

it with an adequate septic system, and the result would be that a great deal of money would be saved on the revenue side.

We are told that classrooms must be provided before septic systems. That will go on for some considerable time. It is bound to. However, I would suggest to the Treasurer and to the Minister for Works that they should treat this as a more urgent matter. It is urgent that septic systems be provided in public buildings; and, as I said before, particularly in schools in different parts of the State.

Before concluding, I would like to mention something about the north. The Minister gave us reasons why it was not advisable, in some cases, to provide bitumen roads in the north. I am not quoting him word for word, but that is his meaning. He explained why. He said if bitumen roads were provided in country such as the Kimberleys, load restrictions would have to be placed upon certain vehicles.

I think road trains will become more common in those areas—

Mr. Brand: There is no doubt about that.

Sir ROSS McLARTY: —and they are necessary in order to get cattle to market in better shape than is being done under present circumstances. But if we are to use road trains, we must be careful not to bruise and knock the cattle about. A month or two ago I saw certain cattle that had been carted by truck into a port in the Kimberleys and some of them were so badly bruised that they had to go down the chute.

The only way to avoid that, if road trains are to be used—and we need this more modern form of transport in the Kimberleys—is by providing better roads. I feel that is one of the things that will have to be done; and I would ask the Minister to give consideration to it when he is forming his next road programme throughout the State.

I am glad to have had the opportunity of mentioning these few matters, and hope that the Minister will view them sympathetically, as he has promised to do in the one case. We will then get some practical results from the attention the Minister has given to these matters.

Progress reported.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Premier—Northam): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.15 p.m. today.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 12.27 a.m. (Friday).

Legislative Council

Friday, the 5th December, 1958.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

BASSENDAN BUS SERVICE.*Presentation of Petition.*

The Hon. A. F. Griffith presented a petition from residents of Bassendean praying for reconsideration by the Government of its decision to discontinue No. 56 bus service from Perth to Bassendean and to implement the feeder service to Ashfield and Bassendean railway station.

Petition received and read.

THE HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (Suburban) [2.35]: I certify that the petition has been signed by 659 people. To address myself very briefly to this matter, I would like to say that it has arisen out of the Government's decision to do the very thing which is contained in the petition. I asked the Minister for Railways a question on the 26th November leading to a further question on the 29th November concerning the implementation of this arrangement—

The **PRESIDENT**: I do not think the hon. member can discuss it at this stage. The petition has to lie on the Table of the House.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: With respect, might I refer to Standing Order No. 82 which entitles me to address myself to the subject of the petition? The other Standing Order appertaining to this matter is No. 84. This Standing Order clearly states that an hon. member shall confine himself to a statement of the parties from whom the petition comes.

The **PRESIDENT**: If you have a statement from the parties I would say you are in order.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I have a statement, which I read in the petition. Might I respectfully refer you again to Standing Order No. 84?

The **PRESIDENT**: Standing Order No. 84 reads as follows:—

The only questions entertained by the Council on the presentation of a petition shall be:— 1. "That the petition be received." 2. "That the petition be read." 3. "That the petition be printed." 4. (In case of a petition respecting any subject then under the consideration of a Select Committee) "That the petition be referred to the Select Committee on . . ."

I do not think the hon. member is in order. I cannot see anything in Standing Orders permitting him to do what he suggests. After the petition has been tabled he will have the opportunity.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: If you would be good enough to have a look at the proviso to No. 84, Sir, you will see the following words:—

Provided, however, that the matters contained in a petition complaining of some present personal grievance,

for which immediate remedy is necessary, may be discussed on the presentation of the petition.

This is a personal grievance of 659 people.

The **PRESIDENT**: Yes, but it has not arisen suddenly. That bus service has been discontinued for some little time now. You are referring to a previous discussion which you had in the House.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: This matter has never been debated in the House prior to this. This matter occurred as recently as November.

The **PRESIDENT**: I will allow the hon. member to go on but I still think he is out of order.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: There is any amount of precedence. To make sure I was on the right track I even looked up the last petition I presented which was in connection with the establishment of a native reserve. The hon. Mr. Loton was in the Chair when I presented that petition and addressed myself briefly to the subject matter of it. I stated why the people thought it was necessary to petition the Legislative Council.

The **PRESIDENT**: I draw the hon. member's attention to the fact that I have seen many petitions presented in another place, and under the Standing Orders there, which are very similar to ours, no discussion was allowed until after the petition had been tabled. However, if the House has no objection to the hon. member discussing the matter I shall take no objection to it.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Thank you, Mr. President. I shall be as brief as I possibly can. Prior to the House meeting, I informed the Minister that I would like to place the petition on the Table of the House and I merely wanted to state the facts briefly before I did so. This matter arose out of a series of questions that I asked, and the Bassendean Road Board, apparently, is not very pleased about the Government's actions in this matter. The only letter from the Bassendean Road Board in regard to it that I wish to quote from is addressed to me and dated the 2nd December. Under the heading of "Re-routing of Bassendean Bus Services" the letter reads—

Herewith copy of the letter from the W.A. Government Tramways and Ferries, dated the 22nd October last, which was received on the 23rd October.

This letter was delivered the day following a meeting of the board, and although shown to the chairman, was not discussed by the full board until its next meeting, held on the 12th November, 1958.

The letter, dated the 18th November, of which you have a copy, was the result of the discussion which took place thereon.

I do not propose to quote from that letter. I am merely trying to point out that, according to the Bassendean Road Board, the service was proposed to be commenced on the 9th November, and the board did not discuss it until the 12th November.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Did you approach the Minister for Transport in relation to the matter?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: No. On behalf of the people whom I represent, and who have taken the trouble to get the petition signed, I am having it laid on the Table of the House. They object to the Government's action in this matter and, on their behalf, and as the member for the district, I am obliged to fulfil their request. Without wasting any further time I move—

That the petition be laid on the Table of the House.

Point of Order.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Mr. President, is the motion open for discussion?

The PRESIDENT: No. Standing Order No. 83 reads as follows:—

Every petition which, according to these Standing Orders, may be received shall be brought to the Table by the member presenting the same, and no discussion upon the subject matter therein shall be allowed.

The hon. member was so persistent that I was not able to pick that point out.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: If the matter is not open for discussion, Mr. President, by what means did the hon. member debate the motion he moved?

The PRESIDENT: As far as I am concerned the matter is closed.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, on a personal explanation—

The PRESIDENT: I do not think it is necessary. We will let the matter drop. The hon. member will be seated.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: With respect, I do not like you, Mr. President, saying that I am defiant to the Chair.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Will the hon. member please resume his seat! I do not think I shall allow any further discussion on this matter. I am in the hands of the House, and if hon. members desire, they may disagree with my ruling. If not, the matter is closed.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am not suggesting that we disagree with your ruling, Mr. President, but the hon. member's action in persisting against your ruling gave him a distinct advantage.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: You can make a speech on the matter and nothing is done about it.

Debate Resumed.

Question put and passed.

Petition tabled.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE.

LANDS, Etc.

Resumption of Certain Avon Locations.

1A. The Hon. C. R. ABBEY asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is there any possibility of Avon Locations Nos. 1676, 3472, 10144, 20 I, 20 H, 20 G, 21, 1230, 1054, formerly held by the estate of the late John Clifford and resumed by the Public Works Department for the Goldfields Water Supply catchment area, being released for selection?

(2) If the answer to No. (1) is "No," is there any possibility of this land being leased by interested parties?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) No.

Government Policy Regarding Adjoining Areas.

1B. The Hon. C. R. ABBEY asked the Minister for Railways:

What is Government policy regarding other areas adjoining these blocks now being developed for agriculture?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND replied:

The general policy is to purchase land as and when finances permit with the object of limiting the ultimate pollution and salinity of the water from the catchment area.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE.

NOXIOUS WEEDS.

Increase in Incidence in Kalgoorlie Area.

The Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is the Minister aware of the amazing increase in the incidence of noxious weeds in the Kalgoorlie area?

(2) Is he aware that the varieties of noxious weeds now include calthrops, Paterson's curse, star thistle?

(3) What steps have been taken to control or eradicate these pests in the Kalgoorlie area?

(4) Does the Minister consider that such pests in this area constitute a menace to other agricultural or pastoral areas?

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE replied:

(1) The Kalgoorlie area has experienced early summer rains and this can be expected to cause a strong growth of summer weeds, such as Bathurst burr and calthrop.

(2) Yes. Bathurst burr which is regarded more seriously is also present.

(3) Spraying and grubbing for the control of Bathurst burr are carried out by the Agriculture Protection Board. Control measures are also taken against calthrop in places from which it is most likely to be spread. Local authorities have also taken some action against calthrop and saffron (star) thistle.

(4) Yes, if uncontrolled, particularly Bathurst burr. Action being taken aims at reducing the risk of spread to agricultural areas.

NATIVES (CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS) ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Annulment of Proceedings.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (Minister for Railways—North) [2.46]: I move without notice—

That the provisions of Standing Order No. 243 having been overlooked in connection with the second reading of the Natives (Citizenship Rights) Act Amendment Bill, the proceedings on the Bill subsequent to the first reading be annulled.

Question put and passed.

Second Reading.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (Minister for Railways—North) [2.47]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

THE HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [2.48]: I should like to take this opportunity, now that the Bill has been re-submitted, to point out to the House a very inaccurate statement which appeared in this morning's issue of "The West Australian." If this is the kind of treatment which is to be meted out to hon. members of this House, I think it is time something was done about it. Those who read this morning's paper would have seen a headline which reads, "Native Rights Bill Opposed." But not one hon. member in this House opposed the Bill. We took exception to certain portions of some clauses, and the Minister agreed to accept amendments to them. This sort of thing is not fair to hon. members, or to the House generally.

The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: There are different versions in the country and city issues.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I have not read the country issue, but I read the city edition this morning. I found this great headline about the "Native Rights Bill" being opposed. That was certainly not so, because no action such as that was taken. I thought this was an opportunity to point out to hon. members, in case they had not read the paper, exactly what was going on. I take strong exception to it. Why cannot we get the truth of what goes on in this House reported in the paper?

Point of Order.

The Hon. A. L. LOTON: On a point of order, I wonder if the hon. member should not have taken action under Standing Order No. 403, instead of taking the opportunity to discuss this matter during the debate on the Bill before us. Standing Order No. 403 states—

Any member complaining to the Council of a statement in a newspaper as a breach of privilege shall produce a copy of the paper containing the statement in question, and be prepared to give the name of the printer or publisher, and also submit a substantive motion declaring the person in question to have been guilty of contempt.

The PRESIDENT: That matter can be proceeded with at a later stage.

Debate Resumed.

Question put.

The PRESIDENT: I have counted the House. There is an absolute majority present and voting and, there being no dissentient voice, I declare the question carried.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

The Hon. W. R. Hall in the Chair; the Hon. H. C. Strickland (Minister for Railways) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—put and passed.

Clause 3—Section 4 amended:

On motions by the Hon. J. M. Thomson, clause amended as follows:—

Page 2, line 3—By inserting after the word "amended" the paragraph designation "(a)".

Page 2—By adding at the end of the clause a new paragraph as follows:—

(b) by adding a new paragraph (c) to subsection (2) as follows:—

(c) stating the full names, sex and date of birth of all children under the age of twenty-one years.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 4—Section 5 amended:

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I understand that the hon. Mr. Thomson is not proceeding with the first amendment in his name appearing on yesterday's notice paper. I therefore move—

Page 2—Delete paragraph (c) and substitute a new paragraph (c) as follows:—

(c) by deleting in subsection (5) the words "may upon application in the prescribed form" and substituting the word "shall".

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

Clause 5—Section 6 amended:

The Hon. J. M. THOMSON: I move an amendment—

Page 2—Delete paragraph (c).

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

Clauses 6 to 8, Title—put and passed.

Bill reported with amendments and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (Minister for Railways—North) [2.58]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

THE PRESIDENT: I have counted the House. There is an absolute majority present and voting and, there being no dissentient voice, I declare the question carried.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and returned to the Assembly with amendments.

INDUSTRY (ADVANCES) ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading—Defeated.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

THE HON. L. C. DIVER (Central) [2.59]: According to the Minister's own statement this Bill has been presented to Parliament in order to validate an already valid Act. He pointed out that the Crown Law officers thought the present Act covered the position which exists; but owing to the doubts which have been expressed regarding an insurance company which was going to make a certain advance for a building construction in Perth, and owing to the exception taken to the existing wording in the Act, it became necessary for the Government to introduce the Bill.

On examining the amendments in the Bill, it appears to me that the Act in its present form is sufficiently definite and broad in its terms and in the way it is intended to operate. It was never envisaged that a Government guarantee would be used in any direction which the times might dictate as being expedient for the Government. I say that, not only as regards the present Government, but any future Government. If this Bill were agreed to, and there were a change of Government, there would be nothing to prevent the incoming Government from financing an organisation such as an off-the-course totalisator system. There would be no limit whatsoever to where a Government guarantee could be applied. It would appear, in the instance envisaged by the Minister in regard to Canterbury Court, that an ordinary business risk should be accepted by the insurance company concerned; because if by amending the Act in this way, we are going to allow Governments to underwrite every business proposition of this nature, what will the position grow to? We will even have ventures which, on the face, are not a business risk, insisting that they be financed by a guarantee from the Government of the day.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: I wish it would guarantee us.

The Hon. L. C. DIVER: That is worth thinking about. It is not as though the guarantees will be for a limited period; if the Bill is passed, these guarantees will extend in the future for many years. In other words, we are going to saddle the future with a liability.

In addition to the Canterbury Court project, the Minister said there were others. However, he did not make it clear what the others constitute; or whether the Act had been exceeded, or to what extent. As the hon. Mr. Watson pointed out last night, those of us who witnessed the depression years know that when, in those times, individuals wanted to arrange finance, one of the leading questions asked by the banks was, "Have you guaranteed any undertaking?" If they had, the figure was immediately put down as though the bank had advanced that amount of money on overdraft. Therefore, if the time comes when this State wants finance and we are asked what is the obligation in regard to State guarantees, I shudder to think what the position will be if this amending Bill is passed.

The Minister made mention of the fact that advances under this Act were made to coarse grain growers. He did not use those words, but said, "Barley and oat-growers". He said their advances were made under the Industry (Advances) Act. I have no doubt that if the Rural and Industries Bank could not meet the requirements demanded in that respect, very little time would elapse before the rural credits

section of the Commonwealth Bank would provide the necessary funds so that the particular pools could function.

The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Would you welcome that situation?

The Hon. L. C. DIVER: I would not welcome that situation, but it might be the lesser of two evils. I feel that we are developing something which was never intended in the first place in regard to Government guarantees; particularly by their being made without consulting Parliament. Secondly, I feel that organisations should be prepared to take some risk themselves in a financial venture. That is why they exist. For those reasons, I am going to vote against the second reading.

THE HON. H. L. ROCHE (South) [3.8]: The more thought I give to this Bill, the more extraordinary it seems to me that the Government should have entered into an undertaking such as the proposition of Canterbury Court; which is the Government's justification for bringing down this amending Bill.

The total cost of this proposition is estimated to be £284,000. The company is going to provide £9,500, plus the freehold land. There are already mortgages and charges affecting the property of this company to the extent of £65,154. Therefore, there is already a substantial charge against the freehold land. The company has a subscribed capital of £40,000, which is not excessive by any manner of means when related to the proposition which is apparently contemplated.

In all the circumstances, if the value of the property is as stated—that is the value of the finished undertaking—it seems to me that it is a good enough proposition for the Prudential Assurance Co. to take on as an ordinary business risk. If it is not prepared to advance £250,000 without the Government pledging the credit of the State, I do not think we are justified in giving the Government the legal right to pledge that credit. If my information is correct this company—including its affiliates—is one of the biggest insurance companies in the world. I understand that it probably has resources greater than those of the Government of Western Australia.

I see no reason why we or the Government should rush in to guarantee this account. There is a very bad principle involved because, quite apart from the case of Canterbury Court, we would be removing from the lender any responsibility for the maintenance of his security; because the Government would be guaranteeing the money that was lent. That would mean that the lender carried no responsibility at all. It seems to me an extraordinary state of affairs that such a proposition should be seriously put forward, even in this case. The hon. Mr. Diver said that this principle could apply to

almost anything in future, and I agree. If someone wanted to start a woodyard, or even a lolly-shop, there would be just as much justification for the Government to give a guarantee, except that in this case there is a certain amount of employment to be found for people engaged on the construction.

To my mind, the Government should not be pledging the resources of Western Australia to a private undertaking with a capital of £40,000, to enable it to provide £250,000-worth of work or development. I feel that this venture should stand on its own merits, as between the company and the Prudential Assurance Company. Apparently that assurance company is prepared to do the business but does not want to shoulder any responsibility. It is not as though this was a work of such national importance that we would be justified in giving the Government the authority it seeks. When we consider the extent to which the principle involved could be developed, it seems that some of the business people in this city have been very slow in neglecting to take what appears to be a wonderful opportunity to obtain easy finance for any speculative proposition they might have in mind. In all the circumstances I must vote against the Bill, and I think the House would be well advised to refuse to agree to the second reading.

THE HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [3.14]: I must voice my objection to this measure. I would remind hon. members of the provision in the Act governing the reasons for which advances could be made. As the Minister explained, when introducing the Bill, money was made available many years ago under the State Agricultural Bank and later, to the Rural and Industries Bank, as we know it today, for the purpose of assisting industry. As three previous speakers have pointed out, this measure would allow any Treasurer, without recourse to Parliament, to make any advance or guarantee that he felt inclined to make.

While I am in favour of money being made available to increase production, and particularly primary production—or any production for which there is a stable market—I do not think money should be advanced to support any venture that is in no way productive. The venture in question is not likely to be productive, in any sense other than that it will entail the employment of a certain amount of labour. I, therefore, cannot give this measure my support. It seems strange to me that the Government wants to give a guarantee to this assurance company, which probably has more assets than the State has.

Apparently the Government has erred quite a lot in transacting the business in regard to Canterbury Court, and in allowing the work to be started before any finality had been reached in the paper work. At least three weeks ago I took

my car to Canterbury Court to have it serviced and, judging from the dust and mortar that was flying about and the machinery that was in operation, the job had already commenced. I do not know why the Government waited for weeks after that time before coming to Parliament with a measure to amend the Act so as to cover a situation that had reached the stage I have mentioned. When introducing the measure the Minister said the Government was anxious for the Bill to be passed so as to cover the Government and allow it to meet its obligations.

I was told, also, that at some public function or gathering the Premier said the Government had advanced to a local company something in the nature of £100,000 to allow it to get ahead with a project to develop parking facilities in the city. If that is so—I cannot vouch for its correctness—it is no wonder that he is anxious for the Bill to be passed. Even though the Government was prepared and anxious to back the finance for this company, I think somebody erred badly in not having the matter tied up properly before work was commenced. I expect that quite a lot of money has been expended on it and the company, having gone ahead with the work, is now, I take it, vitally concerned, because if the Bill does not pass, the job will stop. I am not worried about that, but I do not think we should pass a measure giving the present or any future Treasurer carte blanche to do whatever he wishes in backing any concern at all. I could not have a bar of that.

Although I doubt whether we should have anything to do with a Bill that has for its object the Government's guaranteeing some other body, I would be prepared to consider a short Bill to enable the Government to honour its obligation, and to help this company out of a sticky mess. Further than that I would not be prepared to go. This Act was designed to protect, mainly, the primary industries of this State for the benefit of Western Australia as a whole. Therefore I must indicate that I intend to oppose the second reading.

THE HON. F. J. S. WISE (Minister for Industrial Development—North—in reply) [3.21]: One would be almost devoid of senses if one could not feel that the opposition to the Bill is solid; that is, if one is any judge of the expressions of opinion that have been made on it. I introduced this Bill explaining the need for it from two angles; from the angle of the doubts expressed on the validity of advances made under the Industry (Advances) Act and the interpretation of the word "industry" in the Rural and Industries Bank Act; each being read in conjunction with the other.

I shall attempt to deal with the point raised on two principal grounds; namely the validity of the action of the Government under the law, and the actual action

of the Government in giving the guarantee within the law. First of all, I will touch on a point raised by the hon. Mr. Watson and the hon. Mr. Mattiske, who both stated that the Bill had nothing to do with the Rural and Industries Bank. The hon. Mr. Mattiske said further that loans had been made beyond the provisions of the Rural and Industries Bank Act. I dispute emphatically the opinions of both those hon. members.

I know much of the details of the Rural and Industries Bank Act, because I created it. After three years of attempting, in Cabinet, to introduce that legislation, permission was granted. I advanced my advocacy of it on the ground that the State was losing millions of pounds per annum on the good accounts the Agricultural Bank had built up, to the trading banks, because they had taken over the healthy accounts, leaving the bad ones for the Agricultural Bank to fail with or to salvage. That fact cannot be denied.

In my attempt to create the Rural and Industries Bank Act I went to the length of studying banking law the world over. This took months of thoughtful preparation; and when persons flippantly and untruthfully say that the action of the Government, as explained by this Bill, is beyond the power of the Rural and Industries Bank Act, they do not know what they are talking about.

The Hon. R. C. Mattiske: Why the necessity for the Bill, then?

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Some people apparently do not understand its purpose. The hon. member's observation has nothing to do with the primary observation he made and to which I referred; namely, that this has nothing to do with the Rural and Industries Bank Act.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member must address the Chair.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am prepared to be provoked on this issue if on no other, and with due respect I shall address the Chair and direct all my remarks through you, Sir. The agency section of the Rural and Industries Bank was an entirely new departure from banking. It created in the bank a section, something comparable to the Rural Bank of New South Wales, in which to place unsound accounts guaranteed by Governments, which accounts were not a fair banking risk. When that Act was carried, after a three-year endeavour on my part, and an all-night conference with hon. members of this Chamber, we were able to constitute the bank in those two sections.

The agency section took in millions of pounds worth of accounts of farmers, who were impoverished through no fault of their own; and I am proud to say that the agricultural industry in this State has benefited to the tune of millions of

pounds instead of the farmers being involved in bankruptcy or some similar drastic method of insolvency. As the accounts became healthy in the agency section, they were lifted out and transferred to the general trading section of the bank, thus giving the clients the benefit of an ordinary cheque account; an account in the red only to the extent that could be carried by the equity.

That has been a valid action through the Rural and Industries Bank Act to assist the agricultural industry. I will go further and compare the Industry (Advances) Act—the one we are seeking to amend by this Bill—with the Rural and Industries Bank Act—which shall be read and construed as one with the previous Act—and turn to the definition of “industry.” As I said when introducing the Bill, industry, in its context in this case, refers to industry in its broadest sense; that is, to industry with no limitation.

It certainly contains the words that have been recited two or three times during the last day or two. But industry, in this case, includes every trade or business, or form or branch of productive labour. Before proceeding, let me emphasise that industries—primary, secondary or tertiary—are included in the definition of “industry” in the Rural and Industries Bank Act, because of the unlimiting factor in the use of the word “includes”. Analysed in its context, each and every definition in the Rural and Industries Bank Act is quite clear.

For example “fixed loan” means a mortgage loan guaranteed for a fixed term of years; “Minister” means the Minister of the Crown in charge of the Act; “Repealed Acts” means Acts specified in certain schedules. The word “industry” includes the very many things that have been mentioned and, therefore, speaking as a layman with no legal background whatever, the word “industry”, including as it does every trade or business, or form or branch of productive labour, includes all the things within its meaning.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: You only have to point that out to the Prudential Assurance Company.

The Hon. J. Murray: You wax sincere on a very poor brief.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I challenge the hon. member to cast a slur on my sincerity, and I would ask for a withdrawal of those words, Mr. President.

The PRESIDENT: Would the hon. member kindly withdraw those words?

The Hon. J. Murray: I withdraw.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I was referring to the definition which gives an unlimiting factor and influence in the Rural and Industries Bank Act which, in my view, not only substantiates the validity which the Treasurer had when making this advance—and many other advances—but confirms

the validity of his action in all the circumstances. It is known that on a simple question legal minds will give different interpretations, and when the Prudential Assurance Co. received the advice from its legal advisers that we were prepared to take this risk with the wording of the Act in question, it first accepted the Government's guarantee but eventually accepted the advice of its advisers.

I agree with the terms expressed by some speakers. First of all it is surely not necessary that a firm with the stability and assets—that is, the liquid assets and other assets—of this company should refuse the acceptance of responsibility of an advance of money of this magnitude unless it has a Government guarantee. But since it would not advance even 40 per cent. of this value without a Government guarantee it shows how hollow was its offer to finance the project if the Government were not prepared to guarantee it.

In giving a guarantee under this Act, I reaffirm my strong view that the Government was within its rights, and the Treasurer acted validly in guaranteeing the advance when it was sought. The only difficulty is that unless this Bill passes, and the Prudential Assurance Company evades its responsibility, and discontinues to make any advances, the word of the Premier cannot be broken, which will mean that the impact can fall entirely on the Treasurer—not that it is not something for which the Treasurer would not be fully recompensed; but the point in my view is, without any political assumption or reaction, that no Treasurer should be put in the position of his word being in doubt, or his intent queried when he acts in this way.

The hon. Mr. Roche and the hon. Mr. Diver both raised the point that it seemed extraordinary that the Government removed from the lender any responsibility. But that is what any guarantor does. If the hon. members have not experienced it, I certainly have in the responsibility attached to guaranteeing a promissory note when one is rendering assistance in all good faith to a person whom one feels needs assistance.

The Hon. L. C. Diver: I maintain it is unjust to expect it.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I appreciate the interjection of the hon. Mr. Diver. It is unjust to expect that any odium at all should attach either to the Government, or to the Rural and Industries Bank, which under the agency section I have mentioned, takes its direction from the Treasurer. In the whole of that section the indemnifying of the Rural and Industries Bank is undoubted and unqualified. It is not using the funds of the bank at all; it is simply attempting to give assistance where assistance is warranted in connection with other than rural industry.

I am afraid there is some ego in my next remark, but in those difficult days of which I spoke, when I was responsible for creating the Rural and Industries Bank millions of pounds were advanced to farmers who are prosperous men today. I only wish our institution had the millions of pounds represented in the mortgages which the Associated Banks enjoyed, and which they gathered when there was a healthy account. They suffered no risk. Section 82 of the Rural and Industries Bank states—

The Bank is hereby indemnified by the State in respect of any act done by or damages incurred by it in the bona fide exercise or performance of the powers, authorities, duties and functions conferred or imposed upon it by or under this Part of this Act.

So it is all poppycock to raise the point that was raised in the Legislative Assembly, that this could affect the finances of the Rural and Industries Bank. I would now like to return to my original point; the one on which the passing of this Bill hinges. It is the validity of the action taken by the Government under the Act. That is all that is in question. I think I have presented my case in reply to the criticism that has been advanced to this measure.

I do not like using intemperate language, but from some of the arguments that were put forward, and from some of the interjections, there is no doubt that I was able to draw out one or two points that were being overlooked. However, be that as it may, I hope that I have said sufficient to enable the House to make a decision on the second reading so that all of the actions which I have explained, may be made valid and extended whether they apply now or in the future.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes—11

Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. R. C. Mattiske
Hon. J. J. Garrigan	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. E. M. Heenan	Hon. W. F. Willesee
Hon. R. F. Hutchison	Hon. F. J. S. Wise
Hon. G. E. Jeffery	Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. F. R. H. Lavery	(Teller.)

Noes—14

Hon. C. R. Abbey	Hon. A. L. Loton
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. G. C. MacKinnon
Hon. L. C. Diver	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. A. F. Griffith	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. J. M. Thomson
Hon. A. R. Jones	Hon. F. D. Willmott
Hon. L. A. Logan	Hon. J. Murray
	(Teller.)

Pair.

Aye.	No.
Hon. J. D. Teahan	Hon. H. K. Watson

Majority against—3.

Question thus negatived.

Bill defeated.

CATTLE TRESPASS, FENCING, AND IMPOUNDING ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2).

First Reading.

Received from the Council and, on motion by the Hon. G. E. Jeffery, read a first time.

Second Reading—Defeated.

THE HON. G. E. JEFFERY (Suburban) [3.45] in moving the second reading said: I must first apologise for the late arrival of the Bill in this Chamber. Unfortunately the method of working in another place has been responsible, because it was originally introduced some weeks ago. It is a small measure which seeks to amend Section 26 of the Cattle Trespass, Fencing, and Impounding Act, 1882. As the year indicates, it is an old Act, and as a consequence many of the sections are rather obscure. Although I am in charge of the Bill, I feel that it would be much better to repeal the Act and then revise it completely, instead of subjecting it to a series of patch-work repairs.

Section 26 of the parent Act deals exclusively with repairs to mutual fences—that is, fences along common boundaries dividing allotments or dividing lands owned by different owners—and sets out the procedure to be followed in respect to having such fences repaired; and also the apportioning of the costs thereof between the owners of the adjoining lands; also the type of fence to which such adjoining owners shall contribute to the cost of repairs. The fault in that section of the Act, as it at present stands, is that it does not specify that an adjoining owner shall contribute to the repair and re-establishment of a fence to its original type, but only to what is termed by Section 30 of the Act “a sufficient fence.” In this latter section of the Act a “sufficient fence” is described as “any substantial fence reasonably deemed sufficient to resist the trespass of great and small stock including sheep, but not including goats and pigs.”

Sitting suspended from 3.48 to 4.10 p.m.

THE HON. G. E. JEFFERY: This description, obviously, was meant to apply only to lands in country districts and not to suburban allotments in the metropolitan area; but, unfortunately, for the want of a more appropriate description, it happens to apply. It would be conservative to say that at least 75 per cent. of the dividing fences between allotments in the metropolitan area are closed picket fences and not merely fences “capable of resisting trespass by great and small stock.”

Cases are occurring from time to time of owners, having repaired existing closed picket dividing fences, being refused proportionate payment of the cost of such repairs by other adjoining owners, on the ground that the wording of the Act does not bind them to the payment of repairs to a closed picket dividing fence, but only to a "sufficient fence" which is one merely capable of resisting trespass by great or small stock, but not including goats or pigs. Their contention is that an open picket fence is capable of this and they will not consider any liability beyond the cost of an open picket repair, despite the fact that a closed picket fence has been or is being repaired. It is a method of evading what is at least a moral obligation.

Briefly, the object of this amendment is to bind adjoining owners to contribute to the cost of repairing an existing closed picket dividing fence in such a manner as will keep it to that type of fence. The proposed amendment will do this and only this—it merely covers the repair of fences which are existing closed picket dividing fences. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

THE HON. F. J. S. WISE (Minister for Local Government—North) [4.15]: I thought that hon. members of the Country Party, and also hon. members representing metropolitan constituencies would have some comment to make on this amending Bill because of the implications contained in it.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: They usually wait and give the Minister the privilege of addressing the House first.

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: In this case the Minister has neither the right of introduction nor of reply; he is simply entitled to make an observation if he deems it wise. The Cattle Trespass, Fencing, and Impounding Act was amended in 1957 to allow local governing bodies to make their own by-laws prescribing what constitutes a sufficient fence. The term "a sufficient fence" has caused very much litigation, especially in the sparse areas of Western Australia, and the definition, perhaps, not being appropriate to city areas, authority was given to local governing bodies to make by-laws prescribing for part or all of their districts what in their view might constitute a sufficient fence.

So far only one local authority has taken action under the recent amendment and that is the Gosnells Road Board. The by-laws promulgated by that board were approved by the Governor and published in the "Government Gazette" on the 25th June, 1958. In the Second Schedule to the by-laws a sufficient fence is defined as one which shall be not less than six feet in height. The proposal in this Bill would override any by-laws made by a local authority in the case of closed picket fences.

In regard to such fences it could allow the reinstatement of a fence which formerly had been one as low as 3 ft. 6 in., or 4 ft. Therefore there is a conflict in the proposal with a very old interpretation of what is regarded as a sufficient fence.

I think I should relate to the House the official opinion on this matter. It is that, as Parliament last year gave local authorities the right to determine what should be a sufficient fence, in the event of a fence having to be reinstated it should conform to the by-laws of any local authority which acts under the authority I have referred to. Therefore, if the Bill passes it may overcome a lot of unpleasantness which now exists between neighbours in regard to the replacement of fences which may have been constructed 15 or 20 years ago, and which a new owner may desire to replace with something entirely different.

The official view, however, is that since authority is vested in every local governing body to prescribe within its area what is most suited for that area, in part or in whole, our Local Government Department believes it should be left at that.

THE HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (Suburban) [4.20]: Hon. members showed good judgment in waiting for the Minister to express his opinion on the Bill. It is only natural that we should wait for the lead to be given by the two Ministers of the Crown in this House, because they have the advantage of Crown Law advice. Whilst I do not always agree that such advice is correct, on this occasion we are able to get some idea of what the Crown Law Department thinks. It is an excellent idea for the Government to express its views on a Bill introduced by a private member. One can do nothing else but commend the hon. member for introducing the Bill in an endeavour to clear up a somewhat awkward situation.

As the Title implies, it is an outmoded Act. Originally it envisaged that the fences would keep out animals of a particular nature. Surely that does not appertain to the metropolitan area in these days. We know that in many instances unpleasant feeling and quarrels have taken place between neighbours over the question of the dividing fence. Many of them have been good neighbours and the best of friends, but when it comes to the cost of the dividing fence they have fallen out.

On the information given by the Minister, we might take the opportunity on this occasion to examine the Act. Whilst I commend the hon. member for introducing it, I suggest that the one small amendment in the Bill is not sufficient to cover the whole situation. I suggest that the Government request the Crown Law Department to examine the Act and overhaul it. In doing so, the Act can be separated into two sections, one relating to residential

properties and the other to the other types of properties. I would like to see the Act overhauled so that the causes for bitter feeling between neighbours arising from dividing fences can be removed. It is time we gave consideration to amending the Act on that basis.

THE HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [4.25]: The Bill produces difficulties at the same time as it attempts to remove other difficulties. I would ask the hon. member who introduced it, or the Minister for Industrial Development, to clarify what is a fence, because there is no definition in the Act.

The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is a sufficient fence.

The Hon. J. G. HISLOP: The Bill does not define a sufficient fence. According to the Bill, in describing a sufficient fence, one starts off on the basis of a closed picket fence. If it is desired to vary from that type of fence, the parties must reach common agreement which is acceptable to the local authority concerned. Is the local authority entitled to regard a shrubbery as a sufficient type of fence, because that is a type of modern fence?

The Hon. E. M. Davies: Local authorities do not want to have anything to do with fences.

The Hon. J. G. HISLOP: In regard to my property, I have been able to make arrangements with both of my neighbours. Instead of having a hideous wooden fence between us, we agreed to a shrubbery on one side. There is a ti-tree hedge approximately 260 feet long with shrubs on each side. On the other side of the property we have no hedge but a complete shrub which is 12 feet wide.

The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Not every neighbour is a good neighbour.

The Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I am not worrying about the character of my neighbours or other neighbours. I am wondering whether a local authority will be empowered to give consent, where it is desired to have a modern type of fence. Where back fences, for example, are sadly in need of repair, something much more artistic than a picket fence could be erected in place of the existing one. Would a local authority in those circumstances be entitled to agree to an artistic modern fence? According to the Bill, I cannot come to an agreement with my neighbours in regard to the type of fence, unless we notify the local authority and obtain consent.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: If it will not keep out livestock it is not a sufficient fence.

The Hon. J. G. HISLOP: There are many obstacles, because people living in the city who are agreeable to erecting a garden between their homes cannot do so as the local authority has no power to give consent. Furthermore, the parties cannot come

to an agreement without first approaching the local authority. Unless those anomalies are rectified I cannot agree to the Bill.

THE HON. J. MURRAY (South-West) [4.28]: Although the Bill contains many desirable features, an opinion has been expressed in the House that this is not the time for introducing before Parliament measures of this nature. They have widespread ramifications. Until hon. members have had the chance to study the effect of such measures, it is not fair to ask them to give a complete and unbiased vote. I stress the term "unbiased vote."

Speaking from memory, without looking at the original Act, my view of the Bill is that its provisions are intended to relate to dividing fences between residential properties in the metropolitan area. That is what the hon. member who introduced the Bill is really trying to cover. He wants to determine the responsibility for the erection of fences around residential blocks, and for the maintenance and repair thereof.

Over the last few years, the trend in regard to subdivisional fences has been towards open wire fences. However, in many cases there is no fence at all. People are having garden borders or planting small Queensland box trees, or other trees of that nature. These fences may not be very efficient, but they are good fences so far as the scenic beauty of the subdivision is concerned.

I am concerned principally with the wording of the original Act, because, in most beautified suburbs today, we find that a front fence no longer exists. People usually have a garden block, Queensland box trees or, perhaps, tapestry bricks. As I remember the parent Act, immediately a person encloses his block, he becomes liable for part payment of the fence on his left or on his right.

The Hon. E. M. Davies: The Act has been amended since then.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: That particular section of the Act was amended.

The Hon. J. MURRAY: I am very interested to hear that as it has now become completely out of date in most garden suburbs. When a fence on the left or right of a block falls into disrepair it should be a matter of agreement between adjoining owners as to whether that fence is to be replaced by something better.

Although there are desirable features in the Bill, I would like more time in order to see whether it covers the whole problem in regard to the fences—around properties—to which I have drawn attention. I oppose the Bill.

THE HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [4.33]: As I see it, this amending Bill is purely an endeavour to allow property-owners to come to some agreement, failing which it will provide a standard with which they must comply.

There are many closed picket fences erected today. In all of the State Housing Commission areas closed picket fences are provided. If they are not actually closed picket fences, there is only a picket gap between each one. The mover of the Bill has endeavoured to make sure that where one of these fences has been erected and is still required, but has fallen into a state of disrepair, the same type of fence shall be erected.

There are many places in the metropolitan area where a closed picket fence is justified. This is particularly the case where one has a young family. This would not apply to the hon. Dr. Hislop, because he has no family at the present moment.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: His neighbour has a dog.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: There are many cases where picket fences are desirable. I am inclined to think that there is some merit in this amendment, although there may be times when the erection of a closed picket fence would not be justified. However, I think that in 99 cases out of 100 the adjoining owners would come to some agreement as to the type of fence required.

I think I have explained all that this Bill does. It seems to me that if a fence has fallen into disrepair, a similar fence can be re-erected providing the owners agree; and failing agreement a closed picket fence will become a "sufficient fence" according to the law.

Question put and negatived.

Bill defeated.

BILLS (3)—ASSEMBLY'S MESSAGES.

Messages from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to the amendments made by the Council to the following Bills:—

- 1, Hire-Purchase.
- 2, Noxious Weeds Act Amendment (No. 3).
- 3, Swan River Conservation.

INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL, (No. 3).

Order of the Day read for the consideration of the report of the Select Committee.

In Committee.

The Hon. W. R. Hall in the Chair; **the Hon. H. C. Strickland** (Minister for Railways) in charge of the Bill.

Consideration of Select Committee's Report.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I move—

That the report of the Select Committee be adopted, and printed.

In moving this motion I understand that I am permitted to explain to hon. members what took place in connection with the inquiry held by the Select Committee; and also inform the Committee of the point of view held by a majority decision of the committee; namely, that the Bill be laid aside, and that an alternative be adopted.

I would like it accepted as a genuine statement, when I say that the committee endeavoured, in the short space of time available to it, to do the best it possibly could in the circumstances. I am sure I express the sentiments of my two colleagues on the committee when I say that we were sorry there was not sufficient time to go into certain other facets of the industry, the evidence of which may have proved to be of very great interest to the committee.

As the report states, it is without doubt that this inquiry proved to be well worthwhile; and some most illuminating information came from the evidence; with the result that we find ourselves a lot wiser about the whole situation now the inquiry is finished.

The principal clause in the Bill is Clause 4. We had to make recommendations upon the Bill and in particular in connection with Clause 4, because that clause seeks to amend the Industrial Arbitration Act to enable the Court to determine whether a "worker" is a person who is engaged in plying for hire, or in the delivery of goods or in the transportation of passengers.

At this stage I would like to say that as an individual, I strenuously hold the view that a man should belong to a union if he voluntarily desires to do so, and that he should not be compelled, by legislation, to join a union. Compulsory unionism is not part of our way of life.

In regard to the point which I have just made, I would explain that the inquiry did not cover that question. The Select Committee, as requested by Parliament, simply inquired into the Bill in connection with people employed in the taxi industry. The taxi industry is one which would embrace the words "plying for hire for the carriage of passengers." In respect of "plying for hire for the carriage of goods" the committee came to a unanimous decision that this portion of the Bill, as well as the portion at the end of it, should not be dealt with; and that its inquiries be based on the point of view of people who ply for hire in the carriage of passengers.

The evidence obtained from Inspector Napier of the Police Traffic Branch, under the heading of "plying for hire for the carriage of passengers," as well as referring to taxis, also dealt with buses used for the carrying of school children. In this regard, we also had evidence given by Mr. Secombe, who is the secretary of the Road Transport Association, which was concerned about the inclusion in the Bill of the words "plying for hire for the transportation of goods."

This was not an easy matter with which to deal and I think my colleagues on the Select Committee will agree that, because of the lack of time, we were not adequately able to deal with the whole problem. As far as I am concerned, I would have liked the Government to turn the Select Committee into an Honorary Royal Commission so that a more thorough inquiry could be made.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the committee for the many hours they spent with me in carrying out this inquiry. It will be remembered that we left here last Friday, and first thing Monday morning we engaged ourselves in the inquiry. By Wednesday afternoon we had examined 31 witnesses and had taken a great deal of evidence, a copy of which I have here. We prepared our report on Thursday morning and submitted it to this Chamber yesterday—Thursday—afternoon. I do not know whether that constitutes an all-time record for Select Committees, but at all events I thank my colleagues for the assistance they gave me and the attention they paid to the inquiry.

One quite conclusive fact which emerged from the inquiry was that without any exception whatever, I think, every witness who appeared before us said that the reason for the instability of the taxi industry today was the fact that there were too many taxis on the road.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: Every witness?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I said "Every witness, I think, without exception." There may have been one or two exceptions, but I believe every witness said it. If it were thought necessary, the matter could be put to the proof by going through the evidence. My colleagues know, in any case, that what I have said is basically completely true. That was the main complaint of the witnesses. It is not limited to the witnesses, because the opinion has been built up over a considerable period, and the taxi-men have been making complaints and, as the evidence shows, have sought deputations to the Minister for Transport to put forward that point of view.

One of the majority recommendations contained in the findings of the committee is that the Bill be laid aside; and another recommendation is that in future

taxi plates be issued to the population on a proportionate basis. My colleagues can speak for themselves, but for me it is not an easy decision to make because, in the main, I believe in unrestricted enterprise. Unless it is absolutely necessary, I do not think we should restrict people and tell them what they should do. That brings a smile to the lips of the Minister for Railways, but whether he smiles or rocks himself to sleep with mirth over the situation, I repeat that I have made that statement in all sincerity.

We had to decide whether the Bill should be passed in the form in which it was originally presented to us, or in an amended form. We agreed unanimously that it should not be passed in its original form and we decided that the provision applicable to the transportation of goods should be struck out. We then had to consider what would be the effect of the measure if passed after amendment in that direction. The evidence shows definitely that the men employed in the industry are working extremely long hours, the average for the taxi-driver, being between 80 and 90 hours per week.

The evidence revealed that the earnings of taxi-drivers varied. Some are earning nearly £16 per week and some considerably less than that, but basically they are divided into two groups—those earning £14 per week and those earning less. We next had to decide whether the Arbitration Court should be given the right to declare an award and, if that were done, what would happen in the industry. The answer that we found—in the majority—was, "No; that the industry could not pay award wages." For that reason we felt that the imposition of an award on those who are employing taxi-drivers would force them to dismiss those people who are working on the basis of being commission or lessee-drivers, and who would come within the scope of the legislation. We found that we would be forcing out of business some legitimate operators who have been engaged in the taxi industry for varying numbers of years.

Our inquiries show that there are a number of instances of citizens who decided to engage in this particular industry and who started with one cab and built up to anything from four to 12 cabs over a period of years, and who, over that same period, involved in the business their life savings and capital investments to the tune, in some instances, of £10,000. From the evidence we heard we considered that a number of the men concerned knew that if the Bill were passed they would be liable to come under an award, and they said, "We appreciate the fact that if we are put under an award our employers will not be able to continue to pay us." The result, therefore, is that that section of the community would go out of business to the extent that they would be reduced to one cab which they would drive for themselves.

That was one of the things which the Minister for Transport thought that the measure would bring about. He believed it would put some people in a position where they would go broke, thus reducing the number of taxis on the road, but we could find no evidence at all supporting the view that at this or any other stage there had been any attempt to stabilise the industry, in view of the fact that the number of taxi plates issued had increased over a considerable period, causing the conditions of these men to become worse and worse until they are now virtually slaving day and night.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: Which men?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: All of them, whether owner-drivers or drivers. It was clearly revealed that all the men driving taxis are working long hours.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: Yes, but you mentioned something about their returns.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: They are driving very long hours for a very poor return; and I say, "all of them".

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: You say, "all"?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Yes, I repeat, "all of them", and that includes the owner-driver who owns more than one vehicle and drives one himself, letting the others out. In most instances there was very little difference in the earnings of the owner-driver and those of the ordinary taxi-driver. They have to work equally hard, no matter what their arrangements might be. The evidence disclosed that there was one section of the community in regard to whom the term "parasites on the community" has been used. I have not used that term, and I think it was the hon. Mr. Logan who asked Inspector Napier what he thought about the parasitical state of affairs in the industry. The inspector's comment was to the effect that he did not think these people were any more parasites than anyone else, simply because they decided to employ their money in the taxi business. He implied that if anyone wished to employ himself in that industry he would be just as free to do so as to buy a butcher's shop or any other business.

We had next to try to find an alternative to the present position, and that gave us a great deal of thought. The cause of the trouble, according to the people in the industry—I have not spoken to one of them who has given any other answer—is too many plates. They say they were better off in 1956 than they are now. The evidence was that in recent years Western Australians have become more taxi-minded than they were previously. The witnesses stated that prior to about 1956 they were getting a fair living, although still working very long hours, whereas now they are working very long hours and they are not getting as good a living as they did before,

owing to the strenuous competition created by the fact that so many men are sharing the income from the industry.

The amount of money that Western Australians spend in taxi fares annually is astounding. The evidence revealed that a taxi takes, on the average, 10s. per hour while working and that, based on 80 hours per week, gives a return of approximately £40 per week. When one multiplies that by the 750 taxis on the road, calculating it on the basis I have given, it reveals a figure of about £1,500,000 as being spent by Western Australians in taxi fares annually. I doubt whether many people in this State have previously appreciated how large the figure was. Whether it is an exaggeration or not I do not know, as I have no way of checking it, but even if it is brought down to the figure I originally gave, when I said I thought that £1,000,000 of the taxpayers' money was spent each year on taxis, it is still an extremely large sum.

I believe that taxi fares in this State are very reasonable. I asked one witness what he would charge to take me and my luggage from the Perth station to the Wentworth Hotel. I cited that hotel as I thought it was far enough from the station to be worth taking a taxi, and he said it would cost me 1s. 9d. It occurred to me that three or four people could be transported from the Perth station to the Wentworth Hotel for that 1s. 9d. and the driver would have to handle all the luggage twice—at the railway station and at the hotel. Public transport is nowhere near as cheap or convenient as that.

A long time ago I asked a question as to whether the very cheap taxi fares in this State were having an effect on the income of the Tramways Department, and the Minister's answer was that the question was not understood. The evidence given before the Select Committee seems to make the position clear. The next task of the Select Committee was to search for alternatives to the present position. I do not want to take the name of the hon. Mr. Jeffery in vain, but the alternative seems to be, for the time being at all events, to attempt to rationalise or stabilise the industry by doing away with the *carte blanche* issuing of plates, or providing that the issue of plates does not continue on a basis unattached to some particular standard. I understand that, in other States of Australia, particularly in New South Wales where the industry is regulated to some extent, taxi plates are issued on a basis *pro rata* to the population.

At this stage of the proceedings I put forward the suggestion that we should try to issue plates on the same basis. After making some calculations I think we could issue taxi plates on the basis of one taxi to every 600 people. I would point out that at the moment there is approximately one taxi to 500 people in

this State, and I believe that in New South Wales the figure is one taxi to 580 people. We felt that if plates were issued on the basis of one taxi to 600 people, it would achieve several objects. This would not do what the Bill is going to do. In other words, it would not throw men out of work, because the employers could not afford to pay them wages on a limited number of hours.

The evidence that we obtained on that point was quite clear. It was stated that the taxi industry was a difficult one to operate. The report states that an industrial award would be hard to apply in this industry. Those people who are employing men in the industry have said that it is extremely hard to supervise in any way the activities of a driver who is sent out in charge of a taxi. Some of the men who gave evidence said, "We think the Bill is not necessarily the complete answer to our problem, but it will be a start." Others said, "We want the Bill." I mention these statements because I have nothing to lose, but a lot to gain by trying to do something for the industry following upon the evidence that we had at the inquiry. The opinions, along the lines I have indicated, varied considerably. Another opinion expressed was that if the Bill was passed, it would put people out of business.

Hon. members should stop and think for a moment what the expenditure of £1,000,000 or £1,500,000 of the taxpayers' money means to Western Australia. It means that 751 men are employed in the industry at the moment; and I might mention that, from the evidence given to us, we ascertained there are 2,000 people in Western Australia who are licensed to drive taxis.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: But not all are in existence at the moment.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: It was difficult for the Inspector of Police to tell us that, because the holders of the licences resided both in the metropolitan area and in the country. In answer to the parliamentary question I asked the other day I was told that there were 2,088 licences in existence. When Inspector Napier gave evidence he said initially that the figure was 310, but on making a check later he found that 2,088 licences had been issued.

That figure includes those men who work from Monday to Friday in one form of employment and then drive a taxi over the weekend to the detriment of those men who are employed genuinely full-time in the industry. They are the men who make the full-time taxi-driver work over the weekends in addition to working during the week.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: The employer is not helping any.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: He gives these men a job.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: But he is not helping his fellow men by employing these men is he?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: In some cases he could be. He could be employing a man who was unable to get another job.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Relief drivers would be included in that list.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: That is so. The ramifications of the industry are such that I cannot satisfactorily answer statements of that nature. The Select Committee could have gone on for days and nights searching for such information, but because of the limited time at our disposal we were unable to do so. We had to find an alternative. However, if we accept this alternative it will put men out of employment and the employers will go out of business.

In this taxi business, in which the public spends so much money, the effect on other sections of industry, if this Bill is passed, could be drastic, because I point out that these taxi men purchase tyres, spare motor parts and accessories, apart from employing men to effect repairs to the taxis, and so on. At this stage I also point out that the repairs to the vehicles used in this industry are fairly extensive. As a result, therefore, many industries could be affected.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: As a result of what?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: As a result of the Bill being passed.

The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: These hours are not agreeing with you.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: They are not agreeing with the Minister, either. I hope he is not going to be as terse with me as he was with other hon. members when he was speaking to another issue, because I point out to him that I am not bad-tempered at the moment in speaking the way I do!

The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: What introspection can do!

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I have not a mirror. I suggest that if we wrote into the Traffic Act—there is a Bill before the House at the moment which would give us the opportunity to do that—an amendment to the effect that the Commissioner of Police is empowered to issue taxi plates on the basis of one set to 600 of the population; and give him authority to bring down regulations under that section it would constitute part of the answer to the problem. On this point I would inform hon. members that Inspector Napier gave evidence, on behalf of the Commissioner of Police, and he stated that the Police Department would welcome any regulations that were framed to regulate the taxi industry and those employed in it.

In making this suggestion, I regret that I have not placed the amendments I propose on the notice paper. I therefore apologise to hon. members for this omission, although I have given the Minister a copy of them. These amendments are designed to achieve that which I have outlined to the Chamber. The result of them would mean that for the time being, at any rate, no one would be thrown out of employment and, over a period, the industry would become stabilised.

One of the best witnesses before the Select Committee was Mr. Pettitt, the Secretary of the W.A. Transport Workers' Union. The manner in which he gave his evidence pleased me greatly. He was straightforward in pointing out the problems that existed. He told us that there was an award in existence in the years when the Yellow Cab Co. was operating, but after a period the court found that it was impossible to pursue it. There had been disagreements within the union over the award. Men contracted out of it and, after a period, the award had been allowed to lose its force and became practically non-existent.

Such evidence proved to me how difficult it would be to apply the provisions of an award to this industry. Mr. Pettitt also made another interesting observation. I had discussed with the hon. Mr. Logan my proposed amendments to the Traffic Act and, to my surprise and pleasure, Mr. Pettitt told the Select Committee that his union had discussed the question and was of the opinion that the Traffic Act was the statute that required amendment; but the way the union wanted to amend it might have been more harsh than the Bill we have before us at the moment. The union was of the opinion that we should legislate on the basis that the only man who could drive a taxi was an owner-driver. That suggestion, if implemented, would be extremely severe. Nevertheless, the information that was tendered by Mr. Pettitt was extremely interesting, especially as he was a most satisfactory witness.

At this stage I would like to express my appreciation to all those who assisted us during the sittings of this Select Committee. As Chairman I thank the members of the Hansard staff who came to our assistance by working long hours reporting the evidence, sending it out to the witnesses to be checked, and generally assisting us, in the holding of the inquiry, as much as they possibly could. I also thank Mr. Browne, our secretary. Although he had other duties to attend to in the House, he remained with us during all the sittings; even at night. I also thank Mr. Carrick who kept law and order during the sitting we held at night.

I will let the matter rest on that note; and I am satisfied, in my own mind, that the House, in adopting this report, will

consider the amendments that I have foreshadowed to the Traffic Act. I conscientiously think that by doing that we would place the taxi industry in a better position than it is in today, and in a better position than it would be placed if this Bill were passed.

The Hon. G. E. JEFFERY: As the dissenting member of this Select Committee I think I should address a few remarks to hon. members, through the Chair. As will be seen from the written report, I am of the opinion that we should proceed with the Bill. The hon. Mr. Griffith has covered the activities of the Select Committee very fully. As he has said, we worked long hours over a short period. There were many aspects of the problem that we would have liked to investigate, but we were unable to do so through lack of time.

After listening to the evidence that was given by the various witnesses on the problems associated with this industry, it is my belief that it cannot afford the luxury of investors who are not directly operating in it; especially when men have to work 80, 90 or 100 hours a week to earn approximately the basic wage and, in some instances, not even that. As I have said, there were many aspects relating to this industry that we could not pursue due to the lack of time. In every case the taxi-drivers gave excellent evidence in making their claims against the proprietors at the Select Committee. I think this speaks well for the calibre of the witnesses. I feel an industrial award could be proceeded with, and that the economics of the industry would work themselves out.

However, I do not think the Bill should be proclaimed immediately. It should be passed and the date of proclamation set, perhaps for 12 or six months later. This would enable the investor, who has no interest in the welfare of the travelling public, to take advantage of that period to wind up his affairs and get as much as he possibly can for his investment. I do not think the passing of the Bill would cause unemployment. There would merely be a change in the nature of the employment of those engaged in the industry. In time each man would become an owner-driver; and I can see nothing wrong with that.

At the moment there is no restriction on the hours that are worked and no coverage at all for workers' compensation or other facilities, which employers in a civilised society are expected to provide when they employ the services of an individual. If the taxi industry feels it cannot afford to pay a wage, the parties concerned could approach the Arbitration Court and the drivers could put up their case, while the proprietors, on the other hand, could give any evidence they considered advisable in rebuttal of the evidence given by the

drivers. After hearing all the facts of the case, the court would decide the working conditions for taxi-drivers.

Without attempting to anticipate the court's decision, I would say that the general concept of an award providing for the working of 40 hours at a certain rate of pay would not apply to this industry. Perhaps it would be more in line with the transport industry award, where the staffs work their hours spread over a certain period. Our job is to investigate the Bill; and, arising from the evidence tendered to us, it would seem that the most desirable state of affairs in the taxi industry would be the establishment of owner-drivers. If the evidence of the investors is to be believed, the loss of their assets would be nil. One investor informed us that his total income from each car, after allowing for maintenance, and so on, was £1 a week. I would suggest that this Bill would be of great assistance to that man. It would give him an opportunity to sell his vehicle to the man who had been driving it for him.

I am afraid I doubted the evidence given by that man, and had we been able to sit longer we might have delved further into his affairs. When Wilberforce was attempting to free the slaves the cry was heard that people would go bankrupt; and I am sure the same position obtains in the taxi industry today. If the Bill is agreed to, the taxi industry will be given an opportunity to stabilise itself, and when the measure is proclaimed in, say, 12 months' time it will allow those in the industry to analyse their situation to see if they are able to pay wages.

An interesting situation would arise because, at the moment, a lot of them say they would go bankrupt. It would give them an opportunity to see whether they could pay wages and yet maintain a reasonable investment. For those reasons I think we should agree to the passage of the Bill. If it were passed, every man would be an owner-driver and this would be a very good thing. With the terrific turnover under the bodgie lease agreement—as I term it—and with the hours the men have to work, the safety angle disappears, and the men in the industry have no home life at all. I think the owner-driver is the ultimate in this industry.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: What is the cause of this?

The HON. G. E. JEFFERY: I would suggest that one of the reasons is that too much of the money earned in the taxi industry is not being spent in the industry. One gentleman at Port Kembla owns two taxis. As far as we could ascertain, he never lived at the address from which he obtained his plates. He is not concerned in the taxi industry, or in the welfare of the travelling public of Western Australia; all he is concerned with is that the

residue from the £25 is sent to him regularly at Port Kembla. Perhaps that sort of thing, and the over-issue of plates, has caused all the poverty in the industry. There are people who have no real interest in the taxi industry, except to make a rake-off. Apart from the two points in the report on which I dissented I support the committee's report.

The Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I did not like the Bill in its original form and I must confess to a feeling of disappointment in the report that has been presented by the Select Committee. When speaking on this measure previously I mentioned that the two people with whom I was primarily concerned were those who used the taxis, and those to whom I referred as the backbone of the industry, namely, the owner-drivers. The users of taxis get no mention at all in the report; the owner-driver gets a passing reference. I must admit that the Select Committee did not have much time for its inquiry, and the Bill did not permit a great deal of amendment, but we might have expected some further information on the issue of conductors' licences, which seems to me to be a very unsatisfactory state of affairs. We might also have expected some further information on the issue of taxi-plates, although I understand that has been tightened up considerably in recent times. If the report of the Select Committee is adopted, I cannot see that any improvement whatever is likely to accrue to the owner-driver. The committee recommends a reduction of plates, but it does not state which type of plates.

The committee expresses considerable concern for the investor, and for the people who are driving as lessee-drivers or commission-drivers, or some type of wages men. To my mind they are the least desirable element in the entire industry. As the hon. Mr. Jeffery said, the investor is concerned with his return. The weakness seems to be that the people who are driving for the investor, have very little concern for the welfare of the industry, or of the public and, whilst I do not like the Bill, I am very disappointed that the committee did not deal with certain other features associated with this industry; indeed I am disappointed with those with which it did deal. If the recommendation of the committee is adopted, we will presumably have a reduction in the number of taxi plates.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: No.

The Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Not immediately; it would not benefit any one in the industry in the near future, and the reduction in taxi plates will not necessarily be designed to increase the proportion of owner-drivers; rather would it seem, from the remarks of the hon. Mr. Griffith, and from the report, that the prime concern should be those people who are merely working in the industry and largely, if not entirely, driving on behalf of the people

who have come to be known as investors. I do not think that would be in the best interests of the public.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I do not believe it is in our minds, either.

The Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I am firmly convinced that the foundation of a successful taxi industry must be the owner-driver; someone who has his money invested. If the industry is over-catered for, he will lose money and get out of it. On the other hand, if there is scope for more owner-drivers then they will provide their own taxis. I have never been particularly keen on this idea of a limitation on plates, provided they are confined to the people who are prepared to invest in the industry as owner-drivers, because I think we are inclined at times to overlook the people who should be our prime concern, namely, the people who use the taxis.

There was a time not long ago when the conditions, in this industry in regard to supply and demand, were just the opposite to what they are today. Like other people, I think the taxi owners took full advantage of the opportunities they had, and the only corrective and safeguard for the people who use them is to see there is an adequate number of them on the road. I am not a bit happy about the report of the committee and I certainly do not like the Bill in its original form, but whether we will get anywhere by throwing the Bill out, and adopting the Select Committee's recommendations I do not know. I question very much whether it will result in any great improvement either to the user or to the owner-driver.

The Hon. J. G. HISLOP: For the last few days my car has been out of action, and I have had frequent recourse to taxis.

The Hon. H. L. Roche: You are up to date.

The Hon. J. G. HISLOP: This has proved to be most interesting, because I have had a great deal of conversation with those who have driven me around, and, without exception, each one of them has said that it is the issue of such large numbers of plates that has caused all the trouble in the industry. I am afraid however that I have not been able to find the owner-driver, who is an owner driver. The owner-driver is still making a profit and—

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: You should have been with us.

The Hon. J. G. HISLOP: —the cabs I have travelled in have been well kept. I asked these drivers whether they were able to earn £20 a week and they said they were. I asked them could they do this and still keep their cars in good order, to which they again replied, "Yes." And their cars were in good order and were kept clean. These drivers were quite emphatic in that the only people who could do good in the industry were the owner-drivers because they had control of their cars, whereas the

man employed was given a car to drive and had no guarantee that it was in good order. Admittedly I travelled in only a small number of taxis—perhaps eight—which is only a cross-section, but the two points I have made are quite significant. One is that the issue of plates was the cause of the trouble, and other than the owner-driver would be well cared for.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Did you ask them what they thought about the Bill?

The Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I did not have much opportunity to do so because I have only used one or two taxis since the Bill came here to be dealt with. A very intelligent person discussed the industry quite fully with me and told me some of the difficulties. He repeated the same story as to the number of plates issued, and said the main thing was to attempt to do something. He said that whatever was done would not bring the immediate answer; and the Bill certainly would not, as it would only bring difficulties for those who were driving their own cars. He said the best move would be to limit the number of plates and then leave it till next year to decide what further move to make.

The general consensus of opinion was that the indiscriminate issue of plates was the cause of the trouble. Two of these drivers emphatically stated that it would be impossible to make an award for a taxi-driver because it would only lead to all sorts of difficulties. These are the facts I have ascertained by meeting approximately eight taxi-drivers in the last three days and from these remarks I have arrived at the same conclusion as that of the Select Committee.

The Hon. L. C. DIVER: It appears there is ample substantiating evidence that the greatest difficulty confronting the taxi industry is the over-issuing of plates. I made contact with a person who is providing the money for a man to buy his own car. A little over 12 months ago this taxi-driver, who at the time was driving a hire car and paying £26 a week for it out of the total earnings at that time of £50 to £56, undertook to repay the money lent to him to purchase the taxi. He agreed to pay it back at the rate of £15 a week. But in recent months that driver is finding himself in the position that his income is shrinking and is now only from £28 to £35 a week.

When I inquired from the man who had lent the money the reason for the decline in the earnings, he said, "The issue of too many plates. There are too many men in the industry. That is the cause of it. If the powers that be would, for a time, desist from issuing new plates so that the industry would reach reasonable stability, and then peg the issue of plates on a population basis in the metropolitan area, everything in the industry would look after itself." That was his idea. He believed that the position would

be overcome. When I asked him about the flagfall—as to whether it was sufficient—he said the driver was of the opinion that if the flagfall was increased, many of the best customers would be driven away.

At present a driver picks up a fare in the city and to start with it is 1s. 6d. flagfall. He might only take the fare half a mile and then set him down and go a few yards and obtain another fare. If the flagfall was increased, they would not get as much of that business as at present. I have heard that certain ranks, where the taxi-drivers have no intercom. system, are at a disadvantage in that respect, but by and large that would do away with the set ranks and ensure that the intercom. system was always used.

The simple and logical way out of this problem is for the House not to agree to the Bill as presented but to amend the Traffic Act in a manner which will prevent the issue of taxi licence plates for a period; then issue them in accordance with the metropolitan population. The industry would then sort itself out. I agree with the comments of the committee as regards the policing of the taxi-drivers. It is highly desirable that more supervision be exercised over some of those who operate today. There are many of them who give satisfaction; they are tidy and their cabs are kept very clean. But others are a disgrace to the industry. Therefore I propose to vote against the Bill as presented and support any move that will bring about the position as I have outlined it.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: Although I was not in the Chamber at the commencement of the debate, I have not heard anyone answer this question, which seems to me to be the important thing if it is agreed that there is to be a reduction in the plates; or, as from now, no further plates issued—

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: That does not mean a reduction!

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: Not necessarily, no. The question to which I have heard no reference is: What is to happen to the speculator who is employing these drivers, with no interest other than the return of his money? The drivers of these cars are not the owners. I believe I heard the hon. Mr. Griffith say that if this report was adopted the position would eventually be one of all owner-drivers. I believe—

The Hon. L. C. Diver: The Bill would drive all those people out of the business.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: I think the Bill would drive a certain section out of the industry and that section of the people would be those who are operating similarly to the man from Port Kembla.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I am informed that it would not be left to that section.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: The point about which I am concerned and which I want to make clear before I vote on this matter, is that we are all agreed that the owner-driver system is the one we desire. If an owner is successful enough to build up to the stage where he can buy six cars there is nothing to stop him, provided he pays standard living wages for standard working hours.

For many years in this city, we had a group of people in the industry who used to work under the name of Crossley Cars. After the business went out of existence, all the drivers eventually became owner-drivers.

One of the factors that has set this industry on the wrong path—as well as the over-issue of plates, which I think we cannot deny—is that these taxis have been permitted to move from place to place, instead of staying in one rank. The Traffic Act stipulates that they are not allowed to loiter, so the first parking place they find is where they stop, whether it is a rank that was once recognised as belonging to a particular company or not. One rank that comes to my mind is the one at the corner of Barrack and Murray-sts. which was used by the Swan Taxis and Black and White Taxis; but now any taxi can be seen there. As I say, I think this is one of the undermining influences. But, coming back to my earlier remarks, I still want to know what is going to happen to the lessee-driver.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Not again!

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: Is he going to be protected in any way, or is he still going to have to go on and earn this £20 to pay to the lessor and then try to earn a living wage by working such long hours?

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: He is not compelled to be in the industry.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: No. That applies to any position, including that of a butcher and a member of Parliament. I believe a number of these drivers are in the industry simply because of the employment situation.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: You mean the unemployment situation.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: The hon. member can put it that way if he likes. In the last four or five months, a number of these men have applied for conductors' licences so that they may drive taxis. Why have they done that? It is because there is no other type of employment offering for them; and because the chappie who is letting his cars out on lease knows that if a driver is not giving satisfaction he can send him away and get someone else to take his place. This occurs at Fremantle. White Top Taxis have a big turnover of drivers. I wonder whether the Traffic Department is doing the right thing in giving so many of these men a conductor's licence.

I do not want to take their livelihood from them, but I think the industry is being overloaded in this regard, and the people who are not interested in taxis—those who have been called parasites; I dissociate myself from that word—know that they can get drivers whether the vehicle has to operate for eight hours a day or 20 hours a day; and some of them are on the road for 20 hours a day. I feel that the Bill is necessary to protect these drivers.

The Hon. J. Murray: It will not protect them.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: The Traffic Act could then be amended along the lines suggested by the committee. I think there is room for both this Bill and an amendment to the Traffic Act, and I intend to vote for both, and against the report.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I am hoping the Committee will not agree to adopt the report. I listened carefully to the hon. Mr. Griffith, who was the chairman of the Select Committee; and I have studied the report. Although I agree that the hon. Mr. Griffith and his colleagues put in many hours and did a lot of work, I must also agree with the hon. Mr. Roche that there are aspects of the matter which were brought under the notice of the committee which are not mentioned in the report. The hon. Mr. Griffith claims that if the Bill is passed in its present form it will create unemployment.

The Hon. J. Murray: So it will.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I am saying that the chairman of the Select Committee claims that it will create unemployment.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: The report expresses that contention.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Yes, but it gives no basis for the claim.

The Hon. J. Murray: It should be obvious.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: It might be obvious to the hon. member, who, perhaps has psychic or visionary powers. To me it is not obvious at all; and I have no desire to stretch my imagination to find a reason for it. I should say that when a report states something as being factual, the statement should be backed up by evidence.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: It is.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I listened to the hon. member when he moved his motion.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: You spend so much time talking to your colleague that you cannot listen.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I spend my time as I please. I did not hear the hon. member put up any argument to show

why the passing of the Bill would create unemployment. The police inspector in control of the Traffic Department, gave lengthy evidence and produced facts and figures to show the committee that there would not be a great deal of unemployment in the industry.

The Hon. J. Murray: Who spoke of drawing on the imagination?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I have had a restricted time to study the transcript of the evidence, and I am speaking on what I have found there.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Where did Inspector Napier speak of unemployment?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Evidently it irks the hon. member to have the facts disclosed. He does not want them disclosed. He likes to side-track me.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Don't be silly!

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I do not think I interrupted the hon. member when he made his speech.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Not much!

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I do not think I did.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Hansard will prove that.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: All I am asking is that I be allowed to proceed. Inspector Napier produced figures—this is not imagination—to substantiate his evidence. These are the inspector's words—

On many occasions Mr. Hickson's office has been congested for days and days with men waiting on his doorstep pleading for a transfer, but he has controlled the transfer of plates.

Evidently there is a good buyer's market or a seller's market for plates. Mr. Napier also said—

At present we have 69 persons on the waiting list.

That evidence does not appear to show that there are prospects of unemployment. If the Bill is passed, it certainly will not bring about unemployment. Later, I will deal with an aspect of the hon. member's speech which would bring it about. The demand for taxi plates indicates that the industry is not as dead as we have been led to believe. The argument which would be put up—I am drawing on my imagination now—in connection with unemployment is that if men are paid a decent wage and work regular hours, their employers could not afford to pay them. Here again the evidence produced to the committee shows quite clearly that those who employ drivers must be able to afford to pay them. The figures show that their investment in a taxi cab returns net, £700 odd per year.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Which witness said that?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: There is evidence here which was not disputed by the hon. member.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I was not a witness.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The hon. member was the chairman.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Yes, but I do not dispute what witnesses say before a Select Committee.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Does the hon. member not believe them?

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: It is not my place to dispute a statement that a man makes. I can say I do not agree with him, but I cannot dispute it.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: You could have disputed it in the report. Evidence was produced in a factual statement giving all the costs in connection with an investment in a Holden taxi. Members will know that the majority of taxis are Holdens, and in regard to some we should drop the initial letter, "H" and call them, "oldens." When it was shown by a witness that a net £700 per year was the return on an investment in a Holden taxi, surely the owner of the car could afford to pay a proper wage and still be left with a good return.

The Hon. J. G. Hislop: Did that cover replacement?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: That is after allowing for everything; that is the clear, net taxable income. It should be; but I do not know.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Whose evidence is that?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The hon. member knows whose it is. The statement is there.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: We had a lot of witnesses. I want to know which one it is.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The hon. member will find the name in the list of witnesses. I am not here to answer questions, but to state my ideas in connection with this matter. The hon. member suggests that the portion of the Bill which deals with goods hauliers should be taken out. The committee is unanimous on that point. Then the report proceeds to recommend that the rest of the Bill be laid aside. We know what "laid aside" means. It means that the Bill will be as dead as the dodo; it kills the Bill; it will be the end of the Bill; it is just another means of saying that those who desire to be covered by the Arbitration Court—if the Arbitration Court is prepared to cover them—shall not have the opportunity to go before the court.

The committee, by a majority decision, recommends that the Bill be laid aside and that these workers be not given the opportunity to have access to the Arbitration Court. That will be the result if the recommendation is agreed to. This means that the drivers will continue to drive for long hours and get poor remuneration, which the report admits they do. The report states that men employed in the taxi industry as drivers—owners and otherwise—are working extremely long hours, frequently extending into 80 or 90 hours a week, and that the average earnings of some of the men are about £14 per week, and that there are many who appear to be earning considerably less.

If their working hours are reduced to 40 hours a week, it is admitted by the committee that these men are working for £7; that is, £7 for a 40-hour week. The committee says that the Arbitration Court is to be denied the opportunity of assessing the hours of work, and a reasonable wage for these men. That will be the result of its finding if the recommendation is agreed to.

To offset that position, the committee recommends that the Traffic Act be amended. We have been told by the hon. Mr. Griffith that in Western Australia the ratio of taxi licences to population is 1 to 500. He recommends that the ratio be 1 to 600. He also told us that he does not believe in restricting trade. There is a big difference between the ratios of 1 to 500 and 1 to 600. If we agree to this it will mean that 20 per cent. of those who are operating today must go out of business.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Nonsense!

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: That is the result. Tell me otherwise.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: I have given you an amendment and you know what it is.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: That is backhanded arithmetic.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member will address the Chair.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: If 1 to 600 is not less than 1 to 500, I never attended school.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: You say that the rest will go out of business?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Where does the hon. member expect them to go? That is what he is asking the Traffic Department to do with his complementary amendment.

The Hon. L. A. Logan: Read the amendment.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: One to 600 is the recommendation. He is recommending that there be a reduction of approximately 100 taxi licences in the metropolitan area; and then he talks about unemployment. There would certainly be 100 men, if not 200, driving those taxis.

So if there is any unemployment it will be brought about by the hon. member's amendment.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: It is obvious that you have not read the amendment properly.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I listened particularly to the hon. member when he talked about the 1 to 600 ratio.

The Hon. L. A. Logan: Carry on with the rest of it.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: That was in the hon. member's speech. I could not discuss the amendment at this stage.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Because it does not suit you.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The inspector said that people were clamouring for transfers and new plates; but apparently the hon. member does not believe the inspector.

The Hon. L. A. Logan: He did not say that.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: That is what he said in evidence. The hon. member said that we will create unemployment by giving the small percentage of taxi-drivers affected an opportunity to have a wage prescribed for them by the Arbitration Court. But he discards the fact that 69 persons are on the waiting list for taxi plates, and that Inspector Hickson's office is congested, because of people seeking taxi plates. He tells us that there are too many taxis for the population, and that we should get down to the basis of 1 to 600. It does not need one of those Chinese bead gadgets to work out that that is reducing the number if at present it is 1 to 500.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the Minister is bordering on tedious repetition under Standing Order No. 397. I am tired of hearing this 1 to 600.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The hon. Dr. Hislop told us that he did not use taxis frequently, but when he did he used the one taxi operated by an owner-driver. Naturally he would get only one man's opinion. The hon. Mr. Griffith said that every witness had commented on the fact that there were too many plates. If we ask any butcher or baker in town how they are getting on in business they will say, "There are too many of us." I go to the races about three times a year and when I see the bookmakers I ask them how they are getting on. They always say that things are bad, but they must have had a lot of money to start with, because they are still going.

Although the report had to be prepared in a hurry, it does not alter the fact that not many of the aspects that were submitted in evidence are reflected in it. It merely says that there are too many

plates. That seems to be the only recommendation that has come out of it. Inspector Napier did not say that there were too many plates.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: That is not the only recommendation that was made.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The inspector said that there is still a great demand for them. I think he said in evidence that it was suspected that plates still changed hands at a premium, although it could not be proved. The only plates that are not allowed to be transferred are those that have been issued in the last 18 months or so. Although an abundance of evidence was produced, the report does not appear to be very enlightening. One would have to read all of the evidence to get a full appreciation of it.

I trust that hon. members will not be misled by the hon. Mr. Griffith's argument about unemployment, but I am sure that if the hon. member's proposition were accepted it would have the effect of bringing about unemployment. Surely men who are working 80 and 90 hours a week for a wage of £14, as the report stated, should have the opportunity to go to the Arbitration Court and be granted a reasonable standard of living with a proper wage and regulated hours. I oppose the motion.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: Of course, we must expect a conflict of opinions on the report. I said, when speaking to the legislation dealing with the Metropolitan Transport Trust last year, that public transport had been run into the ground in an attempt to syphon off the business to the railways. Now that the Government has taken over metropolitan transport, it appears that the idea is to wreck the taxi business, whereas to the best of its ability this committee is making sincere efforts to save it. A quick examination of the taxi business has revealed that owing to the modern developments of two-way communication systems and so on, taxis are cutting very heavily into the business of the ordinary metropolitan transport; and the only way to bolster that business is to attack the taxis. Apparently the only way to fix the position is to make the business insecure by the over-issue of plates, or make it expensive to operate by introducing this sort of legislation.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Are you suggesting that the Government brought down this Bill to stop the taxis from running?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: The Minister, in replying to the hon. Mr. Griffith, claimed that there would be a reduction in licences. But there is nothing in Mr. Griffith's suggestion to that effect. The position is that no more will be issued until the ratio of 1 to 600 is arrived at. There is no question of the cancellation of licences.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: They will have to work 120 hours a week then.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: In one instance the Minister said that the industry was in a bad way, and yet to substantiate his argument on the hon. Mr. Griffith's proposition he says that there are many people waiting for licences. If the position is so bad, and needs so many correctives, the Minister's argument falls to the ground.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: That is the evidence.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: The Minister used one set of figures in attacking the argument and then blithely disregarded the same figures when putting his own proposition forward. He made extremely heavy weather of it. I think what I had to say previously about the Government's reason for wanting to attack the taxi industry is correct, and I think probably by including transport drivers the idea is to increase costs so much that people will send their goods by rail.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: It is rather unbecoming for two hon. members of this House, including a Minister, to criticise the members of the Select Committee and the report it presented, especially as both those hon. members were present when the time for submitting the report was determined. We do not belong to those in the sputnik or guided missile class; we are not pressure-cookers!

I can assure the Minister that I was in the House for long hours all last week. On Monday I was here from 9 a.m. till 11 p.m.; on Tuesday from 9 a.m. until 11.27 p.m.; on Wednesday from 9 a.m. until 12.27 a.m. the following day; on Thursday from 9 a.m. until the House rose at 1.20 a.m. the following morning.

For the Minister to criticise the contents of the report is unfair. If he wants us to make a full and comprehensive report, I suggest that I read out all the evidence. We were appointed as members of the Select Committee to deal with the Bill, and the Bill only. Therefore we were not permitted to include in our report anything more than we were appointed to inquire into. The Minister questioned why this and that was not contained in the report.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: That is a matter of opinion. Are we to take the report as read?

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The hon. Mr. Roche criticised the report by saying that we did not do anything about the standard of the taxi-driver. That was his main criticism. Let us see what the inspector of police had to say. He was questioned

on this aspect because of certain statements made to us, and this is what he said—

In relation to the driver he has to undergo a very comprehensive examination and inquiry into his suitability to become a taxi-driver.

We cannot query that evidence. We were satisfied that the Police Department did the job. Furthermore, the inspector produced five forms, including a certificate of health which had to be signed by a medical officer.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: I did not criticise that.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I stated that the hon. Mr. Roche made the criticism. The Minister was not listening. I do not mind fair criticism but that particular criticism regarding the standard of the drivers was unfair. The Select Committee had to find out the effect which this Bill will have on the community, if it is passed. We asked every witness who appeared before us if he had read the Bill. Only 5 per cent., approximately, had read the Bill. The others had gleaned their information from the Press or from the debate which took place in this House and in another place. Most of them were not in a position to give a considered opinion on the ramifications of the Bill.

If the Bill became law many complications would arise, having in mind the fact that many of the taxi-drivers are of this state of mind: "I do not care who else loses his licence, as long as I do not lose mine." That was the theme all the way through. Most of them said there were too many taxis in the industry and that was the reason for its decline.

Let us see what is the position. There are 751 taxis operating in the metropolitan area, and there are between 1,500 and 2,000 taxi drivers. If we were to legislate so that the taxi proprietor had to get out of the business, what would happen? Would he return to the traffic office the taxi plates, for which in some cases he paid £500 to £600? It is logical to contend that he would dispose of those plates in some other way.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Then nobody will be going out of the business.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: None. Besides the 750 taxis operating, there are five new issues of plates per month, and so the position will deteriorate month by month. How are we to get rid of the surplus taxis? In my view and in the view of some proprietors with more than one taxi, the proprietors will attempt to get the commission-drivers to take over the vehicles. No hire-purchase company will finance a taxi unless the driver can raise the required deposit.

As was done in 1927 and 1928, the owners will come to an agreement with the commission-drivers to enable the latter to

carry on until such time as they can raise enough deposit to enable them to take over the vehicles on hire-purchase. Meanwhile many of the commission-drivers under such an arrangement will fall by the way-side, because there is not sufficient business for them to keep up their payments. Although they have the good intention of carrying on when they come to an arrangement with the taxi proprietor, 80 per cent. of them will fail and the vehicles will revert to the owners again.

In regard to the commission-drivers, or lessees, and their earnings, up to two years ago the conditions under which they worked were good. For the number of hours they worked they received reasonable remuneration. With the increase in the number of taxis their income gradually decreased, but their hours of work increased. Who are we to blame for that state of affairs? We cannot blame the commission-driver or the owner. They have nothing to do with it.

There is a certain amount of economic drift in this State at the present, but the overall income of the taxi industry is greater than it was two years ago. In the last two years, of the 167 plates issued, 110 were issued to owner-drivers. It is the entry of the new owner-driver into the industry that has caused the deterioration. It is not the fault of the owners who were in business before that time. They were in a legitimate calling. Some of them started off as owner-drivers and by hard work and thrift they were able to acquire another four or five taxis. They ran their business fairly and they paid the commission-driver a fair share.

If what is predicted will result from the passage of the Bill—that these owner-drivers with more than one taxi will be put out of business—then this Parliament has no right to pass this legislation.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: It will not put them out of business.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: What is the use of the Bill in that event? Every month another five plates will be issued and there will be an increasing number of taxis.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: It is intended to give the drivers a fair wage.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I now come to the ability of the industry to pay award rates. With the number of taxis in operation today it is absolutely impossible for the industry to observe award conditions. It is no use for the Minister to shake his head. The evidence shows that the average earning of a taxi is 10s. an hour. Under award conditions of 40 hours a week a taxi-driver will take in £20. Can the owner pay the driver the award wage under those conditions?

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: Your evidence states that £14 is paid for 80 to 90 hours of work.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: These people are working 80 to 90 hours a week. The driver who works 40 hours a week, under normal award conditions, will bring in £20; but if he works 80 hours he will bring in £40.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: You have signed the report. It says the driver receives £14 for 80 to 90 hours of work.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I was referring to the takings of a taxi not the pay of the driver.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: Read the report.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I know what is there. I helped to prepare it.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: Read it then.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The evidence presented to us was that for every 40 hours worked, the drivers earn about £20, because their rate is approximately 10s. per hour.

The Hon. J. G. Hislop: They would take more than that?

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I have said that practically nobody working under the present set of conditions is bringing in £20.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Worked out on an 80 hour week basis, it would be 5s. an hour.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: We should reduce the number of taxis in accordance with our population if we want to bring in a new set of conditions. It must be admitted that this cannot be done with the present ratio of taxis to the population. It is impossible. Therefore, if the Bill were passed, and drivers bringing in £20 and working 40 hours a week had to be paid a wage, the owners would be forced out of business. That is what this legislation will do. Parliament has no right to pass legislation which will put people out of business.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: The court will decide.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I was speaking of what would happen if the set of conditions envisaged by the Bill were brought about. The people who own more than one taxi would attempt to get owner-drivers to take over the cabs. I have also stated that the drivers would soon be in trouble and forced on to the unemployment market, the cars reverting to the owners. There is quite a deal of unemployment in the State today; and this pool of unemployment, in my opinion, is causing a lot of the trouble which we find in the taxi industry. Drivers flit from one owner to another. Because they are out of a job, they go well dressed to the police station, comply with all the

requirements, and are given a licence to drive. They then work for a week or fortnight. By this time, they find that the conditions are hard and they leave.

We took evidence in regard to chaps who drive on weekends, although they have a job to go to during the week. They do this because conditions in the taxi industry are better on the weekend than at other times. We were informed by Inspector Napier that this cannot be stamped out and is hard to control. However, they are endeavouring to make sure that licences are not issued to people unless they intend to be in the business on a full time basis. I cannot fault that intention, but the problem of the unemployed is still with us. These chaps will grab at any straw to obtain work for a fortnight or a little longer. But they soon pass out of this industry and go to some other.

The present situation has not been brought about by any fault of the legitimate taxi owner who has been in operation for a long time; yet we are endeavouring, by legislative action, to put him out of business. I will not be a party to that.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Did the association say in evidence it was not in favour of this Bill?

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The only people to say that they would like to see this Bill passed were the owner-drivers.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: What about their association?

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: There are 110 owner-drivers who have received licences in the last two years; and some of them only within the last six months. These are the people who wanted the Bill passed, because they said there were too many taxis on the road and the passing of the Bill would reduce the number.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: The secretary of the Taxi Owners' Association said the Bill was no good.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The number of taxis could be reduced in this way, but unemployment would be the result. Legitimate businessmen would be forced out of business. I am trying to safeguard the interests of those who have been in the industry for many years. If hon. members want to reduce the number of taxis, take the 179 non-transferable plates off the road. That would be fairer than passing this Bill, which is a back-door method of putting out of the industry men who have been in it for 10 or 15 years. We must have a fair approach to these matters.

The commission-driver is operating on a very different degree of remuneration. I would have liked to do something in this regard, but when it was pointed out that Parliament would be setting down wages and conditions, I realised that it

was the wrong approach. Some of these drivers are receiving 6s. 8d. in the £, and the owners buy the cars and pay expenses. Others are receiving 8s. in the £, the owner doing the same as in the case I have just quoted. Others work on a 50 per cent. basis with the driver finding everything. The conditions vary from place to place, according to conditions.

All in all, these fellows have to work the long hours of 80 or 90 per week to get a maximum gross return of £40 to £42 to enable them to receive £14 in wages. That set of conditions has been brought about because of the increase in the number of taxis in the metropolitan area. We cannot get away from that—it is a fact. Therefore, seeing that this set of conditions has been brought about for that reason, the only fair way out of the position, as far as I can see, is to hold the number of taxis until such time as the population increases, or these fellows, of their own volition, go out of the business and pass in their plates, which should not be reissued. I know it will take a long time for this to be effective, but I think it is the only sensible and fair approach to the problem.

When we reach the stage at which the industry was in four or five years ago, action can be taken to bring in industrial conditions which will be suitable to everybody concerned. By that time the majority of the taxis will be owner-driven. I think today there are 500 owner-drivers and 250 taxi-cab proprietors.

Much has been said in regard to the parasite on the industry. I paid particular attention to this matter when I was questioning the witnesses, and certain statements were made that these parasites existed but not one has been proved to my satisfaction. I will grant that there are people who operate fleets of cars without being actively engaged in the industry, but they probably paid £400 or £500 for their plates. Therefore, they are running a legitimate business.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: They employ sweated labour.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: They do not.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Of course they do.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: They have been in the business for 10 or 15 years and there was no sweated labour at that stage of the taxi industry. The hon. member must not forget that the chap who is employed on a taxi rank is there because he has offered his services of his own free will and accord.

The Hon. R. F. Hutchison: They used to have sweated labour in England.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: These chaps do not have to stay in the business if they do not want to.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: That is so.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: As I said before, this set of conditions has come about purely because of the increased number of taxis; and to a certain degree, because of a slight economic recession. The Minister was very wrath because this Committee desires to reduce the ratio of taxis in the city from 1 to 500 to 1 to 600 of the population. This proposed amendment to the Traffic Act, which is foreshadowed by the Select Committee, has been given to the Minister.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: He still hasn't read it.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The proposed amendment reads as follows:—

- (d) The number of licenses which may be issued in respect of taxi-cars within the metropolitan area as defined by this Act shall not at any time exceed one such license for every six hundred of the population of the said metropolitan area as estimated or declared from time to time by the Government Statistician, but the provisions of this paragraph shall not be construed to require the cancellation of or the refusal to renew any taxi-car license which has been issued prior to the coming into operation of this paragraph.

Does that amendment suggest that we are recommending a reduction in the number of taxi licences in the metropolitan area?

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: I was replying to the hon. Mr. Griffith.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The Minister knew there was no suggestion like that about it.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: I haven't read it.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The Minister also stated that, according to the evidence of one man, he was making £700 per car. I have already mentioned that a lot of statements were made by witnesses which it has not been possible to prove. I would like to have had more time in regard to the evidence of one particular person in order to check some of the statements he made. One or two witnesses referred to the so-called parasites, but up to the present I have been unable to find out whether they are getting much out of the business. They have been brought down to the same level as everybody else. Much has been said about the so-called parasites known as Blake, O'Hara and Smith who were reputed to have come to this State and put money into the taxi business. Two of them have had to get out without receiving much return for their capital outlay.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: They have made application for 65 licences.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The Minister said that people are clamouring to get licences; but I suggest the hon. member

should read Inspector Napier's evidence. If he does so he will find that of 69 applications for taxi licences, 13 will not be issued, because they already have plates. He said it is not the policy to issue plates to those who own them. Plates were sold by 10 people in the last few months, and it was proved they were trafficking in plates. Because of that, they will not be able to get a plate from the Traffic Police. Therefore, the number of 69 would be reduced to 56. When the inspector was asked if there was any clamouring for the release of the 56 plates, he said it was necessary to write to one or two applicants when their turn came but he did not even get a reply. That is the position in regard to taxi plates today.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: I mentioned there was a clamour by drivers to give evidence.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I think perhaps the wording in the inspector's evidence is not correct; and this could make a difference. And so, for the reasons I have outlined, and with particular stress on the fact that Parliament has no right to legislate men out of business, I say we should not pass such legislation. Such action could create unemployment, of which there is already too much; and it could place the lessee and commission-drivers in a position where they would either have to get out or operate under conditions infinitely worse than those they are working under at present. I can see no merit in passing the Bill. The present situation is due to the over-issuing of plates, and I think the industry will simply have to get along as best it can until the position sorts itself out.

The increase in the population of the State, together with the number of plates that are returned to the Traffic Branch and not reissued, will eventually improve the position sufficiently for an industrial award to be workable, and when that time arrives I will help in any way I can. At that stage—three or four years hence—there will be very few commission-drivers operating; almost all taxi-men will be owner-drivers, and that will be a satisfactory state of affairs. The manager of Carlisle Cabs gave evidence. That organisation has built up a good business and is now operating 10 cars. They do their own servicing and drive when necessary. Three years ago their taxation returns showed an income of £4,000. Two years ago it was £2,000, and last year only £1,625, which proves the deterioration in the taxi business in this city in the last two years. I am glad to know that there are so many taxi plates that are non-transferable. The taxi plates cost only 6s. or 8s. and there should be no goodwill in them. So, in regard to the 550 sets of plates that are transferable, I think there should be provision for them to be transferred once only, after which they would become untransferable.

If, after one transfer, taxi plates were made untransferable it would prevent trafficking in them, concerning which so many of those in the industry are fearful. The recommendations of the committee, if carried out, might put some extra value on the plates, and that is why I feel that there should be the opportunity to transfer the plates once. There is provision to that effect in New South Wales and it has operated successfully. I have now a much greater insight into the taxi business than I had this time last week, and if anyone has any better ideas to put forward I shall be glad to hear them; but in the time available we did the best we could.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I will now reply to some of the statements made by certain hon. members who have addressed themselves to this question. The hon. Mr. Jeffery thought that if the Bill was passed it would be a good idea to hold it up for 12 months before proclaiming it. I think he realises, from the evidence given, that if the present state of affairs continues for another 12 months many now in the business will go broke. If we held up the proclamation of the legislation for 12 months and then those concerned went to the Arbitration Court for an award, it would be 18 months before any relief was felt; so we can forget that argument.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: It was not an argument, but a suggestion.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Very well. The hon. Mr. Roche criticised the Select Committee for what it did not do but, like the hon. Mr. Logan, I say it did the best it could in the circumstances. At the last moment on Friday afternoon information came to us from the Premier that he would not entertain an Honorary Royal Commission, which would have given us time to inquire properly into the industry.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: Into the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must address the Chair.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I will reply to some of the statements made during this debate, as certain of them have been misleading. The hon. Mr. Roche regretted that the committee did not say much about the owner-driver. I regret that we did not make reference to the owner-driver in our report, as I think the industry should be based, as far as possible, on the owner-driver, and I am sure both my colleagues on the Select Committee are of that way of thinking. The hon. Mr. Logan mentioned an award in respect of the number of working hours and I think there was some misunderstanding on what he put forward. The evidence we received was that a man working 80 or 90 hours a week earned £40 or roughly 10s. per hour.

The hon. Mr. Logan wanted to know how we could apply a 40-hour week on the basis of 10s. per hour, as it would

mean that a cab would earn £20 per week and out of that the owner of the car could not afford to pay an award rate to a driver. The hon. Mr. Murray agreed that there should be a reduction in the number of taxi plates on issue and considered that the over-issue of plates was responsible for the present upheaval in the industry. He said he would be happy to vote for legislation limiting the number of plates.

The Minister for Railways endeavoured to convey to the Chamber that I wanted to see people unemployed and he said, "The hon. Mr. Griffith's amendment to the Traffic Act will reduce the number of plates." The Minister for Industrial Development questioned, in defiant terms, anyone doubting his sincerity and I, just as defiantly, tell the Minister for Railways that I do not want my sincerity questioned or my remarks misunderstood.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: I am entitled to criticise your opinion.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Yes, as long as the Minister sticks to the facts of what I said. He skated on such thin ice that it is a wonder he did not disappear. I think he has been dollying in the pot of camouflage paint of which we have heard so much. In the report we said—

It is considered that this can be effected by an amendment to the Traffic Act providing for the issue of plates on a population ratio basis.

The report does not mention the figure or proportion at which it was envisaged the application on a ratio basis would be made, and this was where the Minister imagined—

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: I was referring to your speech.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The Minister said I would like to see people out of employment, but he knows I handed him an amendment which I said I would move to the Act. I gave it to him yesterday and it contained the words read out by the hon. Mr. Logan. Obviously the Minister did not read it, but for the purposes of debate he tried to indicate that I wanted to see 100 men unemployed and that my amendment would immediately mean the withdrawal of 100 sets of plates. One would think the gallery—

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: I am addressing the Committee, and not the gallery.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: As far as I can see there is nobody in the gallery except the Press, who do not always print what I say. There was no intention in the mind of the hon. Mr. Jeffery, who is a colleague of the Minister, because we talked this over; and I am certain it was not in the hon. Mr. Logan's mind either,

that we would bring about unemployment by withdrawing 100 plates. If that had been our intention—and it was not—it would have had the same effect as the Government hopes to achieve by the Bill.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: How?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Our intention was to try to standardise the situation and bring about a basis on which the number of taxis would be in proportion to the population. We said we thought the Commissioner of Police might be able to regulate the industry better than is now the case and Inspector Napier gave evidence to that effect. I believe—I would need advice on this—that the law at present does not enable the Minister to cease the issuing of plates. Another Minister stopped the issuing of plates in 1956, but it is doubtful whether the right to do that exists, and if anyone went to the Traffic Department and demanded plates I believe, even if it involved litigation, that they would have to be issued. I feel that the amendment which we have foreshadowed to the Traffic Act would solve the difficulty, as for the time being there would not be any reduction in the number of plates; but with the rise in population and the fact that some plates would be returned and not reissued, the position would be reached where the ratio of cabs to population would be 1 to 600.

The amendment is to be construed in this form; namely, that if 10 plates were returned to the Traffic Department, they would not be reissued until a situation arose which would justify the reissue of them under the Act. I am sorry the Minister has misunderstood the situation. No-one, at any time, mentioned that 100 plates would be withdrawn. The issue was plain. The Minister has the report and the amendment, and he could have studied it at will.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I do not want this matter to develop into a dual of words between the Leader of the Opposition and myself.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Neither do I.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: But he certainly does provoke one by the remarks he makes here; and also by some of the remarks he made during the taking of evidence on the Select Committee. When a report of a Select Committee is presented before this Chamber for adoption, surely any hon. member is entitled to express an opinion on it.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Hear! hear!

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Both the hon. Mr. Griffith and the hon. Mr. Logan have taken exception to the remarks made by the hon. Mr. Roche and myself. Are we expected to accept the report without demur? What confuses

me in this report, in relation to the speech that has been made on the motion for its adoption, is this portion—

Evidence enabled the Committee to establish that men employed in the taxi industry as drivers, owner-drivers, and otherwise are working extremely long hours, frequently extending to 80 and 90 hours a week, and that the average earnings of some men are about £14 per week, although there are many who appear to be earning considerably less.

The Hon. L. A. Logan: What is wrong with that?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: All the Bill seeks to do is ensure that the men working under those conditions should be able to approach the court for it to decide whether their conditions can be improved. The paragraph of the report I have just read is conclusive evidence that there is good reason for inserting in the Industrial Arbitration Act a provision which would enable the court to inquire into the industry in order to prescribe proper rates of pay and hours of work.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Read the next paragraph.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Whether we criticise each other or whether we agree on the report of the Select Committee are questions that have nothing to do with the Bill.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The Minister, when quoting a paragraph from the report, should quote the relevant paragraphs following, because the report goes on as follows:—

The evidence established that this particular industry, having conditions peculiar to itself, makes it extremely difficult to apply the general concept of what an industrial award should be. Furthermore, the evidence revealed that the industry, under existing conditions, cannot afford to pay wages—

That was the evidence submitted before the committee.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: Is not that the business of the court?

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: No. This paragraph continues—

—and it is considered that an industrial award could do nothing but cause unemployment.

That was the evidence tendered before the Select Committee. If the Minister wants to get at the basis of the evidence, he should read all of it, because all the witnesses said the same thing.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Whatever was brought to light by the evidence is not the question we are considering at the moment, but the report of the Select

Committee. The point referred to in the paragraph quoted by the hon. Mr. Logan is something for the consideration of the court. A small percentage of the total number of men concerned will be enabled to approach the court through their appropriate union, for the court to decide whether they should be granted a minimum wage.

Question put and a division called for.

The CHAIRMAN: Before the tellers tell, I give by vote with the Noes.

Division taken with the following result:—

Ayes—12

Hon. C. R. Abbey	Hon. G. C. MacKinnon
Hon. L. C. Diver	Hon. R. C. Mattiske
Hon. A. F. Griffith	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. A. R. Jones	Hon. F. D. Willmott
Hon. L. A. Logan	Hon. J. Murray

(Teller.)

Noes—12

Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. A. L. Loton
Hon. J. J. Garrigan	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. E. M. Heenan	Hon. W. F. Willesee
Hon. R. F. Hutchison	Hon. F. J. S. Wise
Hon. G. E. Jeffery	Hon. F. R. H. Lavery

(Teller.)

Pairs.

Ayes.

Noes.

Hon. J. M. Thomson	Hon. G. Bennetts
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. J. D. Teahan

A tie—0.

The CHAIRMAN: As the result of the division is a tie, the question is resolved in the negative.

Question thus negatived.

The CHAIRMAN: For the information of hon. members I wish to announce that I have decided to proceed with the Committee stage of the Bill forthwith.

Consideration of Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3—put and passed.

Clause 4—Section 61 amended:

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I am tempted to test the feeling of the Committee by moving you, Mr. Chairman, out of the Chair. However, for the moment, I move an amendment—

Page 2, line 18—Delete the word "or".

Amendment put and passed.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I move an amendment—

Page 2, line 19—Delete the words, "the delivery of goods or in".

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

Title:

The Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I move—

That the Chairman do now leave the Chair.

Motion put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes—14

Hon. C. R. Abbey	Hon. G. C. MacKinnon
Hon. L. C. Diver	Hon. R. C. Mattiske
Hon. A. F. Griffith	Hon. J. Murray
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. A. R. Jones	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. L. A. Logan	Hon. F. D. Willmott
Hon. A. L. Loton	Hon. H. L. Roche

(Teller.)

Noes—9

Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. J. J. Garrigan	Hon. W. F. Willesee
Hon. E. M. Heenan	Hon. F. J. S. Wise
Hon. G. E. Jeffery	Hon. R. F. Hutchison
Hon. F. R. H. Lavery	

(Teller.)

Pairs.

Ayes.

Noes.

Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. G. Bennetts
Hon. J. M. Thomson	Hon. J. D. Teahan

Majority for—5.

Motion thus passed.

The Chairman accordingly left the Chair and the Bill lapsed.

NATIVES (CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS) ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to the amendments made by the Council.

TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2).

In Committee.

The Hon. W. R. Hall in the Chair; the Hon. H. C. Strickland (Minister for Railways) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—put and passed.

Clause 2—Section 8 amended:

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I move an amendment—

Page 2, line 1—Add after the word "amended" the paragraph designation (a).

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I have no objection to this amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I move an amendment—

Page 2—Add at the end of the clause the following passage:—

; and

(b) by adding to the second proviso a paragraph as follows:—

(d) The number of licences which may be issued in respect of taxi-cars

within the metropolitan area as defined by this Act shall not at any time exceed one such licence for every six hundred of the population of the said metropolitan area as estimated or declared from time to time by the Government Statistician, but the provisions of this paragraph shall not be construed to require the cancellation of or the refusal to renew any taxi-car licence which has been issued prior to the coming into operation of this paragraph.

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

Clause 3—Section 11 amended:

The Hon. A. L. LOTON: Hon. members will recall that I drew attention to the fact that in the re-enactment of this legislation certain words have been omitted which were placed in the Act in 1956. Those words were put in for a specific purpose which was to enable a farmer to shift his tractor from one part of his property to another, and to go along a road contiguous to the property rather than cross from one paddock to another. This should have been re-inserted in the parent Act. I move an amendment—

Page 3, lines 16 and 17—Delete all words from and including the word "except" in line 16 down to and including the word "from" in line 17 and substitute the words "otherwise than in passing from one portion of the farm or holding to".

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The amendment is a good one, and the Government has no objection to it.

Amendment put and passed.

The Hon. A. L. LOTON: I move an amendment—

Page 5—Delete all words from and including the word "except" in line 22 down to and including the word "from" in line 24 and substitute the words "otherwise than in passing from one portion of the farm or holding to".

This is almost a consequential amendment.

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

Clauses 4 and 5—put and passed.

Clause 6—Section 22AC amended:

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: I move an amendment—

Page 9—Delete the proposed new subsection (3b) commencing at line 35, and ending at line 38 on page 10 and substitute—

(3b) The condition of a fidelity bond upon the happening of which the fidelity bond is defeasible is the failure by a dealer to satisfy a final judgment within one month of the date thereof obtained against him in a court of competent jurisdiction in respect of a cause of action arising during the period for which the bond inures out of the sale, hiring with an option to purchase or exchange of a used motor vehicle.

I sincerely hope that the very happy spirit that has prevailed today will continue. This particular amendment is designed to alter the working of the legislation in regard to fraud, misleading, or misrepresentation, by placing the matter before the court. I maintain that the court is the proper place for this sort of matter.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: My information in connection with these amendments is as follows:

The amendments submitted by the hon. Mr. McKinnon will negate the whole purpose of the bond. If the Used Car Dealers' Association is genuine in its earlier submission to the Minister, that this legislation is desirable to protect the public, then it should be prepared to try out the measure as agreed upon amongst its representations. Used car dealers, when this Bill becomes law, will be in a similar position to the land agents who have for many years accepted the Under Treasurer's decision as the final arbiter in respect to bond estreatment, likewise companies carrying on insurance business in the State.

There is nothing novel in the Bill, as the Treasurer has the authority to meet certain claims from the bond that is lodged with the Treasurer, and it applies to the land agents, and insurance companies. The information goes on to say—

Although the negotiations between the Used Car Dealers' Association and the Chamber of Automotive Industries have been going on for over twelve months, there has been no indication given to the Minister for Transport until very recently that Mr. Kendall did not have the full authority to speak for both organisations.

Prior to the present Bill being drafted the Minister for Traffic, believing that Mr. Kendall was to be the mouthpiece of the two organisations invited Mr. Kendall to meet the

Parliamentary draftsman, together with a representative of the Underwriters' Association.

The Parliamentary Draftsman, at the appointed meeting with Mr. Kendall and the Underwriters' Association representative, which meeting the latter was unable to attend, was assured by Mr. Kendall that the Used Car Dealers' Association was quite satisfied with the amendments to the Bill which he, Mr. Kendall, was then submitting. As a matter of fact Mr. Kendall indicated to the Parliamentary Draftsman that the Used Car Dealers' Association had in fact drafted the amendments.

In a letter to the Minister dated 22nd October, containing the suggested amendments, Mr. Kendall, in the last paragraph, stated that representatives of the Used Car Dealers' Association were, "called into consultation by me, and the above suggestions were given the approval, through those representatives of the Used Car Dealers' Association."

There is another important aspect to consider. The bond requirement of last year's amendment failed because no insurance company would issue a bond as the legislation stood, and I am concerned that if the conditions of the bond which the Underwriters' Association has also endorsed are not agreed to by this House we will be in much the same position as hitherto and no insurance company will be interested in issuing a suitable bond.

In other words, the Minister for Transport is conveying that although the legislation requires the bond, no notice has been taken of the legislation up to the present time because it has been found that the Act as it stands now provides that if a dealer commits a minor infringement of the Traffic Act, he forfeits his bond. That is the position the Bill seeks to correct. The hon. Mr. MacKinnon desires to take from the Treasurer the authority to use part of the bond to meet a court decision which has been made because a dealer has skipped off with the proceeds of the motor car sale. The information continues—

Inquiry at the Treasury Department today reveals that at no time in the memory of the present staff has the Under Treasurer been required to adjudicate concerning forfeiture of a land agent or insurance company's bond. The mere holding of the bond is a protection both to the public and the used car dealers, and the hon. member need have no fear that his parliamentary duties will be increased considerably by frequent missions to the Under Treasurer on behalf of aggrieved constituents who have been defrauded by a car dealer.

The interpretation of that paragraph is that the Treasurer is of the opinion that the mere fact that he has authority to deal with such cases will be a great deterrent to the frauds. The advice continues—

It is only in the last resort that the Under Treasurer would be required to adjudicate. There is nothing in the Bill to prevent the Under Treasurer from assuring himself that the law courts, to which the hon. member refers, will have first had an opportunity to adjudicate.

It is pretty certain that there would be few cases indeed of car dealers doing the wrong thing. Therefore, I do not think it is necessary to alter the existing setup and I hope the Committee will not agree to the amendment.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: Whether or not Mr. Kendall was competent to speak for both parties should not be taken into consideration. I still do not think that the Bill, as it reads now, is a reasonable proposition. If we are to take the Minister's explanation to its logical conclusion, we should do away with the courts altogether. The Minister knows very well that land transactions and people who are handling money cannot be classed in the same category as the people now under discussion. There are a thousand and one differences. I believe the proper way for these matters to be handled is through the court.

I have heard no reason for taking these people away from the ordinary rule of law, and for putting them under the Treasurer. If two people are negotiating and one feels he has an action at law, he should be able to take his case to a court instead of having to go to the Treasurer. My proposal is not taking away anyone's rights but is in fact extending them. Under the clause, the aggrieved person can go to the Treasurer who, if he decided in favour of the applicant, could decide to pay out of the bond whatever amount was involved. Surely it is reasonable that the dealer should have sufficient time to pay the money and leave his bond intact!

Last year a Bill was brought down and we were not able to consider it properly. Since then, hon. members know that Russell's and Lawrence Gill have gone bankrupt. Under my amendment, there would have been at least £3,000 which would have satisfied at least some of the people who were caught.

My amendment is perfectly satisfactory. I ask the Committee to allow the section of the community involved in these matters to have their cases dealt with in the ordinary way.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I appreciate the sincerity of the hon. member but we are not dealing with criminals. Take the fellow who skips. The hon. member mentioned instances of people who

have gone bankrupt. Their bankruptcy would not make the slightest difference to the question, because the bond would go into the pool. The Minister has been warned about the aspect of dealers being involved in parking breaches, and he wants to clear it up. He also wants to protect people who might sell a car of very low value. These matters can be settled by the Treasurer. Surely his integrity is not questioned. The Treasurer should be able to recompense, from the bond, people who have lost their money. If a case is taken to court it will mean a harvest for the lawyers. A man who sold a car for £200 should not have to meet unnecessary litigation expenses. There would be few cases.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: If that is so, it destroys your argument about the amount of litigation. You said it would be a harvest for the lawyers.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: It could be, but it does not matter whether it is a 50 bushel harvest or a four bushel harvest.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: The bulk of legal controversies are not settled in the court, but out of court. In many cases the dealer would pay out of his pocket and leave the bond intact.

The fact that the procedure provides a basis for arbitration, adds strength to the proposition that the Treasurer should pay out money from the bond on an order from the court.

The Hon. A. L. Loton: There must be costs as a result of the court order. Would that mean an additional charge on the bond?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: The costs would have to come out of the bond or be paid by the car dealer.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: He might be in Shanghai, or somewhere.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: The Bill that was brought down last year was designed to eliminate that type of individual. Given a little time, I am confident that he will be eliminated.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: There are other recourses to law in that event.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: He is then liable to a criminal charge for fraud, and so on. It is better to adopt this procedure than simply to be subject to the Treasurer.

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

Ayes—10

Hon. A. F. Griffith	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. L. A. Logan	Hon. F. D. Willmott
Hon. G. C. MacKinnon	Hon. C. R. Abbey
Hon. R. C. Mattiske	(Teller.)
Hon. J. Murray	

Noes—13

Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. A. L. Loton
Hon. L. C. Diver	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. J. J. Garrigan	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. E. M. Heenan	Hon. W. F. Willesee
Hon. R. F. Hutchison	Hon. F. J. S. Wise
Hon. G. E. Jeffery	Hon. F. R. H. Lavery
Hon. A. R. Jones	(Teller.)

Majority against—3.

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 7 and 7A—put and passed.

Clause 8—Section 47 amended:

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: This is the clause which prohibits the use of a motor vehicle on a road unless the engine has affixed or attached to it a prescribed identification mark or number. These days, with the use of short motors, this will present a great deal of difficulty. In fairness to everybody concerned, the method by which these numbers should be affixed, and the administrative details concerned with the matter, should be included in the Bill. Surely the police know what they want to do in regard to this question!

It is complicated by the fact that there are different local authorities which are licensing bodies. I think the procedure regarding the allotment of blocks of numbers and so on, should have been included in the Bill. We do not know what the regulations will be like, and they will apply to every one of the local authorities which is a licensing agent. I move an amendment—

Page 14—Delete all words from and including the word "Prohibit" in line 4, down to and including the word "engine" in line 14.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Once again I trust that the Committee will not agree with this amendment. The Police Traffic Branch desires the amendment for obvious reasons. As the hon. member has explained, many short motors have no serial or identification number, and I am of the opinion that at present the police could refuse to license them. This paragraph in the Bill will afford much more protection against the stealing of vehicles, and it will make it easier to trace stolen vehicles. I have heard it said that in some of the big shops engines get mixed up at times, and perhaps the same baby may not finish up in its original cot. Whether that is correct or not, I do not know.

The hon. member wants to know how this would be implemented. That will be quite easy. Firms which deal in short motors, I take it, will be given a brand, the same as any cattle man is given a brand to use on his cattle. All those difficulties are easily overcome; it is only a

matter of working out the details. I regret I have not been provided with the information as to how it will be done, but it will be done. The Bill will enable the police to trace stolen vehicles more easily.

The Hon. L. C. DIVER: I would like the hon. Mr. MacKinnon to explain to me how a stolen vehicle can be identified if it has no serial number on the engine? How will the owners get on in regard to insurance.

The Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: I have just lately traded in a motor vehicle which had a short motor with no number attached to it. The Traffic Department in Fremantle had considerable trouble, because there was no identification number, and I was told that the sooner legislation such as this was passed the better it would be.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: If the Minister had listened to what I said he would have noticed that I did not say that engines should not be numbered; I said that the procedure should have been written into the Bill. I wholeheartedly agree that every motor should be numbered for the very reason suggested by the hon. Mr. Lavery—considerable trouble is caused to the licensing authorities when engines have no numbers. But the police are not the only licensing authorities in this State. Therefore it is not wise to let the police make regulations which make it easier only for the licensing authority in the metropolitan area. The Minister told us how he thought it would be done; so why was the procedure not written into the Bill? If a block of numbers is to be allocated to each motor firm dealing in short motors, surely a provision for doing that could have been written into the legislation.

A man might drive into Bruce Rock in a month's time to have his car re-licensed. If this legislation has been proclaimed in its present form he could be refused a licence because his engine might not have an engine number. Regulations are all right if conditions are changing; but in this instance this condition will never change. As I understand it, that is what regulations are for—to cover changing conditions.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: One of the witnesses at the taxi inquiry told us that the engine was really only a very small part of a motor vehicle. He explained how easy it was to replace it at little cost as compared with the rest of the vehicle.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: It is far cheaper than the body.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: It is. I think there is a tendency to attach too much importance to the motor.

The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is a bit more stable than the mudguards.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: It is. But the chassis is the most stable part of the car.

The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It could be.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I am not sure whether the present-day licences show the engine number.

The Hon. L. C. Diver: Of course they do.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: I have my licence with me and it definitely shows the engine number.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: If there are two cars of identical make, and they are the same colour both inside and out, it would be possible, if the engines had no numbers, for the engines to be changed over without anyone being aware of it. I think we are attacking the problem in the wrong way. From the point of view of the safety of the public it might be a good idea to give a motorcar a certificate of title, or something similar, so that anybody buying it would know its history.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The hon. Mr. MacKinnon asked what would happen to somebody who was driving a car without an identification mark if this Bill became law. Since the Act was passed last year, what has happened to the bondholders who have not been required to furnish their bonds? Nothing! A reasonable and commonsense view is always taken on these matters.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: I still maintain that is all the more reason why this sort of thing should be frowned on and the amendment carried. The police should not be given authority to make regulations concerning such a serious matter as prohibiting the alteration or defacement of a prescribed identification mark on an engine. That is a serious thing to do. The amendment should be included in the Bill.

Amendment put and negatived.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I move an amendment—

Page 14—Add after subparagraph (zo) a further subparagraph to stand as subparagraph (zp)—

(zp) empowering the Commissioner to carry into effect the provisions of paragraph (d) of the proviso to Section 8 of the principal Act.

If hon. members realised the difficulty in finding the right section in the Act in which to place this provision, they would feel as I do. If ever a statute needed re-drafting this one does. The earlier amendment which I moved referred to Clause 8 which sought to add a paragraph laying down the basis on which taxi licences are to be issued. The amendment before us

seeks to amend Section 47, which is the provision governing the making of regulations.

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

Clauses 9, 10, Title—put and passed.

Bill reported with amendments and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and returned to the Assembly with amendments.

Sitting suspended from 9.35 to 10.14 p.m.

STANDARD GAUGE RAILWAY.

Leave to Introduce Motion.

THE HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Midland) [10.14]: Mr. President, under Standing Order No. 102, I request the leave of the Council to move a motion without notice.

The **PRESIDENT**: The question is that leave be granted.

Question put and passed.

Deferment of Construction.

THE HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Midland) [10.15]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House the proposal to construct a standard gauge railway between Kalgoorlie and Fremantle should be deferred until all the aspects of this proposal have been exhaustively examined and more urgent reproductive works have been carried out.

It was the Minister for Railways who suggested that I should move the motion at this stage because opportunity would only present itself to discuss this subject on the Loan Bill, and as we are obliged to wait for the receipt of that Bill from another place it was considered wise to move this motion during the break. I would point out, however, that after the motion has been debated I intend, in accordance with the usual practice, to ask the leave of the House to withdraw it.

In speaking to the motion, I voice the knowledge and the convictions I have gained by experience as a former Minister for Railways and, having had occasion to discuss this matter at length with the responsible officials concerned; and also following the opportunity I have had to peruse the file which the Minister for Railways laid on the Table of the House some weeks ago. Too little has been said on the implications of this important matter and the effect it will have on the State. Many people have adopted the view that it will mean a great deal of money coming into the State, and therefore it must be a sound proposal. Others have the idea that it will avoid the delays caused

by changing trains at Kalgoorlie, and so on. However, these views have been expressed by people who have not given some aspects of the question much thought and have not considered the expense involved.

In any event, for the information of hon. members I wish to express some of the views and opinions I have prepared; especially following upon some of the aspects of the question that have been dealt with in the Press. In outlining the history of this matter, I point out that the proposal has gradually been evolved from the theory that a uniform railway gauge throughout Australia will solve all its railway problems.

After much talk and newspaper advocacy over the years, the Federal Government, in 1921, appointed a Royal Commissioner to inquire into the matter. Nothing tangible happened until 1930, when the standard gauge line between Sydney and Brisbane was completed by running a 69-mile link from the border of New South Wales to the Queensland capital. Since 1930 no further standard gauge has been constructed in Queensland, which has no desire to intrude a foreign gauge into its own 3 ft. 6 in. gauge system.

A further development occurred in 1937, when the Trans. line was linked by standard gauge from Port Augusta to Port Pirie. Nothing further occurred until after the conclusion of World War II, when Mr. Eddie Ward—Transport Minister in a Federal Labour Government—revived the idea, ostensibly with a view to providing employment for returning soldiers. That appears to have been the prime consideration. In 1945 this House appointed a Select Committee to inquire into the proposal to link Kalgoorlie with Fremantle by a standard gauge railway.

That committee consisted of the Hon. A. Thomson (Chairman), the Hon. W. J. Mann, the Hon. J. A. Dimmit, the Hon. H. L. Roche, and the Hon. G. Fraser. The proposal was condemned by a majority of four to one, the dissident being the Hon. G. Fraser. An extract from evidence by J. A. Ellis, Commissioner of Railways on page 5 is as follows:—

Broadly my opinion is that there is no economic justification at all for unification except from the defence point of view; that is to say . . . from any economic angle we could not possibly justify the spending of the millions of pounds that would be necessary to change our gauge.

With the use of heavier type rails we could go 55 miles an hour (on 3 ft. 6 in. gauge line) but the curvature of the line would limit speeds to that figure . . . We could run at speeds of 60 to 65 miles per hour with the same curvature as adopted on the standard gauge. I do not know

that I would like to go at 70 miles an hour; 60 miles an hour would be more comfortable travelling.

An extract from the evidence of Mr. D. W. Brisbane, who was the Manager of the Midland Railway Company, is as follows:—

As I understand it, the proposal at present under consideration is for the construction of a separate standard 4 ft. 8½ in. gauge from Kalgoorlie to Perth at an estimated cost of £9,399,500. This means that it is proposed to spend this money on a line alongside an existing one, from which we could expect no appreciable increase in revenue, but which would double the working costs of operation and maintenance and the payment of a large interest bill.

To me it seems unsound to have two railways dividing between them the freight which could easily be handled by one at less than half the cost.

I would like to communicate to this House a few fundamental facts which I think are worth considering. I was advised in 1957, by the Queensland Railways Commissioner, that that State, like Western Australia, had built its railway of narrow gauge construction because it was cheap to build and maintain, and the replacement of equipment was much cheaper than the replacement of equipment necessary for a standard gauge. Although it might have been slower, the narrow gauge, in many respects, was much cheaper to maintain.

At the same time Queensland has four trains running on four internal lines quite equal to the Trans. train for comfort. They are the Sunlander, Westlander, Midlander and Islander trains. They are air-conditioned and do 25-30 miles per hour, including stops. New Zealand, South Africa, and Japan all have 3 ft. 6 in. lines. Their trains, with heavier track construction, travel up to 60 miles per hour. Queensland fears that if the Commonwealth unified gauges it might desire to take over its State railways, and cut out many of the existing lines. The same could happen in Western Australia. The Commonwealth itself operates 1,088 miles of 3 ft. 6 in. gauge, or nearly half of its existing mileage.

The Clapp proposals for this State provided for standard gauge lines which would follow the same track as the main lines of our railway system, but they would result in a considerable reduction of the branch lines. The total mileage proposed to be constructed, according to the Clapp plan was 2,030, and the mileage of our own system then in operation was 4,300. Therefore, it meant a reduction of roughly 50 per cent. of the existing track.

The Wentworth committee, which was appointed by the Commonwealth Government in 1956, submitted proposals—as a report—in connection with the standardisation of certain trunk lines to link capital cities. The three links proposed were—

- (a) Albury to Melbourne (now in hand);
- (b) Broken Hill to Port Pirie and thence to Adelaide;
- (c) Kalgoorlie to Fremantle.

The first two proposals appear sound and do not concern Western Australia. The big consideration, so far as Western Australia is concerned, is the proposal to install a standardized line between Kalgoorlie and Perth. The questions we now have to consider are:—

1. What is its likely cost to—
 - (a) Commonwealth Government;
 - (b) Western Australian Government?

2. Will the proposed link benefit Western Australia's economy or the reverse?

3. What is the defence angle?

4. Are the claims put forward by the scheme's sponsors and experts in regard to such matters as Fremantle as terminal for in-bound goods from the west or in regard to the harbour potential of Cockburn Sound, soundly based?

5. Are such claims truly economic or based on political expediency or an inadequate appreciation of all the facts?

6. What would be the effect on our 3ft. 6in. gauge system, and is the move likely to develop into a unified railway system—Commonwealth-owned, controlled and directed—coupled with the virtual certainty of considerable reduction in railway mileage?

7. Could better use be made of an equivalent or smaller grant for State development in other ways?

I will now deal with the first question—

Cost to Commonwealth and State: The Wentworth Committee sets out the cost as £18,000,000 in 1956. An expert railway committee now estimates the cost as £29,876,750. Commissioner Hall pronounced the report as being a good one and the estimate reasonably accurate. Commissioner Clarke said the railway committee's figure was under-estimated, and he estimated "that £40 millions would be nearer the mark."

I think the difference in cost was arrived at principally by the Wentworth committee not taking into account the large sums that had to be expended in resumptions; a certain amount of re-routing at the Perth end; the provision of necessary workshops, equipment, rollingstock, etc. Expenditure on these items would account for the great

difference of £12,000,000 between the estimate of £18,000,000 made by the Wentworth committee and our own estimate of £30,000,000.

Cost to Government: The Commonwealth Government subsidised the Albury-Melbourne link to the extent of 70 per cent. New South Wales and Victoria shared the remainder, each paying three twentieths or 15 per cent. Assuming, however, that the line cost £30,000,000 and Western Australia was equally treated with other beneficiaries, Western Australia would have to find £4,500,000, plus interest, at, say, 5 per cent. as well as its share on a pro rata basis of the Commonwealth's contribution as individual taxpayers.

Benefit or otherwise of proposed link on Western Australia's economy: The proposed link could confer some advantages—apart from personal convenience—in the way of speedier transit of goods, say from Sydney to Perth. Is this wholly desirable in view of the cost and other factors? The trade balance between Western Australia and the Eastern States, however, has always been very much against Western Australia—so much so, that the Premier has seen fit to initiate a "Buy in W.A." movement. A reflection of this trend can be seen in the Wentworth report itself. On page 24 there appears the following table:—

Year	To W.A.	From W.A.	Total	Remarks
	tons	tons	tons	Ratio
1953-54	25,506	8,238	37,794	4 to 1
1954-55	36,710	6,379	43,095	6 to 1
1955-56	49,641	8,460	58,091	6 to 1

Apart from the desirability of keeping Western Australia as self-contained as possible, the question may be asked why was not cheaper sea freight employed, so that users could get the benefit?

What is the defence angle? Defence is a Federal matter, and while it is agreed that a standard gauge would be advantageous, the defence authorities never gave it high priority. In fact, in recent years the trend has been to utilise roads because of mobility and less danger of disturbance. Kalgoorlie now has a black road to Perth. Air power has affected old ideas tremendously, and if enemy air power prevailed, it would matter little about a specified railway gauge.

In April last year, after a visit by Mr. Dulles from America, when defence matters were specifically discussed, the Prime Minister said that new military strategy demanded a new approach, inasmuch as any war involving Australia could be regarded as lost if an enemy established itself on our shores. The new strategy was to keep the enemy out of Australia, and the new weapons were guided missiles.

Validity of the various schemes put forward by the scheme sponsors and other interested parties: Under this heading could be enumerated the recommendations of the Wentworth report, and also the fantastic claims for the use of Fremantle Harbour as a terminal of inbound goods from the West and the uses of Cockburn Sound.

The claims of the Wentworth committee are temperate and reasonable, although some suggestions are not based on sound data. The suggestion that iron ore ex-Koolyanobbing might be railed to Newcastle, presupposes that the railway could compete with the Broken Hill Proprietary Company's own vessels specially designed for this trade; also, that the State would release such ore for that purpose.

I might mention that the Broken Hill Proprietary Company, which is the one steel company in Australia that might be likely to get ore as suggested by the Wentworth report, has a fleet of vessels especially designed and built for its own purpose, and the company's costs by sea are remarkably light. So, if the question of Koolyanobbing ore going to Sydney ever became a practical consideration, I am sure the company would rail it to Fremantle and then convey it in its own vessels to Port Kembla and Newcastle.

The suggestion that Fremantle might develop into a terminal to take cargoes from, say England, for transshipment and rail-ing to the rest of Australia, was side-tracked by the Wentworth committee. In its report—page 25—it was stated that this matter was "discussed with members of overseas shipping representatives' association" in Sydney, and was discounted on the score of shipping time-tables and extra distance.

This point is worth some study on account of minutes supporting it on the railway file—both from Mr. Clarke and Mr. Brodie. Clarke instanced the trend of ships cutting out some ports and concentrating on others. He said that future vessels of 45,000 tons carrying 2,000 passengers could terminate at Fremantle. Passengers could proceed to the Eastern States by rail or air.

Feeding such visitors and provisioning ships and accommodating out-bound passengers would be equal to supporting a city of 360,000 people. He said he estimated that three ships per week would call. Mailboats now took 28 days to come from the U.K. to Fremantle and a further 28 days to call at other Australian ports and return to Fremantle before final departure from Fremantle to the U.K. Mr. Brodie said each vessel would require eight trains—seven for passengers and one for baggage. This is certainly a glowing picture from Western Australia's point of view.

We must examine this from all angles. There would be opposition from the Eastern States. They would say that Fremantle could not accommodate the goods required for the Eastern States, because Fremantle Harbour, serving a population of seven per cent. of the total Commonwealth, could not be expected to serve the needs of existing ports in the Eastern States also. In addition, apart from having had facilities built up over the past hundred years costing millions of pounds, the handling charges of the Eastern States are appreciably lower than those at Fremantle; and the difference in freight by sea from Fremantle to the Eastern States—say to Sydney—as compared with the freight by rail between Fremantle and Sydney would be £6 a ton. The shipping people would also say that they had gone to the expense of loading the vessel and bringing it so far, and why should they not be entitled to the extra revenue which would accrue by their taking it the full distance?

The convenience of the passengers would also have to be considered. Passengers on a liner at Fremantle would prefer to go through to their destination on that boat rather than break the journey at Fremantle, which would of course involve a change from the boat to the train, and all the attendant inconvenience. It would be a far greater undertaking than the changing of trains at Kalgoorlie when people visit Western Australia from the Eastern States. Yet it would seem that we want to put these people to further inconvenience, merely to have a broad gauge line going through and saving ourselves a little trouble at Kalgoorlie.

Bulk cargoes would in any case not go by rail but by sea. These bulk cargoes coming into and going out of Australia form a considerable portion of the Australian trade. In Fremantle the loading is roughly three million tons a year in, and three millions tons a year out. A great proportion of that is made up of bulk cargoes of wheat. For instance, this year it is likely to be about 1,500,000 tons, but last year it was about 750,000 tons. In addition to bulk wheat and other grains, Fremantle handles large quantities of bulk fuel oils, phosphate rock and sulphur. The number of mail boats calling last year totalled 41 with an average tonnage of 25,000 tons. Only portion of the cargo of those 41 ships is discharged here; the rest goes to its final destination, so the actual discharges at Fremantle are not a big proportion of the cargo of those ships. Mr. C. W. Clarke's suggestion was that we might be called upon to handle three 45,000-ton ships per week, which would terminate at Fremantle. That figure would represent approximately 7,000,000 tons per year. The present figure, assessing Western Australia's population at 7 per cent. of the Australian total, would be approximately 72,000 tons from 41 ships now calling at Fremantle.

So when we come to examine the matter in the light of the facts which must be known to the experts, the proposals appear to be nonsensical.

The position re Cockburn Sound is best described in the words of Commissioner A. G. Hall as follows:—

Wentworth discussions—R/313.

Part 6—Folio 259/260.

He understood Kwinana was not proving to be the good docking area that it was thought to be in the first place, but the Chairman of the Fremantle Harbour Trust, Mr. Tydeman, would be able to inform them—the committee—in this respect.

And in paragraph 142 of the same discussions (folio 260)—

The commissioner said that the story of Kwinana has been a disappointing one; they were getting rough weather down there and the fact was that Kwinana had not turned out to be the ideal port, and it would be wise to tread warily before it could be said that everything would go to Kwinana eventually.

31/7/1956.

The question of such claims being based on political expediency: It is probable that the original claims were sincerely presented. Only the Government can answer the question of political expediency. It would appear significant, however, that there was no Government enthusiasm in the early stages. Mr. W. M. Marshall said he would never give priority to a standard gauge railway as now proposed, until other requirements of the State's economy had been fully met.

Former Commissioner Hall was always hostile to premature action, and he placed the needs of the State railway system first and intimated that heavy spending on a luxury line could prejudice aid on general rehabilitation needs. Mr. Hawke's letter to the Prime Minister on the 5th November, 1956, (R.313/38—folio 307a) sets out in the final paragraph:—

I would not agree that the suggested work is entitled to a priority above many other urgent and important works, such as the provision of water supplies, electric power, schools, and so on. However, in the event of your Government deciding to take steps to implement the report of the committee in question, I trust the Kalgoorlie-Fremantle section will receive careful and favourable consideration and also a very high priority.

The Premier, I think, rightly puts the responsibility for examination and action on the shoulders of the Federal Government—and I could not agree more—but later a distinct change of sentiment seems to have developed. A railway report was

called for and furnished on the 23rd May, 1957 (folio 332). This revised the figures, but made no recommendations.

On the 18th June, 1958, however, the then Acting Commissioner (Mr. Brodie), submitted a report (folios 384/6) approving the Wentworth proposals for early implementation. The Premier, five days later, wrote to the Prime Minister requesting a start to be made on the work by March, 1959. There is no indication that consideration was ever given to the alternative route—via Roleystone—as mentioned in the Wentworth report. Certainly, no survey was ever made.

I might say at this stage, that I have a very high regard for Mr. Brodie, but I must put his report alongside that of men whom I know well and who are more capable of judging in this particular matter than Mr. Brodie would be—men like Mr. Ellis, Mr. Brisbane and the late Mr. Raynor. The late Mr. Raynor was one of the best men the system ever had. He was born in Western Australia and served his life with the system which he loved, together with Western Australia. He was pleased to be in the position where he was able to try to build the system up, but unfortunately he died and we have been deprived of the services of a very useful man.

My next question is: What would be the effect on our 3 ft 6 in. gauge system, and is the move likely to develop into a unified system—Commonwealth owned, controlled and directed—coupled with the virtual certainty of a considerable reduction in railway mileage?

This question, to farmers and country people generally, must be the crucial test of the soundness or otherwise of the proposals. We have to remember, as I have stated several times, that it is the farmer and the people in the country who pay the great bulk of the railway freights, and I think that when we talk of railways it is the effect on these people that we have constantly and carefully to bear in mind.

First, it can be assumed that an extra line, however economical, would have to earn fresh revenue to justify its existence. But there is no evidence of any additional revenue. Therefore, its cost would add to railway losses. These losses would almost certainly be substantial and must finally result in increased freights to bring the budget nearer equilibrium. The proposals envisage re-location of wheat bins, involving Co-operative Bulk Handling in extra costs. If the Commonwealth operated the line, the losses could be still greater, so far as the Western Australian Government Railways are concerned, as the new line—according to Mr. Hall's assessment—could take half the total earnings.

Figures obtained from the department show earnings from this line in 1956 being approximately £4,300,000 or about 35 per cent. of the total earnings for the system. The loss of a proportion of this would be a

serious matter, as the running expenses would be very little reduced. If, in desperation, the State had to hand over the railways to the Commonwealth, then without question, many existing branch lines would be pulled up. The Commonwealth proposals in 1944 provided for the retention of 2,030 miles of line only—a reduction in the then mileage of over 50 per cent.

What help the Commonwealth Government would be prepared to give to affected rail users, would be problematical. It is the fear of such a happening which has influenced the Queensland Government to resist the intrusion of any Commonwealth lines in to that State.

I come to my final question, which is this: Could an equivalent grant from the Federal authority be better utilized in developing the State in other ways?

Commonsense answers this question, and the answer is emphatically in the affirmative. Our State is crying out for development. In the light of reduced export income, this question is a serious one. The following is a list of items on which we could spend a Commonwealth grant:—

- Make our own rail system serviceable.
- Comprehensive water scheme.
- Geraldton Harbour.
- Assistance to dairymen.
- Power and light.
- Country water supplies.
- Pasture development.
- Light land development.
- Salt encroachment.
- Soil erosion—and sand creep.
- Technical research—agricultural and mineral.
- Nor'-west roads.
- Drainage and irrigation.
- Prospecting and mining.

All these are country matters and they are all concerned with production. We must attend to these as well as to education, health, communications, etc. With limited money available, wise spending is vital to our economy. Get these things done first and then re-submit the railway question.

In this way we will be doing very much more valuable work than by constructing a luxury line which at its best, could only duplicate a line already in existence which is well able to take all the traffic that is offering; and it could, with heavy rails and air-conditioned trains, be made the equal in speed and comfort of anything the Trans. line has to offer. Therefore, my advice is to get these things done first.

I want to make it clear, as I said from the start, that I do not want this to be a political matter. I want to offer factual evidence for, what I think, is the State's benefit. No-one can be keener than I am for money to be received from the Federal Government for the development of Western Australia. I know its needs and I know it is lacking development. I

know it must have help if it is to build up economically to a position at all comparable with that of the Eastern States. I do not want to take up the time of the House unduly, but I would like to say that having looked through the files, I have found that over the years there have been some interesting comments from different sections.

There was one from the Australian Associated Chamber of Commerce some years ago protesting against the Clapp proposals, and advising against the general idea of standardisation. We have to remember that our State is almost self-contained in the matter of traffic handling. Less than two per cent. of all products of any State go outside the borders of the State. While I agree that the line from Albury to Melbourne is a good one and could probably help save the black road between Sydney and Melbourne, it is justified by the fact that there is a volume of traffic on it. But, where in a State like this, there is not that volume of traffic, then we would, if we constructed this standard gauge railway, do something which would not be in the interests of the State.

We have to remember that we are a claimant State. During the last 10 years, through the agency of the Grants Commission, Western Australia has received from outside sources the sum of £71,696,000, and now the proposal is that we may ask for another £30,000,000 for something which we do not want.

I think, if we are honest—and we must try to be—we should regard ourselves as trustees for the careful spending of other people's money. We want to develop our State because we think that to do so is in the interests of Western Australia and the Commonwealth as a whole. But while we are depending on our rich neighbours, we should be very careful not to overspend when it can be proved that that expenditure is not warranted.

We talk a lot about a uniform taxation system. I will ask one final question: If we had to rely on our own taxation receipts and we were faced with a request to build a £30,000,000-line from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle, what would be the answer? I think it would be emphatically that we could not afford it; and I think we should adopt the idea that for what we cannot afford to do ourselves we have no right to ask help from other people.

THE HON. F. J. S. WISE (Minister for Industrial Development—North) [10.58]: I think that all Western Australia is indebted to the hon. Mr. Simpson—

The Hon. L. C. Diver: Hear! hear!

The Hon. F. J. S. WISE: —for having given to us something in a concise and tangible form of the case for and against the uniform railway. His analysis of the problems, and the questions that he posed—that are so related to such an enormous

expenditure; because it is certainly true that Western Australia must pose the question as to where the money is to come from—are very vital to the economy of the State. I think it is the intention of the hon. Mr. Simpson to withdraw the motion and, if he does, I repeat that he will have done this State a great service in presenting, in the form of a record, the details he has given us tonight.

THE HON. L. C. DIVER (Central) [10.59]: I would like to echo the sentiments expressed by the Minister for Industrial Development, and record my appreciation of the time and effort that have been put into the motion by the hon. Mr. Simpson; because by condensing the various reports in the manner he has done he will immediately have put any individual who is investigating this problem, on the alert, for his remarks throw into open relief the stark problems associated with this suggestion. When an inquiring mind, alerted through the efforts of the hon. Mr. Simpson, delves into this problem, it will find that there are much greater problems associated with the suggestion, particularly in regard to the various branches of our railway in Western Australia. One can see, from what the hon. Mr. Simpson had to say, that some of our branch lines could be engulfed by this broad gauge problem, and many of our spur lines could be placed in jeopardy.

Therefore, I think we owe a debt to the hon. member for the research he has made into this matter, and the fact that he has placed all his information on record. I do not wish to weary the House at this juncture. We have listened to a long speech, because it dealt with an immense problem; but the matter it contained is very much condensed. In view of the timely warning given by the hon. member regarding the obstacles that lie in the path of a broad gauge system between Fremantle and Kalgoorlie, I hope that, even at this late stage, wiser counsels will prevail, and we will not go ahead with the project in the near future. I support the motion.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (Minister for Railways—North) [11.3]: I am sure hon. members are very appreciative of the lucid and clear analysis of the question of a broad gauge railway from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle just presented to us by the hon. Mr. Simpson. He had quite a long and difficult experience as Minister for Railways in this State; I would say that no other Minister has gone through such a trying time as the hon. member did during his regime as Minister for Railways. While occupying that position, he also administered the Transport Board. At the time there was an acute shortage of railway wagons and locomotives. Because of that fact his knowledge of the railways system is great; he gained considerable experience through the difficulties that confronted him at that time.

I was pleased to be able to listen to his speech in connection with this proposal to extend the standard gauge from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle. I agree with the hon. member that there are more urgent needs throughout the State—for the expenditure of State funds at any rate. But whether the funds to be spent on the Kalgoorlie-Fremantle section of a standard inter-capital Australian railway system would come from the State Treasury, or be provided by the Commonwealth Treasury, has not yet been disclosed by the Commonwealth. The hon. Mr. Simpson has told us of previous proposals, suggestions and arrangements.

Since I have been Minister for Railways the subject has naturally come under my notice on many occasions, particularly when the Wentworth committee came to Western Australia to examine the question of an inter-States standard railway gauge system. I gained the impression at the time that the committee was necessarily examining every State in the Commonwealth in regard to this matter, because Commonwealth funds are supposed to be expended on such works throughout the Commonwealth. After discussing the matter with the committee, I felt that the primary object of its investigation was the Wodonga-Melbourne link. I expressed that opinion during the committee's interview with me—not as a witness, but when the members of the committee made a personal call at my office. Events proved that to be so.

While agreeing with the hon. member that funds can be spent in the State—whether they be Commonwealth or State funds matters little—to better advantage at the moment than on connecting the standard gauge railway, one has to consider the employment which the expenditure of funds on that railway would mean to Western Australia at present. A lot of money would be spent. The Wentworth report assessed the cost at £18,000,000; but it had in mind only the laying of the track. The total cost is assessed in the vicinity of £40,000,000. That is a lot of money to expend on duplicating a railway system. I say "duplicating" because it would not be possible to discontinue the Kalgoorlie-Fremantle link while we were replacing it with a standard gauge line. One must necessarily be built alongside the other and, unfortunately, every line it crosses means another break of gauge for the Western Australian railways. Also, the Western Australian railways would still have to operate.

Wheat could be brought in from branch lines and perhaps transhipped on to the standard gauge railways trucks; but that would not be economical. Wheat must come in from the branch lines and be brought down the main line. Therefore, the expenditure on the standard gauge

railway certainly means a duplication, and duplication would not altogether be to the benefit of Western Australia; at least in my opinion. But the benefits would go the other way. The construction of such a line would create a tremendous amount of employment. It does not take much imagination to realise the benefit that such a job would be to the timber industry of Western Australia. A tremendous number of sleepers would be required, and it would be a tremendous fillip to the timber industry. The building of the railway would absorb the number of unemployed which Western Australia has at the moment.

The latest correspondence in connection with this railway is as stated by the hon. Mr. Simpson. During the past 12 months the Premier has pressed for Western Australia to be put on an equal priority with the Victorian railways so that there would be an expenditure of money in Western Australia at the same time as there would be an expenditure of money in Victoria on a standard gauge inter-States railway system. But the Prime Minister has never agreed that the lines between the States should be constructed simultaneously. The Commonwealth Government has taken the attitude, through its Minister—Western Australian Senator Shane Paltridge—that the expenditure should initially be on the link between Wodonga and Melbourne, which is virtually the link between New South Wales and Victoria. As I remarked earlier, I think that was the main objective of the committee from its inception. However, the Commonwealth agreed to finance the construction of that link on a 70-30 basis. But the Victorian railways were very shrewd, and the Victorian Government was alert to the position.

Through negotiation and bargaining—in my opinion after the decision had, if not reached a final consideration, proceeded so far that it would not have been politic to retract—the Victorian railways took very quick advantage of the position; and, as I understand the correspondence and the files perused by the hon. Mr. Simpson and tabled here, the Victorian Government will be getting a centralised traffic control system—also supplied by Commonwealth funds—at a cost of £1,000,000.

So it would be very nice if ever the Western Australian Government could find itself in such a happy position. However, the latest advice in connection with this matter is that the Premier of Western Australia has only recently pressed the Prime Minister again to commence the link between Kalgoorlie and Fremantle, because although we say it has its disadvantages, it also has its advantages. I agree with the hon. Mr. Simpson when he says that shipping would be turned around at Fremantle and that could not be used as a justification for a standard gauge railway.

The idea of some of those who advocated the standard gauge a few years ago, was that, instead of shipping proceeding from Fremantle to the Eastern States ports, that shipping would, if through-trains were provided, turn around at Fremantle, and the passengers would alight on to a train at the wharf and finish the journey to the Eastern States by rail. My inquiries of the shipping companies' representatives, when that question was alive, showed that it was hardly likely that such a set-up would have come about, because although the passenger traffic in some ships was certainly most desirable there was also freight to be considered, and freight traffic of course is the main revenue-producer of the shipping companies.

Accordingly, as I see it, desirable as it is from an employment point of view, there are still two sides to the question of a standard gauge railway, and it is hard indeed to determine which Government—and I am not now referring to any particular Government—should use its own funds; whether the State Government should say, "We are prepared to have a link built on a 70-40 basis or a 60-40 basis" or whether the State Government should say to the Commonwealth Government, "If you want to build a railway, and you require a standard gauge, you build it; we can utilise our State funds elsewhere."

That would be the attitude of the Western Australian Government to this proposition. The Premier would naturally press, as we all would, for a standard gauge railway to be constructed, provided that those who benefit most from it, namely, the Commonwealth, paid for it and constructed it. There is no doubt that the Commonwealth would benefit most, and it should, accordingly, construct it. That is the point on which the Premier bases the urgency of his approach to the Commonwealth to construct the railway. If the Commonwealth considered that the railway should go through, it should construct the line at its own cost, and the State could use its funds where it needed them much more urgently.

I would like once again to express my appreciation to the hon. Mr. Simpson for bringing this subject up once more, and for his expression of the position as he sees it and as the files have disclosed it to him.

THE HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [11.21]: I will not delay the House long. I, too, would like to offer my congratulations to the hon. Mr. Simpson for the many hours he has spent in studying the reports that have been tabled in order to secure evidence to submit such a precise and clear report to the House. All of us who have heard the hon. Mr. Simpson's speech would do well to read it again, because the message contained therein gives considerable guidance in any

decision as to whether or not we should build a standard gauge railway between Kalgoorlie and Fremantle.

While I appreciate the remark of the Minister for Railways that if the Commonwealth Government is prepared to build a railway at a cost of £30,000,000 then Western Australia would be glad to have it, I feel that would be all right only if the railway in question was going to serve the suggested purpose, and make the expenditure of that £30,000,000 worth while. At the moment we have a railway which is adequate—it is not of the best type, but it is adequate—to cater for the traffic offering. As the Minister has said himself, any other railway following in the same groove, would only be a duplication; it would never pay for itself at this juncture of our State's progress.

I think it behoves everyone of us to say to the Commonwealth Treasurer, "Mr. Commonwealth Treasurer, rather than have that £30,000,000 spent on a railway, we would prefer to be given that sum for other purposes, because we can better spend it on water schemes, in the advancement of wharfs and harbours in the North, and the development of the country generally." Accordingly I hope that all hon. members will agree to the motion, because if they do, and if we as a Parliament have to decide what Western Australia needs—if this money is ever offered—we will be better able to understand the position.

THE HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [11.23]: I regret that because of urgent business I was unable to listen to what the hon. Mr. Simpson had to say when introducing this motion, but I assure him that I will read his address. It seems to me that irrespective of whether we look at this Kalgoorlie-Fremantle railway as an asset to the State, or whether it is worth the tremendous cost, there are still some links which could be built into the Trans-line which would prove to be of tremendous benefit to Western Australians. I would say the first link after the Wodonga section should be the Port Pirie-Broken Hill link, because to be able to entrain at Kalgoorlie and go straight across to Sydney in the same train would be a godsend to travellers, and would reduce the cost of Eastern States articles imported into Western Australia.

The Hon. E. M. Davies: Do you think Victoria would agree with that?

The Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I do not think I would worry about that too much.

The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It would give a tie to all rollingstock from Kalgoorlie to Sydney.

The Hon. J. G. HISLOP: It is a line which would have a considerable amount of traffic. The Port Pirie-Broken Hill communications are growing every year.

and I would say that such a link would be of great benefit to the State. The second remark I would like to make is, that I regret that the Minister for Railways has reached a decision not to air-condition the new Fremantle-Kalgoorlie train. By reading Press reports I obtained the impression that he believes that, by not spending £100,000 to air-condition the train, he will be saving money. I suppose one saves money in the same way by deciding not to buy a car. It is certainly not a true method of finance.

I believe that if we are to carry on with our own railway from Perth to Kalgoorlie, we should make the train the most modern one possible on a 3 ft. 6 in. gauge. Anyone who has travelled from Brisbane to Cairns is eulogistic of the "Sunshine Train" which carries passengers over that long route. If we did that, we would overcome any adverse comments which travellers might make of the journey across our Australian desert, because they could then transfer into an air-conditioned train. I do not know whether I can join with the Minister in saying that he is saving money by his decision not to air-condition the train. It is inevitable that the railways must be air-conditioned either now or in the near future.

THE HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Midland—in reply) [11.28]: I thank hon. members for the comments they have made. As I explained in the earlier stages when moving the motion, the idea was to have it dealt with at this stage in order to save time, rather than that I should claim my right to speak when the Appropriation Bill was introduced. Having moved the motion I have to some extent cleared the deck, as it were, and there is, perhaps, a little less left to do. I thank hon. members for the consideration they have given, and the attention they have paid me, and I now ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Sitting suspended from 11.30 p.m. (Friday) to 1.4 a.m. (Saturday).

LOAN BILL, £16,742,000.

First Reading.

Received from the Assembly and, on motion by the Hon. H. C. Strickland (Minister for Railways), read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (Minister for Railways—North) [1.5 a.m.] in moving the second reading said: This is the customary Bill which, after the Loan Estimates have been agreed to in another place, is presented to both Houses of Parliament towards the end of each session. The maximum amount that can be raised by loan under the Bill is £16,742,000, and

the details of the purposes for which this money is required are contained in the schedules on pages 3 and 4 of the Bill. It will be noticed that in the schedule on page 3 is set out the proposed expenditure—and some of the money has already been spent—on railways, tramways, ferries, the State Electricity Commission, public works, North-West, mines, State Housing Commission, agriculture, forests, fisheries, industrial development, other undertakings and sundries. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

THE HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (Suburban) [1.6 a.m.]: I would not like anyone to get the idea that I shall be speaking for more than a few moments. We have all waited for this Bill to come from another place and, before it can be introduced here, a great deal of discussion takes place on the Estimates. This is one of those customary Bills that we have introduced each year. It is a money Bill and gives hon. members an opportunity to speak on all sorts of subjects. I hope, at this late hour, that not much advantage will be taken of the opportunity. I support the second reading.

THE HON. J. MURRAY (South-West) [1.7 a.m.]: Despite what my Leader suggests, that not too many should take advantage of having something to say on this Bill, I wish to have something to say in relation to the timber industry, because certain opportunities were denied me in the time at my disposal last night. I could not speak on certain matters because the motion last evening was only for the partial revocation of State forests. Because of that, I have to use this Bill to speak on other forestry matters.

A little earlier in the session I made certain suggestions regarding the losses of the State Building Supplies. The Minister challenged me on my statements and replied to my remarks. I realised at the time that he had not checked with the department before he replied. The general manager of the State Building Supplies had tabled his annual report in this House and I thought that the Minister would have checked on some of the statements he made before he replied to my remarks regarding the department's losses. As the Minister did not check on the general manager's statement, I shall read out what he had to say in regard to the contract for supplying karri, to South Australia in the main. The report is dated the 30th June, 1958, and at page 6 we find the following:—

It will be noted that the percentage of production of the State Building Supplies continues at a slightly lower level than 1954-55 and 1955-56. The increase in timber stocks has been arrested. This has only been possible

by marketing in South Australia on a price level determined by that of timber imported from overseas. The industry did not receive any relief by way of increased duties following the Tariff Board enquiries in 1957 and drastic reductions in Adelaide wholesale prices for karri since the close of the financial year will be reflected in next year's accounts. State Building Supplies has taken the lead in price reduction for karri on the Adelaide market in an endeavour to hold an outlet for production from our karri mills. Competition on a price basis has also been felt in other overseas markets and, while the export market for jarrah in the form of sleepers was buoyant during the year, this has been offset by a drop in other business. A favourable market had been re-opened for W.A. hardwoods in New Zealand but this has been curtailed by import licensing during 1958 with an indication of still more drastic cuts in 1959.

That is where the general manager of State Building Supplies says they were the instigators of cutting prices at the expense of the public purse, and if that is not unfair trading I do not know what is. He said further—

Competition on the Adelaide market: Reference has already been made to this factor. Our sales on this market during the year have recovered prime cost of production with some contribution to proportionate cost of depreciation. Activities have made no contribution to head office or trade expenses or to interest and sinking fund. Had these expenses been met recorded loss would have been reduced by at least £15,000 and, for comparative purposes, it is considered reasonable to assess the net loss on activities in South Australia at this figure.

I was correct when I said that that section of State Building Supplies was operating at a loss by undercutting, in order to get rid of karri. I am sympathetic, because I know karri is not suitable for stockpiling for long. It deteriorates when cut unless put straight into a kiln in order to dry it out, or unless it is treated as the crossarms at Pemberton will be treated. As I said the other evening, some mills in this portion of the State are dependent on karri output and the mill employees resemble the workers of the depression period, as the Government must keep them in employment. Many towns in that portion of the State depend, for their economic life, on the sawmills in the district, and unless the mills can be put on a more economical basis of production the Government will be forced to carry them on as the men—some 5,000 of them—must be kept in employment.

If the mills require to be subsidised to the extent of £15,000, or more, they must be subsidised; and the Government has no alternative, but must face up to the position. It might be better, in one sense—even from the conservator's point of view, when he talks of perpetuity in milling—to leave the karri in the trees until there is a market available for it. It is no use cutting karri unless there are orders for it.

In connection with this contract that was elaborately advertised by the State Building Supplies for the supply of cross-arms to the Commonwealth Government—a contract worth £250,000—I asked the Government if that would take the bread and butter out of the mouths of the small sawmillers. The Minister subsequently replied that he could not disclose the information, but that the Commonwealth had released all the details. I do not know whether the Minister checked the details, or whether he ignored the importance of the question raised, as the Conservator of Forests so often does.

There is a suggestion that a plant at Pemberton is to be built at a cost of £25,000. It cannot be done; it will cost at least £50,000 or £60,000. In 1949, and up to seven months ago, a small sawmiller was cutting karri cross-arms for the Commonwealth Government. This was his bread and butter, but the Commonwealth decided to call tenders on a Commonwealth-wide basis for the supply of cross-arms; and this small sawmiller has not one load of timber on his contract which he has been carrying out for the last nine years. Will the Government give an undertaking to these private sawmillers to treat these cross-arms at the Pemberton depot at cost, or does it want to profit on that transaction as well?

All this is a great blow to the small sawmiller, even though it does not affect the associated sawmillers. I support the Bill, but I must protest at what has been done, not only in the case of this contract, but in the case of others.

THE HON. L. C. DIVER (Central) [1.28 a.m.]: I would like to comment on the schedule attached to the Bill. I notice there is an amount of £2,300,000 against the item dealing with opened railways. I am sorry that the words before the amount did not read, "The reopening of railways." I trust that even at this stage some of that money will be used for rehabilitating some of the discontinued railway systems we have in the wheatbelt area of Western Australia today. I see also under Item No. 2 that marshalling yards connecting railway yards including land resumption is £300,000. It would appear that the Government is making some progress in relation to that.

Item No. 3 is Perth Railway Terminal, £10,000. I would like the minister to enlarge on that item a little and let us know whether that is for resumption for the new terminal at East Perth, or just how it is proposed that the money will be absorbed.

I cannot see on this schedule an item to provide loan funds for the many septic systems required for schools in Western Australia. That is rather disheartening. I thought the Government would have made some endeavour to overcome this great disability which is so wide-flung throughout Western Australia, and I hope that the next time there is a loan appropriation Bill before this House we will see an item on the schedule to attend to these shortcomings. I support the Bill.

THE HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [1.32 a.m.]: At this late hour, I do not intend to hold up the House for very long but I must certainly make mention of something which is of great importance to us and something which I feel is being badly managed at the moment. I refer to the water boring scheme as set up by the Mines Department. I said previously that I commended the Government for setting up an organisation whereby water could be found in districts where it is very hard to find, and I pointed out that settlers in those districts assisted materially in finding the water.

The idea was that two plants and two geologists would be made available, and sent to districts which had been nominated. The areas discussed were the Mendels, Wongoody and Badgingarra areas, and another was in parts of Dalwallinu Road Board district where water is very difficult to find, and is very deep. It is certainly beyond the capacity of many settlers to find water and pay for it themselves. The object, too, was that when water was found, the settlers would pay for it; but if the cost was too great, it would be spread over a period of years, or money would be made available cheaply to them.

Of course that policy was never determined by the Government, that is, the finance side of it, and I am sorry to say that with the set-up of this plant and the working of it, very little progress has been made. We must allow, of course, that anything in its initial stage will have teething troubles, but when the equipment is available and it is the very latest and best, and the vehicles are all ready to go to work, as are the geologists, a good job should be achieved. Up to the present time, however, although they have been in the field for some months, they have found only one supply at Badgingarra at 702 feet, and to the best of my knowledge they are still trying to case that bore and put a screen down in order that the water may be tested. I suggest that as they

have been there for so long and have achieved only that much progress, the men employed are incompetent.

The other plant had a mishap on its way to the first job. It suffered serious damage and had to be brought back to Perth, leaving the men idle. I hope hon. members will recall that I have been trying to find out just what the boring plant has done and what the expenditure has been so that we would have an appreciation of how much the service is going to cost, because I feel sure that on account of the time factor and the work that has been done, it will be £5 per foot to sink the waterholes.

I am going to ask the two Ministers in this House to have a good look at this boring project because I feel something must be done about it. The amount of £50,000 which was allocated earlier for the purpose, will cut out before any water is found at all. I would suggest, too, that if the Government cannot bore more cheaply, it would be far better to let the contract to private contractors with a Government guarantee; with the same contract as at present to the farmer. This would cost the taxpayer very much less than it will under the present setup.

I ask that a serious view be taken of this matter so that it may be put on a sound basis. I believe as do others, that the work should have been carried out first in those districts where the water is most needed. I am not suggesting that the area in which the work is being done at present is not in need of water, but I do know that the position there is not as difficult as it is in other places where people are worrying about the water which they require to carry on their farms. If they do not get it they will be forced to walk off their properties. This point could well be substantiated if someone would go into those districts and make inquiries.

I do not want to weary the House any longer. To save delaying the House later, I would like to thank everybody and express my good wishes for Christmas. I ask everybody to accept my remarks in the spirit in which they are given.

THE HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [1.40 a.m.]: It seems as though it has fallen to me all this year to be in strife with newspapers, and because the opportunity has arisen tonight—on this Bill which mentions railways—to take the newspapers to task for something they said on this subject, I think the time is appropriate to mention something else—

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: Especially for those in the gallery!

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I think it is only right to take this opportunity to have this incorporated in Hansard. I

refer to an article in "The West Australian" of the 28th November, which says this—

Politicians, with a State election—

The Hon. L. C. Diver: Is there anything in the Standing Orders, Sir, as regards the attendance of the Press? Could we have their presence while this letter is read?

The PRESIDENT: We have no control over the Press. The hon. member will continue.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I appreciate the position, but all the same, I have to say that I think it is worthy of being recorded in Hansard, and I repeat that this article was in "The West Australian" of the 28th November and signed by someone named Goldsmith. It is as follows:—

Politicians, with a State election in the offing, are certainly happy to be protected by the "Smith shield" from the obvious wrath of some of their constituents. Nowhere that the commissioner has been so far has there been a local member within coo-ee.

I think that almost comes within the category of being unfair comment, which is almost libellous. I am not too sure that it is not really time the House took action against this paper for the articles it writes against members of this House. Perhaps on this occasion there are no Legislative Council elections in the offing, but there is an election for the Legislative Assembly. The article refers to the hon. members of the Legislative Assembly and so, possibly from the Council's point of view, we do not actually come under that category, but I think it is well to remind hon. members that 16 railway lines were marked down for closure—there were 17, but one, the Big Bell-Cue line, cannot be included because it had been closed for 18 months previously. We are not very worried about it. In districts represented by Country Party members, there are seven of those lines, including the one which is more particularly referred to in the article in question, which is in the district of Mr. Cornell, M.L.A., who consistently opposed the closing of these lines.

For the paper to say that Mr. Cornell is hiding behind the "Smith shield" when he opposed the closing, it goes too far. But he is not the only one because it will be found that other lines closed are in the areas of my province; and I have said enough against the closing, and I think I was the one who moved the motion for an extension of the inquiry to enable Mr. Smith to inquire into the closures.

The Hon. C. H. Simpson: Quite right!

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: It will be found that some of these lines are in the electorate of Mr. Perkins, and I do not think we could find anyone who works harder than he does against the closure of lines. It will be found also that some of the closed lines are in the areas of the hon. Mr. Diver, the President himself, the hon. Mr. Simpson, the hon. Mr. Jones, and some in the area of the Hon. A. F. Watts, plus the members of the Legislative Council who represent the province in which the Stirling electorate is included. All of these hon. members opposed the closure of the lines from start to finish. Not only did they oppose the closure, but they went to a lot of trouble in helping the people in those districts to prepare their case to put before the commissioner.

Some lines have also been closed in the area represented by Mr. Bovell, another hon. member who opposed the closing of the lines. There were some lines closed in Mr. J. I. Mann's electorate. Mr. Mann, unfortunately, was not in the House when the vote took place, so his decision was not recorded, and we do not know what his vote would have been. So, each hon. member of the Country Party has consistently opposed the discontinuance of railway lines, regardless of whether it is considered we are right or wrong; but as far as we are concerned, we are right. The article published by "The West Australian" that we were hiding behind the "Smith shield" was libellous. That newspaper had no right to print such an article. What is more, we took the opportunity to ask the Government—and it agreed—for the terms of reference of the Royal Commission to be extended to enable the commissioner to inquire into the discontinuance of these lines.

In view of that, surely it was the prerogative of the Royal Commissioner to visit those areas in which lines had been discontinued and make a report accordingly. Surely it was not our duty to go into those areas and make a political football of the inquiry. I am sure that all hon. members will appreciate that. As far as I am concerned, it would have been a tragedy if any hon. member of this House had gone to any of those parts where the Royal Commissioner was taking evidence and appeared as a witness; or even appeared in the precincts of the building in which the inquiry was taking place. That may have had a boomerang effect on the evidence given, because at the inquiry there would have been people of all shades of political opinion, holding various views on the subject, who would be giving evidence.

Therefore, why should this evidence taken by the Royal Commissioner be turned into a political football? I am sure the Minister will agree that we have done

the right thing by keeping outside the inquiry conducted by Royal Commissioner Smith in order that he may bring out an unbiassed report. It is bordering on libel for "The West Australian" to print the article that I have mentioned and if this practice is to continue, then—I repeat what I said on the debate on the Bill dealing with citizenship for natives—we should give consideration to whether the representatives of the Press should be allowed in the gallery of this House. I am sick and tired of getting into strife with the Press and, no doubt, the more I get into strife with it the more it will kick me to death. I am only trying to get justice for the people concerned.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: "The West Australian" supported the closing of the line.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Apparently that is why it published the article to which I object.

The Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: "The West Australian" should read the speech you have made tonight.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I do not care who reads it. I think I have done my duty and I take this opportunity even at this late hour of today's proceedings to voice my objection to the article which appeared in "The West Australian". I support the Bill.

THE HON. F. R. H. LAVERY (West) [1.50 a.m.]: I would like to make a few remarks on Item No. 8, Metropolitan Power Scheme and Gas Supply, for which there is a provision of £500,000. In the Stephenson Town Planning Scheme, the smallest subdivision of land that is allowed in South Fremantle, in agricultural areas, is five acres. In the last five years a great deal of subdivision has taken place in an area near Russell-rd., South Coogee and many properties are being developed there. There is a bituminised road, and I draw the attention of the State Electricity Commission to the fact that I asked some questions concerning whether these areas would be treated on the same basis as those in the South-West scheme which were connected with electricity. The answer I received was that, subject to the regulations of the commission, electricity would be made available to those people.

I know that several associations in the South Fremantle district have been attempting to get electricity supplies in Russell-rd. In that road is situated a cement works. There is a main power line dissecting that area and it stops at Russell-rd. In view of the fact that £500,000 is to be provided to the State Electricity Commission for the extension of the metropolitan power scheme and gas supply, I ask that attention be given to that area.

In regard to Item No. 30, Advances for Housing of Government Employees, for which provision of £80,000 is made, I point out that at the back of Hamilton Hill an area of land was resumed some time ago for housing development. The Cockburn Road Board is concerned that this area has been resumed for so long without any houses having been erected on it. I would like to know what possibility there is of houses being constructed in that area; and I suggest that, if possible, the State Housing Commission give serious consideration to carrying out this development in the coming financial year.

Transport matters have played a great part in my career and, therefore, I would be failing in my duty if I did not take this opportunity of paying tribute to that fine body of men, the police pointsmen. I do so at this stage, because they are about to give way to the traffic lights that are being installed at city intersections which, as all hon. members realise, are reducing the accident rate. There is no doubt that these men gave outstanding service in handling the flow of traffic during Show week. This is borne out by the fact that during the holding of that important function, which draws people from all parts of the State, not one accident occurred. I support the Bill.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (Minister for Railways—North—in reply) [1.55 a.m.]: In referring to the hon. Mr. Murray's speech one finds it hard to give a logical reply to one who talks in the abstract. Throughout his speech the hon. member has spoken of "he" and "him" and I do not know to whom he is referring. Further, I do not know to whom he was referring when he mentioned a small man who had been done out of a contract for cross-arms. In any case, this contractor cannot be in a very small way, because I think the hon. Mr. Murray said that the contract was to the value of several thousands of pounds. Therefore, I do not think he would be in the bread-and-butter class of contractors.

It seems to me that the hon. Mr. Murray was attempting to suggest that the State Building Supplies had secured a contract under unfair conditions and that that State trading concern should be subject to the scrutiny of the Commissioner of Unfair Trading. In the circumstances mentioned by the hon. Mr. Murray, tenders are called by the Commonwealth Government for cross-arms. If the Commonwealth Government accepted a tender from a State Government concern, surely somebody is out of step. Is it the Commonwealth Government, is it the State trading concern—

The Hon. J. Murray: Using the public purse to undercut!

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: —or is it the hon. Mr. Murray? Obviously, someone is out of step. We have the hon. Mr.

Murray, who is an impartial member of this Chamber. We have the Commonwealth Government, which is comprised of members of the Liberal-Country Party—a non-restrictive and free-trade Government. We have also a State Government trading concern which is the successful tenderer.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Successful by undercutting, of course!

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I cannot work out what the hon. member's grizzle is, because I have had no proper notice of it. It appears to me that the Minister said something to him about the matter some time previously. I recall the hon. member saying that the State Building Supplies had made a profit this year, which is a fact.

The Hon. J. Murray: In one section only.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Absolutely. I can mention a State trading concern close to this House where one section shows a profit and another section shows a loss, but no-one takes any notice of that. In any case, the same thing happens in any association of industry.

The Hon. J. Murray: Yes, when the public purse is used to undercut.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The public purse is not used to undercut when a State trading concern shows a profit.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: The Minister is splitting straws.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I am sorry the hon. Mr. MacKinnon does not agree with me, but it is no use his trying to square his conscience in that respect, or in trying to play politics. Let us be honest in this matter. How many hon. members purchase, at some store, each Friday, butter below cost? How many hon. members object to a departmental store putting out a special line of shirts or shoes at a price below cost? The Commonwealth Government, on much the same lines, accepted a tender from the State Building Supplies. I wonder why?

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Because it was the lowest.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: That is correct. It is only recently that the Commonwealth Government has awakened to the fact that it might be paying out too much of the taxpayers' money for certain articles that it buys.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: For seven years nobody else was prepared to undercut.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The State Government awakened a long time ago when it called tenders for sleepers, because it contended that too much money was being paid for sleepers. What happened? A great saving was made, and the result was that the Commonwealth Government said to itself, "Fancy that!

The State Government is able to be supplied with sleepers despite the fact that it was told it would not be supplied. I wonder if we can do the same thing." What happened? It called tenders and is now being supplied with bigger and better sleepers than the Western Australian Government, at £1 a load less; because it followed the lead given by this Government.

The Commonwealth Government called tenders for sleepers, and in doing so saved the taxpayers money. It did not use the money, as the hon. Mr. Murray said, to subsidise the cross-arms for sleepers. I am disappointed when I hear in the House this parish-pump or parochial talk about some poor fellow losing his bread and butter. The hon. member said a person lost a £250,000 contract and he was a small producer. I understand that the party to which the hon. Mr. Murray belongs believes in free enterprise, in competition and in free trade. What can be better than the calling of tenders?

The Hon. H. K. Watson: Ask the Premier about metal.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I need not ask the Premier. The hon. member can ask me. I dived my nose into metal and saved £40,000 of the taxpayers' money. The hon. member would not be allowed to call tenders if he were the Minister for Railways. I would do the same with any other requirement, in order to save the taxpayers' money.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: What about the £9,000,000 you called tenders for?

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: We hear so much about socialism. I do not know in which category of "isms" is placed the system which says, "You can charge what you like at cost plus. The higher the cost the bigger the plus." That is the principle on which business has been carried on since the war. That was the reason why our taxes were so high.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: It was established by the Federal Labour Party.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: That is the practice of the Government to which the hon. member belongs. I have not the slightest idea of the argument of the hon. Mr. Murray. He complains about someone losing a £250,000 contract which was his bread and butter. I hope that you, Mr. President, and I can get into that position some day.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: On a point of order, the hon. Mr. Murray did not say such a thing.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order. The hon. member will resume his seat.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Reference was made by the hon. Mr. Diver to an item of £10,000, Perth Railway Terminal. He desired to know if that had anything to do with the new terminal at

East Perth. Every year a sum is set aside for possible purchases in areas which have been planned for future railway work. That sum is set aside for that purpose, and not for resumptions. Each year something comes up, such as an old dwelling house or a vacant block of land, which is in the area covered by the blanket town interim order. The money is used for negotiations and purchase.

I join the complaints made by the hon. Mr. Logan concerning Press reports at times. I was surprised to read, since the House met today, the report on the Natives (Citizenship Rights) Bill. The report published in this morning's "The West Australian" is definitely not correct. As was pointed out, there was no dissentient voice. There was an inquiry and a debate on certain aspects of the Bill. There was never any opposition.

I feel the time has arrived when hon. members of this Parliament are entitled to be absolutely correctly reported. On this occasion it could have been a mistake on the reporter's part. I have no doubt it was, but at the same time it was very disappointing and certainly most embarrassing to hon. members to find themselves reported as saying the very opposite to what was actually said. When such cases occur, it is up to the Press to publish a correction, in the same sized print as the error was headlined. That is the fairest way out. We all make mistakes, but surely we should be fair enough to admit them and make a fair and square correction when the occasion demands it!

In regard to the inquiry into the railways by the Royal Commissioner, I would not take very much notice of any comment that parliamentarians were not in close proximity. The matter has, through the Press and by motions in Parliament, been mentioned over a long period by all those opposed to rail closures. I do not think the hon. Mr. Logan should worry very much about that particular matter. It was a comment which happened to cross the reporter's mind at the time. Some reporters presented themselves at the inquiry, but strangely enough they saw no parliamentarians present.

I agree with the hon. Mr. Logan that this inquiry is conducted amongst the parties concerned and there is no need for the presence of any parliamentarians.

However, parliamentarians do arrange for inquiries to be made in their districts, and for individuals and organisations to appear. I do not know what the parliamentary representative can add to the information the people give. It is not a question of whether parliamentarians are or are not present.

The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The Press assumes superiority over Parliament.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: It always has the last say. The Press has the liberty to express its views, but there are times

when the Press turns itself into a sniping organisation. It will snipe at those whom it desires to get rid of or push out of public life. That is my opinion in view of my own experience.

In regard to the remarks made by the hon. Mr. Jones concerning water boring, I have not the knowledge to answer his complaints. Whatever the complaints may be, he should remember that the taxpayer is the person who has to meet the cost in the end. Anyone seeking some assistance or relief from the Government must remember that the Government is the people, and the people will eventually have to find the money. The hon. member can be assured that the department responsible for the boring will no doubt spend a fair share of money on the project in the particular area he mentioned.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and passed.

APPROPRIATION BILL.

First Reading.

Received from the Assembly and, on motion by the Hon. H. C. Strickland (Minister for Railways), read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (Minister for Railways—North) [2.16 a.m.] in moving the second reading said: An Appropriation Bill is introduced each year after the passing of the Estimates; it is necessary to appropriate the moneys required for the services of the year.

During this session, supply has been granted to a total of £39,000,000, being £29,000,000 from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, £8,000,000 from the General Loan Fund, and £2,000,000 from the Public Account for Advance to Treasurer. Clause 2 of the Bill grants further supply up to the total requiring appropriation as shown in Schedule A.

The estimates of expenditure from the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the year 1958-59 amount to £61,766,331. Of this sum, £13,015,176 is permanently appropriated by special Acts, leaving £48,751,155 still to be appropriated. This amount is provided for in Clause 3, which, likewise, appropriates £18,180,500 from the General Loan Fund for expenditure in accordance with the estimates for the year, and it also appropriates £3,500,000 from the Public Account for Advance to Treasurer for the purposes set out in Schedule D.

The clause further appropriates expenditure during the year 1957-58 in excess of the amounts voted, full details of which are set out in Schedules E and F, totalling respectively £1,466,896 14s. 2d. from the Consolidated Revenue Fund and £1,372,306 16s. 7d. from the General Loan Fund.

Clause 4 of the Bill is to approve of the expenditure of £1,054,291 from the Forests Improvement and Reforestation Fund in accordance with the scheme of expenditure prepared under Section 41 of the Forests Act, which has been laid on the Table of the House, and which requires the approval of Parliament. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

THE HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (Suburban) [2.19 a.m.]: I rise to speak on this measure, as we are still waiting for a further piece of legislation to be returned from another place, and will make one or two comments concerning this session of Parliament.

This session has followed very much the same pattern as every other session since I have been in the Western Australian Parliament; and it has been the same irrespective of the type of Government in office. During my first three years, it was a Liberal Government; and over the last few years we have had a Labour Government.

When I say it follows the same pattern, I am referring to the fact that we open the session usually in July, sometimes later; we have quite an easy time for a period and then the session commences to get busier and busier; and we always finish the last week by sitting until the early hours of the morning.

A suspension of Standing Orders takes place; and instead of being able to get an adjournment to debates in order to study the Bills, we consider all stages of the Bills at one sitting. I think some improvement could be made.

I expect that one of these days I may have reason for withdrawing my remarks, but I think it should be at least admitted that the position is not good. I would like to see Governments try two sessions in the one year, instead of one long drawn out session. I think it would be a good idea to examine the possibility of two sessions of short duration, picking times in the year that would not interfere with such important things as harvesting, seeding, haymaking and other matters connected with agriculture. It would have to be a time best suited for the purpose.

Having done that, it could be set down that Parliament would open on such and such a day and close on such and such a day; and unless any legislation was vitally important, it should all be introduced by a certain time. I think this

would obviate the necessity for hon. members sitting here over long hours, as we have been this week; and, in addition, some of us had duties in connection with a Select Committee.

I am making the suggestion to see whether some consideration can be given to it. The times we sit would have to be carefully worked out; but I do not see any reason why the Government should not give some thought to this point of view. The Federal Parliament does not have one long session covering six months of the year. It does better than that. If we had two short sessions it would give us the opportunity of following a programme.

I think the Minister could say to the departmental heads that they would have to get their legislation ready early because of the two sessions of Parliament. If it were not ready for the first session, they would have to be told to make sure it was ready for the second one. This would do away with the situation we have now where Bills are rushed through at the last minute.

In concluding my remarks on the Bill, and before dealing with the usual felicitations, I would like to say that this is the first session in which my colleagues—the members of my party—have bestowed upon me the honour of leading the party; and I wish to have it recorded in Hansard that I appreciate the co-operation they have shown me. I would also like to thank the hon. members of the Country Party for their co-operation, and also the two Ministers and the members of their Cabinet.

I think we are a very happy Parliament in Western Australia. We have our political quarrels, but they are not personal; we get along very well.

THE HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [2.25 a.m.]: I wish to take this opportunity to make some reference to the Parliament House library. I notice that the amount for the Joint Library Committee is £575. I believe that the time has come when Parliament should do something about appointing somebody to be responsible for the library. I think we have the nucleus of a good library, if only somebody could spend more time there to give hon. members the benefit of his knowledge.

I know that at the moment the librarian is a clerk from another place; and I think there is a move afoot to make one of the officers of this House an assistant. I am of the opinion that the assistant from this House, with the extra time available to him, should take over the job and be available to hon. members to help in their selection of books. He would also be able to keep the library up to the standard it ought to be.

I appreciate the fact that one should be able to go to the library and obtain whatever reference book one desires. However, I also believe we should be able to

get from the library, fiction which is worth reading. I do not read many books, but in regard to the books I have taken out since I have been a member of this Chamber, I would say the latest edition would be about 10 years old. Whether new fiction books are procured and do not see the light of the shelves I do not know, but I think the time has come when a little cleaning up is necessary.

During the hours Parliament is sitting somebody should be on duty for the benefit and guidance of members. This person would have a knowledge of the books that were on the shelves and would be able to discuss them with hon. members. If this action were taken, the library would be used much more than it is today. I pass the suggestion on to whoever may be responsible for its consideration.

I wish hon. members the compliments of the season, and thank the Ministers for their co-operation during the year. I also congratulate the hon. Mr. Wise on his appointment as Minister. He has had wide experience in Australian and overseas affairs, and will contribute quite a lot to this State as a Minister. I am sure that the hon. Mr. Strickland appreciates the fact that after having had to do all the work for about 12 months he now has an able assistant which will enable him to take a little time off.

I think all hon. members are appreciative of the staff of Parliament House. The staff is always courteous and nothing is too much trouble to them; and if, in the heat of the debate on certain things, one wants information in a hurry one has only to press the bell and the clerks will do their best to make sure that the information is obtained. Therefore, on behalf of all hon. members I thank the staff for their courteousness.

To you, Mr. President, I trust that the festive season will be all that you could wish; and, while next year will be your last as President, I sincerely hope and trust that you will be blessed with good health during your term. I wish everyone the compliments of the season.

THE HON. R. F. HUTCHISON (Suburban) [2.29 a.m.]: It was not my intention to speak tonight, but as the hon. Mr. Logan has mentioned the Parliamentary Library I feel I should say something about the matter.

I agree entirely with what the hon. Mr. Logan has said, and would like to inform him that there is a movement on foot now to do something to bring the library more in keeping with the usage of the House. Mr. Sharr has been here, and there is a suggestion to remove some of the old redundant books in order to place them in the archives of the Public Library and obtain more up-to-date books for the Parliamentary Library. Perhaps when the new building is completed we may be able

to do something about the library; up to date we have not been able to do anything about it owing to a lack of space.

I am interested in this matter, and I have served my first term on the Library Committee. I think the method of choosing the books could be improved, and also the type of books that are sent to us. I have not had enough time to assess what is wanted in that direction, but, if I am a member of the committee next year, I hope to be able to report to the House on improvements that have been made. With the position at the moment it is impossible to keep trace of the books, and there is a rather haphazard way of looking after things. I believe that some thought is being given to the appointment of a full-time librarian.

I hope such a person is appointed, because a Parliamentary library is important and needs the attention of a full time librarian. At present the library is not used very much because hon. members waste too much time looking for books which are not there, or which have been placed in the wrong sections. I hope that this time next year I will have a more satisfactory report to present.

I wish to thank all hon. members for the kindness and courtesy they have extended to me as the only woman in the Chamber. I congratulate the hon. Mr. Wise on his appointment, and also you, Mr. President, on obtaining the position of President. I hope that we will all meet together next year, and that there will not be any of the tragedies such as we had recently. Some very fine people have gone from this Chamber over the four years since I have been here. The hour is getting late and it is a long time since anyone has kept me out till 3 a.m. I wish all hon. members a merry Christmas.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (Minister for Railways—North—in reply) [2.33 a.m.]: As the hon. Mrs. Hutchison, being a member of the Library Committee, has replied to the hon. Mr. Logan, there are only a few things I wish to say in reply to the hon. Mr. Griffith. He suggested that it might be a good idea to have two sessions. No doubt you, Mr. President, were an hon. member when two sessions of Parliament were held; and I think the hon. Mr. Wise was also an hon. member at that time. Two sessions in the one year proved to be most inconvenient, particularly for country representatives.

The Hon. L. A. Logan: It would mean meeting in February or March.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Because the State is so large it was difficult for country representatives to look after their districts and do their parliamentary job as well. The hon. Mr. Griffith also mentioned the late hours and unusual times, and suggested that Canberra could manage its affairs all right by sitting at:

different hours, and perhaps we could do the same. There is a big difference between Canberra and here. In Canberra there is a gag, or a timetable, and not everybody can speak on every measure—that applies whichever Government is in power. The only way we could run to a timetable would be to use the same procedure. But we in this State believe in free speech, and the free expression of views. I think it would be a rather sad day if this small Parliament of 80 members was gagged. In such cases hon. members would not be able to speak as they have been doing tonight.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Sitting suspended from 2.40 to 3.8 a.m.

TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2).

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to amendments Nos. 1, 3, 4 and 5 made by the Council and had agreed to No. 2 subject to a further amendment.

In Committee.

The Hon. W. R. Hall in the Chair; the Hon. H. C. Strickland (Minister for Railways) in charge of the Bill.

No. 2.

Clause 2, page 2—Add at the end of the clause the following passage—

; and

(b) by adding to the second proviso a paragraph as follows:—

- (d) The number of licences which may be issued in respect of taxi-cars within the metropolitan area as defined by this Act shall not at any time exceed one such licence for every six hundred of the population of the said metropolitan area as estimated or declared from time to time by the Government Statistician, but the provisions of this paragraph shall not be construed to require the cancellation of or the refusal to renew any taxi-car licence which has been issued prior to the coming into operation of this paragraph.

The CHAIRMAN: The Assembly agrees to the Council's amendment subject to the Council's making a further amendment to add to the proposed new paragraph (d) the following:—

Except that notwithstanding the foregoing where in the opinion of the Commissioner of Police the circumstances of an applicant for a taxi-car licence are such as to warrant it, the Commissioner of Police may, in his absolute discretion, issue not more than one taxi-car licence in any month under such circumstances. Provided further that—

- (a) no taxi-car licence which has been issued on or since the first day of November, one thousand nine hundred and fifty-six, shall be permitted to be transferred; and
- (b) no taxi-car licence which was issued before the first day of November, one thousand nine hundred and fifty-six, shall be permitted to be transferred after the thirtieth day of June, one thousand nine hundred and sixty.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I move—

That the Assembly's amendment be agreed to.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I agree to the first and second portions, but I disagree with the third portion. The first portion states that the Commissioner of Police is entitled in exceptional circumstances to issue not more than one licence a month. I can envisage that a person might wish to apply for a taxi licence, and that taxi-driving is his only form of employment. I agree to that.

The second portion states that no taxi licence which has been issued on or since the 1st November, 1956, shall be permitted to be transferred. During the Select Committee inquiry I asked whether the Commissioner of Police could refuse a licence, because we were told they were being issued at the rate of five a month. It now seems that there is some grave doubt about the non-transferability of licences issued since that date. If there is any question of the validity of the 156 licences issued over the two years, all that is required to be done is to take a test case and, if successful, the licence costing 8s. will have a large premium.

My amendment to the Bill has clarified the point that the 156 licences may not be of the non-transferable type. I cannot understand the reason for including the word "and" immediately before paragraph "(b)".

If paragraph (b) is agreed to, it will mean that the 156 licences will be validated. After the 30th June, 1960, no taxi plates whatsoever would be transferable.

I do not like this paragraph. At the moment there are two types of licences; one which can be transferred, and the other which cannot. In order to overcome any difficulty about non-transferability, all that a taxi firm has to do is to form itself into a limited company and for that company to receive a transfer of the plates into its name. One big company has 190 persons operating its two-way radio service. All it has to do is to call them together to form themselves into a co-operative company to which the plates could be transferred. The company could then lease the cars to the 190 persons.

I am not out of sympathy with the idea that at some stage some limitation should be placed on plates. I realise that by giving the Commissioner of Police the right to issue plates in accordance with the ratio of taxis per head of population, we will be placing some value on the plates.

The three members of the Select Committee spent four days and long hours in deciding what to do. Personally, I would have preferred to be able to speak to the people engaged in the industry concerning the amendment made to the amendment of this Chamber. I would like to hear their views. Could we not decide to deal with this matter in the next session of Parliament? I agree to the Assembly's amendment to the amendment made by the Council, with the exception of paragraph (b) I move—

That the Assembly's amendment be amended by deleting all words in the amendment after the word "transferred" at the end of paragraph "(a)".

The CHAIRMAN: We have a motion before the Chair that the amendment from the Assembly contained in its message be agreed to, subject to the amendment you have just moved.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The Assembly's amendment was the subject of much discussion by the select committee. We felt provision should be made for the extra circumstances, if they arose, in regard to the transfer of licences. Inspector Napier's evidence shows that non-transferable plates that have been issued in recent years have been allowed to be transferred because of exceptional circumstances. We could permit that.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: They are issued, not transferred.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: That is so. When the department issued plates they were supposed not to be transferable, but that was all bluff on the part of the department, because they could be transferred. I made the point that plates issued prior to November, 1956, should be permitted to be transferred within a period of 18 months or so. That would warn the owners of these plates and permit them

to recoup any losses. After the 18 months, or two years, the plates would be non-transferable, and the entire industry would be on the same footing. We should stipulate a time during which plates may be transferred, and after which they may not.

It does not matter to me whether the period is 18 months or not. I am prepared to accept a period of two years so long as the action we take will allow owners to be recompensed for the money they have paid for their plates. The hon. Mr. Griffith has said that these fellows will form themselves into a company and the plates will never be transferred but will remain with the company. I do not think that will arise because the action we have taken tonight will eventually lead to the ultimate owner-driver of a taxi and, in my opinion, no owner-driver is going to pass his plates over to a company as he will lose them if he transfers them. I am not worried about that aspect at all.

I think the best thing to do is to accept the amendments as presented by the Legislative Assembly and give them a trial. If there is need for further legislation later on, Parliament is quite capable of dealing with the matter at that stage. I am quite happy to accept the amendments.

The Hon. H. K. WATSON: It seems to me that the amendment bears all the indications of having been drafted quickly and without the thought that should be put into an amendment of this nature. The hon. Mr. Logan says he is not concerned about the possibility of a company being formed and licences being transferred to the company, because by that means the owner-driver would cease to be such. That would not be the case. If a man formed his own company he would transfer the shares to his wife and children and keep his licence. On the other hand, the owner-driver, who does not form a company may die and his wife or son may desire to carry on; but the taxi will automatically be deprived of its licence. I would be appreciative if the Minister or the hon. Mr. Logan could give me some information in this regard.

I think the wise thing to do would be for this House and another place to defer consideration of the last item, pending further consideration. I am not against it; I simply say that hon. members have not had time to consider the full implications.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: There are 179 plates now in existence which are not transferable. If the licensee holding one set of these plates were to die, the plates would not be transferable to his wife.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: What do they cost?

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Eight shillings. We are giving to the person who paid £200 to £600, a period of 18 months during

which time he will be able to recover what he originally paid. We have already placed a provision in the Act whereby the Commissioner of Police will be able to use his discretion in regard to the plates of an owner who dies. In the existing circumstances, if the commissioner deems it advisable, the plate is transferred to the wife. I think he is competent to do it.

The Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I hope this amendment will not be agreed to. These licensees have always had the right to transfer or sell their plates, because they have paid a premium to obtain them. For that reason they are given the privilege, until a certain date; which is fair and reasonable. No licences issued since 1956 have been transferable except in special cases.

The Hon. L. C. DIVER: I cannot altogether agree to this amendment. What will these plates be worth if an amendment is passed to control the issue of taxi licences? Their value is deteriorating day by day. By the action we contemplate taking we are going to put worth back into the plates. As the hon. Mr. Logan said, after 18 months the holders will have had time to organise and there will be some stability in the industry.

Supposing it becomes obvious between now and when Parliament meets again, that the misgivings of the hon. Mr. Griffith materialise—and I for one will be surprised if they do—an amendment, along the lines suggested, could be submitted to stop these people from forming themselves into companies. If we agree to this amendment as printed, Parliament will have established the fact that it does not desire the formation of these private owners into companies. They cannot have it both ways—accept all the privileges that Parliament may grant them, and yet avoid their responsibilities.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: At this late hour, I am positively amazed to hear a suggestion from the hon. Mr. Diver that at some stage of the game we are going to introduce legislation into this Parliament to stop people forming themselves into companies. Where are we supposed to be heading? I have never heard of anything more ridiculous in all my life, and I hope that I am here if such a Bill is submitted, so that I may try to put a stop to it. The hon. member said that if people start forming themselves into companies, we are going to stop them. He knows they are in companies now.

An hon. member: How many plates are owned by companies now?

The Hon. L. A. Logan: Only one or two.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: A number, but the principle is already there.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: You advocate that they should all be companies,

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: No. I am not suggesting there is anything basically wrong with this. All I suggest is that we should not rush into it but should allow a little time to elapse. That is reasonable, I believe, and I do not think that if people do form companies, it will necessarily be a bad thing.

An hon. member: To avoid something this Parliament did not intend.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I did not know that Parliament did not intend that a company should hold plates. I do not think that is wrong basically.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: You want everyone to drive eight hours a day for £14 a week.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The lateness of the hour is affecting hon. members. I do not mean to imply that at all. The only point I am making is that this is not the time to make a decision. Although the hon. Mr. Logan expressed himself very well on this matter, he said something which makes me quite certain that we should not make our decision. He said we could amend it later. But this is a decision for ever and a day.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: Rubbish! Any Bill can be amended.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Of course! We can tell people today that they cannot transfer, and then subsequently tell them we made a bad mistake. Do not let us make that mistake. This is a situation which cannot be changed in mid-stream. If it is decided that plates are not going to be transferred after a certain date, do not let us alter that decision because if we do, more injustice will be meted out than is intended. The more I hear of the arguments submitted, the more satisfied I am that we should not make a decision but that we should have another look at it.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: It all depends upon whom you represent!

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Whom does the Minister think I am representing?

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: I do not know.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: No. But it is a very interesting remark to make.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I will ask the Minister to cease interjecting, and the hon. member to address the Chair!

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: It is a most unbecoming remark for the Minister to make because I do not represent anyone.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: Your argument advocates company control.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: My argument does not advocate any control, and the Minister knows it. I am suggesting that we should stop and have a look at the situation, but, as is typical, these interjections are thrown to put a different impression on my remarks.

The Hon. H. C. Strickland: I cannot interpret your thoughts.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I will not pursue the point any further but I do say that the decision should not be made in haste. To say that we are putting value into taxi plates by doing what we have is certainly true. We are going to place a value on them all right. Not by any stretch of the imagination, is the value going to be taken out of them by the passing of this amendment. Therefore, I hope the Committee will agree to the amendment. It is best in these circumstances, to make haste slowly. We have plenty of time to make inquiries among people because we have had no opportunity to ask those not interested in the industry what they think about it.

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

Ayes—5

Hon. A. F. Griffith	Hon. F. D. Willmott
Hon. R. C. Mattiske	Hon. C. R. Abbey
Hon. H. K. Watson	(Teller.)

Noes—15

Hon. L. C. Diver	Hon. G. C. MacKinnon
Hon. J. J. Garrigan	Hon. J. Murray
Hon. E. M. Heenan	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. R. F. Hutchison	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. G. E. Jeffery	Hon. W. F. Willesee
Hon. A. R. Jones	Hon. F. J. S. Wise
Hon. F. R. H. Lavery	Hon. E. M. Davies
Hon. L. A. Logan	(Teller.)

Majority against—10.

Amendment to the Assembly's amendment thus negated.

Question put and passed; the Assembly's amendment agreed to.

Resolution reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Assembly.

CLOSE OF SESSION.

Complimentary Remarks.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (Minister for Railways): Mr. President, there is no more formal business to consider. It has been a very interesting session, and some useful legislation has been passed which, I am sure, will be of benefit to the community and the welfare of Western Australia. As parliamentarians we do not get much credit from the general public for our efforts in respect to legislation; but we have the satisfaction of knowing that our efforts are conscientious and in keeping with our principles and thoughts of democratic Government. I feel we can congratulate ourselves on our efforts this session. We have discussed the legislation which has been presented to us in temperate terms. We have discharged our obligations and duties to the community to the best of our ability, and in a conscientious manner.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the tolerance you have shown me as acting Leader of this House, and over the last two or three weeks, as Leader. I think every hon. member appreciates the kindness you have extended and the tolerance you have shown towards us all. I would also like to thank the staff of this House, in particular, and of Parliament generally, for their usual assistance, advice and general understanding. I wish also to take this opportunity of thanking hon. members of this Chamber for their attitude towards me during the conduct of the business of the House. It might be peculiar only to this State for a Government to have a minority—that is a minority which is really a minority in the second Chamber. Yet the Government has received from the majority, who are the Opposition, tolerance, understanding and appreciation towards the various measures that have been presented. There may have been indifference towards some measures, but broadly speaking I thank them for their general acceptance of the Government legislation which has been presented this year.

I extend to all the staff and hon. members best wishes for Christmas and the coming new year. There is one thing about the closing of this session—we will have only one new face in the House when it reassembles, and that will be whoever is elected to take the place of our late leader, the Hon. Gilbert Fraser. So there is consolation in that we are able to leave on this occasion knowing that all of us who are now in this Chamber will meet again when Parliament reassembles.

THE HON. A. F. GRIFFITH: I take this opportunity to join with the Leader of the House in offering the usual Christmas felicitations. This has been an interesting session for me as I feel I have been on trial in the position I have undertaken. I have endeavoured to do my best by members of my party and by the House generally. As the Minister for Railways said, legislation coming to this House is dealt with in a happy atmosphere. I am sure we must be the envy of many other Houses in Australia because our attitude to each other is like that of eminent lawyers who meet in court and express differences of opinion, but have a drink together when out of court; and that is how it should be.

I thank you, Mr. President, for your guidance, kindness and co-operation. You have been very helpful to me, and I thank you for your tolerance. To the hon. Mr. Hall, Chairman of Committees, and his deputies, I offer my thanks. To the staff of Parliament House I offer thanks also for their assistance and kindness; not forgetting the Hansard staff, and in fact the entire staff, including Mr. Burton and his staff.

As the Minister for Railways said, there will be one new face in this Chamber next year, but one well-known face will be missing. I refer to Mr. Tom Courts, who is to retire shortly and go by the "Iberia" back to the land of his birth. I wish him bon voyage and I hope he enjoys his trip and his retirement in good health. He has always exercised kindness and courtesy to hon. members in carrying out his duties. To you, Mr. President, to the Ministers of the Crown, who have shown us so much co-operation, to members of this Chamber and their wives and families, I extend the wish for a happy Christmas and prosperous New Year.

THE HON. W. R. HALL: I associate myself with the remarks of previous speakers and take this opportunity of extending to you Mr. President, appreciation for the courtesy you have shown me during your term in your present high office. Our association has always been a happy one, and it has been a pleasure to be associated with you in your position as President of this Chamber. I congratulate the two Ministers on the efficient way in which they have conducted the business of this House. It has been easy to work with them and with the hon. Mr. Griffith, the Leader of the Opposition.

My job has been made much easier by the fact that we all get on so well together. I thank the Deputy Chairmen of Committees, the hon. Mr. Davies, the hon. Mr. Logan and the hon. Mr. MacKinnon, who have done a great job in an efficient manner during the session. Thanks are also due to the Clerk of the Legislative Council, and Usher of the Black Rod (Mr. Brown), and the Clerk of Records (Mr. Ashley) for the way in which they have carried out their duties. They have been of great assistance to me over the years I have been here, and I do not know how I would get on at times, without their help.

I wish also to thank Mr. Courts and Mr. Carrick for their courtesy, and for the efficiency of their work. I also include the Hansard staff, who have at all times been of assistance and extended kindness to me. To you, Mr. President, to hon. members, and to the staff inside and outside the House—I include the wives and families—I extend the wish of a very merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

THE HON. L. C. DIVER: I join in wishing you, Mr. President, the Leader of the Opposition and Ministers and members a merry Christmas. I congratulate the new Leader of the House on his elevation to that position and thank him for his cheerful manner in defeat, which is much appreciated by this House as it softens the nervous strain for everybody. I also congratulate the hon. Mr. Wise on his elevation to the ministry. The hon. Mr. Griffith has been elevated to a very responsible position and I have no doubt that

with a little more experience he will cultivate that very desirable approach which the Minister now has. I am inclined to think that in a short while he will smile in an impenetrable fashion like the Minister.

I wish to thank all members of the staff for the kindnesses shown to me during this session; and I would include Messrs. Roberts, Brown, Ashley, members of the Hansard staff, Mr. Carrick, Mr. Courts and the typists. The genial atmosphere that is maintained between hon. members and the staff makes this life far more attractive than it would otherwise be. With those remarks I wish you, Mr. President, and all hon. members a merry Christmas.

THE HON. F. R. H. LAVERY: I join with other speakers in extending Christmas greetings. For a long time I have appreciated the fact that our leader has had a most onerous job and I am pleased to see that he now has the assistance of a Minister. I congratulate the hon. Mr. Griffith for the able manner in which he has carried out his duties as Leader, and I must say that I admire his tenacity.

I experienced a tragedy this year, but still find the world is a beautiful place. The help and guidance I have received from hon. members of this Parliament has shown me that despite the troubles in the world, there are many kind people in it. Especially do I thank the hon. Mrs. Hutchison—she has been wonderful.

I wish to thank every hon. member of the House, and the staff of Parliament, from the kitchen upwards, for their expressions of condolence. I received over 1,200 cards and letters, which was a wonderful tribute.

THE PRESIDENT: I want to say how happy I am to be in this position and I express to everyone of you my warmest thoughts and thanks for the tolerance shown to me.

I came from another place where I received my parliamentary education. There we had a different set of Standing Orders. When one is young one can assimilate them better than when one is getting on in years; and I very much appreciate the help I received from the staff of this House and the great tolerance shown by hon. members. I made many mistakes in the earlier stages as President and felt most awkward, but hon. members seemed to overlook my shortcomings and this gave me confidence.

I feel this morning that we are saying *au revoir*. I do not know whether I can take credit for it, but I have been associated with this Parliament for 33 years and this is the first time the session has ended without there being a conference. Sometimes we have had two or three. However, on this occasion we seem to have been able to make amicable arrangements with

another place. In these circumstances, the legislation must be more beneficial than if conferences had been held.

During the intervening period before the House is brought together again, I hope you will all have happy associations and that the Christmas period will bring every happiness to you in your homes. In conclusion, I wish to thank every member of the staff and all hon. members for the service and courtesy which has been extended to me.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (Minister for Railways—North): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till a date to be fixed.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 4.22 a.m. (Saturday).

Legislative Assembly

Friday, the 5th December, 1958.

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The **SPEAKER** took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.