road and to-morrow it may be superseded.

Mr. GEORGE: Take the main road to Bunbury, when it gets to Armadale, it continues on to Albany some hundreds of miles. A little further the main road goes to Marradong, and further on is another going to the coast at Mandurah. Then north of Bunbury is another going to Bridgetown and Busselton, and that has other main roads branching from it. It is really a mixture, and it is difficult to say what a main road is, but I heartily agree with the idea that the licenses collected from the motors should be apportioned among the districts used by these people. The road from Pinjarra to Mandurah is cut up principally by motor traffic, and the road to Pinjarra itself has been practically destroyed by motors, and not one cent has been received by the local body in the shape of license fees.

Mr. Taylor: That was during the last election.

Mr. GEORGE: During the last election campaign the only means of locomotion I had were shank's pony, and pretty good they were.

Mr. Taylor: That is pretty severe on the road.

Mr. GEORGE: If I wore fourteens like the hon. member they would be severe on the road; mine were nines. Neither the

Serpentine roads board or the Murray roads board has had more than a few shillings in the shape of license fees which amounts were collected from local motors, and yet their roads are used every day by motors from Perth and Fremantle which cut up the surface considerably. The Minister knows that about a year ago he went down into that district, and I accompanied him, and if we did not get shaken up enough to make him bring down two traffic Bills, I do not know him.

The Minister for Works: I was stuck in the mud for a few days.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! What has this to do with the Bill?

Mr. GEORGE: It deals with main roads, and my object is to ask the Minister when fixing up the main roads, not to forget those on which we travelled on important State business, but with great discomfort to ourselves.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must not discuss incidentals.

Mr. GEORGE: I do not think it is necessary for me to say anything more.

Mr. ALLEN (West Perth): It is not my intention to say very much in regard to this Bill. The Minister for Works, in introducing the measure referred to the reception accorded to the Bill last year in this House and in another place, and said that while he was congratulated upon making an honest endeavour to deal with this matter, he regretted the final stage which the Bill reached. In introducing legislation which has for its object any benefits, it is natural that the Minister should be congratulated, but when such a measure is considered clause by clause, and hon. members find out what it contains, that alters the complexion of the whole thing. We want, as far as possible, to be just and fair to all who are interested in the measure. The Bill before us, while it should accomplish a great deal which will be of value, also, to my mind, has some features in it which so seriously affect some of the districts interested that care is necessary before we pass such legislation. The metropolitan area from Fremantle to Midland Junction, it seems to me, has been singled out for special treatment, which, so far as I can see, is not

going to be of any great advantage at any rate to the local governing bodies comprised in that area. The conference to which the Minister, when moving the second reading of this measure, referred, was held in Perth. The Minister was present, and he made a great deal of a motion which was carried by that conference. The result of that conference was naturally what might have been anticipated. It was a sort of socialistic idea of taking what the other fellow had simply because he had it and the others themselves did not have it. The different bodies whose representatives met in conference, carried a motion in favour of pooling the license fees and distributing them proportionately. Under the existing conditions, the city of Perth, with the municipality of Fremantle are those which have been receiving the largest amount of revenue from the license fees, and the other outside municipalities represented at the conference had all to gain and nothing to lose, and they consequently supported the motion that license fees should be collected by the Minister and pooled and divided proportionately. Nothing more natural could be expected.

The Minister for Works: A very just resolution.

Mr. ALLEN: From the Minister's explanation, the system proposed in this measure is devised to take from the City a very large proportion of the revenue which is being collected in respect of licenses. To show the injustice of this measure—I want to be quite fair—we have only to refer to the city of Melbourne and there, I am given to understand, not only does the city of Melbourne collect all the license fees but receives a proportion of the fees collected in the suburbs. In Adelaide the licenses for cabs, motor cars, and other vehicles plying for hire are issued by the City Council, which retains all the license fees. Perth has something like 100 miles of macadamised roads to maintain within its boundaries and receives about £1,300 or £1,400 per annum in license fees. The Minister evidently thinks it is too much, but he himself admitted that Perth is suffering from a loss of revenue due to

the resumption of property and the taking away of certain police court fees, and now he proposes to relieve it of certain license fees that it has been enjoying. Perth has great obligations upon it to maintain the prestige proper to a capital city, and lately we have seen that its revenue is quite inadequate to maintain its roads in a proper state of efficiency, and it has had to go on the loan market. The city's revenue at the present time, in spite of this tremendous amount which the Minister is going to take away, is quite insufficient for it to maintain the roads in the state in which they ought to be found. The hon. member for Perth (Mr. Dwyer) referred to the matter of duplicating work, and I ask the Minister whether it would not be wise, if the Bill were carried in its present form, to let the local bodies collect these license fees for him. It seems to me that it would be better for them to do so at a small rate of commission, than for the Minister to establish special collectors to do it for him. One of the special points in the Bill which is agitating the minds of hon. members is the question of main roads. The Minister said he could not define what a main road is and would leave the matter to his officers, but that does not seem a satisfactory solution of the matter to the bodies interested, and I think that before the Bill becomes law something should be stated definitely so that the bodies interested shall know just what is going to be defined as a main road. The question of main roads is most important, and affects the city of Perth more than any other municipality. It is difficult to make a suggestion as to what should distinguish such roads, but I do not think we should altogether cast the responsibility on the Minister's officers. The hon. member for Perth has suggested that a commission should be appointed, and it would probably arrive at some solution.

The Minister for Works: What about the country main roads? Would you bring people down from Wyndham? You want to realise that difficulty.

Mr. ALLEN: The most important main roads are those within a reasonable distance of Perth. It is not altogether fair to say that Perth gets the whole of the

license fees of the vehicles in and around Perth. With reference to the question of stands, the Bill proposes that certain stands should be provided, and that they should be only available for vehicles licensed in the area. But the Minister has full power to make such regulations as he thinks fit. There is nothing I can see to prevent him making a regulation causing these stands to be available for any vehicle licensed outside the municipality.

**The Minister for Works:** The Minister has power to make regulations, but the regulations cannot conflict with the provisions of the measure.

**Mr. ALLEN:** I hope not, as it appears that these stands might be used by outside vehicles which would be contributing nothing for them.

**The Minister for Works:** You will find a clause dealing with them.

**Mr. ALLEN:** With regard to the maintenance of main roads, the Minister referred to one main road, the Perth-Fremantle road, and said that Perth had not kept it in the state of maintenance which it ought. The Perth council does maintain three miles out of the 11 miles of road, and I think its average expenditure would amount to £300 or £400 a year in maintaining that road; and on the recent estimates I believe £1,400 or £1,500 was provided to put the road in a state of good order. There is a clause in the Bill which says that where excessive traffic is affecting a road the local body can require those responsible for that excessive traffic to contribute towards the cost. I think that is only fair and we should welcome that in the Bill. I hope the measure will get through successfully and become law this time, as it is very necessary we should have a Bill of this kind, but at the same time we should see that we are not doing any injustice to the districts that are concerned.

**Mr. B. J. STUBBS (Subiaco):** Undoubtedly the most important new principle which is sought to be introduced in this measure is the innovation dealing with the collection and distribution of vehicle license fees, and incidentally the upkeep of main roads in the metropolitan area. Some very strong and, to my mind,

unjustifiable criticism has been levelled at the Minister because of the provisions made in this Bill to govern the metropolitan district; but while these strong criticisms have been levelled and while the Minister has been accused of attempting to make of himself a czar to have absolute control over the whole of the local governing bodies in this area, no alternative, as he points out, has been suggested to him, and it is a strange but significant fact that while certain hon. members in this Chamber profess to be guarding the interests of the local governing bodies, those bodies themselves are expressing their approbation of this measure. That occurred not only at the one conference that was held, which has been referred to by the hon. member for West Perth (Mr. Allen), but also at a deputation about two months ago, at which practically every local governing body between Perth and Fremantle was represented. The delegates at that deputation, having had the provisions of this measure explained to them by the Minister, thoroughly endorsed its provisions, and I have received from two of the local governing bodies—and I suppose other members representing metropolitan constituencies have also received them—letters asking me to do my best to get this measure passed. One is from the Midland Junction municipality and the other from the Claremont Roads Board, and I understand from information received to-day that at a meeting of the Claremont Council last evening that body also carried a motion expressing satisfaction with the provisions contained in this measure, so we see that while some members profess to be looking after the interests of these bodies, the bodies themselves are taking a directly opposite view. In dealing with this matter with regard to the control of affairs in the metropolitan area, it is necessary that we should keep before our mind the reason why vehicle licenses are collected, and I contend that the main, in fact the only reason why a vehicle license fee is paid, is for the purpose of compelling those who use the roads to contribute towards their upkeep. And if we go back a few

years we find that this extra charge was levied by a system known as toll gates, and that system was undoubtedly, to my way of thinking, the fairest that could possibly be invented, though it might be rather cumbersome to collect the fees by such a method to-day. Nevertheless, under that method of collecting vehicle license fees or rates the amount was collected on each road in accordance with the amount of traffic which went over that road, and there could be no fairer system of collecting a tax of this description.

Mr. Green: Are you prepared to advocate toll gates at Subiaco?

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: The Minister for Works has informed me that they still exist in New Zealand. Undoubtedly where you have a large amount of traffic, toll gates would be a cumbersome method and would cause inordinate delays. But while bringing our practice up to date we want to devise a system for the collection and distribution of fees as fair as that system which has passed away. I contend that no other system is possible, or has been suggested, apart from what the Minister has brought forward in this measure. The Minister has the power to appoint various local governing bodies as the collectors of the fees, but the money would be paid into a trust fund, and then apportioned out, as the Minister has explained, on the mileage of main roads in the district. With regard to the definition of a main road, when the Bill was before this Chamber last session I was one of those who very strongly advocated that a definition of main roads should be placed in the measure, but I have given the matter some thought since that time and I am convinced to-day that it is an absolute impossibility to define a main road for the purposes of a measure such as this.

Mr. Harper: How can the Minister do it?

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: The Minister is not going to attempt to do it. The officers of the Government will specify certain main roads, upon the maintenance of which they will distribute the

fees, and when the money is apportioned on those specified roads, the Minister will pay a subsidy on the amount so spent. It has been pointed out by the leader of the Opposition that there is nothing in the measure to compel the spending of this money on the road which the Minister specifies. That is true, but the Minister still possesses the power of refusing to pay the subsidy unless this money is spent upon the road which he specifies. I think that safeguards the Minister, it safeguards the local body, and, as I have stated, I can conceive of no fairer or more equitable system of collection or distribution being devised than that provided for in this measure. I might here refer to the fact that the member for West Perth likened this Bill to a socialistic measure because some bodies wanted to get something which other bodies possessed. He however, fails to realise that one body possesses something to-day to which they are not entitled, and that other bodies are undoubtedly being deprived of revenue to which they are justly entitled. If the hon. member thinks that is socialism, then his knowledge of socialism is limited. I want briefly to give him a little idea of the manner in which the collection and the distribution of the licenses operate so far as the Perth-Fremantle road is concerned. As has been pointed out, the Perth City Council collect £1,400 a year in vehicle licenses, the Claremont Roads Board collect £106 per annum, and some few months ago, shortly before the deputation waited on the Minister for Works on the subject of the upkeep of this road, the latter body kept a check over the number of vehicles which used the main road of their district on one day. They selected a day of the week which they considered would be a slack day, a day upon which there would be no boats at Fremantle, and they found that 386 vehicles passed over the Subiaco road, and 454 vehicles passed over the Perth-Fremantle road, making a total of 840 vehicles in one day. And this is the body that collects in fees the large amount of £106, representing payment for 139

vehicles. Hon. members will see that 139 vehicles are licensed in that district, and 840 passed over their main roads on one day. Coming to the Claremont Roads Board, we find that that body licenses 41 vehicles, and collects £26 17s., and the same number of vehicles passed over their roads as passed over the roads of the Claremont municipal council. We find in connection with the Claremont roads board a state of things existing which no hon. member would countenance if he wished to be just to each local governing body.

Hon. J. Mitchell: It is a very bad road.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: I would like to inform the hon. member that the section to which I am referring is the best kept portion of the Perth-Fremantle road—that is, the part over which the Claremont Roads Board has no jurisdiction. This body has to keep in repair the whole of the road between the Karrakatta cemetery and the railway line, from which they do not collect one penny in rates. Then they also have a very large portion of the main Perth-Fremantle road to keep in repair, and from which portion they collect a very small sum in rates. Hon. members will recognise the difficulty of a body such as the one to which I have referred, which has to keep in repair such a big section of the main road from which it derives so very little revenue, a road over which very heavy traffic passes: traffic, too, which is really of no benefit to the locality, because it is all through traffic. Yet they are compelled, with their very limited revenue, to keep roads such as these in repair, and they do not get anything like a fair percentage of the licenses which the owners of the vehicles using those roads have to pay. In Subiaco we find that 207 vehicles are licensed, and that their fees amount to £103. We find also that Subiaco kept an account of the traffic passing over their roads, and that a great number of vehicles which did not belong to the municipality passed over them in one day.

Mr. Allen: The same thing applies all around in the metropolitan area.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: Yes, and proves conclusively that each of these outlying districts should get its fair proportion of the vehicle licenses, and that the whole amount or practically the whole of it, should not be paid to one central body.

Mr. S. Stubbs: Are the fees the same in each case?

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: I cannot say whether or not Perth has cut down the fees to attract people to license there.

Mr. Allen: I do not think so.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: If they have not done so they are undoubtedly getting an unjust proportion of the fees that are paid. That will prove that some more equitable system must be devised for assisting those outside local governing bodies, and as I have stated, and as the Minister has pointed out, no alternative to the proposals which he has put forward, has been so far suggested by anyone, not only by members here but by local governing bodies outside. No one seems to be able to suggest any other system which will give fair and equitable treatment to these bodies, except that which is being put forward by the Minister, and as I have pointed out all local bodies, with the exception of Perth, are now in favour of the proposals contained in the Bill.

Mr. Allen: Of course they are.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: That should be sufficient to prove to hon. members that the people and those who are charged with the administration of local affairs, are favourable to this measure, and no further evidence should be required of the necessity for passing it at once into an Act, and allowing its provisions to operate. It has been pointed out again and again by speakers that the Perth-Fremantle road is in an absolutely disgraceful condition, that it is the worst possible advertisement which Western Australia could receive from visitors arriving in the State and travelling over it, but there is no solution of the difficulty, except passing this measure. The local governing body cannot keep that road in repair; it is an absolute impossibility with the limited funds at their command.

Mr. Allen: Perth spends a third of the amount it collects in licenses on its section of that road covering three miles. It spends over £400.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: There is another matter I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to—a matter which they seem to have overlooked. The Minister has referred to it more than once, and it is that when these fees are collected a subsidy is to be paid on them. If those fees plus the subsidy are not sufficient for the maintenance of these roads the obligation is then thrown on the Government to see that they are kept in proper repair. That means that if a subsidy which is paid in the first year is not sufficient for the upkeep of the roads the Government will increase it.

Mr. Allen: You have to settle the main road question first.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: I have pointed out there is no necessity whatever to settle the definition of main roads. The Minister will specify the roads on which the subsidies will be paid. If the local bodies are not satisfied with the roads which have been specified, they can make application to the Minister and point out that other roads should come under the provisions of the measure, and then if the Minister is satisfied that a good case has been made out, he will also specify those roads as main roads. I am satisfied that no Minister will do an injustice to any local governing body. The object of the Minister will always be to see that justice is meted out with an even hand, and this will be the case no matter what Minister is in power. I would scorn to suggest that any Minister controlling this department would lower himself to so disburse the funds as to try and secure votes for himself or his party. That has been suggested—

Mr. Allen: By your side.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: Yes, I am sorry to say, and I think it was an unworthy suggestion. There is another matter I would like to mention before I conclude, and it is with regard to the licenses paid for motor-cars. I contended last session when this measure was before us, and I contend again now, that the fees proposed

to be charged for the licensing of motor-cars are altogether too small. I agree with the suggestion made by the leader of the Opposition that the fees on bicycles should be abolished, and that the amount should be made up by substantially increasing the amount to be levied from motor-cars. I find that a motor-car of ten horse power or under has only to pay a fee of £2 annually. A carriage has to pay 5s. per wheel, and if it is a four-wheeled vehicle its annual license fee is £1, as against £2 paid by the ten-horse power motor-car. Everyone who has given the question consideration knows that there is no comparison between the damage done to a road by a motor-car and by a four-wheeled carriage. There is nothing so destructive to a macadamised road as a motor-car, and those who can afford to run motor-cars are the wealthiest section of the community, and they should undoubtedly be made to pay a more substantial amount towards the upkeep of the roads than they are asked to do under the Bill. Whilst I shall attempt to have that provision altered, it is my intention to give this measure my heartiest support, and I trust that it will have a speedy passage through both this Chamber and another place, and that its beneficent provisions will soon be put into operation.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE (Katanning): I am very pleased to be able to give this measure general support, reserving to myself of course the right to move in Committee any amendment which I think may be necessary.

The Minister for Works: I hope you will put them on the Notice Paper.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: This measure is one which the local governing bodies in country districts have for some time past looked forward to. We realise that it has been necessary to have a consolidating measure, bringing the various Acts together so that we may be able to apply the provisions of the new measure to the altered conditions existing to-day. I may say that so far as the local governing bodies in the country are concerned, they appreciate the interest taken in this measure by the Minister for Works, and



the opportunity which has been afforded the roads boards' executives of meeting the Minister's officers and going thoroughly into the various proposals. I am pleased that the Minister should have assured us that this measure is practically the same as the Bill which passed this Chamber last session. In the main I think its provisions meet with the approval of most members on this side of the House. There is one question which I would like to again bring under the notice of the Minister, namely, the question of fees, and the ever increasing taxation to which our primary producers are subjected. I have not the least doubt that there is every reason to expect that fees should be collected in respect to the vehicles used upon the various roads of the State. At the same time I would point out that the enterprising settler on the land who has shown his worth by his industry and thrift, and by the work he is putting into the land with a view to increasing production, which of necessity entails the provision of increased means of transport, that very often this tax presses heavily upon that individual. I suggested last session that the Minister should take into consideration the question of some rebate in this direction. I want to again point out that the man who, for instance, is paying £10 by way of rates to the roads board, if he should have vehicles in his possession which necessitated the payment of £4 or £5 wheel tax, he should pay whichever is the higher. In my opinion that is a very fair way of dealing with this matter and meeting the opposition which we so frequently hear in the country districts regarding this question of wheel tax. I have already said that this multiplicity of taxation, the State and the Federal land taxes, roads board and municipal taxation, health board taxation, and the constantly increasing taxation upon vehicles must, of course, tend to increase the cost of production. I hope the Minister will be prepared to accept some amendments when in Committee, particularly in regard to the license fees. I cannot agree with the hon. member who has just spoken in the contention that the license fee for motor-cars is altogether too small,

and that as a rule motor-cars are only used by the wealthy classes. I think we have arrived at the stage when, owing to the reasonable prices at which motor-cars are now being sold, even men of small means are able to avail themselves of this means of transport. We know that very often by the use of such vehicles a great deal of valuable time is saved, which must be of material advantage, not only to the industry, but also to the country.

Mr. Green: Have you seen many wages men going to work in them?

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: Yes very often. Frequently I have seen wages men being conveyed in motor-cars, and I think the hon. member must agree that, having regard to the ever increasing rate of wages, this saving of time represents a considerable gain to the country.

Mr. Green: Do the wages men own the cars—that is the point.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: In many instances they are of benefit to the working class. Then again, we have a question which has already been referred to, namely, that of license fees for bicycles. As I pointed out last session, I think the Minister might very well have left this out of the Bill. We should be content with provisions governing the use of bicycles on our roads. The bicycle is used very largely by the men of small means, and by school children and teachers who have long distances to travel daily, and I think we might very well have excluded the license fee for bicycles altogether. At the same time provision should be made for the numbering of bicycles so that the inspectors who administer the regulations might have some control over these particular machines. Provision is made in the Bill—I am not quite sure whether it is exactly as it left the Chamber last session—to license every driver of a motor car. Now in some families there are to be found three or four persons who drive the car. So, in addition to the fee for the licensing of the car, it will be necessary to pay 10s. for a license for each of those persons. Thus, if we have four members of one family who at various times drive the car, this will mean an increase of £2 in license fees.

I hope the Minister will see fit to eliminate this provision from the Bill when we get into Committee. I am satisfied that the width of tyre provisions embodied in the Bill are the best. I believe in the width of tyre being governed by weight per inch of tyre. In the past the Width of Tyre Act has been a dead letter, has been of very little use to the local governing bodies. In fact I do not think its provisions have been observed at all. In any case, it has been of very little use in the protection of our roads. I will be glad if the Minister, when replying, will specify in what part of the Bill he has made provision for the payment of a subsidy. We have the assurance of the Minister that a subsidy will be paid, for in his second reading speech he stated in respect to the subsidising of the various local authorities that they would earn a subsidy as outlined in the Bill. I do not see any subsidy outlined at all, and I think we ought to have some assurance from the Minister before the Bill is passed that it contains a clause guaranteeing a subsidy to the local governing body. Possibly it would not be wise to fix the amount of the subsidy, but it should be made mandatory for the Minister to pay that subsidy. I am well aware that no subsidy has been paid to the local authorities upon the fees collected by way of wheel tax, and I think it is only proper that, considering the local authorities have been able to earn a subsidy so far as their general rate is concerned, it should be made mandatory for the Minister to pay this subsidy upon the wheel tax. I have no desire to delay the measure. Indeed, I shall be pleased when it has passed both Houses. I hope the Minister will be prepared to listen to any reasonable amendment. I know there are special difficulties surrounding the apportioning of the subsidy in the metropolitan area; but surely we must be just to those particular bodies. It is only to be expected that there will be strong objections from the city of Perth, which will lose a great amount of its annual income by the proposal of the Minister, and I think some better assurance should be given to the city of Perth that the loss will be as small as possible. Perhaps the Minister

might be able to give assurance of some special consideration to be extended to the City in regard to subsidy for the first five years. That might get over the trouble. However, the proposal is surrounded by very great difficulties. It means removing the present administration of this part of their work from the control of the local authorities to the control of the Minister, which in some respects involves a certain amount of dual control. We must all agree that in matters of this kind it is not wise to have dual control. I hope wiser counsels will prevail with the Minister to accept some workable scheme which will be less objectionable to the city of Perth. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Mr. S. STUBBS (Wagin): I desire to commend the Minister for endeavouring to place on the statute book a measure which will be in the interests of the whole of the municipalities and roads boards throughout the State. Last session the Bill introduced in this Chamber did not become law, and I think blame has been attached to another place on account of the rejection of the measure. It was not due to the fact that members of another place were antagonistic to the Bill, but because of the lateness of the session when the measure was brought down. In framing this new Bill the Minister has wisely taken the precaution to eliminate several clauses of a contentious nature which were objected to by many members of this Chamber last session. And I readily agree with many of the clauses contained in the Bill. The main provision, that dealing with the collection of fees for vehicles, must, if carried as the Minister proposes, work harshly on many of the large municipalities who have, in the past, received large sums of money from the licensing of motors and other conveyances.

Mr. Allen: Not very large sums.

Mr. S. STUBBS: I understand that the City Council obtained £1,500 from the licensing of vehicles, and that is a very large amount. The collection of these fees has undoubtedly caused a good deal of dissension in the past, because of the fact that the motors and other vehicles travel through many suburban municipalities

which do not enjoy anything like the proportion of license fees that the City Council does. Very much the same position obtains in connection with country municipalities and adjoining roads boards. For instance, in the Wagin municipal area, there are a number of motor cars, but most of the traffic is over the roads controlled by the Wagin roads board, and the position is that the municipality collects the fees and the roads board has the pleasure of spending money on the maintenance of the roads.

Hon. J. Mitchell: That will be so under this Bill.

Mr. S. STUBBS: But the license fees are to be pooled.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Only in the metropolitan area.

Mr. S. STUBBS: Well, the same trouble will continue to exist with the country municipalities and roads boards as exists to-day with the suburban municipalities. If pooling of the fees is good for the suburban municipalities, why is it not good also for the country districts? However, that point can be discussed in Committee. The Minister introduced the Bill only a few days ago, and I hope he will not be anxious to hurry the measure through the Committee stage, because all the roads boards in the country have not had time to study the various clauses, and from my own district no replies have yet come to hand.

The Minister for Works: Is that not an indication that the Bill is perfect in itself?

Mr. S. STUBBS: It is no indication whatever, because they have not had time to go into the question or to suggest any improvements. I do not think that any measure ever brought in has been perfect, and it is only by due consideration by members that we can get a Bill which will be acceptable and workable in the interests of everybody concerned. Although the principles in the Bill are very good, a number of amendments can be made which will greatly improve the measure. I strongly object to the tax on bicycles for the reason that a large number of the people who will be taxed on that means of locomotion are of the poorer class,

and it would be right to exempt them from paying any fees whatever.

Mr. Foley: Have you ever heard them object to paying the tax?

Mr. S. STUBBS: I have often heard men drawing £200 a year object to a tax for the upkeep of the country. The majority of people are not averse to paying taxes where necessary, but I think this means of collecting revenue is not one that should receive the countenance of this Chamber. Another thing I object to is in connection with the license fees for motor cars. If a man owns a motor car and several members of his family learn to drive it, each one of those persons is to be penalised by being required to take out a license. In my electorate the owner of a car has to pay a license of £3 a year and he does not object, but if four or five members of his family learn to drive the one car and are to be charged 10s. each it will mean that the father of the family will require to pay a license fee of £5 or £6 a year. In the case of a person residing in the country the car is probably used only two or three times a week to travel to and from the nearest town, and if fees to that extent are to be charged, the owning of a car will become a very expensive privilege. I do not think it is necessary to penalise a family as the Bill proposes. However, I am certain that the Minister will be amenable to reason when we are dealing with the clauses in Committee. In the meantime, I desire to express my approval of the main provisions of the measure, which with some amendments may be made acceptable to the majority of members of this Chamber and another place and become law this session.

Mr. LEWIS (Canning): I have much pleasure in supporting this measure, because, in the district I represent, there are three municipalities and four roads boards, and all of them are watching very keenly the fate of this Bill. They are all desirous of seeing it have a speedy passage, because the construction and maintenance of roads throughout their districts is a very burning question with them. For instance, we have inside

the boundaries of the Victoria Park municipality and the Belmont Park roads board three racecourses, and on race days there are motor cars and every kind of vehicle travelling over those roads. This makes the cost of road maintenance very heavy, those local bodies are called upon to spend large sums of money, and the Perth City Council receives all the revenue from licenses.

Mr. Allen: The City council does not receive it all by a long way.

Mr. LEWIS: The City council receives a very large proportion, in fact more than its share. The essential feature of the measure is that the revenue from licenses is to be pooled and distributed among the local governing bodies throughout the metropolitan area. In introducing the Bill the Minister said that it was not his intention to impose speed limits. If that is to be the case, I hope that heavy penalties will be imposed on drivers who disregard the warning posts, especially when passing schools. A reckless driver may permanently injure children coming from school, and if signs are disregarded, very heavy fines should be imposed on the driver. I am also opposed to a tax on bicycles, and I think the Minister ought to accept an amendment to strike out that provision. We know that throughout the metropolitan area there are men with large families who buy bicycles in order to save fares on account of those children who are apprenticed to some trade or are working for small wages, and this tax would be a heavy burden on them. The Bill is largely governed by regulations and it is not my intention to take up any further time in discussing it at this stage. I hope that we shall be able to carry it through Committee and that in another Chamber it will meet with approval on this occasion.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam): I can assure the hon. member for Wagin that this Bill has been earnestly considered by most of the people in the country. It is of considerable interest to them as it is to us, because we are all desirous of having our main roads better maintained than they are at the present

time. The underlying principle of the Bill is really the better upkeep of the principal roads. The Bill will not do very much to help in that direction, for I venture to say that it will take a tremendous amount of money to place our main roads in reasonable repair. Of course we are a very scattered community and we have a tremendous mileage of roads from one end of the State to the other. Our taxes are very heavy at the present time, but they are spread over such an extent of country that no place can make any very substantial improvement. There are many good provisions in the Bill and most of them were in the measure of last year. By the way, the Bill was discussed in this House and then it went to another place. Since then the Minister has been to the country and has convinced the electors that if they had only had this Traffic Bill they would have received additional revenue in the form of a special grant for the upkeep of main roads. To-day the taxpayers say, "Let us have the Bill so that we may have some of the Minister's promised subsidy." I do not know where he is going to get the money, because there is no provision in the Bill for the payment of a subsidy. It will remain with the Minister to pass a vote through Parliament from year to year for the payment of the subsidy. However, we have the word of the Minister that the subsidy will be from £3,000 to £10,000 and that will be a help to the municipalities if it is in addition to, and not a substitute for, any subsidy now paid.

The Minister for Works: It is an addition.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Then if it is an addition the municipalities will gain. The Minister stated the other night that he was unable to define in the Act what he means by "main roads." I quite understand that there is a difficulty, but I cannot see how the difficulty will be removed after the Bill is passed. The Minister asked that he should have the power and he would determine which are the main roads and what money was to be paid on account of them. We know that the main roads are those which carry the main amount of traffic, and it will be difficult for the Minister, dealing with roads from

the far north to the extreme south, to determine where money should be spent. I think the Minister is taking on a fairly big contract when he undertakes to declare for each of these boards just the roads on which the subsidy and license fees are to be expended. It is interesting to find members for the metropolitan area, the member for Perth and the member for West Perth, objecting to the Minister becoming a licensing authority, taking control of the license fees, having the sole control and determining without the assistance of anyone just what amount of money is to be paid to any of these municipalities.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): The money is the only objection.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: On the other hand, we have representatives of suburban areas, who think they will gain under this provision, declaring the Bill to be fair and reasonable. They are perfectly willing that the Minister should take possession of the license fees forthwith in order that the money may be distributed throughout their various electorates. I do not know whether the support they are giving the Minister means that the Minister is doing right in determining, as this Bill does, that he is to have power to collect all license fees and the right to distribute them as he pleases, and that they are to be spent where he says they are to be spent. I think the Minister will find that the cost of collection and administration will eat up a good portion of the license fees to be collected. It is the duty of this House to consider what is fair and what is right where the metropolitan area is concerned. It is not fair to pass legislation simply because it does not concern some members very much. It is not right for the House to pass legislation which will cost the country a good deal of money. It is not right to pass this measure without inquiring from the Minister what the added cost will be to the taxpayer as a result of the alteration. Will the Minister set up another office with a staff of inspectors and probably of clerks in addition to the staff now engaged by the municipality?

The Minister for Works: What for?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: To administer that portion of the measure under the Minister. The Minister should give the House some idea of the probable cost, and the measure, of course, gives the Minister great powers not only in the metropolitan area but throughout the State generally, but the cost will be largely confined to the administration of the law in the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Works: Absolutely.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: That is where the Minister is in sole control. I think the Minister is undertaking something into which he has not gone very closely when he proposes, as is done, to provide all officers necessary to administer this measure, to issue licenses, and to do all other things necessary even in this small area. I suppose he intends to charge the cost of administration against the license fees collected. I entirely approve with the provisions for the regulation of traffic. The Minister has power under the measure to fix a speed limit and another clause provides that no vehicle is to be driven to the danger of the public. This is a very good provision and I am very pleased that it has found a place in this measure. It would be useless in the country districts unless the Minister fixed a speed limit. Motors are driven at a furious pace along country roads and it should be an offence to drive a motor beyond a limit to be fixed under the measure. When the Bill becomes law, the law will then be uniform throughout the State and that will be of great assistance in the matter of regulating traffic. The Minister will find that he will have considerable trouble under this Bill and there will be very many disappointed people throughout country districts, particularly in the early stages of the administration of the law, because every man who contributes by way of a license fee will claim that he is living on a main road. The adoption of the system of fixing loads according to the width of the tyres is a very important matter. In South Australia I believe the weight is 900 lbs. to the inch; I am not very certain, but it seems to me the Minister will do well to ascertain what is done in the other States before asking us to pass this proposal. It

is very much better to fix the load according to the width of the tyres, than to the size of the axle, and I approve of the Minister regulating the weight in this way. But I think the weight as fixed at 800 lbs. per inch is too low. The Minister is keen on the Bill becoming law, and in his anxiety to excuse the rejection of the measure last year, he has time and again said that the Bill would have been law to-day but for the treatment meted out to it in another place.

The Minister for Works: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Speakers to-night have agreed that the Bill was not sufficiently considered last year owing to the lack of time.

The Minister for Works: Nonsense.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We have plenty of time this year and the Minister will find that notwithstanding anything he has said the Bill will receive very earnest consideration at the hands of every member. It is useless to say that because another place is elected on a limited franchise, elected on a franchise that largely comprises the people who vote at the roads board elections, the outlook of such representatives must be much narrower than that of the representatives in this House. The Minister is entirely wrong.

The Minister for Works: I say, judging by the Bill last year.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The people most concerned in this measure are those who own property, who pay house rent and who have the qualification to vote for members in another place. The Minister will find that the outlook of the hon. gentlemen to whom he has referred rather disparagingly is sufficiently broad to deal with this and any other measure he may bring down, and the Minister will find them sufficiently fair to give every measure proper consideration. But the Minister must expect to have opposition. There never was such promise of opposition from his own side since we have occupied the Opposition benches as there has been on this occasion; it is quite nice to see the Minister faced with opposition from his own followers. We ought to have sufficient support to make some drastic alterations to the Bill.

Mr. Monger: Take a vote and they will turn around.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I have no desire to detain the House longer. There are provisions in the Bill which should become law; there are some which should be altered, and I want the Minister to agree that he should not take away power from the local authorities. I do not agree with the centralisation of power in the Minister, and the Minister should not ask the House to agree to it. Probably the Committee will agree to some amendment, because it would be impossible for the Minister to do more than administer the Act as head of the Works Department. It would be impossible to administer it as the head of every roads board in the State. When the Bill does become law I hope that the Minister's promise of a substantial subsidy on the license fees collected by each roads board will eventuate and that the amount of such subsidy will be stated by the Minister in his reply.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (Honorary Minister): It is rather pleasing to hear hon. members of the Opposition at last agreeing to the principles of a Bill introduced by the Minister for Works.

Mr. Monger: Principles only.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (Honorary Minister): But I am afraid that instead of looking at the Bill from a State point of view they are looking at it entirely from the point of view of centralisation. Nearly every member of the Opposition who has spoken has pointed out the possibility of the Perth City Council losing some funds in the shape of license fees if this Bill is passed. As a matter of fact, hon. members are overlooking the point that every other district in the metropolitan area, outside of Perth and Fremantle, is supporting this Bill.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Of course, they gain by it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (Honorary Minister): They comprise the greater number.

Hon. J. Mitchell: But they gain by it.

Mr. Male: They are interested parties.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (Honorary Minister): If hon. members would only travel

down the Perth-Fremantle road they would realise the necessity for such a Bill becoming law.

Hon. J. Mitchell: They want more money to spend on it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (Honorary Minister): Let hon. members walk down St. George's-terrace and see the scores of motor cars lined up.

Hon. J. Mitchell: They are all socialists.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (Honorary Minister): All the license fees, not only the wheel license, but the passenger license fees are paid to the Perth City Council, and almost all the time these motors are using roads, the upkeep of which is paid for by councils other than the Perth City Council. I have known instances, I will not say in Perth, where unless a motor car stationed in some outlying district was registered in the town where it plied for hire, it was refused a license as a passenger vehicle. And while the outlying districts roads were used equally with or more so than those of the larger town, the owner of the car was compelled to obtain a license from the town in which he plied for hire.

Mr. Monger: Is that so?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (Honorary Minister): Yes, I know of licenses having been refused on this account, and the owners have refrained from going to suburban towns for licenses because they were refused. This shows that there should be a licensing authority. To-day there is a possibility of a license fee being demanded in each district, and look at the number of districts in the metropolitan area. If this Bill becomes law it will be necessary to be licensed only once.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You must not be unfair.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (Honorary Minister): The position to-day is unfair and this Bill will make it fair. It was interesting to hear hon. members opposite complaining of taking away the powers of local authorities. I think there is no member on the Opposition benches who would agree to give local authorities full

rating powers. They have opposed it in the past and would oppose it again.

Hon. J. Mitchell: They have pretty full powers now.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (Honorary Minister): Every local governing Bill brought down when members of the present Opposition were in power limited the local authorities in this way; yet, after pressing this limitation on the House, embodying it in their Bills, and realising the necessity for it, they now complain that the Minister for Works has introduced the same provision in this Bill.

Mr. Allen: That is no excuse for him.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (Honorary Minister): I am showing the inconsistency of members of the Opposition. It shows that they consider what is good for them is bad for someone else. What was good for them when they were in office should be good for them now that they are out of office.

Mr. Allen: They have seen the error of their ways.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (Honorary Minister): They have not done so, and their actions since have shown it. I hope that the Bill will become law, as I realise the necessity for it. Every one who has taken part in local governing work realises the necessity for it, and members opposite would do the same if they could only get the city area out of their minds. I am safe in saying, and I do not think it will be contradicted, that if the Minister included in this Bill a provision that all the fees collected for licenses in the city of Perth to-day should be retained for the city of Perth, there would be nothing in this Bill to which objection would be taken. The whole of the opposition depends entirely on the money that some district is likely to lose, the money it is likely to lose that it is not entitled to to-day, and which to-day it is taking from other districts which have to provide the upkeep of roads which vehicles from the other districts run over. The law in the past has been wrong, and this measure will put it on a more just basis, so that districts which to-day are kept almost in a state of pov-

erty in connection with the upkeep of main roads, will have their just share of the license fees. There is no doubt to my mind that the local authorities throughout Western Australia are in accord with this Bill, and many of our country members are in opposition to it contrary to the desire of the local authorities in their districts.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (in reply) : When one considers the nature of this measure, I think I can safely claim that the criticism of it has been mild indeed. The Bill is, of course, bristling with technicalities, and it deals with one of the most difficult questions I have had to grapple with since I have been Minister for Works. I am not here to claim that everything within the covers of this Bill is the last word that can be said with regard to any particular clause. I am prepared to consider any propositions submitted in Committee, and in order to give proper consideration and to have the expert advice I am entitled to get with regard to amendments, I would like hon. members to put their amendments on the Notice Paper, and it would be fairer to me.

Hon. J. Mitchell : Will you give a few days ?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : I am not prepared to go on indefinitely as I, with other members, am anxious to bring the session to a close at the earliest possible moment, and the Bill has been before members long enough to enable them to get their amendments ready. I do not propose to go into the Committee stage to-night, but when I do so I hope that hon. members' amendments will be on the Notice Paper. This is not a new measure so far as the Public Works Department is concerned. The necessity for this Bill has been brought home to various Ministers controlling the local government after numerous public meetings of the bodies interested, but no Minister has been prepared to tackle it. It is a measure which must bring a certain amount of criticism upon the shoulders of any Minister who undertakes to see it through. I recognise this difficulty, and I want hon. members to recognise it, and

I want them to recognise that it is a Bill which has been delayed because of the difficulty of framing it to meet all the conflicting conditions existing in the State to-day.

Mr. Monger : And you alone have the courage to produce it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : That may be, but the necessity for the Bill was never greater than it is to-day. I think that every member who has spoken has agreed that the Bill is absolutely necessary, and while I do not want to claim any special credit for having introduced it, I think it is as well to put on record that the Bill was introduced by the present Government, but it had been considered by previous Governments, who were not prepared to introduce it. The leader of the Opposition complained that the Minister was taking control of traffic instead of leaving it as it is to-day under the control of the local body, but I would like to point out that it is impossible to leave the control of traffic under the local body and have a Traffic Bill. The very nature of the Bill necessitates a centralising authority, and, as I pointed out in my second reading speech, somebody has got to take the responsibility of preparing the regulations so that they may be uniform throughout the State. Somebody has got to take the responsibility of the centralising authority to overcome the unfairness which exists to-day with regard to the license fees in the metropolitan area, and while it has been said that the Minister for Works has been trying to make a czar of himself, and take all the authority, or, as the hon. member for York (Mr. Monger) said, to make a Poo Bah of himself, the fact remains that someone must do it, and surely the central authority required under the Bill should be the Minister in control of the measure. The leader of the Opposition went on to state that we were supposed to be a Government of decentralisation and had preached decentralisation, whereas we were centralising; but you must centralise the authority to make regulations if you want them uniform, otherwise you have the conflicting ones in existence to-day. The hon. member stated that he questioned the right of



the Minister to interfere with local governing bodies and he made a special point in championing the Perth municipality, but he has to bear in mind that while it is true Perth is protesting—I do not object to their protesting at all, and, as the hon. member for Katanning (Mr. A. E. Piesse) points out, possibly if some money were to be taken from the Midland municipality I would enter a protest—I object to Perth entering a protest and to that protest receiving special consideration at the hands of Parliament. I want Perth's protest to be weighed in the balance and compared with the protests lodged by other municipalities in the metropolitan area for years past. While Perth is protesting, and while the hon. member has questioned my power to interfere, it must be borne in mind that I did not express any desire to interfere until I was approached and requested to do so by a representative conference of all the local governing authorities in the metropolitan area. They met in conference and appealed to me as Minister to do something to overcome the anomaly existing, where they had to be maintaining roads and the fees from the vehicles were collected by Perth. While Perth is protesting we have to bear in mind the fact that Perth has been receiving special consideration for so many years that we should now arrive at an understanding between Perth's claims as compared with the claims of other local governing bodies in the metropolitan area. The hon. member said that this would be overcome if the Government carried out their promise—I do not know where the promise was made—in regard to the introduction of a Greater Perth Bill, but it would not do anything of the sort. A Greater Perth Bill would limit the difficulty to-day, but not overcome it. A Greater Perth Bill would not include the whole of the metropolitan area. If it did it would be all right, but it does not, and consequently would not overcome the difficulty we propose to overcome in this Bill. The hon. member said that we should define a main road. He admitted the difficulty of a definition, but he went on to point out that we should at least declare in the Bill what are the main roads, and so give an indication to

the local bodies as to the roads that would receive the amount of license fees and the subsidy we propose to pay. I want to point out, however, that we cannot declare main roads and put them inside an Act of Parliament, because main roads differ. There may be a main road to-day, but developments in the near future may cause another road to spring up that may be a main road, and the other to become a subsidiary or secondary road. It would mean that we would have to introduce practically every year an amending Bill to add to or take from the main roads provided in the principal Act. It is not a practical suggestion. In regard to these main roads, we do not propose to define a main road. Hon. members say they are of opinion that I am not able to define a main road so as to place it in an Act of Parliament, but that I am going to take the license fees and then proceed to define it. What we propose to do is to declare what, in the opinion of the officers of the Works Department, are genuine main roads, and then proceed to distribute the license fees in just proportion. It is impossible to go on as we are to-day. All sorts of attempts have been made to overcome the difficulty, not only by the present Government, but by previous Governments, but no solution has been arrived at. The proposition that has been submitted by the present Government has been criticised, but no alternative has been suggested. Take the attitude of another place; they deleted one of the main features of the Bill, that applying to the metropolitan area, where the necessity for the measure is most pronounced, and by taking that out they defeated the Bill. I would not have minded if they had taken that out and at the same time indicated that they would put something in its place, but they never submitted any alternative proposal at all. They took a salient feature out and then, having defeated the Bill by that means, protested because we removed the measure from the Notice Paper. If the part in question is taken from the Bill the measure is no good to us.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Oh, no.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: What is the good of a Traffic Bill, the main feature of which is to deal with main roads,

if it does not apply to the metropolitan area? If that is taken away without inserting something else, the Bill is defeated, and we have no alternative—the salient feature having been taken away—but to ask the Chamber to discharge it from the Notice Paper. The hon. member for Perth (Mr. Dwyer) waxed eloquent and alluded to me as “czar” and pointed out that Parliament was going to have no control.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Will you not be czar in this measure?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Not at all. The hon. member said, what is true, as I remarked the other night, that moneys expended by a Minister of the Crown should be subjected to the criticism of Parliament, and he took up the attitude that I was going to distribute these license fees and Parliament would have no voice in the matter. It is not so. It is true that we take the license fees, and say these fees should go into a trust fund, but the Bill also says that these license fees should be distributed back to the local bodies in proportion to the amount of main road. That only makes the case broader even than I desired to indicate. It simply states then that the license fees shall go into the trust fund, and that the money shall be sent back to the local bodies.

Mr. Dwyer: At the discretion of the Minister.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: But the license fees given again to the local bodies would be of no value unless we subsidised them. The subsidy is placed on the Estimates, the Minister for Works being given a lump sum to distribute, and hon. members will have the same opportunity of offering criticism as they have in regard to roads board grants.

Mr. A. E. Piesse: What obligation is there on the part of the Minister to place that money on the Estimates?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No more than the original roads board subsidy. There is no obligation to fix any particular sum, but the Government have to take the responsibility and they place it on the Estimates because it is in the interests of the development of the coun-

try that it should be there. The present Government increased the subsidies paid by the previous Government under both the Roads Board Act and the Municipalities Act. This, however, is purely a matter of administration, and the Government have to take the responsibility of it. On last year's Estimates we provided a sum of money for the purpose of subsidising the fees as collected under the Traffic Bill. We were then under the impression that the Bill would become law, and that the subsidies would be operated, and we stated that a certain amount would be distributed in the metropolitan area and another sum in the country districts. Exactly the same will be done this year, but when the Estimates are brought down hon. members will see that provision has been made for an increase over the amount which was provided last year. This is due to the fact that last year's amount was intended to cover six months, while this year we are providing for 12 months. The only question which will give rise to criticism will be in regard to the responsibility which the Minister will take in the direction of declaring main roads. The Minister will be subject to criticism because he cannot declare every road a main road, yet if we take the views of the local governing bodies, they will always maintain that they have four or five in their boundaries, but if we agreed to all that they claim as being main roads, the Minister would assume control over all roads, and there would be no need for local bodies at all. The Public Works Department have control over local bodies, and the Minister has the assistance of expert officers whose duty it will be to study these matters, and they will set to work to declare main roads, and having done so, the local bodies will be instructed to spend their license fees on those roads, and the department will subsidise them on the amount collected, provided that it is spent on those main roads. The amount of the license fee plus the subsidy will be based on the length and width of the road. I do not know that the hon. member helped me in regard to his proposition that main roads should be defined by the appointment of commissioners. By way of interjection I

asked him whether these commissioners should be civil servants, and he said yes. That is the provision in the Bill. The point is that the roads have to be declared, and by whom are they declared? If they are declared by the Minister for Works, the expert officers are the gentlemen who assist the Minister in arriving at that decision, so that instead of appointing them commissioners we arrive at the same end by reason of the fact that they are experts who advise the Minister as to which are, and which are not, main roads, and then the Minister declares them. After all, the hon. member's suggestion is the method by which we will arrive at the solution of this admittedly difficult matter. Then the hon. member considered that it was unfair to place in the Bill a proposal that the dismissal of an inspector should be subject to the Minister's approval. The member for Murray-Wellington gave a reason for that, but this is a matter which in the ordinary case the Minister would not interfere with. In the general routine it would be only a matter of form, but as we have found that local governing bodies dismiss active men over the question of collecting licenses, then it is the duty of the State to protect those men who are doing their duty against the interference of locally interested bodies.

Mr. Broun: A local body would not dismiss such a man.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It has been done. In my own district, recently, while travelling at night, I came across a number of straying stock on the road. I met one of the councillors subsequently, and protested that it was dangerous to allow stock to run on main roads, and I asked the councillor why the stock were not pounded. He replied, "We are not using the pound to any extent; we had a pound-keeper, but he was too jolly active and we got rid of him, and now one of the municipal employees is told off to make a raid and get in the stock straying at that particular time." That man, however, went to a livery stable and hired a horse, and then everyone was communicated with by telephone, with the result that very little pounding was done. That, however, is only a small

item compared with the dodging, if I may use the term, of license fees. Hon. members must realise that it is necessary to give the Minister power to step in when he sees that an injustice is being done. The member for Northam desired information as to what was going to be the extra cost of administration, so far as the local governing bodies were concerned. So far as the country districts are concerned, under this measure there will be no additional cost for administration. The officers we have now will be sufficient to cope with this matter because after all, it is only a small matter, so far as country districts are concerned. The hon. member may argue that we are revolutionising things and that in the metropolitan area it will be necessary to appoint traffic inspectors. But if we do we are only perpetuating what is in existence to-day, and if we do that, the local body will not require to keep such officers, and while this may cost a little more from the central fund it will be a reduction so far as the city of Perth is concerned. They will not require to keep their traffic inspector, and we shall appoint a general inspector for the metropolitan area. Then we can use the police to enforce the provisions of the measure, but we must have a traffic inspector to take necessary action. That traffic inspector may be the secretary of a roads board or he may be a town clerk. There is no reason why we should not utilise the services of a local Government officer if it is in the interests of the Traffic Bill that these officers should be so employed. There is another matter I would like to refer to, and which was raised by the member for Katanning, namely the subject of taxation. The hon. member said that taxation is on the increase, and we should endeavour to arrive at the solution of this difficulty by reducing it in other directions. But I want to point out that while we are increasing taxation possibly by enforcing the provisions of measures already on the statute-book we are not imposing any fresh measure of taxation generally speaking, but we are simply giving the local authorities special inducement to impose taxation principally in connection with vehicles. The hon.

member argued that, taking certain districts, a ratepayer pays a large amount under the Roads Act for general roads taxation, and then in addition pays a large amount under the Traffic Bill, and that we ought to take the greater of the two and make that apply. It would not apply for this reason. If a ratepayer pays a large amount under the Roads Act he naturally has a lot of property. The tax is on the property, not on the individual.

Mr. A. E. Piesse: What about the man who has a small property and pays a number of license fees?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: One pays on property and you cannot argue against that. Then if you have a lot of vehicles it is a fair assumption that the owner of those vehicles is using the roads, and he should pay more than the man who does not use them. Another matter to which I wish to refer is the tax on bicycles. I am not particularly anxious to impose taxation on bicycles, but the provision has been made in the Bill at the request of the local bodies. The roads board conference asked us to put this in. In many parts of this State special bicycle pads are maintained at the requests of cyclists, who appeal to the local bodies to maintain them, and consequently it is these bodies who desire to continue to levy the tax from bicycles. I am prepared, however, to go into the question and see whether it is possible to limit the operation of this provision to the gold-fields areas. In the country districts and in Perth we do not make special bicycle pads, but in Kalgoorlie, for instance, there are special pads maintained for bicycles. In the backblocks also pads are kept off the main road and are specially protected for the benefit of cyclists. I do not know, however, whether we can limit the collection of the license fees from bicycles to any particular part of the State, but if it is possible, I am prepared to do it.

Mr. Allen: In Perth they should be required to carry their number on the back of the machine.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is a matter which we have power under the regulations to provide for. One question brought forward by an hon. member was that we should have the name of the owner of the vehicle painted on a licensed vehicle. I think, myself, that is desirable.

Mr. Taylor: It is practically provided for in the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Those are matters which we can deal with when in Committee. Let me say in conclusion that I recognise the Bill is one bristling with technicalities and courting the greatest amount of criticism. If hon. members desired to be extremely hostile, they could read all sorts of things into the Bill. But they will agree with me that the main provisions of the measure, although they appear drastic, are to be found to-day in our local government Acts. In the Roads Act, a considerable number of the provisions find a place, while others are in the Municipal Act. They appear drastic, but the provisions are already embodied in existing local government Acts. All we are doing is to collect them and put them into one measure, so that those using the roads, whether by motor car or bullock dray, will know exactly what is expected of them, what fees they have to pay and under what conditions they have to drive their vehicles, no matter in what part of the State they may be.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*House adjourned at 10.31 p.m.*