

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.**

Tuesday, November 17, 1953.

The SPEAKER (Hon. Sir Robert Nicholls) took the Chair at 2 p.m. and read prayers.

**APPROPRIATION ACT (No. 2).**

His Excellency the Governor's Deputy, by message, intimated his assent to the Act.

**QUESTIONS.****SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE.**

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Can the Premier indicate when the present session is likely to finish, and whether Parliament will be expected to sit on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, or will there be any further cancellation of evening sittings?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I am not in a position to answer the first part of the question because it will depend largely on how long the business of the House takes to conclude, how many members will speak upon the various Bills, and how long they will speak. I cannot make a prophecy on those points. The Government desires to conclude the session as early as possible, though without undue haste in considering legislation, and the House will be asked to sit on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. I know other arrangements were made last Wednesday, but they were made only after the Leader of the Opposition had been consulted. There were a number of Bills for the consideration of which additional time was required by some members and I was tied up with the work of the Grants Commission and not able to introduce a new batch of Bills, but this week there will be ample business for everyone, and some to spare.

**HOSPITAL CHARGES.**

Mr. MICHAEL—During the Budget debate I mentioned the anomaly which exists in regard to hospital charges in South Australia in that at about six hospitals it is possible to get free treatment—in fact, patients are not permitted to pay—whereas in other parts of the State everyone who is able to pay has to pay. The Treasurer said the Government had this matter in hand and proposed making an announcement soon. Is he able to make any announcement now?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Government hospitals were established as the backbone of the hospital services of this State. Expensive equipment has been provided, and they have been run on a different basis from that of subsidized, community, and private hospitals.

The reason is that the Commonwealth Government, in accordance with an agreement that was ratified in this House, agreed to compensate the State to the extent that it had previously been collecting fees on condition that the State did not charge patients. That was not an anomaly, but a deliberate policy, and it has been in operation until recently, when the Commonwealth announced a further decision, that the amount payable to the State will be available whether a charge is made or not, providing the charge does not exceed a certain amount. That matter is being considered by Cabinet, and three decisions have been made and will be put into operation in due course. The first is that the amount payable under the Commonwealth scheme, including the amount that will be available under any insurance, will be charged in Government hospitals. The second refers to certain payments which are not collected at present with regard to a privileged class, and they will be abolished. As soon as the new system has been worked out by the department I will make an announcement. In our public hospitals we are not always able to provide private accommodation. Many can supply only ward accommodation, and in fact some are overcrowded to the extent that from time to time emergency beds have to be installed in some wards, so some wards would not be eligible for classification for paying patients. General principles have been approved by Cabinet, and as soon as a system has been worked out I will advise the House, possibly next week.

**WESTERN DISTRICTS HOSPITAL.**

Mr. TAPPING—Has the Premier a reply to my recent question regarding the opening of the maternity wing of the Western Districts Hospital?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—During the debate on the Estimates I pointed out that provision had been made to use the first portion of the buildings, namely, the nurses' quarters, as a maternity hospital before the remainder of the hospital was completed. The best information I can give is that on present indications the hospital should be in a position to take maternity patients some time next May.

**BUSH FIRE DANGER.**

Mr. HEASLIP—In the past few years great service has been done to the community by the Minister of Agriculture and the press in giving publicity to the great danger of bush fires, and I feel that that publicity has made

the public much more fire conscious and careful and has saved the country from much damage. However, it is possible that the risk this year will be just as great as in the past few years. Will the Minister of Agriculture have this great danger brought before the notice of the public through the press, as in previous years?

The Hon. Sir GEORGE JENKINS—I have already made one or two statements to the press on the matter, and the widest publicity will be given so that the public may be fully conscious of the dangers. I can assure the House that the fire fighting organization is better this year than it has ever been before.

#### ROYAL VISIT.

Mr. DAVIS—An amount of £15,000 has been set aside for a children's demonstration in Adelaide during Her Majesty's visit next year, but no provision has been made for country children to see that demonstration without paying for rail transport. I have been informed by a parent of a child attending the Port Pirie school that the school has been circularized for a list of children prepared to go to Adelaide to see the demonstration, the fare to be 16s., and I suppose that children living farther away than Port Pirie will have to pay more. Is the Premier prepared to reconsider the position of country children by granting an additional sum so that they will be able to enjoy some of the privileges enjoyed by metropolitan children?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The honourable member is only partly right in his statement that £15,000 has been set aside for the demonstration. In addition, the Government has instructed the Railways Commissioner to make available as much transport as possible to bring children to the metropolitan area at reduced fares, the cost of which, I believe, will ultimately be charged to "Chief Secretary: miscellaneous." It is the Government's desire that as many children as possible should have an opportunity to see Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh at one place or another, and it is for that reason that of the five effective days of the visit (for the Sunday and one other day will be reserved as rest periods) no fewer than three will be spent in country areas. When we were considering the Royal Visit applications for an extra holiday in relation to Whyalla were made as far down as Jamestown on the assumption that children from that area, including Port Pirie, would, in fact, be going to Whyalla, and a holiday was to be granted for that purpose. It seems

that the honourable member wants it both ways. Do I now understand that he does not want a holiday for Port Pirie on the occasion of the Royal Visit to Whyalla, because, if that is the position, we can meet it in due course?

Mr. DAVIS—I received a letter from the Premier's Secretary asking if I thought it desirable that a holiday be declared in Port Pirie and asking me to name other towns in surrounding districts which I thought should be included. After consultation with the member for Rocky River I replied asking if it was desirable that there should be a holiday in certain towns in the Rocky River district. The Premier says that any railway concession granted to country school children would be debited to the "Chief Secretary: Miscellaneous" line, but I am concerned, not with which department meets the amount but with seeing that justice is done to country children on the occasion of Her Majesty's visit. Can the Premier say what provision has been made for country children from Port Pirie and surrounding districts to travel from Port Augusta to Whyalla?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—From the communication in respect of the holiday I understood that it was hoped that Port Pirie children would visit Whyalla by means of a ship which it was proposed to place on that run for that occasion. I received that information only indirectly and I understood it was a local arrangement. I have already informed members that the Government will do its utmost to facilitate, through its public transport systems, the conveyance of people to see the Royal couple, but it has become obvious that the number of carriages and locomotives in the railway service will be inadequate to meet the demands made for transport on this memorable occasion, for every country person who has a reason to come to town will be in town on that day, and every person who has no reason will find one. It is obvious that all sorts of emergency transport will have to be brought into operation. The Transport Control Board has already been through the various districts in regard to this matter, and I believe no difficulty will be experienced in obtaining the necessary permits to use vehicles on this occasion. State transport facilities will also be available and considerable concessions will be made in the rates charged to children. I believe these arrangements go further than those in any other State. The Government is quite happy that the residents of the important town of Port Pirie should have

it both ways by having the opportunity of being able to visit both Whyalla and Adelaide, and that it should have two holidays instead of only the one which other parts of the State will have.

Mr. RICHES—Rightly or wrongly, it is believed that in our lifetime we shall not again have a Royal Visit to South Australia. Many country children would like to visit Adelaide during the Royal Visit. It has been suggested that the Monday or some other day might be proclaimed a public holiday to enable country children to come to Adelaide. Has the Premier given this matter consideration?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I am pleased to assure the honourable member that consideration has been given to the matter. Yesterday, in general principle, Cabinet approved of arrangements being made for the public. We have obtained the gracious consent of Her Majesty to visit the honourable member's district, which is a significant honour to that district. It is being done to enable the residents of the area to see Her Majesty because it would be difficult for them to come to Adelaide. A holiday will be proclaimed in each of the areas visited by the Queen and there will be a general holiday throughout the State on the day the Royal Progress takes place in the city.

#### METROPOLITAN ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES.

Mr. LAWN—Can the Premier say whether it is a fact that the Government has appointed a secret committee to consider and report upon altering the electoral boundaries of some of the metropolitan electoral districts by transferring that area between the South Road and the Keswick Bridge from the district of Glenelg to the district of Adelaide with the object of making Glenelg safe for the Liberal and Country League at the next election, and to make similar alterations to the districts of Torrens and Unley with the same object?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—It is not a fact that the Government has done this, but I thank the honourable member for the suggestion. The facts are that the electorates referred to are quite safely held by the Liberal and Country League, and it will not be necessary to make any innovations as suggested. The members for these districts are well and favourably known to their constituents, and I have not the slightest doubt that if an election were held tomorrow they would be safely returned on the present boundaries and on the present distribution.

#### WARTIME DEFENCE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

Mr. QUIRKE—Ever since the first Australian A bomb was detonated somewhere beyond Woomera, I have been thinking of its implications. South Australia is now on the map in the matter of atomic fission, and consequently has become a principal world target in the event of world hostilities. As far as we have been informed, we know of the progress of uranium production and the development of guided missiles, including those carrying atomic warheads, but we have not been told what preparations have been made to meet an assault on our cities in the event of war. Seeing that we are now the centre of such a possible attack, can the Premier say whether consideration has been given to meeting such an attack, particularly with regard to the defence of our capital cities which are very open to sea attack by submarines using missiles carrying atomic warheads?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—This question, because of the scope of the Commonwealth Constitution, is one primarily for the Commonwealth Government, but in the last war the Commonwealth Government requested the States to take certain action to try to minimize the effect of any attack which might be made on the civilian population and civil defence preparations were undertaken in this and other States along the lines then known to be most effective. Since then the Commonwealth has maintained a close liaison with the States, and in fact an officer from South Australia was selected on behalf of the Commonwealth Government to go to Great Britain to study and get the fullest information on this question for distribution among the States. That officer returned some time ago, and from time to time we are receiving further communications from the Commonwealth as to what action should be taken. Nearly all these matters have been marked "Confidential" and I am not in a position to disclose them, but speaking generally, I believe the best defence against any future attack will lie in the work being done at Woomera on guided rockets. These would, in my opinion provide the most effective counter to an air attack, for they not only travel at a great speed but are capable of being guided to the attacking plane. Indeed, I think the latest technique has almost reached the stage at which they will manoeuvre to overtake a plane. All requests made by the Commonwealth to the State Government have been fully met, and any further requests will be met to the fullest extent.

**FRUIT JUICES FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN.**

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—Last session, in reply to my question regarding the possibility of using fruit juices as an alternative to milk for school-children, especially where milk is difficult to supply, the Minister representing the Minister of Education said that the Commonwealth Government would not consider any alternative, that the Act was limited to milk and that milk would have to be supplied. According to press statements the Federal Minister in charge of this matter is prepared to re-examine the position to see whether fruit juices can be used. In view of the large and excellent supply of a variety of fruit juices in this State, will the Minister again take up this question?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I shall be glad to do that. I consider the area represented by the honourable member produces some of the finest fruit and tomato juices in Australia.

**POTATO PRICES.**

Mr. DUNKS—Can the Minister in charge of prices say whether the Government is taking action to see that South Australian potato-growers receive a price for their forthcoming crop equivalent to that which they could get in other States, so as to avoid the potato shortage experienced last year?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—My most recent information is that relatively few South Australian potatoes are yet coming on to the market. The price for South Australian washed new potatoes is 9d. a pound, and that has been fixed by the Prices Commissioner on a parity with the Victorian price of 9d. a pound. The bulk of the potatoes available for the consuming public in this State are those coming from Western Australia. We have entered into a satisfactory arrangement with the Commonwealth Railways and shipments of potatoes from Western Australia have been arriving regularly. Their retail price is 7½d. a pound, but they are not washed or new.

**GERMAN RAILWAY EMPLOYEES.**

Mr. JENNINGS—Has the Minister of Railways a report on the investigations he recently promised to make in reply to my question regarding German railway workers receiving preference in the allocation of overtime so that they would not sever their connection with the railways when their contract period had expired?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I spoke to the Railways Commissioner on this matter. A general statement such as that made by the

honourable member is hard to refute, because no instance is given. However, the Commissioner emphatically denied the allegation. I asked him to go further and see whether there was any case which would even give colour to the honourable member's suggestion, and he promised to do so. If the honourable member can give me details of any case which might justify his statement I shall be pleased to pass it on.

**HIGHWAYS COMMISSIONER'S REPORT.**

Mr. HAWKER—Can the Minister of Local Government indicate when the Highways Commissioner's report for the last financial year will be tabled? Two important Bills dealing with highways matters are before the House, and the report would be of considerable value to members in dealing with them.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—It may be a coincidence, but only today I sent that report to the Chief Secretary for laying on the table of the House. It has to be printed, which may take some time, but authority has been given for it to be laid on the table.

**ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES ON HIRE.**

Mr. RICHES—In reply to a question last week it was intimated that the Electricity Trust was considering withdrawing a scheme which applied throughout the State and under which household electrical appliances were available on a rental basis, and substituting for it a scheme of purchase by instalments. Has the Premier had an opportunity to consider the Electricity Trust's suggestion and, if not, when considering it will he take into account representations made not only for the continuance of the existing scheme but its extension to areas which do not now enjoy the privilege? Will he discuss the matter with the trust?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The chairman of the Electricity Trust showed me the report before it was made available to the honourable member in the House last week. It said that the trust was considering withdrawing the scheme because the demand for funds which arose from it meant that extensions of electricity supplies would have to be curtailed. It was thought that the primary duty of the trust was to extend electricity supplies rather than enter into a scheme of financing the supply of electrical appliances, and with this I agree. Whilst so much of the country is clamouring for extensions I can understand the trust preferring to make them instead of spending money on a hire purchase system for

electrical gadgets. I have already had a request from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to provide for heavier deposits on time payment goods, because traders are selling some articles without any deposit. The second point associated with the trust's decision is that the cost of servicing in the country from a central organization is exorbitant. It was feasible when the area to be serviced was only within nine or 10 miles of the city, but when, for instance, a stove breaks down and it is necessary to travel 100 miles to service it the cost of the servicing becomes prohibitive.

Mr. Riches—How will the private householder in the country manage?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—In his district there is always an electrician available.

Mr. Riches—Could not the Electricity Trust have one there?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—If the trust set up an organization to deal with country servicing it would become very costly. The third point is that people who own property take better care of it than people who use property belonging to others. However, I am prepared to re-examine the matter, as suggested by the honourable member.

#### SOUTH ROAD.

Mr. DUNNAGE—I have noticed when driving along the South Road in congested traffic that when a motor vehicle is forced off the bitumen it often goes into a deep gutter, which sometimes drops 8 in. to 9 in., and this causes a great deal of inconvenience and is likely to cause accidents. This morning, in considerable traffic, there being a trotting meeting at Victor Harbour, a truck was forced off the road and there was almost an accident. Can the Minister of Local Government say whether it would be possible to have the edges of the bitumen built up with metal so as to be useable as a roadway? It would be cheaper than widening the bitumen and would overcome much of the difficulty on narrow main roads.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I will direct the question to the Commissioner of Highways and get a reply, as it is more an engineering than a policy matter. Speaking generally, the object of the Highways Commissioner is to provide an approved thoroughfare of sufficient width to enable people to travel on ordinary occasions at a reasonable speed. To take care of the extraordinary conditions indicated by the honourable member would involve the expenditure of some of the money which is available to be spent on extending roads. It becomes a question of whether it is better to

widen the road to enable it to be traversed more speedily by some people or extend roads for the benefit of more people. Money is spent on the roads to the best advantage.

#### COMMONWEALTH HEALTH SCHEME.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Some time ago I drew the attention of the Premier to a practice which had been reported to me whereby certain approved societies under the Federal Health Scheme were refusing to insure pensioners under the State Superannuation Act who had been retired from the service on a breakdown pension, because of their alleged chronic invalidity. This meant considerable hardship to a few people whose cases were indeed deserving. Has the Premier any information to give on the matter?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—This matter and one raised by Mr. Stephens have been the subject of consideration by the Government and communications have passed between the Commonwealth and State Governments, more particularly on the matter raised by Mr. Stephens. The honourable member will realize that these things are primarily under the control of the Commonwealth and not the State. This morning I received a letter from Mr. Kent Hughes, written, I think, on behalf of the Prime Minister, saying he had communicated with other Premiers about societies, and the conduct of societies, and that he had received a reply that South Australia was prepared to agree to the proposals, but that one or two other Premiers had not yet signified their assent to an Australia-wide scheme to cover what might be considered the ethics of this matter. He said he would advise me as soon as he had heard from other Premiers.

#### MOUNT GAMBIER RUNNING SHEDS.

Mr. FLETCHER—I compliment the Minister of Railways and the department on the wonderful success of the broadening of the gauge to the South-East, but when will it be possible to move the running sheds from their present position in the Mount Gambier railway yards? I have just returned from Mount Gambier, where I received many complaints about the inconvenience caused by smoke from locomotives in the present railway yard. The Minister assured us some time ago that it would not be long before the running sheds were transferred to a new position. Can he say when the inconvenience caused to residents will be eliminated?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I thank the honourable member for his complimentary remarks: they were like balm to the wounded

spirit. The work will be done as soon as possible, though I cannot at the moment say when. I will consult the Railways Commissioner and I am sure he will be glad to remove any disability arising out of the extension of the broadening of the gauge. I will bring down his reply as soon as possible.

#### ANDAMOOKA OPAL FIELD ROADS.

Mr. RICHES—A letter I have just received from the Andamooka opal field refers to the bad state of a section of the road between the field and the air strip. It states:—

The road to the air strip is six miles long. Two miles of this is in good enough condition, but the remaining four miles is extremely rough. In the case of transporting a patient out to the Flying Doctor's plane it would be very hard on the patient. A new road could be made direct to the air strip from the turn-off, a distance of four miles. We have a man here, Mr. Sam Brooks, who could do the job and would be able to borrow the station grader to do it. The suggestion was made that the Government might be able to make a grant in order to do this work.

Will the Minister of Works do everything in his power to have this road put in trafficable order as soon as possible? The work that the Engineering and Water Supply Department is doing in the north-western areas is greatly appreciated by the people there, but they believe it may be some time before Government plant can be taken to this area. Because of the number of aged people at this centre and the frequency of the Flying Doctor's visits, I ask for special consideration for this work to be done soon.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—If the honourable member will give me the correspondence I will send it to the Deputy Engineer-in-Chief and ask him to get a report from the district engineer as to whether it is feasible to do the work on the lines suggested.

#### WALLAROO SHIPPING.

Mr. McALEES—For some weeks I have been making inquiries about the scarcity of shipping at Wallaroo, and the Premier promised to see what could be done about it. At present the waterside workers are working around the clock to unload a boat there with phosphatic rock. Has the Premier received any definite information from the shipping companies regarding ships for Wallaroo?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have received the following letter from the Federal Minister for Shipping and Transport:—

With reference to your letter of September 21, 1953, regarding the waterside labour position at Wallaroo, I have to apologise for the

delay in supplying you with information on this matter, but in order that a full appraisal of the position might be made it was necessary to refer your inquiry to the Australian Wheat Board, the Australian Barley Board, the British Phosphate Commission, the Wallaroo-Mount Lyell Fertiliser Ltd., the Australian Stevedoring Industry Board, the Department of Labour and National Service, and the Combined Traffic Committee. I have now been advised that five to six months ago, at the height of the grain season, there was considerable congestion at the port of Wallaroo. The eight gangs then available in the port were quite inadequate, as indicated by the following figures supplied by the Department of Labour and National Service, which show the monthly average waterside labour supply position at Wallaroo:—

Month.	No. of registrations.	Average No. employed.	Average surplus.	Average shortages.
July . . .	150	138.2	—	123.1
August . .	151	78.1	56.3	4.9
September .	150	46.1	79.2	—

An application by the Australian Wheat and Barley Boards for the provision of two more gangs at the time the worst congestion was being experienced at Wallaroo was opposed by the Waterside Workers' Federation, and the Australian Stevedoring Industry Board deferred a decision on the matter. The application was later refused by the Australian Stevedoring Industry Board. The Australian Wheat Board faced with the problem of overcoming the congestion took action to divert the grain consigned to New Zealand, to the port of Ardrossan by road transport, where it was loaded by the recently installed bulk handling equipment. I understand 80,000 tons of wheat have been shipped in bulk through Ardrossan since January 1, 1953. In addition, grain from Yorke Peninsula was transported by rail to Port Adelaide for shipment overseas. The Australian Barley Board, which had commitments with the South Korean Government and with the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Organization for delivery by June 30, 1953, was unable to acquiesce in the delays occurring and resorted to transport by rail to Port Adelaide, incurring an additional expense of about £25,000. Barley for malting purposes purchased by Victorian and Mittagong (New South Wales) establishments was consigned direct by rail notwithstanding that it cost the South Australian Barley Growers' Pool an additional 20s. per ton for transport.

Another major activity at Wallaroo is connected with the Wallaroo-Mt. Lyell Fertilizers Ltd. This firm receives phosphate rock from the British Phosphate Commission's ships at the port. It also ships calcines consigned to Risdon, and similarly Cresco Fertilizers Ltd., import phosphatic rock. Since the processing plants of these companies are located at Wallaroo, the transport of their raw material is tied to the port. While bulk cargo of this type does not require so much waterside labour, its reception and dispatch is obviously affected by congestion; however, on occasions the British Phosphate Commission has found it necessary to divert ships to either Port Lincoln or Port Adelaide, but an equal tonnage

has been brought into the port at a later date to maintain the annual average. The export of calcines is dependent on the output of the producers and although it arrives on the berth at irregular intervals the total annual production available for export passes through the port of Wallaroo during each year. The period of congestion at Wallaroo has since passed, as indicated by the table regarding waterside labour employment quoted above, and at present the Australian Wheat Board has a large accumulation of wheat available for shipment. Until the wheat plan under the International Wheat Agreement had been determined the board could not sell to buyers inside the agreement, or to outside buyers. Its chartering activities were therefore restricted. The International Wheat Agreement has now been signed and is in operation. The principle importer of Australian bagged wheat, the Indian Government, is a party to the agreement and intends to continue ordering through the India Office, London. However, a cable received by the Australian Wheat Board from London on October 30, stated that the Indian Government had not then estimated its requirements, and shipping therefore had not reverted to its normal rate. When the various importing countries' requirements under the International Wheat Agreement have been settled, an increase in the wheat ships calling at Wallaroo may be expected, and this, together with interstate vessels calling at the port, will no doubt provide full employment for the waterside labour force at Wallaroo during the forthcoming season.

#### ELECTRICITY VOLTAGES.

Mr. GEOFFREY CLARKE—Has the Premier a reply to my recent question regarding the changing over from 210 to 240 volts in certain suburbs?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have received the following report from the assistant general manager of the Electricity Trust:—

Work on the changeover from 210 volts to 240 volts is continuing in the metropolitan area as quickly as trust resources will permit. In addition to the changeover in the suburbs, the trust is changing over the installations in a number of country towns, mainly from direct to alternating current, including Murray Bridge, Yorketown and Moonta, where supply is now given from the trust's system. This, combined with the very large amount of work involved in supplying new consumers (including Housing Trust areas), has prevented the trust from completing the changeover work as rapidly as it would desire.

The changeover, which was suspended almost entirely during the war years, is being done at the rate of 13,000 installations per annum; is more than two-thirds finished; and is expected to be completed in about three years' time.

#### ELECTRICITY BREAKDOWN.

Mr. STOTT—During the week-end there were serious electricity blackouts in certain

Murray districts caused, it was said, by a tree crashing on the supply line between Waikerie and Morgan. Will the Premier take up this matter with the Electricity Trust to see if it would be possible to remove the trees adjacent to the line to prevent such breakdowns and for the plant at Berri to be used in such emergencies?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Any emergency plant will be found to be unsatisfactory because it is inadequate. That has been the experience in other places where small emergency plants have continued in use for a time. The reason for the Electricity Trust's being called into the district is that the old services are obsolete and inadequate. It always happens that when electricity is available from the trust's mains much more power is used. The honourable member's question raises an important question of policy. This Government has desired the trust to give effect to the policy of preserving trees to the utmost extent. That inevitably means that occasionally, during a bad storm, a tree will break and disrupt the service, but we cannot have it both ways. If we intend to retain the trees along the road—and in most cases no other route is available for the trust's mains—occasionally, particularly in spring, the service is subject to blackouts. The trust is establishing a number of alternative lines. For instance, the principal line from Port Augusta is being duplicated and will provide alternate circuits which could be used in case of emergency in many districts. I think that will give some relief. I will refer the honourable member's question to the chairman of the trust. My district in the hills is particularly susceptible to blackouts; in fact, we had one last night, but this susceptibility arises from the fact that the people in my district have been anxious to preserve the trees along the roadside and occasionally severe storms have caused interference with the service.

#### HOSPITAL ACCOMMODATION FOR AGED PERSONS.

Mr. LAWN—The report of the Superintendent of Mental Institutions for the year ended June 30, 1952, states:—

Most of these patients are simply cases of mental and physical infirmity consequent upon advancing years, or cardio-vascular degeneration. As pointed out in these reports for nearly 20 years, many of these infirm patients could be cared for more appropriately in an infirmary type of hospital.

Can the Treasurer say whether the Government intends to provide other accommodation

for such patients and whether, before these patients are admitted to these mental hospitals, they must be certified as mental defectives?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—As I understand the legal position, no patient can be admitted to or kept in a mental asylum until he has been certified insane. I am sure any person accepted by Dr. Birch at Parkside would be one with a mental affliction of some sort; therefore I do not think purely old age cases are admitted by him.

Mr. O'Halloran—That was the doctor's evidence before the Public Works Committee.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The words quoted by the honourable member do not confirm that. Whether the affliction is caused by advancing years or any other factor, a person must be certified insane or mentally defective before being admitted. Mental cases may be caused by war injuries or any one of a number of other reasons, and the cases mentioned by the honourable member are those caused by advancing years. The Government has almost completed the erection of two large additional wards at the Northfield hospital, which is being increasingly used by aged patients.

Mr. Lawn—It took you 20 years to do it, according to the report.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The honourable member is again wrong, because this Government has been in office for only 15 years and certainly could not be held responsible for any actions in the five years preceding its assuming office. Moreover, during the war years, when a Federal Labor Government was in office, we were expressly asked to forbear from building any hospitals or such institutions so that all efforts might be directed to winning the war. That took up at least seven or eight years. In the last few years there has been a great advancement. Wards have been provided and there has been a re-organization at the Parkside Mental Hospital. I shall get for the Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member a statement on the alleged cases from the medical officer in charge of the institution.

#### CUMMINS TO GREENSHIELDS ROAD.

Mr. PEARSON (on notice)—

1. Has any work been done since July 1, 1953, by the Highways Department on the Cummins to Greenshields section of the Cummins to Edillilie road?

2. Does the Commissioner expect to complete bituminizing this section of road during the present financial year? If not, why not?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The Commissioner of Highways reports:—

1. The departmental gang was moved to Lincoln Highway from the Cummins-Greenshields section of the Edillilie-Kyancutta main road during last winter when conditions became too wet for work to continue there economically. No construction has been done on this section since July, 1953.

2. The departmental gang is now being moved back to Cummins to complete the filling, sub-base and base of the Cummins-Greenshields section preparatory to sealing. If the base is sufficiently consolidated, the intention is to seal the section before the winter. If conditions prevent thorough consolidation before the wet weather, sealing will be deferred until the following summer.

#### RENT INCREASES.

Mr. DUNKS (on notice)—

1. What percentage increase in rent has been granted to owners of dwellinghouses since 1939?

2. What proportion of this increase relates to—(a) increased property values; (b) repairs; (c) alteration; (d) council rates; (e) water and sewerage rates; and (f) any other expenses?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The replies are:—

1. When rents of dwellinghouses are fixed under the Landlord and Tenant (Control of Rents) Act, the rents must, according to the Act, be fixed upon the basis of the rental level for comparable houses prevailing at September 1, 1939, plus 22½ per cent thereof, plus any amount attributable to increases in costs of maintenance incurred in respect of the dwelling and increases in rates and taxes and other outgoings. When the rent of any particular house is to be fixed, the rent must be fixed with relation to the particular house. In some cases maintenance has not been carried out and thus there is no case for an increase on this ground, whilst increases in rates vary according to the local government area. However, where a house has been reasonably maintained, the combined effect of the provisions of the Act is that the rent fixed at the present time would be from 40 to 45 per cent above the general rental applicable to that house at September 1, 1939.

2. (a) to (f) (inc.) Statistics relating to the matters referred to are not kept by the South Australian Housing Trust and, as before



stated, the rent of each house is fixed according to the particular circumstances of that house. To obtain the details would involve a close examination of the files of the trust which amount to many thousands.

#### COUNTRY ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

Mr. MICHAEL (on notice)—

1. Has the Government finalized the scheme for assisting in the provision of electric power in country areas?

2. If so, what are the principal features of the scheme?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The matter has been discussed with the chairman of the Electricity Trust. It is expected that the trust will submit the scheme for consideration by Cabinet within the next two weeks. Details will then be available.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (on notice)—

1. Is the Minister of Railways aware that, owing to a breakdown in the railway electricity power plant at Cockburn, the electricity supply to residents of that town is now inadequate?

2. If so, what steps are being taken to restore this service to the standard maintained before the breakdown?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The Railways Commissioner reports:—

1. There are two diesel engine generating sets at Cockburn, one being a standby for the other. One engine broke down on the 30th ultimo as the result of the failure of a big-end bearing bolt. When the other engine was put into use, it also failed, because of a broken gudgeon pin. These mishaps, coming one on top of the other, were extremely unfortunate, although inadvertent. Immediate steps were taken to provide an emergency service, and on November 1 power to the extent of 60 per cent of that formerly provided was made available. This, unfortunately, necessitated some rationing.

2. Action has been taken through the Supply and Tender Board to obtain two new engines, and it is anticipated that these will be in operation by the end of this week.

#### MOTOR VEHICLE DRIVERS' LICENCES.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (on notice)—

1. How many licences to drive a motor vehicle of any kind were issued during the year 1952-53?

2. How many licences to drive a motor cycle only were issued during the year 1952-53?

3. What was the total revenue derived during 1952-53 from the issue of (a) licences to drive a motor vehicle of any kind; (b) licences to drive a motor cycle only?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The replies are:—

1. 236,687 for vehicles.

2. 4,256.

3. (a) £118,343; (b) £1,064.

#### SHIRT PRICES.

Mr. HUTCHENS (on notice)—What were the percentage margins on wholesale prices of Pelaco Whitemaster, Arrow and Holeproof brands of men's shirts as retailed in New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia on November 1, 1953?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The South Australian Prices Commissioner advises:—

Retail mark-up margins on the shirts in question were, at November 1, 1953:—

	N.S.W. Victoria.		S.A.
	%	%	%
Pelaco White Master . . . . .	35	35	39
Arrow . . . . .	35	35	40
Holeproof . . . . .	35	35	40

Further to the above report margins on Pelaco Whitemaster shirts have been reduced to approximately 35 per cent as from November 10, 1953.

#### PETERBOROUGH RAILWAY STAFF.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (on notice)—Has any action been taken to implement the suggestion made by me in previous sessions that the staff at the Peterborough railway depot be increased to avoid sending maintenance work which could be done there to Islington?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—Since the honourable member last raised this matter in the House on August 21, 1953, additional machine tools have been sent to Peterborough and a large wheel lathe will also be placed in operation shortly. This machine will enable the department to handle rollingstock wheels at Peterborough instead of sending them to Islington. The Railways Commissioner states that between August, 1952, and the end of last month, the staff at Peterborough Locomotive Workshops was increased by 20 men, and a further 10 men are being sent there as soon as they become available. The number of locomotives and rollingstock has been increased, and the present staff are fully engaged on the maintenance work rendered necessary by the increasing amount of business being handled on the division.

# ROAD TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 1) (FEES).

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 4. Page 1328.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—This Bill may be regarded as being in part inspired by the report of the Commonwealth Grants Commission for 1951-52. It drew attention to the fact that the severity of taxation in this State was below the standard represented by the taxation in the non-claimant States. In terms of revenue the total deficiency was £453,000, of which £269,000 represented a deficiency in motor taxation, which had not developed suddenly in the year under review by the commission, because there had been previously a slight trend in that direction. In its report for the year 1950-51 the commission drew attention to the fact that South Australia was down £22,000 on registration fee revenue and £2,000 on licence fee revenue. That deficiency may have been too small for the Treasurer to worry about at that time, but I cannot rid my mind of the haunting suspicion that it was not so much the size of the deficiency as the fact that an election was imminent that caused him to make no reference then to the Government's intention of raising registration and drivers' licence fees during the first session of this Parliament. One principle on which the Grants Commission works is that if a claimant State could have raised more by means of taxation or had spent more on social services its grant is reduced by the amount necessary to bring those items into line with those of the non-claimant States. The extent of South Australian taxation is indicated by the following items:—Motor taxation £269,000 below standard; estate duties £270,000 below standard; stamp duties £74,000 below standard; land tax £124,000 above standard; liquor tax £229,000 below standard; and racing taxation £265,000 above standard. The total of the items below standard is £842,000, from which must be subtracted the items above standard, totalling £389,000. South Australia is only £269,000 down on motor taxation, but the Treasurer proposes to increase this form of taxation by £1,100,000 in a full year.

The Hon. T. Playford—Since that report of the Grants Commission was made there have been great changes in taxation in other States.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Some changes, but not great changes.

The Hon. T. Playford—There was a very big change in Queensland.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I admit that.

The Hon. T. Playford—And in New South Wales, although not in Victoria.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Motor taxation revenue in Queensland is the highest in the Commonwealth, but I think the only considerable change in Victoria was in relation to the registration of primary producers' vehicles. Formerly they could register all their motor vehicles at a concessional rate, but the concession has been withdrawn on motor cars, and in that respect they have been placed on the same basis as the primary producer in South Australia. In any event, the so-called winning bets taxation brings in about £265,000 above the standard revenue from that source in other States. When the Premier introduced this taxation he said that it would be levied in other States, but history has not borne that out.

The Hon. T. Playford—Victoria has followed South Australia's lead in regard to winning bets taxation.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I disagree, for Victoria has not adopted the vicious practice of taxing the punter's own stake. In New South Wales motor vehicle taxation substantially increased as from February 1, 1952. In Victoria taxation on new registrations and re-registrations of 2s. 6d. a horsepower, and transfer fees on the same basis, operated from November 12, 1951. Concessions on primary producers' vehicles were modified as from November 7, 1951. In Queensland registration fees were increased by about 50 per cent as from February 8, 1952, and on renewals as from March 17, 1952. No concessional rate of registration is allowed primary producers. In considering these figures we should see how the average of the three non-claimant States compares with the South Australian average. The average tax per motor vehicle in the non-claimant States in 1951-52 was £9 14s., but the South Australian average was £8 3s. 3d., or £1 10s. 9d. less. Of course, that warrants an increase in the registration fees in South Australia. It is obvious that the Treasurer is determined to raise more and more revenue to enable him to continue with his extravagant policy of public expenditure. I have pointed out on numerous occasions the mania which the Premier has developed for large-scale undertakings, and have said that sooner or later the State will be placed in grave financial difficulties. I repeat the warning about what may result from any slight recession; I question whether we should be able to finance the many schemes at present in progress.

They may be eminently desirable, but we must face the fact that we have to pay for them. For many years there has been less and less emphasis on efficiency and economy and more and more on increasing expenditure on the Premier's pet projects. However, there is some guarantee that increased revenue from motor taxation will be used for road purposes and not entirely lost in the general pool. I am not implying any sinister motive. It has been the practice for many years to pay direct to the highways fund all revenue derived from motor vehicle taxation. The relevant section of the legislation is not being disturbed, but any Parliament could change that provision.

Mr. Dunks—Does the honourable member believe in the principle that all motor taxation should go into the highways fund?

• Mr. O'HALLORAN—Yes.

The Hon. T. Playford—You would not support a move to abolish that principle?

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I would not. Motor registration has come to be a convenient, but perhaps not altogether just, means of taxing the owners of vehicles. Strictly speaking, the registration fee should merely be sufficient to meet the cost of keeping records and rendering the service originally intended to be provided by registration. When motor registration fees were first introduced in South Australia they were intended to meet the cost of keeping records so that we could have a check on the owners and drivers of motor vehicles to identify them in case of any breaches of the law. I was a member when the first attempt was made to secure from owners of vehicles some effective contribution towards the cost of maintaining roads. The Gunn Government introduced a form of fuel consumption tax. It was something like the petrol tax, the principle being that the more petrol a motor vehicle owner used the more miles he travelled over our highways and the greater his obligation in maintaining and repairing them. That Government pioneered the idea of the petrol tax, but it was too good an idea for any State Government to get away with, and the Commonwealth promptly challenged South Australia's tax, which was undoubtedly in the nature of an excise impost. Since those days we have gradually developed the principle of making the motorist, in addition to paying the petrol tax to the Commonwealth, pay a registration fee to the State. At present practically the whole of the revenue for the construction and maintenance of roads

in South Australia is derived from the motor-ing public. Probably that is reasonable in its incidence.

The State provides considerable sums out of motor vehicle taxation for making and maintaining roads, and in addition a large amount is provided by rates levied by councils, the money being chiefly used on district roads outside the scope of expenditure from the Highways Fund. The position is that there are three different contributions—from the motorist through the petrol tax and registration fees, and from the general property owner through municipal rates. I was interested in an article in the *News* of November 9 which showed that New Zealand was making provision for £15,000,000 in an all out drive to improve roads, something on the lines the Premier contemplates if this Bill is passed. That is a pretty substantial amount in any language. I believe the population of New Zealand is about 1,500,000, so an expenditure of £15,000,000 for such a population is much higher per head than about £5,000,000 in South Australia, with a population of about 800,000. The article states that the Government realized how roads all over the country had deteriorated, and adds that deterioration began during the war. New Zealand is not unique in that regard, as undoubtedly deterioration of South Australian roads began during the war. The article continues:—

Revenue for the new roads programme will come from increased motor taxation and from an annual contribution of £1,000,000 from the Government. Petrol tax, increased from 1s. to 1s. 3d. a gallon without any rise to the public, will bring in £10,000,000. Higher registration and licence fees will raise £1,700,000, heavy traffic fees £1,750,000, and mileage and tyre tax £250,000 to be spent on roads. Work on highways will absorb £10,000,000, and £1,530,000 will go to country councils as a subsidy on road maintenance and works.

Evidently they have the same method of taxing heavy commercial vehicles as South Australia, but our system is not quite as efficient as I should like it to be. The local bodies will still have autonomy as regards the roads coming under their care and will be able to do precisely the same in that regard as councils in South Australia do. The question arises whether in addition to the amount derived from taxation on motor vehicles and the amount provided out of council rates there might not be some general contribution from revenue towards the cost of maintaining roads, as in New Zealand, where £1,000,000 is provided annually from revenue for that purpose.

A person who uses his car only occasionally pays the same registration fee as one who uses one regularly and frequently. The commercial owner can pass on increased registration fees, but the private owner cannot do so. These are inequalities inherent under our system, and I do not know whether we can do very much about it. It all boils down to the fact that the fairest way to raise revenue is by tax on the fuel used, but without Commonwealth co-operation we cannot do that. New Zealand does not have to worry about State Governments and is able to make provision by legislation for increasing the petrol tax from 1s. to 1s. 3d. If the Commonwealth Government could have been induced to increase the petrol tax even by a smaller amount than 3d. a gallon, South Australia would be in a better position than it is today, and the impost would have been spread more justly over the motoring community.

Mr. Dunks—And the business people who are under price control would be in difficulties.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I do not know whether there is substantial price control over the cost of transport.

Mr. Dunks—What about the position of the grocer?

Mr. O'HALLORAN—The grocer has his retail margin controlled, and I should think that the cost of petrol in that margin would be very small. If he is sailing that close to the wind he might have difficulty in meeting the increased cost of registering his vehicle. Under the Bill an unfair increased impost could be placed on the ordinary citizen, particularly the ordinary working man who uses his vehicle perhaps to take his wife and children to the beach once a week. He would have to pay the increased registration in the same ratio as a man who is able to use his vehicle every day. After this measure has been in operation for some time we shall find that the law of diminishing returns will begin to apply and that a number of vehicles will not be re-registered when their present registration runs out. That applies to many of the older type high powered vehicles, which are rated very highly for power-weight taxation. That brings me to the question of whether the power-weight principle of determining the registration fee is entirely satisfactory. A small motor vehicle could travel over a road many times without causing damage, whereas a large vehicle would cause considerable damage in one trip if it travelled at high speed with a heavy load. The question arises whether we should not have a calculation

based on power and load weight rather than the power-weight principle alone. I submit that for the Government's consideration. A vehicle of 20 h.p. with a carrying capacity of five tons would not pay as much as a similar vehicle with a capacity of 10 tons. I believe that this principle is applied with success in some other countries. Under the present system the power of the engine and the weight of the vehicle are used to determine the power-weight. One should have regard to the power of the engine and also to the laden weight of the vehicle, rather than to the unladen weight.

Motor taxation is complicated by the fact that there are two distinct sources—registration and the consumption of petrol. Under the agreement with the Federal Government a portion of the Federal tax represented by 6d. a gallon on imported petrol and 3½d. on locally refined petrol is distributed among the States according to their population and area. The total proceeds of the petrol tax at 10d. a gallon on imported petrol and 8½d. on locally refined petrol are about £26,000,000. Of this amount £16,000,000 is distributed among the States. As not all petrol is used in land motor vehicles, the Federal authorities are justified in retaining portion of petrol tax contributions for other purposes such as the maintenance of aerodromes, but under the system of differential taxing of petrol the States receive a rebate of 6d. a gallon on imported petrol, the Commonwealth retaining 4d. a gallon, whereas on locally refined petrol the States receive 3½d. a gallon, the Commonwealth retaining 5d. The practice of refining petrol in Australia is increasing rapidly, and recently we have read of the proposed establishment of refineries in Victoria, Western Australia and New South Wales, therefore unless something is done to correct this anomaly whereby the Commonwealth Government receives a penny more and the States 2½d. less on locally refined petrol, the time will come when the amounts received by way of road petrol taxation by the States will be very small indeed. The Premier should join other Premiers in urging the Federal Government to make a more just allocation of the present £26,000,000 which is derived from this taxation. I do not believe the Federal Government is spending as much as £10,000,000 on the maintenance of aerodromes and on other purposes which would justify its retaining that amount. The time has arrived for the Commonwealth to account for the way in which it spends its portion and to refund the balance to the States in accordance with the formula in the agreement. The question of the differential

between the taxes on locally refined and imported petrol and the smaller return to the States on locally refined petrol should also receive immediate attention.

The diesel motor vehicle which is popular for heavy haulage presents a problem which must be dealt with separately in determining its fair contribution to the upkeep of roads. At present this vehicle escapes the petrol tax and it is doubtful whether the proposed differentiated registration fee will compensate the State for the loss of revenue which would be obtained by way of taxation from a petrol-driven vehicle. I have heard some criticism of the high charges to be levied on these vehicles, but I consider they are being let off lightly in view of the wear they cause to our roads. It might even be suggested that the registration fees for this type of vehicle should be further increased, but I think that would be futile because most of these vehicles are used commercially and an increased fee would react to the detriment of the consumer, resulting in another increase in the cost of living, particularly for the working man who has had his wages pegged by the Commonwealth Arbitration Court.

The Treasurer expects to receive the following amounts during 1953-54 for road purposes:—Carried forward from 1952-53, £500,000; petrol tax, £1,675,000; registration fees, £2,200,000; total, £4,375,000. It is expected that that amount will be spent on South Australian roads during this financial year. Expenditure on our roads has increased without a proportionate increase in road efficiency, and members should carefully consider that point. I understand from a notice of motion given in this House this afternoon that we are to be given an early opportunity to consider it. In making these comments I do not reflect on the Highways Department or on the efficiency of its engineers, but I believe the department has set too high a standard for road construction. The construction of bridges over railway lines, the straightening out of bends, and the construction of arterial roads so that speed may be indulged in with impunity may be desirable, but these things should be provided only after providing tolerably good roads for country people, particularly those of the far outback who have paid petrol tax and motor registration fees for years without having a proportionate amount of their contributions spent on roads, but who have produced the real wealth which has kept the country going and enabled other people to pay motor taxation. In this respect I

was pleased to note a hint in the Treasurer's speech that consideration would be given to the needs of councils throughout the State. As a result of tremendous building programmes in recent years new roads have had to be constructed and old roads maintained at greater cost, and full regard should be had to the needs of local authorities throughout the State and to whether they, rather than the Highways Department, could not more efficiently and advantageously spend some of this money. As a start it might be made possible for a country council to seal at least a few miles of road radiating from the principal business centre of a town so that local people might be able to drive over more of their roads without finding it necessary to wear old clothes or a dust coat. They should not have to wait until coming to the city on their annual holidays before being able to drive over a sealed road.

Something should be done to co-ordinate South Australian transport services so as to obviate some of the damage being done to roads. In general, I do not oppose the Bill. There has been no substantial increase in registration fees since 1929, despite the fact that other costs and charges have increased enormously in the meantime. South Australian roads are not being maintained in as good a condition as they were in at the end of the war. They are deteriorating and unless something drastic is done they will continue to deteriorate still further until mighty little of the sealed roads will be left. The proposed doubling of the drivers' licence fee is an imposition on the ordinary motorist. In some instances two, three or even four drivers' licences are associated with the one motor car, which is generally kept by a working class family for a little week-end pleasure. I do not object to the increase in the fees for motor cyclists' licences, for such licences result in the same amount of administrative expenditure as those of the motorists. I see no reason why motor cycle driving licences should not be abolished and everybody made to pay 10s. for a general licence. In Committee I shall move an amendment in that direction.

Another important matter concerns the concessional registration of primary producers' vehicles. Earlier I thought that considerably more revenue would be derived if this concession were withdrawn, but on making inquiries I found that only £112,000 was concerned, a substantial portion of which is represented by concessions to people outside council areas. They are entitled to the concession because

their vehicles rarely run on roads on which a substantial amount of public money has been spent. For them the concession should continue, but the position of primary producers inside council areas must be considered. The original purpose of the concession was to enable an owner to use his motor vehicle on his farm or between the farm and the nearest town or railway station, but it has become the practice, particularly with woolgrowers, to use their vehicles to cart wool to Adelaide, thereby depriving the railways of revenue. During the wool season I have not passed fewer than eight loads of wool on the roads when travelling on a Friday from Adelaide to Peterborough. On one occasion between Adelaide and Clare I saw 17 loads. I do not mind the primary producer using his vehicle for the purpose set out when the concession was first granted, but when he sets himself up as a common carrier the position is different. It is well known that many producers bring their goods to Adelaide and take back something for themselves and their neighbours. The Government should look at the matter. Generally I support the Bill. I have said that its introduction could have been avoided if there were a more equitable distribution of the petrol tax, but I do not expect much from the present Commonwealth Government and I hope that the electors will soon return a Government which will make a more just distribution of the money collected from the petrol tax, so that our roads can be improved.

Mr. WILLIAM JENKINS (Stirling)—I support the Bill on the grounds that no appreciable adjustment has been made since 1929, and revenue from this source has not kept pace with increasing costs of road maintenance and construction. This proposed increase is not popular, naturally, and by many people exception to it is taken, but from the same people come complaints of the poor condition of our roads. The one saving grace with most people is the fact that the whole of the revenue will be put into roads, less collection costs.

Again, motorists say that other means or ways of taxation should be applied to better road construction. One person said to me, "Why didn't the Government take over the entertainment tax field evacuated by the Federal Government and apply that to roads?" but I do not agree that a person who may walk, for instance, to the pictures, should pay an entertainment tax for the purpose of providing cheap motoring for another section of the community.

Garage proprietors have told me that many cars will go off the roads under the imposition of increased motor taxation, but it will not have that effect at all, for where a person owns a motor car, which rarely costs under £400, is it likely that he will get rid of it because of an increase of about £3 a year? If so, then let us go back to 1929 and 1938 commissions and cost of repairs, for they have risen steeply since then, but the registration has not. There is under any legislation a minority which will be hurt to some degree, but taking it all round increased costs have been spread in a reasonable manner. One instance I would like to quote is that of one of my constituents who is a road contractor, and who owns a vehicle known as a "low loader" for transporting his bulldozers or heavy earth moving equipment from job to job. During a year he would not travel more than 700 miles and then chiefly on side tracks and unmade roads. I feel that some consideration should be given in circumstances such as these, for no damage is done to main roads, and the distance travelled is so small within a prescribed area that the costs seem out of proportion, but a person using a vehicle of this nature does not contribute to road funds by way of petrol tax.

I know of many roads in my district which need bituminizing. Many more require better maintenance, and I hope that the increased revenue will assist in some measure to gradually overcome that disability. I have asked the Minister of Works to consider providing sufficient money in the Estimates next year for straightening and widening five of the worst bends in the Cut Hill area between Mount Compass and Victor Harbour, which would conform to the general plan for the ultimate re-making of the full 17 miles. In these days it is impossible to pass in either direction many of the big petrol and milk tankers and buses without going off the bitumen on to the loose shouldering of gravel.

We are gratified for grants for roads from the Highways Department, and hope that this increase in taxation revenue will mean a corresponding increase in grants. Towns in my district cater for very large numbers of tourists, and the motor traffic gives a short life to the roads used, and it imposes a heavy burden on the ratepayers of those towns. At the same time we appreciate that the tourist trade is of great benefit to a section of the people in those towns. The scale of increased charges has been meticulously worked out; that is perfectly evident, and it would appear to take into consideration all the angles of

the various motorists who use the roads, particularly the big semi-trailers which do so much damage to the highways.

The difference in registration costs between South Australia and the eastern States has been too great. This Bill will bring them into line again. These vehicles are diesel oil burners and do not contribute to the road funds through petrol tax. I heard the Leader of the Opposition say that the Premier is embarking on large-scale undertakings, and spending larger sums of public money. That sounds queer to me, when for the past two or three weeks members of the Opposition have advocated the expenditure of £100,000,000 on steelworks at Whyalla, without any assurance of the economic soundness of the scheme.

Under the Bill our highways will benefit to the extent of about £1,000,000, which is well within the keeping of the advancement of the State, and increased road transport. I have been told that the increased revenue from the greater number of motor cars on the road today should pay for the increased needs, but that does not add up to me, for the more cars on the roads the more is the wear and tear. Motorists in South Australia have for the past few years enjoyed a low rate of registration, in comparison with other States, and it is better to raise the rates steeply once in several years, than to be continually increasing them by small amounts. The Leader of the Opposition referred to revenue derived by the Commonwealth Government from the petrol tax and to the method of collecting taxation from refineries in Australia and on imported petrol. I intended to speak on this matter but the Leader of the Opposition has dealt with it fully.

Mr. LAWN (Adelaide)—The honourable member said that the Opposition supported the expenditure of £100,000,000 for the establishment of steelworks at Whyalla without being assured of the economic success of the project. That is an inaccurate statement.

Mr. William Jenkins—You advocated it.

Mr. LAWN—We advocated the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the report of the Director of Mines. We wanted to know whether it would be an economic success if steelworks were established, but the House carried a motion which had been amended at the instance of Mr. Dunks, and which was supported by Mr. William Jenkins, whose statement was most inaccurate. For 1952-53 the total revenue collected by the State was £4,191,632, of which £1,632,742 came from motor taxation. These figures were

taken from appendix 3 of the Treasurer's Financial Statement for the year ended June 30, 1953. The whole of motor taxation is given back to the motoring public in the form of expenditure upon roads and I know of no other form of taxation that is used in the same way. Usually it goes into general revenue. Appendix "3" to the Treasurer's Financial Statement accompanying the Budget shows that land tax amounted to £574,088, stamp duties £1,039,695, succession duties £1,001,997 and other licences £743,114. Land tax does not go back to producers to assist development of the land, and stamp duties and succession duties do not go back to any particular section of the community. It is obvious therefore that members will find themselves in a most difficult position if they attempt to oppose some of the provisions of this Bill. Some have been endeavouring to placate their electors by a continual agitation in this House for better roads, so they cannot very well oppose the proposals in this Bill if they are to be consistent.

Mr. Jennings—The only thing Government supporters are consistent in is their inconsistency.

Mr. LAWN—That is very true. No doubt this Bill will meet with a lot of criticism from members opposite, but the Government nevertheless will be able to rely on their votes. However, I am not pledging myself to supporting the whole of their proposals, although I agree with some aspects of the Bill. I feel that a fairer form of taxation would be a petrol tax.

Mr. Fred Walsh—We already have that, and this is supplementary.

Mr. LAWN—Yes, but if we accept the principle that all money derived from motor taxation should be spent on the roads, the fairest method would be a tax on petrol. The Premier, by way of interjection said, that petrol tax could not be used as a basis because some vehicles use diesel oil, but he cannot convince me that some form of taxation on fuel at its source could not be devised. Many people use their cars only at week-ends, and not every week-end, whereas others use them every day, and it is therefore not fair to charge the same registration fees for both. Also I know of instances where more than one member of a family holds a driver's licence to drive the one family car, and therefore the doubling of the fee will be rather harsh on them. On the other hand, I see no reason why the motor bike owner should not be on a par with the car owner.

The Federal Chamber of the Automotive Industries has been sending me communications from time to time for a considerable period, mainly in support of road hauliers. This Chamber has been boosting private enterprise on the roads and condemning railways for some time. One of its recent bulletins stated that there had been a conference of Ministers of Railways as a result of which some lines were to be closed, but when I asked our Minister whether it was proposed to do this he said it was not. By no stretch of the imagination can the Chamber of Automotive Industries be described as Socialistic, but it is very high in its praise of road transport. The latest bulletin has just come to hand and I have no doubt that had the Treasurer had his copy before he gave his second reading speech we would not have heard much from him except the information contained in this four-page document. It contains a schedule of passenger and freight traffic by sea, road, railways, tramways and air, and beneath it the following comment:—

The above schedule reveals clearly the reason for the growing national demand for improved facilities for road operation. It will be noted that of the total tons annually carried 76.5 per cent are moved by road against 18.7 per cent by its nearest rival—the railways. This 76.5 per cent of the total tons carried meant an annual movement of 195,000,000 tons of goods over 8,258,000,000 ton-miles. In passenger transport the staggering total of 20,000,000,000 passenger miles is credited to road against 5,830,000,000 passenger miles to the railways and 2,900,000,000 to the tramways, from a total passenger miles run by all services of 29,710,000,000.

If the roads are being used to the extent claimed I can well understand the reason for increasing some of the present registration fees, but it is not right that the family car, used only at week-ends, should bear the same increase as vehicles carrying many, many tons of freight over the roads day in and day out and even at night time, doing the roads much harm, whereas the family car scarcely harms them.

The Bill makes no alteration to the concessions to primary producers, but I am opposed to the present concessions, which have been granted on the principle that their vehicles are used mainly on their own properties and on running farm products to the nearest railway siding. However, their vehicles are not being used merely for those purposes, and even the Government supporters have referred to this question. They are using their vehicles to run goods as far as the metropolitan area and are using our roads in

the same way as the average motorist or carrier. I thought the Bill would have provided for some closing of the gap between the fees charged to primary producers and those charged to ordinary road users. Of course, most Government supporters represent country districts so the Bill has a political flavour. Every Cabinet Minister represents a country constituency so naturally the Government is continuing the concession, though primary producers are not now using their vehicles in a way that originally justified the concession. Perhaps the fairest way would be to amend the legislation so that a concession could only be obtained for a vehicle used for the purpose envisaged. In that way those who are using their vehicles on their farms or in taking produce to the railway sidings would not be penalized. I am disappointed in the Bill for many reasons, some of which I have given.

Mr. HAWKER (Burra)—I support the Bill though, like all Bills brought down for the purpose of raising revenue, it will not be popular in some quarters. As long as we adhere to the principle that motor registration fees, plus what we receive from the Commonwealth Government for petrol taxation, shall be practically the sole method of financing our road fund it will be necessary to have heavy taxation on motor vehicles. We cannot evolve any absolutely fair method, for there will always be the man who runs a great mileage on a bitumen road and another who runs a small mileage on roads on which perhaps no money has been spent. The petrol tax may be fairer, but even that is not absolutely fair because one person runs an enormous mileage on unmade roads, whereas another runs a small mileage on bitumen roads. In the country a tremendous amount of work is done by vehicles mustering sheep, particularly by motor cycles and jeeps, and those vehicles are rarely run on made roads, yet the increased registration fees will apply to them. Of course, the toll system could be adopted, but it would not be workable at present. America uses it on some of its big turnpike roads that have been recently constructed. The cost varies from just under 1d. a mile for the average passenger car to 3d. a mile for a heavy commercial vehicle. Of course, the toll system is used on the Sydney Bridge.

Motor transport has become part and parcel of our economy; we could not get on without it. The member for Adelaide quoted some figures which seem to me too high, but they showed the amount of goods shifted by motor



vehicles is a big proportion of the total shifted in Australia. The Government and semi-Government departments, shift vast quantities of goods and plant by road. On the road over which I travel frequently I always see two or three heavy vehicles belonging to the Electricity Trust, the Engineering and Water Supply Department, or the Mines Department. If possible, those undertakings should use the railways, but they are often compelled to carry goods by road, especially heavy plant and equipment. We should consider whether we are on the right lines in stipulating that all the money collected from motor taxation should be spent on the roads and, conversely, whether this is the only source of finance for our roads. Actually, the motorist pays considerable sums into the Commonwealth's general revenue, such as through import duties on motor vehicles. Again, although the petrol tax is not a State tax, a large proportion of the revenue derived from it is used on our roads, but it must be remembered that this tax is levied not only on road users but on airway companies and owners of stationary engines. The Commonwealth Government has to keep its aerodromes in order and the Civil Aviation Department functioning. Therefore, motorists cannot expect to have the whole of petrol taxation used on roads.

The serious state of the finances of the Tramways Trust has recently been debated in this House. The trust's finances have had to be bolstered from general revenue. The railways have not paid their way, but it is considered that they are necessary for the development of the State, just as it has been considered that our tramway system is necessary in the capital city. If it is now necessary to support the tramways, the time is fast coming, if it is not already here, when part of the general revenue should be used for maintaining roads that are so important to our economy. They are not needed for road users alone any more than the railways are necessary for railway users alone. Roads have been laid for the benefit of the State as a whole and many of them are purely developmental. We shall have to seriously consider changing our attitude and not try to get all the money to maintain them from the motorist.

There has been little advance in the method of road construction for many years. I was a member of a local council when the floating surface first came into vogue. It was a sound idea brought here by Mr. Fleming after a trip

abroad on behalf of the Highways Department. Loose gravel was deposited over the surface so that motor tyres would not come in actual contact with the road itself. When the gravel was scattered by vehicles it was graded, so theoretically pot holes or corrugations did not develop. Since this idea was introduced the speed of vehicles, their weight, and number have increased enormously. You can see roads which although they may be graded this week, or even coated with a new sheet of gravel, show bare patches within two or three days, and in about a fortnight there is hardly any gravel left. It may be a month or two before they are regraded. These roads are not doing the job they were designed to do, and I believe they are incapable of carrying today's fast heavy traffic. There seems to be nothing between that type of road and the bituminous road. One is completely inefficient, the other is extraordinarily expensive. I am informed that the high expense of the bituminous roads is not because of the bituminous sealing, the bitumen represents only 10 per cent of the total cost, but so that the bituminous surface will not break away under load there must be a heavy foundation, and this is the cause of the high cost. Some research should be undertaken to ascertain whether there is not some way of sealing a road so that the surface will be more or less elastic and so that heavy traffic, even if the foundation is not as heavy as is now considered necessary, will not break it up.

In America the cost of inter-capital highways or turnpikes is very high. The Maine turnpike 47 miles long, cost 450,000 dollars a mile to build—approximately £200,000—and the New Hampshire turnpike cost £268,000 a mile. These roads provide for four traffic lanes, and tunnels through hills are provided and also bridges where required, so that there is no interference with traffic. These additional features cost a great deal in addition to the surfacing costs. If we are to be dependent on registration fees and petrol tax to maintain existing roads and provide others, I do not think the additional amount received will enable us to increase the mileage of bituminous roads. Prior to the war South Australia used to lay down each year about 100 miles of bituminous roads, but I doubt whether that rate will be maintained even with the increased revenue from registration fees. It has always been difficult to get a team of men to work in the country on road construction.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—It is a very uninviting job, either in summer or winter.

Mr. HAWKER—I agree. Wherever a team of road men are working one will hear complaints about their slow rate of progress. I know that the Highways Commissioner is anxious that this type of work should be done by local councils rather than by the Highways Department, and not by men from outside the district who know no one there and have no personal local interests. I agree with the suggestion that this work should be done by private contractors. I feel that we are not getting full value for our money under the present methods of road construction. Under the present practice with gravelled roads graded by power units, taking into account the time spent in travelling to the job and returning home and the mid-day luncheon break, only a small proportion of the total time is spent in actual grading. Even with the extra money from registration fees we shall still not have nearly enough money to keep existing roads in order and build additional roads. Much money has been wasted in straightening curves. At Stanley Flat one will see two perfectly good bridges alongside one another. The second bridge was constructed to make traffic conditions easier. The other is not being used. I know of other places where much money has been spent in buying land to improve the route of a road. I doubt whether all this expenditure was warranted, but undoubtedly this work was undertaken in the interests of safety. In this connection I quote the following from the December-January issue of the *South Australian Motor*:—

These special roads (including freeways and expressways) are deemed to be safer than ordinary roads. In respect of safety, however, America has been rudely shaken. On the Pennsylvania turnpike, the accident rate has been higher (12.5 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles) than the national average of 7.5 per 100 m.v.m.

Investigating the high fatality rate on the Pennsylvania turnpike, the American authorities have pin-pointed two major causes. These are the substantial number of large, heavy commercial vehicles using the road, and the high speeds maintained by both passenger cars and commercial vehicles.

The police during a recent check-up found that nearly 57 per cent of commercial vehicles using this road exceeded the speed limit of 50 m.p.h. and numbers of private cars were also flagrantly ignoring their speed limit of 70 m.p.h.

More significant still, however, was the unhappy discovery that the turnpike induces an hypnotic effect on drivers. The American Automobile Association says:—"There have been many reports of extreme monotony and sleepiness experienced by drivers on the Pennsylvania turnpike and on some other roads

of similar design. It may be found desirable to artificially introduce horizontal and vertical curvature and perhaps other features of geometric design and roadside design which will tend to keep the driver alert."

Almost all the American turnpikes are straight and pass through hills by means of tunnels. When I was in Germany in 1937 I travelled on the autobahn between Heidelberg and Mannheim. An autobahn is not similar to a turnpike in that it follows the contour of the land with its curves and ups and downs. Even on these autobahns I was told there were a number of accidents because of drivers falling asleep or the hypnotic effect of driving on these roads. There were instances of people driving off the roads or, more commonly, of a fast vehicle driving into the back of a slower vehicle. We have been spending large amounts on straightening out curves, but in view of the experiences of America and Germany will such work make these roads safe? It would be better to build good roads where there are bad ones at present. In another debate the Leader of the Opposition referred to the road between Spalding and Jamestown, with which I am familiar. The old macadam road is on the western side. Previously there was a dirt track and one frequently had to use chains to get through in wet weather. The new road is built on what was the dirt track; I cannot understand why the macadam road was not used as a base.

Mr. O'Halloran—With the existing foundations.

Mr. HAWKER—Yes. Even if the old foundations were not quite good enough they did contain big rocks and not small rocks which are being used today. There is better material in the foundation of the old road than in the new road. That road traverses a thickly populated area which carries a lot of stock and there are sheep markets at both Jamestown and Spalding. It will not be nearly so easy to drive sheep along with that road in the centre as it would have been on the side. There is a similar road between Burra and Booborowie with a dirt track in the centre which carries the majority of traffic most of the year. Years ago it was intended to put a new road down the centre and abandon that on the side. I am pleased, however, that, possibly through lack of finance, the old road has been scarified and re-surfaced and made into a good road. To summarize, roads are an economic necessity for the development of this State and the motorist should not be called upon to bear the entire cost of their maintenance. The question of

straightening out curves needs to be closely examined, especially in view of experiences in America and Germany, and some intensive research should be conducted to ascertain whether a cheaper method of construction can be introduced to displace expensive bituminizing and unsatisfactory loose surface roads.

Mr. HUTCHENS (Hindmarsh)—I have listened with interest to previous speakers. When Mr. Hawker rose he indicated his unqualified support to the Bill, but then complained most definitely about some of the proposals. I am not at all happy about this measure and am surprised that country members have given it their wholehearted support because I feel it is extremely dangerous. We must realize that motor transport is going to play a great part in the future development of this country. Mr. Jenkins has apparently no fears about the increase in fees because he claims that a few extra pounds will not deter people from purchasing or running motor cars, but I remind him of the old saying, "It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back." Does not this Bill add that last straw? The object of the Bill is to raise another £1,100,000 for roads. There may be some necessity for additional revenue for the upkeep of roads, but that necessity has not become evident only in the last 12 months. In March, when the State elections were held, nothing was said of the necessity for raising revenue by increased motor taxation.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—On all occasions when I have addressed meetings I have stated that we pay far less than any other State in the Commonwealth. We pay far less than your Labor colleagues in Queensland.

Mr. HUTCHENS—That is not a contradiction of what I suggest. The Minister was boasting on the public platform that his Government was able to do things at less cost while at the bottom of his heart he knew that this proposal for increased taxation would be introduced as soon as his Government was returned to power. It was a despicable trick to play on the public. If the Government had intentions of raising revenue by this means why didn't it say so before the elections? Why doesn't the State approach the Federal Government and seek a greater amount from petrol tax?

The Hon. M. McIntosh—We are getting more now than we were from the Chifley Government.

Mr. HUTCHENS—If there were a Federal Labor Government today the Minister would certainly be trying to embarrass it by seeking

a greater proportion of the petrol tax. Today, £16,000,000 of the £26,000,000 received from petrol tax is returned to the States. The Premier mentioned the tax on petrol, which is 10d. a gallon on imported petrol and 8½d. on locally refined petrol. We are reimbursed at the rate of 6d. and 3½d. a gallon respectively. With the establishment of more local refineries our proportion will naturally become progressively less.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—Don't you believe in local production?

Mr. HUTCHENS—Yes, but we must carefully examine all the facts. If we were to receive what I suggest is our rightful proportion from petrol tax we would gain a further £800,000 annually, but a Federal election is pending and naturally one Party would not embarrass another of the same political colour. Increased fees, however, must embarrass the people who find it necessary to own motor cars of considerable horsepower. Mr. Hawker said that cars were an extreme necessity in the country but the increased fee will be on the average about £8 a year.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—The value of the wool upon a wether.

Mr. HUTCHENS—Yes, but prices for primary production have been good for so many years that we must recognize that the day of reckoning is near and that there will be a decline. The Government, however, sees fit to impose an excessive tax at this late stage. It should have imposed moderate increases as they became necessary. The results of a Gallup poll published in yesterday's paper revealed that people from all walks of life were finding it difficult to make ends meet. The Government has chosen a most inopportune time to impose excessive fees. The progress of this State and its economy depends upon primary production and anything that may be to the prejudice of the man on the land should be regarded as dangerous.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—We are providing half-fees for primary producers.

Mr. HUTCHENS—Yes, but not for shearers, station hands and persons contracting in those areas.

Mr. O'Halloran—We are providing half-fees for the primary producer so that he can compete with the railways.

Mr. HUTCHENS—Yes, and that is a matter of great concern. The difference in the rates will also cause some concern. The fee on a Cumstomline car, which is the average weight of cars used in country areas, will be £8 7s.

higher than that applying in Victoria; £7 7s. higher than in New South Wales; £7 10s. higher than in Western Australia; and £5 15s. higher than in Tasmania. On the other hand, in Queensland the rate is £1 14s. higher than that proposed in South Australia.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—How about some interstate figures on commercial vehicles?

Mr. HUTCHENS—I offer no opposition to the high registration fees on the heavier motor vehicles. Like the honourable member for Burra I am concerned about the reasons given for the introduction of this legislation. In his second reading explanation the Treasurer said:—

Quite apart from the aspect of the main roads and highways, the position with regard to assistance to councils has become of great urgency, because there is scarcely a council in this State, including those in the metropolitan area, which has not been asking for additional assistance to enable them to meet, in some degree at least, the demand being made by the public for services.

Those remarks imply that country and metropolitan councils will need assistance from the revenue raised, but members have not been told how this money will be spent. Will it be granted to country councils to use as they see fit? Without an assurance that the money will be spent wisely and economically, members should more closely scrutinize this Bill. In a reply to a question this afternoon members were told that South Australians this year had taken out about 236,000 licences at 10s. to drive motor vehicles and 4,250 at 5s. to drive motor cycles, therefore this Bill will result in additional revenue of more than £100,000, which is £92,000 more than the £8,000 which, according to the Grants Commission report, this State is down on revenue of this type. It is unreasonable to penalize South Australians to this extent, when only an additional £8,000 is required. Mr. O'Halloran mentioned the worker whose car was used by two or three other members of his family, and we should not penalize such a man who, at the week-ends, will be working hard in his garden while his family use his motor car for a little pleasure. This Bill will bring condemnation on the Government because of the sly way in which it has been introduced.

Mr. GEOFFREY CLARKE (Burnside)—In introducing the Budget a few weeks ago the Treasurer said that the principal factor contributing to the estimated increase in revenue was the revenue from the proposed increase in motor vehicle registration, driver's licence

and sundry other fees under the Road Traffic Act. It seems to me that, if it were felt that this was an improper way to raise revenue to meet the expenses of State, the critics of this Bill, such as the honourable member for Hindmarsh, should have said so at that time, but they accepted the Budget and would now deny the Treasurer the ingredients which go into making up the revenue on which he relied to balance the Budget which was approved by members. The passage of this Bill was implied in the passage of the Budget. It has nothing to do with the petrol tax, as some members and many correspondents to the daily press would have us believe. It is purely a matter of motor taxation and its disposition.

In considering this as an item of taxation members must consider some principles of taxation. It has come to many people as something of a surprise to learn that the whole of the motor taxation in this State is actually spent on the roads; in fact substantially more than that total was spent on the roads last year. The Highways Act provides that the proceeds of motor vehicle taxation, after deducting administrative expenses in the Motor Vehicles and the Highways Departments and debt charges on loans raised for road purposes, shall be paid to the Highways Fund. Is that a good thing? I do not want to be misunderstood on this matter, as at the moment I do not intend to make a move to vary this long established practice, for I believe that in view of the present feeling of the House such a move would be doomed to failure. There are, however, among honourable members, those who are coming to the view which I will now advance.

There is no principle in public finance which approves of special taxation being earmarked for special purposes. No student of public affairs nor any authority on taxation principles will agree with this practice which has grown up with public consent and the approval of Parliament. When the needs of road construction and maintenance roughly equalled the yield from motor taxation, there may have been something to be said for it in practice; but now, as Mr. Boykett the secretary of the Royal Automobile Association says, "Good roads are a community benefit and there is a limit to the contributions which can be expected from any one section of the community." With that I entirely agree, and it seems to me that there is implicit in that statement a move towards a sound principle in taxation, namely that it should be levied according to ability to pay and spent on a

basis of needs. If the ownership of a motor car represents ability to pay a tax over and above the taxes paid by other members of the community, then it can only be assumed, in the absence of contrary evidence, that the owner of the higher horsepower motor car has a higher capacity to pay it. Under this Bill there is, in conformity with established practice in these things, a higher rate of tax for the higher horsepower vehicle, but it must be pointed out that the owner of a commercial vehicle has the right to deduct from his taxable income the whole of the running expenses on that vehicle including registration fees. This tends to produce some rough equality between the road taxes paid on private cars and on commercial vehicles. The weakness of the doctrine that all motor tax should be spent on roads is shown by the fact that, if such doctrine were pursued to its illogical conclusion, it would be just as equitable to spend on footpaths all the taxes paid by boot and shoe factories and in the beautification of the landscape all the customs paid on cameras. Last year substantially more than the total of motor taxation revenue was spent on South Australian roads. With the aid of Treasury officials and after much inquiry I have compiled details of how that amount was spent. An examination of the Auditor-General's report shows that this year the accounts are in a somewhat different form and even more difficult to follow than previously. Last year motor taxation yielded £1,632,742. Disbursements were as follows:—

	£
Motor Vehicles Dept. administration .. . . .	134,368
Highways Dept. administration .. . . .	171,786
Pensions for officers of M.V.D. . . . .	1,146
Pensions for officers of Highways Dept. . . . .	3,950
Sinking Fund (ordinary) . . . . .	28,292
Sinking Fund (special under Highways Act) . . . . .	15,782
Interest on Loan money . . . . .	120,360

These items totalled £475,684. The remainder of the revenue from motor taxation was transferred to the Highways Fund, and in this instance it was £1,157,058, giving a grand total of £1,632,742. In addition to the £1,157,058, the sum of £120,000 was provided for roads of access to the war land settlement areas and £500,000 for the development of country roads. This made a total of £1,777,058, or £145,000 more than all the motor taxation.

Mr. Fred Walsh—What about the petrol tax?

Mr. GEOFFREY CLARKE—There is nothing included from the petrol tax. The amounts mentioned came out of consolidated revenue.

Mr. Stott—Something must be taken from the petrol tax for administration.

Mr. GEOFFREY CLARKE—I am not concerned with theories, only facts. I have given figures disclosed by the Auditor-General's report. If there is some principle which has been violated, in the honourable member's opinion, I suggest that he take it up with the Auditor-General, because he has said nothing about the Government's setting out the position inaccurately. I do not propose to traverse the arguments of the Grants Commission in deciding that we had an unfavourable financial adjustment amounting to £269,000 in 1951-52 because of the low level of our motor taxation. Whatever the premises on which that deduction was made, it shows clearly that we lose doubly from not taxing our people with a severity equal to that of other States. We lose because our Commonwealth grant is cut and because we do not derive enough revenue from our taxpayers. I urge most strongly that a statement comparable with the one I have endeavoured to give members should be included next year in the Auditor-General's report, or in financial papers produced by the Treasurer. If honourable members feel that this is not a proper method of raising revenue in order to balance the Budget they should have criticized it at the proper time. The Budget was agreed to unanimously by members, and we were committed to the principle in the Bill when we accepted the Budget. I support the Bill.

Mr. JENNINGS (Prospect)—It is remarkable that after so much talk lately about reduced taxation we should now have before us a Bill to savagely increase taxation. I am trying to remember whether there was mention of this proposal before the last State elections. Rack my memory though I do, I cannot remember any such suggestion, but there were some in the opposite direction. The increase in motor taxation has been made necessary because of a conspiracy between the Commonwealth Government and the State Government to enable the former to make pre-election taxation concessions in order to bolster up its shattered prestige. Taxation is reduced in the Commonwealth sphere and re-imposed in the State sphere in another form; the net result being no taxation reduction at all. That is the effect of the Commonwealth and State Budgets.

Mr. Teusner—All States?

Mr. JENNINGS—Yes, and South Australia was the only State to meekly acquiesce in smaller reimbursements to the States. The people are aware that what is given to them with one hand is taken away with the other. They are not particularly concerned whom they pay taxation to, only with the amount they pay. They are violently incensed because the tax reduction in the Commonwealth Budget was only a myth, and nothing more than political trickery. The Treasurer said that this taxation would be, apart from that required for administration purposes, all made available for expenditure on roads. To justify this brutal increase he said that those who most use the roads should pay for their upkeep. Is that principle given effect to in this Bill? The worker who only uses his motor car at week-ends, or on other rare occasions, pays the same increase in registration fees as the person who uses his motor car every day. The Government has recently given itself some commendation for not re-imposing entertainment tax, but the proposal in the Bill is a re-imposition of it, and in a sectional form. It is a tax on those who own motor cars for pleasure purposes when not engaged on daily work. If we want to ensure that those who use the roads most pay for their upkeep we should make more use of the petrol tax. The person who uses the road most buys more petrol. The Commonwealth will not reimburse the States fully from the proceeds of the tax. The retention of a large portion of the money collected enables the Commonwealth Government to curry favour with a wider section of the community by making gestures in regard to reduced taxation, but it allows the roads to get into a deplorable condition. The Treasurer told a melancholy story about the condition of the roads in this State. The tale of woe, depressing though it was, was nevertheless an understatement of the position. The roads did not get into a deplorable condition suddenly. For years they have been neglected by the Government, which had the effrontery to use the election slogan "Progress and prosperity."

[*Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.30 p.m.*]

Mr. JENNINGS—Before the adjournment I was drawing attention to the fact that the Premier, in his very tearful tale of deterioration of our roads, failed to provide any adequate excuse for this happening over the last 10 years or so. This Government has been in power for about 20 years, during which there

has been a virtual disintegration of the road system, and now when there is no election imminent, it proposes a vicious increase in taxation to remedy the disastrous effects of its own negligence and sloth. We have been told that the Grants Commission takes into account the revenue we raise in various ways when deciding the amount we will receive, and we all realize that, but because that is the position it is very strange to hear members opposite continuing to express such haughty sentiments about State sovereignty and such horror at any suggestion of unification when it is obvious that in financial matters we are not a sovereign State at all. The truth is that any disadvantage we suffer in grants as a result of the present low registration fees in this State applied just as much last year and in previous years as it does now, and if the argument of the Premier is valid, this legislation should have been introduced years ago. Why wasn't it introduced before? Was it because the Government thought that even the grotesque gerrymander that applies in this State was not sufficient to insulate it from the anger of the people it has misled and betrayed? Under this legislation the State will be grabbing much more from the motorist than would be lost from reduced grants. The argument is only an excuse to justify the difference between what we received from the Federal Government and what we should have received had that Government been less concerned with pre-election bribery, and more concerned with the true welfare of the people. This State, which is the low wage State, will have under this legislation the second highest motor registration charges in Australia, and by far the highest driver's licence fees.

Mr. Heaslip—Which State has the highest registration fees?

Mr. JENNINGS—Queensland, but South Australia's fees are far in excess of the average for the Commonwealth. The 100 per cent increase in drivers' licences is a great injustice, and I wonder how this imposition conforms with the policy enunciated by the Premier that those who use the roads most should pay the most for their upkeep. It is common knowledge that in many families several members have drivers' licences for the one car. They obviously cannot all drive at once, and at the present licence fees they all can afford to have the convenience of a licence, whereas under the increased fee these people will be shockingly exploited. The law of diminishing returns to which the Leader referred will apply, and apart from the cruel

injustice to those concerned it is very doubtful if there will be much benefit to the State by way of increased revenue from this source. I sincerely hope that the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition to provide for a flat rate of 10s. for all driving licences will be carried.

The inevitable effect of this legislation will be an increase in the cost of living; directly to a motorist who has to pay the higher charges, and indirectly, because the increased charges on commercial vehicles will be passed on to the consumer. It is disgraceful that, now wage pegging applies, any Government should be deliberately sponsoring a measure which will have the effect of increasing prices and thereby reducing the standard of living. It would be disgraceful for any Government to do that, but it is more so that this Government should take action of this kind after accepting the decision of the Federal Arbitration Court on the abolition of quarterly adjustments of wages, and has adamantly refused to alter the wages of its own employees or any workers under State awards to enable them to receive compensation for price rises by way of quarterly wage adjustments. This Government is initiating something that will increase prices, and it should be the last in Australia to do anything of that kind. It has seized the opportunity to reduce living standards by increasing prices when wages are pegged, and this proves once again that it is not concerned about the interests of the ordinary people. When the Premier was making his second reading speech, the member for Onkaparinga interjected that the increase in the registration fees paid by road hauliers would mean nothing to them because they could pass it on. Of course they will pass it on—they always do—but the worker cannot pass on his increased costs; he can only tighten his belt. This Bill provides for a vicious increase in taxation by a Government which has no mandate for it, and the people of the State will suffer as a result. This Government and the Federal Government, who are jointly responsible, will become even more unpopular than at present, if that is possible, and I sincerely hope that this measure will be another nail in the coffin of both.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY (Chaffey)—I have listened with a great deal of interest to previous speakers and have heard all the arguments put forward, mainly against the Bill. It is quite true that no-one likes to pay taxation, and it is peculiar that people seem to have two sets of values regarding it. When it comes to matters of private indebtedness, most

people are very honest in their dealings, but when it comes to taxation the person who is able to evade paying taxation (to put it mildly) is looked upon as having more acumen and sense of values than anyone else. From time to time I have drawn the attention of this House to the fact that the bulk of our taxation is levied to pay interest on debts with which the community should never have been charged in the first place, instead of on public works; however, that is beside the point. This Parliament has never accepted any ideas put forward by me on finance and therefore we have to dig deeper and deeper into our pockets in order to carry out the necessary works.

Mr. O'Halloran—The real truth is that a few privileged people have not accepted it.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—I do not think it is a question of a few privileged people not being prepared to accept it, but the bulk of the people, privileged or unprivileged, have never considered this important question of finance enough to understand it. Until such people take an interest we will have to do what we intend to do tonight. Whether we like it or not, and however much we talk on this subject, this Bill will be passed because the Government has decided that there are certain things to be done and that this is the way to do them. The Leader of the Opposition, supported by various members of his Party, has tried to prove that this is not in the best interests of the community. They can talk until the cows come home but they will not alter this Bill one iota, because, unless the Government is prepared to accept any such move it will be passed without alteration. So far as I know country people are not opposed to these increases in taxation. I have discussed this matter with many people in my constituency, and they have told me that, although they are not very keen on paying increased fees if they must pay them they feel they should have a fair share of the revenue spent in their district. They are prepared to pay if they receive a *quid pro quo*. Members are sent here from different parts of the State to tell the Government the views of constituents. In the irrigated areas my district would have at least one car for every 20 acres, though I suppose there are in many cases two or three motor vehicles for the same area. That means a tremendous amount of revenue accrues to the Treasury in motor taxation from those areas. It is common knowledge that transport is one of our greatest problems. During my 15 years in Parliament, and for years

before, many deputations waited on the Government, supported by all parts of the State, for better access to our irrigation settlements. At present the Upper Murray areas are outside the land of the living. About 50 miles of comparatively arid country separate the irrigation areas from those with more or less assured rainfall. I am sorry that Governments, irrespective of political colour, have been inclined to forget all about the people who have developed our irrigation lands. I hope that the Government will see that a reasonable amount of the money to be collected in motor taxation will be spent in those areas.

Recently there has been some division of opinion on how revenue should be spent. For years I have been a keen advocate of bridges across the Murray, but when we have approached the Treasurer or the Minister of Local Government we have been told that they are out of the question because of the high cost. All the councils concerned, to which we pay so much lip service in this House, held a conference at Overland Corner. I pay a tribute to the member for Light who was instrumental in organizing the conference. Representatives came from Paringa (the farthest away), Renmark, Berri, Barmera, Morgan and Eudunda. They thrashed out the question carefully and decided that they would work as a united body to try to get the Government to bituminize the road along the north side of the river in lieu of the bridges that we had worked so hard for. I believe this work would be of great developmental value to the State. Port Augusta and Port Pirie will become great industrial centres, and the river areas grow great quantities of fruits and vegetables. At present these products have to be sent by the most outmoded and ridiculous system to the Adelaide market. If the trains are delayed they miss the market and lose their freshness. If that road is bituminized the growers will have a direct link with markets and they will get full value for their fruit and vegetables, and will be able to send much of their produce to the industrial workers in Port Pirie and Port Augusta. When the Government considers its road policy I hope it will allocate a considerable sum to my district so that it will bear a fair relationship to the amount of money the district provides.

Mr. Riches—Do you know how many miles of road the Government will be able to build with its extra revenue?

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—No.

Mr. Riches—About 110.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—That will be at least some improvement on the present position, but I think the honourable member's point is that the construction and maintenance of roads does not depend to a great extent on State finances, but on the money we get from the Commonwealth from the petrol tax. A bulletin that I have received from Sydney gives the following interesting information:—

The Commonwealth Budget introduces some new and strange anomalies. Spirits, for instance, including imported Scotch whisky, enjoy an excise relief of 21s. a gallon, whereas duty and excise on petrol, the means by which all Australian goods and services are at some stage moved or operated, will continue to pay an unchanged rate returning from £30,000,000 per year to Commonwealth revenue. Sales tax on commercial motor vehicles remains unchanged at 12½ per cent, causing a further £7,000,000 to £8,000,000 per year to be added to the cost of this indispensable service. However, this, the most highly commercial motorized country in the world, will glean some small satisfaction from the fact that customs duty on horseshoe nails has been adjusted downwards!

Of course, few people use horseshoe nails today, so the Commonwealth Government, in accordance with that expansionist policy it is so fond of, promptly reduced the import duty on them, but left the duty on the great motor industry unchanged. The bulletin continues:—

Over 1,000,000 motor car owners and the hundreds of thousands to become motor car owners in the next two or three years—60 per cent of whom, incidentally, are in the country and, according to the Prime Minister, 80 per cent over-all of whom operate in a capacity "essential to our peace-time development and defence"—will be interested to note that, from a point of essential use, their vehicles are now officially bracketed with totalizers, slot machines, furs and jewellery and trinkets of various kinds, but not nearly so important as racing clubs and promoters of professional sport! Motor vehicle spare parts, vital in the maintenance of essential transport services, remain on 12½ per cent. In all, highway users, through customs, excise and sales tax, will this financial year pay in the vicinity of £63,000,000 to the Commonwealth and, in addition, will pay approximately £20,000,000 to the States, who have been forced to increase registration fees and to find revenue to meet the cost of essential undertakings.

One section of the community—those using motor vehicles, whether they be young men with motor cycles, ordinary citizens owning motor cars, or business people who do so much to keep the Australian economy moving and employees in jobs when railway, shipping or wharf workers are on strike—pays £83,000,000 in motor taxation. If the Commonwealth Government returned all this special taxation



to the States we should have a road system that even New Zealand could not better, but much of it is paid into general revenue. I often wonder whether the State Treasurers, when they go to Canberra, are as enthusiastic as one would be led to believe when they talk about having this money returned to them for road purposes. It is class taxation, and should be used for this specific purpose. All Governments have only a certain amount of revenue to spend. When the Grants Commission allocates certain gifts to the claimant States the Commonwealth has to get the money from somewhere. One of the places they get it is from this £83,000,000 collected from motorists. If that amount were paid back for a specific purpose it would be so much less money the Commonwealth would have to pay to the States. When the Treasurers get this money they can spend it as they think fit. In South Australia, for instance, the Treasurer could allot £4,000,000 to the railways for losses sustained, and £1,500,000 to the tramways. The question is where is this money to come from. I have often been accused of saying that this money could be obtained from the empty air, as by a conjurer, but I have never suggested that. We know that the money of the Commonwealth has to be backed by the labours of the people. So, if the railways have to receive £4,000,000 because of losses, and the tramways £1,500,000, plus £3,750,000 which has been wiped off because of wasted assets, the only source that money can come from is the result of the sweat and labour of the people. That is why I am so careful as a member to endeavour, as far as possible, to get to the root of these things and find out how the Treasurers, whether Federal or State, administer the funds entrusted to them. My argument has been that if the Commonwealth Government made available to the State Treasurers money collected under a specific charge to be spent on roads and bridges, obviously there would be that much less money to provide as gifts to those Treasurers to subsidize losses in their States. I support the Bill not because I think it is a desirable form of finance—actually I think it is the opposite—but because we have accepted the financial methods existing in the States and there is no room for argument. I support the Bill without prejudice.

Mr. CORCORAN (Victoria)—The objective of the Bill is rehabilitation of our road system, but the question is how we are to raise the money. It seems only fair to

suggest that those who use the roads should be asked to pay for them. When introducing the Bill the Treasurer remarked that it was not easy to decide upon an equitable basis of collection, but we have to be realists and ask ourselves "Are we to allow our roads to vanish or are we to rehabilitate them?" If we are to put them in order it cannot be done without money. There may be something in the suggestion that as the road system plays such an important part in the transport of our commodities it may not be unreasonable to suggest that portion of the money required to rehabilitate roads should be taken from consolidated revenue. We know that developmental roads are involved. We could not concentrate on roads during the war to the extent we would have liked, but in neglecting them we did something of profound importance to our very existence.

We must face up to the stark reality that our roads have deteriorated. I have tried to ascertain the views of people in my district concerning the method of raising money for roads. They seem more or less reconciled to accepting it as being inescapable, believing that they must bow to the Government in its effort to raise the money, hoping that it will be wisely expended on roads. No one can dispute the fact that our roads require attention, but the next thing is to raise the money. Is it fair to suggest that those who wear them out should pay for them, or are we to adopt other means of raising the money? That is the problem confronting Parliament. It is wise to approach the people with the problem now, during a period of prosperity when they are in a position to pay. The condition of our roads is not due to any one authority but to circumstances. It is not much use holding inquests on what has been the cause. I support the Bill with its objective of raising money to rehabilitate our roads, but consider the proposed rates a little severe.

Three or four people in a family might drive the one car, therefore I propose to support the amendment indicated by the Leader of the Opposition that the fee should remain at 10s. As the member for Prospect said, it is only a matter of the commercial vehicle owners passing on to consumers their increased registration fees. I support the Government's attitude concerning the registration privileges at present enjoyed by primary producers, but the conditions laid down should be adhered to. I am given to understand that some of the holders of this special class registration abuse their privileges. I would not be

a party to that. Possibly the provision needs closer policing by the authorities. As roads play a vital part in the lives of country people, I support their improvement by all means available, so long as the basis is equitable.

I hope the Government will examine the question of refunds to the State by the Federal Government from the petrol tax. I am not convinced that any State receives its fair share of this tax. I have not the figures before me, but I should like to be certain that the Government receives every penny to which it is entitled. I know that we cannot expect to receive all the petrol tax, because petrol is used for purposes other than on the roads, such as aviation. It is reasonable to suggest that members should have placed before them figures showing that South Australia is receiving its fair share of the tax. It rests with the Government to see that we get our equitable share. We shall need it in addition to the money received from the increased motor taxation. I do not expect that we shall achieve the rehabilitation of our roads in one year. The work must be planned over a period of possibly four or five years, and the people will be very happy if the Government can succeed in reaching its goal within that time. Heavy diesel transports, which do not use petrol, have a detrimental effect on the roads. There are provisions which limit the load to be carried on a vehicle and which also limit the speed of vehicles. It is the pace that kills, but the load that ruins the roads. Owners of heavy transports will complain because they have to pay increased fees to provide good roads, but they would complain more if they were to revert to mud roads. It is the Government's responsibility to rehabilitate the roads and to collect revenue for that purpose on the most equitable basis.

Mr. CHRISTIAN (Eyre)—I do not suppose any member is falling over himself to support this measure because it will not be popular. Nevertheless, I will not oppose it, because I realize the necessity for more money for our road construction programme. I would have been more pleased had we concentrated upon getting better value for the money we have expended before embarking upon any increase in taxation. Members have made it abundantly clear that they are not satisfied with the value received for expenditure in the last few years. We are all acquainted with a number of works, particularly in country areas, that seem to have cost an inordinate amount

and which have taken a tremendous time to complete. Members have seen works in progress and have marvelled at the lack of progress that has been apparent on them. That has resulted from lack of efficient supervision on jobs away from the centre of administration. Unfortunately that is one of the penalties we must pay when works are undertaken all over the State by a central authority. We should try different methods and I strongly urge letting the work out on contract. One frequently hears from responsible people who have engaged in this type of work and who have plant available that they could have done a certain job for half the cost. I know many people exaggerate in an effort to make their cases more spectacular, but some district councils have their entire road works done under contract and their showings are, I am certain, considerably better than those of councils whose work is done by day gangs.

Mr. Pearson—They get more value from their plant.

Mr. CHRISTIAN—A private contractor does not have to worry about a 40-hour week and other impositions which limit the return he can get from his machines. Under the day-labour system men go to a job on a Monday and usually start after lunch; they knock off at lunch time on Friday and travel home in the afternoon. Only four effective shifts per week are obtained from the costly machines. Every district council today owns plant worth between £15,000 and £40,000, and the Highways Department has considerable quantities of plant, much of which is standing idle a great part of the time at various country depots or on the highways. That represents money standing idle and if the Highways Department cannot employ that plant it should either permit councils to use it or hire it out to contractors, thus getting an adequate return from it. We must examine all avenues from which we might get a better return from our expenditure.

It may be advisable to spend a few thousand pounds in research work because there is a big field available for research in connection with road construction and road maintenance. Frequently dirt and graded roads corrugate within a week of being regraded, but no-one knows the cause of the corrugation. Apparently there has been no research in that direction. On Eyre Peninsula there are the most lasting corrugations in the State which, unfortunately, do not wear out. By the application of brains and money we might find a remedy for this deterioration in our secondary

roads, which will undoubtedly remain such for many years because many of them will not be bituminized, or if they are, not for a long time. I remind members that corrugations began to appear when soft pressure tyres came into use and with the advent of faster-moving traffic. Our gravel roads, to which Mr. Hawker referred, are rapidly deteriorating and that is another matter which might be rectified if adequate research were conducted. On a former occasion I instanced a council on Eyre Peninsula which had discovered a material which did not corrugate and which maintained a well sealed surface in all weathers. It appears to have the answer to this problem and that knowledge should be disseminated and made available to other district councils and to the Highways Department so that everybody may benefit. We are on the wrong scent if we think we can maintain or construct good roads by using ordinary rubble which has no binding material in it. It is dry and gritty and is thrown out by vehicular traffic and corrugation results, which is the bane of all motorists. If a sealing material is used with rubble or gravel an effect similar to sealing with bitumin is achieved.

I remind members that not all the money which will be raised from these increased fees will be placed in the road fund. A considerable proportion will be expended in administration costs. The Highways Act specifically provides that the costs of both the Motor Vehicles Department and the Highways and Local Government Department shall be met from these revenues before the balance is paid into the road fund. Moreover, interest and sinking fund costs on previous loan moneys which have been expended on roads and bridges must be met. I do not know what the two latter amounts will be, because the Estimates do not disclose them. The annual cost of the Motor Vehicles Department is £146,000—and I remember that 15 or 20 years ago it was only about £30,000—and the Highways and Local Government Department, £190,000. In the Estimates there is also an item relating to special sinking fund payments of £19,000. These three amounts total £355,000. Probably the interest on previous loan expenditure would increase the total to at least £400,000, to be paid from the revenue to be raised under the Bill. That will make a substantial inroad into the revenues which are really designed for the expenditure on roads. The actual amount received last year for the road fund from these sources was only about £1,500,000, and from the petrol tax a similar amount.

The sum of £500,000 may easily be absorbed in the way I have indicated. That could go a long way towards meeting the needs of our road programmes in country districts. If economies could be effected and better methods employed we could probably undertake a greater programme of work with a lesser increase in taxation than is proposed in this measure.

Mr. Shannon—The costs involved in the two departments would still have to be met from some other source.

Mr. CHRISTIAN—Yes, but the roads exist not merely for the benefit of the motor vehicle owner but rather as an instrumentality serving the economy of the State as a whole, therefore there is some reason to say that the whole cost of those departments should not have to be met by the motor vehicle owner. In fact, another item of revenue which might be well diverted for expenditure on roads is that of the Transport Control Board, the annual revenue of which is about £85,000 and the administrative costs £17,000, leaving a net balance of about £68,000. That could well be paid into the Highways Fund for road construction purposes, because the board exists to co-ordinate road and rail transport and minimize as far as possible competition with the railways. Its purpose is to get as much tax as possible from road users by way of permit and registration fees, therefore that money could be used to construct quite a few Penwortham bridges or to reconstruct the Eyre highway, the worst in the world.

Mr. Shannon—Have you seen the others?

Mr. CHRISTIAN—I have seen a good many others which are quite bad, but I have never ridden over a worse one. Much has been said about the deterioration of our roads, and one factor frequently mentioned has been the effect of speeding, especially by big road units carrying enormous loads. We have not tackled the problem of the control of speed. Speed limits are not observed, and I do not know that any effective attempt has been made to compel people to observe them. Occasionally in the metropolitan area a driver is charged with speeding, but on our great arteries of trade in country areas no effective attempt is made to compel the observance of the speed limits which apply in respect of heavy vehicles and which vary from 25 to 35 miles an hour according to the load carried. These vehicles exceed the speed limit over roads which were not built for that kind of treatment, and the results may be readily imagined. Last year

the Treasurer and I were travelling to Kimba. The Treasurer always has to be in a hurry to get from one place to another, and his car was doing 50 miles an hour on the Eyre highway, when a huge semi-trailer, returning to Kimba after delivering a load of wheat to Port Augusta, passed us, leaving us standing. That gives an idea of the speed attained by some of these heavy vehicles.

In this debate governors have been suggested for use on heavy vehicles, but, from conversations I have had with operators who have had experience with them, I understand that they are a great disadvantage because when climbing hills, vehicles fitted with them must change down into a lower gear much sooner than would be the case if the engine were not governed; therefore, the best economy is not obtained from an engine which is governed. In Victoria a method applies which should be examined. Every road haulier or driver of a heavy vehicle must check in with the police at every town through which he passes. If he covers a distance of, say, 50 miles between towns in less than an hour, it is apparent that he has exceeded the speed limit, whereas if he takes two hours the authorities know that he has observed it. There may be occasions when, because of some trouble, a driver has been delayed and makes up for lost time by speeding for some part of the journey, but whatever system is tried there will always be some anomaly. I suggest we try some of these methods to see how they work out. I understand Victoria is satisfied with the method adopted, and, if it works there, it should work here. We should not allow this heavy traffic to continue speeding as it does today, ruining so many of our roads which were not built for this type of traffic. I support the Bill, because, until we discover better methods of supervision over our roads and our research reveals better procedures or more effective materials for use in road construction, I am afraid we will have to accept this method of higher taxation and see how it works out.

Mr. FRANK WALSH (Goodwood)—Although supporting the second reading, I am not in harmony with the Bill which has been introduced allegedly to assist in the improvement of roads. Although there is need for improvement, I challenge the suggestion of the member for Burnside that agreement to this legislation was implicit in the acceptance of the Budget, for I point out that at that time the Government was silent on the exact

nature of the proposed increases in registration fees, telling members bluntly that they must wait until the Bill was introduced in order to find out those details. Now members find this Bill provides for extravagant increases.

I agree with the member for Eyre in his remarks on the speed and tare weight of vehicles. What is the greatest contributing factor towards the wear and tear on our roads? Is it the commercial vehicle or the private motor car? On our main bituminized roads smaller cars such as the Morris Minor or the Fiat are able to cruise at speeds of up to 50 miles an hour, and I doubt whether the heavier type of cars such as the Ford Customline would cruise at a much higher speed. The Treasurer has said that better roads must be provided in order to prevent wear and tear on motor vehicles, but motor vehicles are fitted with tyres of a size and pressure particularly suited to the size and weight of the vehicle, so that on a rough road the heavier type of car which is sprung for a better ride on such roads could probably do a higher speed more comfortably than the smaller car. This legislation will probably result in the inability of dealers to sell any car heavier than the Holden, and even the Holden will be taxed excessively.

The schedule to the Bill provides that the registration fee on a motor vehicle exceeding 30 but not exceeding 35 power weight will be £8 10s. A rate of £8 5s. would have been reasonable. The £10 rate could be reduced by 10s., and the rate for the Holden to £10 15s., the £13 rate to £12, and the £14 10s. rate to £13 5s. The rate for the Customline should not be more than £15. With the modern car, whether large or small, there is little difference in the speed, but there may be some difference when it comes to climbing hills. Is the damage to the roads caused by speeding of motor cars or by heavy motor vehicles? It has been said that the increase in the registration rates to be paid by commercial vehicles can be passed on to the consumers, but it will not be possible for the workers in industry to pass on the increase in their rates. It is said that speed causes the deterioration in the condition of roads. The main road from Adelaide to Bordertown was built for speed and it was soon damaged, yet the Highways Commissioner retains the right to build such roads. What has Mr. Shannon to say about the work being done on the road near the Eagle-on-the-Hill hotel? Work has been in progress there for some months and a large sum of money has been spent, in my opinion

unnecessarily, on removing a bottleneck, yet the work will create another several hundred yards down the road. Will Parliament be called together early next year to appropriate more money for road purposes? It all increases the burden on the motorist.

The Commonwealth petrol tax returned £23,481,000 last year, of which South Australia received £1,641,000. The total return to all States was £14,920,000. These figures exclude aviation petrol. The remainder went into Commonwealth general revenue, instead of being returned to the States. The Commonwealth Government collects a duty on all imported motor vehicles, as well as sales tax on them and locally made vehicles. It is safe to say that the motorists pay to the Commonwealth Government about £70,000,000 a year in duties, sales tax, petrol tax, drivers' licences, registration fees, and a tax on the rubber used in the manufacture of tyres. Must Commonwealth motor vehicles be registered, and do they get free petrol? There are also a number of heavy Commonwealth defence vehicles and I wonder whether they contribute anything towards the cost of constructing and maintaining roads. In 1940 the petrol tax was fixed at 11d. a gallon, but in 1946 it was reduced to 10d. Since then there has been no change, but the Commonwealth Government has promised taxation concessions in other directions. The Premier should tell us what happens at Premiers' Conferences towards getting a greater return to the States from the petrol tax. We are entitled to the information before agreeing to the Bill. Does the Premier intend to carry on the formula that was laid down, I believe, in 1946, and is still being carried on? It is his duty, with the assistance of other Premiers attending these conferences, to demand a greater allocation of moneys obtained from the petrol tax. The person who uses the roads most should make the greatest contribution towards their upkeep. In the Budget debate the Treasurer indicated that certain things would be done to make more money available for road purposes, but gave no specific information, and as no opportunity presents itself to obtain the real information, I hope some recognition will be given my remarks in the Committee stages, particularly relating to the effect on owners and the trade of the imposition of increased taxes on heavier cars, from the Holden upwards. I do not see why people should be taxed heavily if they own a large car as against someone who has a baby car. That is not in the interests of the trade.

Larger portions of the amount received from the motoring public by way of excise, import fees and sales tax should be paid back to the States instead of taxing the motorist as provided in this measure.

Mr. STOTT (Ridley).—Despite the criticism levelled against this Bill I believe we should get down to the purpose of the legislation, which is to obtain a greater amount of revenue for the roads; from that point of view I support the Bill, because it is necessary to obtain extra revenue to put them in proper condition. Earlier this session I said that soon we must adopt a more vigorous policy with regard to roads. The cost of road making in this State has increased by leaps and bounds, a position which is not peculiar to us, but because of it the Government is faced with the problem of finding more revenue. Under this Bill the registration fees of heavy cars has been increased proportionately more than on smaller cars, and although the power-weight formula is one method of taxing, sometimes it causes an anomaly because the owners of small cars use the roads more. When introducing the Bill the Premier said that the money raised would be spent on roads, yet some time ago the Minister of Works said that district councils had not spent the whole of the money allocated to them for that purpose. The balance unspent on June 30, 1953, was £145,560, and on October 31, following on the allocation of grants for this financial year, £723,281. Against this sum there are, of course, substantial commitments for works to be done later in the year, so that the figure quoted does not give a true picture. We would have to know what will be the balance at the end of the present financial year to discover the amount of works that the councils have done against the allocation of that money. The Minister of Local Government, following this legislation, should see that the councils adopt a more vigorous policy than in the past, and that they spend the amount allocated, otherwise we will find ourselves in the position of increasing the amount paid to them and they will not be spending it all unless they obtain more labour and purchase better machinery. In outlying rural areas councils find difficulty in obtaining labour, and it is in those areas that most money should be spent on roads. I have figures, taken out in October last year, of registration charges in all States, and from these it can be seen that South Australia will now have the second highest fees of all States, with Queensland the highest. The following figures show the registration fees for different types of motor cars

and commercial vehicles, both petrol and diesel, in the various States:—

Make and Type.	P.W.	S.A.			N.S.W.			Vic.			Qld.			W.A.		
		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Ford sedan . . . . .	65	12	0	0	11	18	6	9	12	0	19	10	0	10	0	0
Austin sedan . . . . .	41	8	0	0	9	15	0	6	0	0	12	6	0	7	0	0
Holden sedan . . . . .	42	8	0	0	7	18	6	6	3	0	12	12	0	5	0	0
Chevrolet sedan . . . . .	59	11	0	0	11	5	0	8	17	0	17	14	0	9	0	0
Vanguard sedan . . . . .	41	8	0	0	9	1	6	6	3	0	12	12	0	6	0	0
Austin truck (petrol) . . . . .	74	12	12	0	27	10	0	16	13	0	22	4	0	19	0	0
International truck (petrol) . . . . .	102	23	0	0	49	15	0	30	12	0	30	12	0	33	12	6
Commer truck (petrol) . . . . .	104	20	14	0	46	0	0	27	16	3	31	4	0	39	12	6
Bedford truck (petrol) . . . . .	73	12	12	0	27	10	0	16	8	6	21	18	0	22	0	0
Mack truck (diesel) . . . . .	166	76	0	0	168	5	0	90	15	0	99	12	0	102	0	0
Dodge truck (diesel) . . . . .	89	32	8	0	74	15	0	53	8	0	53	8	0	*		
Leyland truck (diesel) . . . . .	132	57	12	0	137	5	0	65	6	10	79	4	0	82	15	0
Commer truck (diesel) . . . . .	214	92	4	0	229	5	0	105	8	9	128	8	0	122	12	6

\* None licensed.

Of course, the registration fee on the Ford sedan of 65 power-weight will be increased by this Bill from £12 to £17. I draw particular attention to the registration fees of diesel commercial vehicles, for much discussion this afternoon and evening took place about these vehicles. Many members said they cause the greatest damage to roads. A comparison of our registration fees on these vehicles with those in other States is alarming. The figures I have quoted demonstrate that up to October last year South Australian registration fees for all classes of vehicles were lower than in most other States. Under this Bill our fees will become the second highest in the Commonwealth, but I believe that by next August we will again be in the lower range because other States will increase their taxation. Being a country member, I am concerned about the condition of country roads, so it would be inconsistent for me to oppose the Bill and continually ask the Minister of Works to erect a bridge across the Murray at Blanchetown and improve roads in my district. The member for Eyre said that a road in his district was the worst in the world, but I do not think he has been in Ridley for some time. He would find many bad roads there. While we have a financial system like a dog chasing its tail we shall have to continually increase motor vehicle taxation. Wages and costs continue to rise, so we have to find more money for road works.

Mr. Macgillivray—That is called sound finance!

Mr. STOTT—If road works cost more people have to be taxed more heavily to pay for them. I was not impressed by the argument of the member for Eyre that we could get more money for road works if we did not debit certain charges to the highways fund. To

get more money we should have to spend less on other departments, such as the Education Department. The Government will get greater revenue from my district as a result of increased motor registration fees, so I hope it will spend more money on roads in that district. Many people have criticized the Government for raising fees, some saying it should have entered the entertainment tax field vacated by the Commonwealth Government. This form of taxation has been in force since World War I. and if it had been continued by this Government no one would have noticed it, but if all that revenue were used on roads it would not be fair on the people who do not own motor vehicles. However, the Government would not have had to increase registration fees so steeply, so the impact on the motor vehicle owner would not have been as heavy. Taking the mean average worked out by the Commonwealth Grants Commission on the number of vehicles registered in the different States, South Australia is on the unfavourable side of motor taxation to the extent of £261,000. In the circumstances, I must support the Bill in order that better roads can be made available. The member for Stuart said that the total revenue received under this Bill will be sufficient to build another 110 miles of roadway. The mileage would depend on the type of road constructed necessarily more miles of macadam road than bituminous roads could be laid down for the same amount. We must support this type of legislation particularly in the interests of country districts, because many country roads are in a deplorable state. Nobody likes increased taxation, and naturally country people are a little perturbed about the additional rates proposed, but when they realize they are to get better roads the majority of them, I am sure, will not object. I hope the

Government will carry out its assurance to have the additional taxation spent on roads, and that our country districts will be better off as a result.

Mr. TAPPING (Semaphore)—Although I support the Bill I consider the increases proposed are too steep. I would have thought an increase of 10 per cent would meet the position, but the increases proposed range from 37 to 50 per cent on motor cars. Other speakers have compared the registration rates in South Australia, with those in other States, referring to various makes of cars to illustrate their point I shall refer to the Holden car. I have watched its progress with considerable pleasure because it employs Australians, more than 5,000 of them being engaged at the Woodville works. When the Holden was first introduced we were told it was to be the workman's car—one he could afford to buy—but the present cost of about £1,100 is beyond the resources of the ordinary person. Having in mind the Holden car, I shall give the registration fees for the three claimant States, namely, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia. Under the Bill registration in South Australia will cost £11 10s. a year, in Tasmania £8 6s. 6d. and in Western Australia £5. It has been said by other speakers that the Queensland registration fees are the highest in Australia. My assumption is that it has better roads. In addition to registering his car, an owner must always take out third part insurance. In South Australia this would amount to £4 2s. a year which, with registration would amount to £15 12s. In Western Australia the figures are £5 and £2 18s. 6d., a total of £7 18s. 6d., a difference of £7 13s. 6d. compared with South Australia. That proves my point that the proposed increase in South Australia is too steep. I agree with previous speakers that, whatever the increased registration fees, they will not be sufficient to overtake the lag in good roads in the State over the past seven years. Some of the money derived from the increased registration fees will be devoted to country councils so that they can play their part, as in the past, in making better roads. I appreciate that they suffer disadvantages because it is difficult to get the requisite labour. Some of the metropolitan councils also need financial aid because roads in these areas have deteriorated. That has been the weakness for many years. Roads have deteriorated to such an extent that the Government has found it necessary to increase registration fees in order to overtake the lag which has accumulated. I believe that it is unwise to provide for such

heavy increases. Anomalies exist in regard to districts outside district councils in which half registration fees will apply. I have in mind Kangaroo Island and Woomera. I would favour the provision of quarter registration fees for people on Kangaroo Island because they are making a sacrifice by virtue of their isolation. If they desire to use roads on the mainland they must consign their motor cars from the island on the *Karatta* at a cost of about £8. However, the position is different at Woomera. People there are not isolated and the roads in that district are in excellent condition. One person in every three owns a motor car and one can fully appreciate the amount of revenue the State will lose because of the application of a half rate there. If they had to pay the full rate the coffers of the State would benefit materially. I support the measure because I believe some increase is necessary although that provided is too great.

Mr. MICHAEL (Light)—I accept the Bill, not because I favour increased taxation but because I realize that money must be found for our road works. There are a number of anomalies in this legislation, but I do not know that there are any more than in other legislation. It is only human to complain when something affects us personally. I have listened to much criticism from persons I have met in recent weeks. One man suggested that instead of the increases proposed in this Bill it would be more equitable to obtain revenue from entertainment tax. I do not agree with that contention nor do I believe it would be possible to obtain additional revenue from any other source without causing anomalies. I entirely agree with suggestions that we should get better service for the money spent on road works. I point out, however, that a road-maker is constantly before the public and I doubt whether he is any more idle than a person in any other occupation which is hidden from public view. Roadmaking is not an attractive job. Men must work in extreme heat and frequently on cold showery days and I believe it is a most undesirable occupation. We are experiencing prosperous times and if I were looking for a job roadmaking would be the last I would turn to. I have seen nothing to indicate that men working on the roads are doing less than men in other walks of life.

Mr. Christian said that more research work should be undertaken. I agree, but point out that a great deal of research is being done. Macadam, who died about 120 years ago, developed a system of roadmaking which

became world-wide. He introduced that system in Bristol in 1816. In our own State Mr. Bratten, from Tumby Bay, undertook research work and introduced a method of roadmaking which was of great assistance in country areas. Today, we are living in times when we are moving quickly and it is difficult for research officers to keep pace with changes in our road transport. It was a number of years after the introduction of motor transport before we got away from macadamized roads and discovered that a road constructed of softer material was suitable for motor traffic. Not so long ago people were just learning to make roads suitable for motor traffic. But today heavy vehicles carrying heavy loads at high speeds have rendered unsuitable those roads constructed for lighter vehicles. No doubt our road engineers are studying this problem and before long will find a method of road construction to suit modern transport.

I believe this legislation has been accepted by the public generally, and evidence of that may be found in Mr. Macgillivray's speech. If there is anything to criticize in legislation, Mr. Macgillivray usually makes that criticism, and, even when other members can see nothing to criticize, he generally finds something, but this evening he made a fair speech, and I do not doubt that it reflected the views of his constituents who are prepared to accept this legislation because it will mean improved roads for them. I thank him for his kindly reference to the part I played in organizing the people north of the River on this matter. Those people generally have accepted the principle that unless they contribute something towards their new road they will not get it for a long time. It would be just to expect that that road, which has been promised by the Government, will be constructed sooner if more money can be raised by road taxation.

The member for Stuart interjected that the additional revenue provided by this legislation would enable the construction of only 110 miles of road each year, but surely 550 miles of road in five years would be a valuable contribution to the improvement of our highways system. I support the Bill because I do not know a more equitable means whereby the money can be raised to enable us to proceed with the construction of urgently needed highways.

Mr. WHITE (Murray)—I support the Bill, the object of which is to raise additional revenue for road construction and improvement, a very important work. I have indicated in this House previously that many of our roads have become outmoded. They are not wide

enough, and the corners are too sharp for the large motor freighters used today. In many instances our main highways were built without any knowledge of the heavy loads they would be called upon to carry at high speeds.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—In the past many objections have been raised because we were taking out too many bends.

Mr. WHITE—Some roads constructed earlier have corners which make it difficult for a large freighter to get round. Some interstate visitors prefer to take the Gorge Road rather than come through Murray Bridge for that reason. Another big problem in modernizing our roads is the provision of better road bridges. Many bridges have poor approaches, and on some constructed over the Bremer River the approach is almost at a right angle, which makes it practically impossible for a large freighter to get on to the bridge without hitting its sides. To provide for fast moving traffic improvements in that respect are necessary. In the post-war period we have developed immense areas which are practically without roads. If people are to live and prosper there road construction must be carried out, therefore more revenue is necessary, and it seems that the logical source of such revenue is taxation on road users. I understand from the Minister's second reading explanation that motor registration fees in South Australia have not been materially increased since 1929, although since then the cost of road maintenance and construction has increased several times over, particularly in the postwar period. From experience in local government I know that five years ago bitumen cost only £10 a ton, whereas today it costs £36, and that is only one item used in road construction.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—And all other items have increased proportionately.

Mr. WHITE—Yes, and that should give members some idea why it is difficult to keep up with the construction of new roads and the maintenance of existing ones. It is natural for people to raise some objection to the increase in registration fees, for some people always object when they are called upon to pay any extra tax. Some members have said that the Bill will cause some hardship to motor owners, but the Minister indicated that the owner of a Holden would pay only another £3 10s. a year, which is only 1s. 4d. a week—not a large amount. From experience as a motorist over a number of years I know that, if a motor vehicle owner has good roads over which to travel, he will save more than that.



amount on motor repairs and depreciation on his vehicle. If this Bill is passed and the extra revenue raised, I hope that country municipalities will get their fair share of it. Mr. O'Halloran referred to this matter this afternoon. It is desirable to have good roads in our country towns; it is an inducement for people to live in them. In the debate there has been some criticism of the Government for continuing with the concession to primary producers. This has been allowed because agricultural trucks run much of the time off the roads, but some members say it is not so. I have a truck whose speedometer shows that it has travelled 56,000 miles; about 40,000 miles have been traversed on the property. That is typical of trucks used in agricultural areas. When a vehicle of a primary producer leaves a farm it passes over some poor roads in many instances. I know the condition of the roads in Mr. Stott's area and there are similar roads in my own district. Primary producers should not be expected to pay the full rate of registration when having to travel on such roads. Some members have complained about producers bringing their produce by truck to Adelaide, but only a small number do it. If they worked out the cost they would find that it cost more than to send the produce by rail. Some of them do not think of anything but petrol and oil. The Government has done the right thing by retaining the concession to primary producers. All money raised under the Bill is to be spent on roads, and if that is done it will be ample compensation to the motorist for having to pay increased fees. After the motorist has looked at it in this way he will not mind having to pay a little extra, and as the increased revenue will enable the Government to catch up the lag in road construction and maintenance I support the Bill.

Mr. TEUSNER (Angas)—Any legislation which tends to increase taxation is, of necessity, unfavourably received by the public. During this week I approached a number of my constituents and several approached me about this matter. I had the same experience as Mr. Macgillivray. The first reaction to the Bill was unfavourable, but once it was explained that all the revenue would be used for road purposes the reaction was different. If the additional taxation is applied for these purposes the position will be satisfactory. I support the Bill on five grounds. Firstly, about 24 years have elapsed since there has been any increase in motor taxation. In other States and in New Zealand there have been substantial increases, and costs of road maintain-

ance have gone up considerably. The Treasurer said that road construction costs were now three or four times heavier than in 1939. Consequently legislation of this type is inevitable. Substantial sums of money have been spent by the department, corporations, and councils over the past five years in the construction of roads and maintenance. In 1948-49 £2,557,000 was spent, £3,010,000 in 1949-50, £3,373,000 in 1950-51, £4,395,000 in 1951-52, and £4,676,000 in 1952-53. Last year local government authorities alone spent £1,895,000. Although this appears to be a large expenditure, much more work is necessary in view of the developmental programme being followed. That is the second ground on which I support the Bill. A huge additional network of roads is necessary. In the South-East and other parts of the State road construction work is in progress for developmental purposes. My third reason for supporting this measure is a comment of the Commonwealth Grants Commission in its report for 1953, as follows:—

The average revenue received by the non-claimant States in 1951-52 from a typical 100 vehicles of all classes was £969.7, compared with £816.2 for South Australia, £727.6 for Western Australia, and £743.4 for Tasmania. By applying these relationships to the motor tax revenue raised in the claimant States, the following adjustments are obtained:—

South Australia ..	£261,000 unfavourable
Western Australia .	£306,000 unfavourable
Tasmania . . . . .	£115,000 unfavourable

If we take into account unfavourable adjustments in respect of drivers' licences, there is a total unfavourable adjustment of £269,000 for this State. All members realize that unless we fall into line with the eastern States or at least approximate the average rates there is a possibility that this State will be penalized by the Commonwealth Grants Commission in the amount of the grant it recommends under section 96 of the Federal Constitution. My fourth reason for supporting the Bill is the likely decrease in our grant under the Commonwealth Aid Roads Act, which is provided from the revenue derived from petrol tax. At present the Commonwealth collects approximately £27,000,000 from this source, and this tax is the most equitable way of collecting revenue for road purposes, because persons using the roads should be responsible in the main for their upkeep and construction. The petrol tax is an imposition at the source, but if this or any other State introduced legislation to that effect it would be declared unconstitutional, as was done some years ago by the High Court, when South Australia passed such a measure.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—Is the honourable member overlooking the fact that a fair amount of petrol is used by aeroplanes?

Mr. TEUSNER—I am not suggesting that petrol used for that purpose be taxed to pay for road construction. The amount obtainable by the Federal Government from petrol tax is likely to decrease in proportion to the amount refined in Australia. There is now 10d. a gallon tariff on refined imported motor spirit, yielding approximately £23,500,000 per annum. From this amount 6d. a gallon is allocated by the Commonwealth under the Aid Roads Act to the States for road construction and maintenance purposes. On petrol refined in Australia the excise is 8½d., from which 3½d. a gallon is allocated for road purposes, and this realized last year approximately £3,827,000. If more petrol were to be refined here the total excise collections would increase whereas customs receipts would decrease. As 6d. a gallon is allocated for roads from the latter and only 3½d. from the former, the States are likely to receive less, unless of course the Commonwealth, if necessity arises, amends the legislation. It has been estimated that for every 100,000,000 gall. refined locally the Roads Fund would lose £1,250,000. I remind members that the Aid Roads Act expires on June 30, 1955. As a result of the situation in Persia and the closing down of one of the largest oil refineries in the world at Abadan, the oil industry is establishing refineries in the major consuming countries. According to the Federal liaison officer of the Automobile Association of Australia, Mr. U. Ellis, an expenditure of £80,000,000 has been sanctioned by the oil industry for the erection of refineries in Australia to provide 90 per cent of our demand by 1956. If this aim is realized, it will make a tremendous difference to the amount available to the States and I suggest, as did the Leader of the Opposition, that the matter should be seriously considered by the State Premiers to ensure that the States do not suffer, because of these refining operations, in the amounts made available by the Commonwealth. The following table shows the amounts this State has received and how much therefrom was allocated to councils:—

Year.	South Australian	Councils'
	Receipts.	Receipts.
	£	£
1948-49 . . . .	759,865	269,579
1949-50 . . . .	973,711	409,811
1950-51 . . . .	1,409,812	641,193
1951-52 . . . .	1,627,977	712,632
1952-53 . . . .	1,641,168	582,345

I support the Bill because all the revenue derived from motor taxation will be applied to the construction and maintenance of roads. Of course, that has been the practice in this State for the last 15 years. If the money is spent on roads the motorist will indirectly get the benefit because his vehicle will be less likely to suffer damage. I hope it will be possible to greatly improve our main and district roads and that the grants to councils throughout the State will be greatly increased. Local councils are in the best position to judge where the money should be spent. If their grants are appreciably increased good use will be made of the money. I endorse the remarks of the member for Chaffey that a sum should be ear-marked for constructing a bridge over the Murray at Blanchetown.

Mr. Quirke—There will not be any left for that.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—It would take all one year's fees to pay for it.

Mr. TEUSNER—A sum should be ear-marked annually to establish a fund to enable a bridge to be constructed. Those who use the Blanchetown ferry at week-ends have an unpleasant experience, for they have to wait hours. The road that connects one side of the river with the other is a strategic highway, and in view of the importance of the districts on both sides the construction of a bridge should be given early and sympathetic consideration.

Mr. QUIRKE (Stanley)—I shall vote for the Bill, but I will not delude myself that its passing will result in better roads. The idea that by increasing registration fees we can achieve a general good in any direction is entirely fallacious. Two years ago the cost of ½ in. aggregate for bitumen road surfacing in country areas was about 16s. a ton yard under the crusher. Today the cost is 24s. which, together with the expense of haulage, brings the cost in Clare to over £2. The increased revenue to be gained by this Bill will not save much wear and tear on motor vehicles. The motorist will be sadly disillusioned.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—We shall be at least £1,000,000 better off.

Mr. QUIRKE—Yes, but during the next 12 months increasing costs will absorb much of that. Listening to some members one would think the only roads of any concern were the arterial highways, such as the main road running north to Port Augusta, but thousands of miles of roads leading off that highway are in a sorry state. Let us assume that,

as a result of this legislation, grants to district councils will be doubled. The work done today from these grants is barely sufficient to keep roads trafficable, and if we think we are going to restore the highways with £1,100,000 we and motorists will be sadly disillusioned. Although the Government will collect £1,100,000 more, costs will be greater and every metal haulier will increase his charges by at least 2s. a yard.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—The increased registration fees would not amount to a fraction of a penny a yard.

Mr. QUIRKE—You would have no control over his charges.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—Competition would handle that.

Mr. QUIRKE—There is no such thing as competition in this. I should like to have the name of any haulier who will cart metal more cheaply than someone else. In the last two years there has been an increase of 9s. a yard in metal, and there will be no check on further rising costs. By this time next year the cost of metal to councils will, for various reasons, increase another 2s. Even if we doubled or trebled the existing tax we would not thereby do what we fondly imagine will be done. I am not saying that the fees are unfair. It is one of those increases in costs which are steadily mounting, and until we find some other way of attending to our roads we shall not do it with the pittance accruing as a result of this legislation.

At this stage I am not prepared to support the Bill on the basis that there will be a saving in the wear and tear on my vehicle, and that will apply for the next two years, notwithstanding the payment of extra taxation. There will not be any revolutionary change in the condition of our roads as a result. Should there be any of this money available to country councils I hope that the method of allotting it will be changed. The Highways Department has not been ungenerous to the Clare Corporation, having made small amounts available for various roads. If a council applies for a grant it gets it on the basis that a road is used more by outside people than by those living in the area. For instance, if there is a saleyard at one end of the town with a road leading to it which carries stock it is accepted as being used more by outside people than those in the town, and the same interpretation applies to a winery. The Minister of Local Government on one occasion challenged councils to increase their rates to provide better roads. At least the Clare

Corporation thought he was correct and today is collecting a rate of 4s. 3d. in the pound. An examination of the councils programme of works will show that not a penny of it is wasted. It has received a few grants of £150 to £200, but that does not enable us, with the present rising costs, to do much more if any more, than we were doing when collecting a rate of 3s. We had to increase rates to keep pace with rising costs; we are not doing any more work, but carrying a substantial overdraft.

If money is to be allocated from this taxation, I should like to associate myself with those honourable members who said that country corporations should share in it. They have a terrific task. Clare is situated in an amphitheatre of hills, the main street being at the bottom, with other streets on the surrounding hillsides. The rainfall is 25in. a year and at times the precipitation is very heavy, resulting in debris being carried down and choking the culverts and watertables. This cannot be prevented. All that can be done is to clear it away, but in the meantime the water has scoured across the roads and done hundreds of pounds worth of damage. It places an additional burden on the council, which finds it impossible to undertake repairs even with a rate of 4s. 3d. in the pound. Damage equal to the total rate of collections for 12 months can be caused. If any money is available I hope that Clare will receive a share of it. I have not found that there is any great opposition to this legislation and there is a realization that our roads are in a bad state of repair. Some people have a completely false idea that this measure will bring about the restoration of our roads, but I believe that within 12 months those people will be completely disillusioned. I support the second reading.

Mr. DAVIS (Port Pirie)—I have no desire to support this legislation unless I am assured that portion of the money collected from the increased fees will be paid to district councils.

Mr. Quirke—And portion to the city.

Mr. DAVIS—The city can look after itself. The Government is always prepared to assist the metropolitan area, but not district councils. Thousands of country residents will pay these increased fees and thousands of pounds will be collected from Port Pirie, but there is no assurance that one penny will be returned to it. Heavy vehicles will continue to use the roads in Port Pirie and although the council does receive grants from the Government, there is no certainty we will get anything as a result of this legislation. I feel that the people in my

district will not object to the proposed increases provided an amount is devoted to improving the roads they traverse. All district councils are working under great difficulties and are finding it impossible to maintain roads in a good state of repair. The Highways Department could effect a saving by undertaking light work on roads in outback districts, by scarifying and rolling them. Most of the byways in the country, however, have been neglected. Some main arterial roads have been kept in good condition, but some which have been repaired did not warrant that work and I refer particularly to the road between Snowtown and Redhill. Had that road been topdressed and sealed it would have lasted for years and the additional money spent on it could have been diverted elsewhere.

I am opposed to the concession granted to primary producers because many of them are abusing the privilege and are competing with the railways. Instead of carting their goods to the railhead they travel hundreds of miles to the city. Some members of this House are abusing that privilege, yet they condemn the railways for not paying. It costs more to maintain our roads than to maintain our railways. Some members frequently criticize the administration of the railways, but they are prepared to abuse the privileges granted by the Government. I do not think the imposition of increased fees is necessary. Recently at a Loan Council meeting the Premier said that South Australia had sufficient money for the purposes of the State, but immediately he returned and introduced his Budget he proposed the imposition of a tax of £1,100,000 on a section of the community—the motorist. I am also opposed to the proposed increase in driving licence fees. I know of households where both the husband and wife hold driving licences and others where children obtain licences in order to drive their aged parents about. I do not see the necessity for penalizing such families both ways. The motorist is being heavily penalized by the imposition of petrol taxation. This State should receive a greater share of the revenue from that tax. Had the Premier played his part and stood by the other Premiers in their approach to the Prime Minister, we would have got a greater share, but he tried to play the part of the great administrator.

Mr. O'Halloran—He is a supporter of Menzies.

Mr. DAVIS—Yes. He was prepared to tell the people that he could run the State more economically than the other State Premiers could run theirs, but this legislation has given the lie direct to that statement, for now South

Australians are to be penalized more heavily. I was pleased to hear the member for Murray say that a vehicle which he used on his farm had run only 20,000 of its 60,000 miles on the road, but that could be said of very few farmers' vehicles. The discontinuance of the quarterly basic wage adjustments by the Commonwealth Arbitration Court will mean that the workers will have to bear any rises in the cost of living caused by this increased road taxation. When the Labor Party was in power in the Commonwealth sphere, the Playford Government was crying out for a greater share of revenue raised by way of petrol tax, but recently, in an effort to assist Mr. Menzies, Mr. Playford went quiet on that line. However, today we find that he is out to get the money by this increase in fees. He has played into the hands of the Prime Minister and I believe he was quite happy to support Mr. Menzies in his election catch-ery of reduced taxation.

I am not prepared to support the Bill unless the Premier can tell members that he is prepared to give greater grants to councils, so that the money can be spent in the districts in which it is collected. There are about 3,000 or 4,000 motor vehicles in Port Pirie, and one can well imagine the amount of revenue collected over the years from the owners of those vehicles, yet this Government is not prepared to give the local council enough money to keep in repair those roads which are being used constantly by the owners of those motor vehicles. The Port Pirie roads are in a deplorable condition because the council has not the money to keep them in good repair. Many primary producers who receive concessions under this legislation haul their goods into Port Pirie over roads maintained by the Port Pirie Council, yet this Government is not prepared to give that council a fair share of the tax collected.

Mr. FLETCHER (Mount Gambier)—It is evident that this Bill will become law, but I hope that some of the most deserving of country districts will receive more money for the upkeep of roads than has been the case in the past. Over a number of years the owners of some commercial vehicles have had to earn their living on roads on which nothing has been spent by the district council or the Government, yet today they are faced with an increase of 100 per cent in registration fees. We all know the wonderful asset Mount Gambier stone has been to the building trade, but most of the stone carriers have had no made roads to traverse from the quarries

unless made by themselves, and carriers of the produce of sawmills have had to travel over unmade roads, yet they will be badly hit by the increased taxation. More research work should be conducted by the department in connection with material used for road construction. Portion of the main highway between Kingston and Millicent has been constructed with a white pipe clay material, and it has set very solidly. It could be used with success in other places. Councils have had difficulty in getting a sheep's foot roller, which is helpful in the building of roads. The roller could be used in many districts. If it were used before other materials were laid the roads would be capable of carrying heavy traffic and there would be less maintenance expenditure for councils. The rates to be imposed on commercial vehicles are high. The road between Adelaide and Bordertown is used considerably by road hauliers, and damage is done to the road, but we would be in a bad position without them when the railways are not operating.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clauses 1 to 4 passed.

Clause 5—'Registration fees.'

Mr. FRANK WALSH—In the second reading debate I suggested that the registration fees set out could be reduced and I indicated what I thought some of the rates should be. I ask the Premier if he is prepared to give any consideration to these matters.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—As I understand the honourable member's question, it is whether the Govern-

ment is prepared to amend schedules in the Bill. This afternoon the Leader of the Opposition pointed out that the Grants Commission for a number of years has been telling us that our motor taxation is lagging behind, and since the eastern States have been increasing their amounts steeply, we have lagged behind more. This money is urgently needed for road work and if it is not collected, the purpose of the Bill will be defeated. Under these circumstances the Government cannot alter the schedule. Although I would like to be popular and say that there will be no motor taxation at all, members should realize that such a policy would result in no roads. These schedules have been examined closely from every angle, and are based as far as possible on equality, taking all factors into consideration. The lowest increase is to the private motorist, whose fees will be increased by amounts ranging from 37½ to 46 per cent whereas on commercial vehicles the increases are up to 89 per cent.

Mr. Frank Walsh—Is that on diesels?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—No, on diesel engines the increases are 100 per cent or more. Motor cars are already the lowest taxed vehicles, and the proposed increases on them are approximately half of those for commercial vehicles. It is not practicable to alter the schedules, and the Government could not agree to amendment along these lines.

Clause passed.

Clauses 6 to 13 passed.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

At 11.09 p.m. the House adjourned until Wednesday, October 18, at 2 p.m.