

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 1 August 1979

The **SPEAKER (Hon. G. R. Langley)** took the Chair at 2 p.m. and read prayers.

PETITION: MARIJUANA

A petition signed by 83 residents of South Australia praying that the House would reject any legislation that provided for the legal sale, cultivation or distribution of marijuana was presented by Mr. Wotton.

Petition received.

QUESTION TIME

INVESTMENT PROJECTS

Mr. TONKIN: Can the Premier say what major new investment projects he anticipates will replace the income to the State Treasury which could now be expected without the Government's ban on uranium mining and export?

All economic indicators confirm that industrial and mineral development and commercial activity continue to decline in South Australia, while the rest of Australia is recovering strongly. The mining of uranium deposits near Lake Frome could create employment within a few weeks and generate several millions of dollars in royalties within two years. The deposits at Beverly could provide more than \$34 000 000 to the State over the next 20 years and other deposits will contribute further royalties as they are developed, as was outlined in the speech by Mr. Gordon Jackson to the petro-chemical industry recently. Work could begin in a few weeks. Overseas markets, contrary to the Premier's reported statement this morning, are strong and likely to be firm in the next two decades. If the Premier is prepared to forgo that available revenue, what projects has he in mind that makes him confident of being able to meet this State's financial needs in the immediate future?

The Hon. J. D. CORCORAN: The Leader makes great play of the fact that, because the policies of this Government relating to uranium mean that it cannot be mined or treated in this State at this time, this is going to lead to the eventual impoverishment, I suppose, of the State. Nothing can be further from the truth, and the Leader knows that. As I stated yesterday to the Deputy Leader in reply to a question about Roxby Downs, if the development of that discovery went ahead as rapidly as possible, nothing could flow from it until the year 1986; the Leader knows that.

The State Government, as he knows, is constantly pressing, through the Deputy Premier and me, to see to it that we can capitalise on any development that may be available at this time. I have told the Leader in the past, and I tell him again today, that nothing very much is moving in any State at this particular moment in relation to industrial development.

Mr. Tonkin: That is not true.

The Hon. J. D. CORCORAN: That is true, and I can prove it to the Leader and he knows it.

Mr. Tonkin: Figures don't lie.

The Hon. J. D. CORCORAN: I am telling the Leader that no State (apart from the exploitation of mineral developments in Western Australia which are having a rough passage at the moment, and in Queensland, and the

coal deposits in New South Wales—minerals that can be exploited without the dangers associated with the mining, treatment, development and use of uranium) is moving much in relation to industrial development.

The Leader knows full well that the State Government is pressing on and making every facility available to Dow Chemical in relation to Redcliff. He has heard the Deputy Premier speak about that on more than one occasion. We are not as a Government (I am not as the Leader of the Government, nor is the Deputy Premier) trying to preempt any decision to be made by Dow. We are not at this stage saying that it is a certainty. We are saying that, in fact, the thing must take its course. I will do that in relation to every other development in South Australia. I am not going to come out with announcements about so-called bonanzas unless the i's are dotted and the t's crossed. I want to be absolutely certain of what is happening. I can tell the Leader that, nevertheless, there are some things in the pipeline which may eventuate and which he will be pleased to hear about in due course.

I want to assure the people of South Australia that this Government is doing everything it possibly can, not only to generate interest from outside the State in developments within this State, but also to encourage industries, where possible, that are based in this State to expand. The Leader knows that there are a number of incentives available, that are as good as any in Australia, to people in this State to attract them to expand. He also knows that we are reviewing those incentives to ascertain whether or not they can be improved on. The Leader can rest assured that we are doing everything possible, not just because of the reasons he has stated but because we would be doing that, anyway, in order to make sure that this State gets the most rapid growth and expansion that it possibly can.

COUNTRY CABINET MEETINGS

Mr. KENEALLY: Will the Premier give the House a report on the cost and benefits of the recent historical first country Cabinet meeting held at Mount Gambier? There seems to have been almost universal acceptance of the Government's decision to hold country Cabinet meetings. The first Cabinet meeting in Mount Gambier was praised as a resounding success.

Mr. BECKER: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that that question is covered by Question on Notice No. 70 about the cost of the Cabinet meeting at Mount Gambier. In part, the question asks:

(d) what was the cost of having the meeting there and how is that cost made up; and

(e) what benefits, if any, have so far accrued to the State because of the Cabinet meeting at Mount Gambier and what further benefits are expected?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Chair will make the decision. I would like the honourable member to ask his question again.

REDCLIFF PROJECT

Mr. KENEALLY: I accept the fact that the question is on notice and I direct a question to the Deputy Premier. Will the Minister say whether, as a result of the world developments regarding the petro-chemical industry, the Federal Government has shown any greater inclination to support the project at Redcliff? Over the past three or four years that the Federal Liberal Government has been in office in Australia, there has been a notable lack of co-operation in the obtaining for South Australia of the

petro-chemical plant at Redcliff. My question derives from the changed economic situation that applies in the world, particularly in regard to energy sources.

The Hon. HUGH HUDSON: The first point that must be made is that originally, when the submission was made to the Federal Government, the estimates of the benefit to be obtained for Australia's balance of payments from Redcliff was about \$218 000 000 per annum net improvement, either in terms of additional exports or replacement of imports. In view of the rise in the price of oil and related products, it is now clear that those estimates grossly understate the position. It is probable now that the net impact on Australia's balance of payments of the Redcliff proposal would be about \$300 000 000 per annum, which is obviously very substantial indeed, particularly in circumstances where the bill for imported oil is increasing so dramatically.

It has always been my impression until recently that the Federal Government was somewhat divided on the question of Redcliff, with certain Ministers supporting the Dow proposal and others inclined towards I.C.I. Certainly, the delays that occurred in gaining Loan Council approval for infrastructure borrowing seemed to indicate that there were sources within the Federal Government who were not unhappy to see Dow's programme delayed. I can report, however,—

Mr. Dean Brown interjecting:

The Hon. HUGH HUDSON: The member for Davenport does not know what he is talking about; he knows nothing about this matter. Regarding Redcliff, the Government has never—

Mr. Dean Brown interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Davenport is out of order. Many times in this House I have heard members of the Opposition complaining that they do not get an opportunity to ask questions during Question Time. Yesterday was a perfect example. If this situation continues today, the same thing will happen. They have no reason to complain. I hope that interjections will cease.

The Hon. HUGH HUDSON: So that there is some straight record of the matter and so that the distorted view of history that is peddled by some people is not perpetuated, let me make clear that this Government has always been concerned to promote the most suitable development at Redcliff. Prior to the decision made by Mr. Connor excluding Dow from the proposal, the Government was negotiating with both Dow and I.C.I.

In those circumstances, we would have clearly tried to get the best possible deal for South Australia, whether it be a Dow proposal or an I.C.I. proposal. We have criticised Mr. Connor and objected to the decision that he took which excluded Dow at that time, leaving us only with I.C.I. When we were left with that decision, we then proceeded to do the best job we could to encourage I.C.I. with the development, but I.C.I. withdrew in 1975. At no stage did the Government alter its attitude, and the member for Davenport in particular is indulging in his usual distortions of the truth.

I have to report that the Prime Minister indicated at the last Premiers' Conference, certainly to me and I think also to the Premier, that, if there was any possible assistance that he could give to further the Redcliff proposal, he would give it. It is clear that, perhaps because of the liquid fuel difficulties, the Prime Minister now sees benefit in Redcliff that he did not see previously. I would also like to add that I have had two meetings with Federal members of the House of Representatives and of the Senate, of both political Parties, and I can report that both sides of the Federal Parliament have been very supportive with respect to the Redcliff proposal, as was the previous shadow

Minister of Mines and Energy (Hon. Mr. Geddes).

Unfortunately, we have not yet had the same supportive attitude from members opposite in this House as we have had from one or two members of the Liberal Party in the Upper House and from all of the Federal Liberal members and Senators that we have approached in relation to this matter. Members on both sides of the Federal Parliament who come from South Australia have, within their own Parties and with Federal Ministers, and the Prime Minister, endeavoured to put South Australia's case and acted in a bipartisan manner. I think it is about time that the Leader of the Opposition instructed certain of his members to cease the endless knocking that goes on, instructing in particular the member for Davenport to desist from his needling campaign with respect to Dow Chemical. The member for Davenport is attempting in one way or another to suggest that Dow is not doing enough work; that it was not dinkum in 1973; that it is not progressing with its studies quickly enough; and so on. Frankly, the member for Davenport is not acting in the best interests of this State, and I call on the Leader of the Opposition to—

Mr. Tonkin: You've totally misrepresented him, as usual.

The Hon. HUGH HUDSON: No, I have not. The Leader ought to check on the questions that have been put by the member for Davenport and the statement made. The Leader himself, on occasions last year, called the whole matter into question, and it is only recently that he has said he is coming out in support. Members in this House have not given the Government adequate co-operation in this matter, and it is about time they reformed and improved their attitude, because I am disgusted by it.

Mr. DEAN BROWN: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I claim to be misrepresented. If the Minister reads a speech I gave in the House last night, I think he will find a totally different attitude.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

QUESTION PROCEDURE

Mr. RUSSACK: Mr. Speaker, what is your ruling on the future procedure concerning questions? This afternoon the member for Stuart asked a question. The question was already on the Notice Paper. He sought your leave to withdraw that question, and then he asked another question. In future, will the procedure be that, if a member asks a question that is already on notice, he can then withdraw that one and ask a supplementary question?

The SPEAKER: I shall be happy for that to be done.

Mr. Goldsworthy interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I can assure the honourable Deputy Leader that I do not recall any occasion on which a member has asked such a question. I shall be interested if he can recall such an occasion.

URANIUM

Mr. GOLDSWORTHY: Is the Deputy Premier himself—

Mr. Mathwin interjecting:

Mr. Millhouse: Now, no dissension.

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Mitcham is out of order.

Mr. GOLDSWORTHY: Is the Minister convinced that we should not mine and export uranium in South Australia on safety grounds, or is his opposition simply because a majority of his Party is currently opposed to it? It is fairly

obvious that there is a division within the Australian Labor Party on this question. One proposal at the recent A.L.P. conference was to in future repudiate contracts entered into by the Government in relation to uranium. There was an obvious division of opinion on that occasion between the Minister and the Hon. Peter Duncan, one of the spokesmen for the left wing. The former A.L.P. President (Mr. Hawke) made perfectly clear publicly that he supported the mining and export of uranium, and he referred to the fact that we had a moral obligation to supply energy—

The SPEAKER: Order! Question Time is not for debating, and I hope that the honourable member will stop debating. I spoke to him yesterday about the matter.

Mr. GOLDSWORTHY: No, I am reporting to the House facts that indicate that the Deputy Premier has a view of his own, and it is important to this State that that view be known. As I have said—

The SPEAKER: Order! If the Deputy Leader continues in this vein, I will ask him to resume his seat.

Mr. GOLDSWORTHY: Is the Minister, then, convinced that we should be mining uranium and, if he is, what is he doing to educate and convince his left-wing colleagues?

The Hon. HUGH HUDSON: Let me make quite clear that I support the Government's policy on this matter. In fact, I had the major hand in drafting the resolution which this Parliament passed in March 1977 and which even the Deputy Leader supported.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. HUGH HUDSON: In broad terms, so far as the Labor Party is concerned, we conduct conferences and our meetings of the Party in full view of the press. We have done that for several years, and that is more than we can say for the Liberal Party, because at most times that Party does not need to have a conference to develop policies and, if it has a conference to develop policies, it takes no notice of it anyway, so Liberal Party conferences are completely different animals.

Furthermore, on all matters each member of the Government accepts the basis of Cabinet solidarity, and that applies continually. The position is no different from the Government's attitude that has applied ever since we have been in Government. My attitude is quite clear and is as I have stated previously. I support the Government's policy on the matter without equivocation. However, let me throw it back to those characters who sit here—

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. HUGH HUDSON:—and have the effrontery to claim they are an Opposition.

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Minister knows as well as I do that they are honourable members.

The Hon. HUGH HUDSON: These honourable members have the effrontery to sit here and claim they are an Opposition. Do the Leader and the Deputy Leader suggest to us that no member of the Opposition Party in this or the other House, or any other members of the Liberal Party, do not support the Leader's position on uranium? Is the Liberal Party 100 per cent behind the Leader?

Members interjecting:

The Hon. HUGH HUDSON: What has the shadow Minister of Environment to say on the matter? The Deputy Leader, in carrying on with this matter again, is being silly and wasting the time of the House. He is wasting the opportunity for his colleagues to ask further questions which might be of some relevance.

Let me give Opposition members some advice, because obviously they need some help; they are desperate for

help. The public outside is not interested in this tom-footling internecine "No, you didn't" and "Yes, you did" argument that sometimes goes on between political Parties. The Leader indulges in it all the time. He is known in the community as a knocker. The Deputy Leader has some prospects, because he has not yet been Leader, so he does not want to be known outside as a knocker. The best way in which to avoid that reputation is to avoid this stupid and time-wasting inter-Party bickering that he has so far indulged in. I suggest that he look after his public reputation.

REGENCY PARK

Mr. BECKER: Will the Minister of Health clarify which Federal Government department instructed the Crippled Children's Association of South Australia Incorporated to cut back the number of professional hours by 78 a week? Yesterday, in reply to a question, referring to the Crippled Children's Association, the Minister said:

It was interesting, when I went to Regency Park on Monday, to find that the basic cause of retrenchments made at that time was that the Federal Government had instructed Regency Park to cut back the number of hours of professional services being provided by 78 a week.

I contacted the office of the Federal Minister for Social Security, Canberra, and an officer of the Social Security Department here. I have been told that no instructions to cut back professional staff have been issued by the department, nor have there been any other instructions in relation to cutbacks or reduced subsidies. I understand that the South Australian Health Commission has written to the Crippled Children's Association, warning that association, but I am at a loss to understand which Federal Government department issued such an instruction. Will the Minister clarify the situation?

The Hon. PETER DUNCAN: I would be happy to clarify it, but, unfortunately, I do not know the department. When I visited Regency Park, I had an opportunity to tour the centre, and then some discussion took place between me and two officers from the Health Commission with officers of Regency Park. The Administrator of Regency Park specifically made that statement in the presence of witnesses.

Mr. Tonkin: What did he say?

The Hon. PETER DUNCAN: That they had been instructed by the Federal Government to cut the number of professional hours by 78 a week. That is what was told to us in the presence of witnesses, and I do not want to take it any further.

Mr. Becker: So you're going by hearsay?

The Hon. PETER DUNCAN: If I am told by the Administrator that that is the case, I am perfectly entitled to assume that that is so. I took the Administrator at his word, and I had no reason to think that I should do otherwise. I would rather take the Administrator of the Regency Park establishment at his word than I would take the mere puffery of the member opposite. That is the situation as I know it, and I have no reason to dispute or doubt the Administrator's word.

SPORTS LOTTERY

Mr. SLATER: Will the Minister of Community Development inform the House of the Government's attitude to the national sports lottery recently proposed by the Federal Government and the meeting held in Melbourne recently by the Federal Minister, Mr. Ellicott, attended by representatives from New South Wales and

Victoria? Has any consideration been given to the benefits the proposed lottery would bring to sport, or what effect it might have on this State's finances and those of sporting bodies in South Australia?

The Hon. J. C. BANNON: The question is appropriate in the light of considerable comment that has been generated over this proposal at a national level for a sports lottery to fund sport in Australia. In South Australia we have taken a fairly strong attitude on the matter. I think to explain that attitude one must look at the history of what has been happening in terms of sport funding in Australia over the past few years.

Under the Whitlam Government, a Minister for Recreation and Sport had a Budget which he administered and grants which amounted to \$6 000 000 in terms of commitment at the time that Government went out of office. Under the present Government, we have a Minister for Home Affairs who has one minuscule division which is attached to him as part of his functions and which manages to find a total of \$1 300 000 for sport at the national level. It has been said quite clearly by meetings of Ministers, and I think accepted by all sporting bodies and the Australian Sports Federation, that the Commonwealth Government has the responsibility for national sporting bodies, for national coaching schemes and to assist our sporting teams to compete overseas in international events. That responsibility has been put squarely in the hands of the Federal Government, which is spending a minuscule \$1 300 000 on it.

Quite rightly, there have been enormous protests about this. The Federal Government has seized on the national sports lottery concept as a way of getting off the hook of finding funds at the national level in some other way which means it does not have to provide them from its own Budget.

In addition, I think we should look at the way in which this proposal has been actively promoted. I was visited by a Mr. George Harris purporting to act on behalf of the Federal Government or, if not on behalf of the Federal Government, at least purporting to have a proposal which had received extremely close and detailed examination by the Federal Government. Mr. Harris is the President of the Carlton Football Club and also the Manager of Carlton Marketing Services, which is its commercial arm. The No. 1 ticket holder of the Carlton Football Club, incidentally, is Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, who is a regular supporter of that club and a friend of Mr. Harris. It is interesting that Mr. Harris was visiting every sports Minister in each State with the proposal under his arm with the suggestion that the Federal Government had in fact given him the okay to promote this scheme. The *Age* on Saturday, 28 July, had a headline, with a picture of Mr. Harris, stating "Blues sink into financial mess". That was followed by an extremely detailed and in-depth Insight report on the enormous problems facing the Carlton Football Club and its finances under Mr. Harris. This is the man who is touting the national sports lottery concept on behalf of the Federal Government. I think I could be excused a little if I am somewhat sceptical about the seriousness with which this was being considered at the national level.

Now let us take the meeting organised by Mr. Ellicott. The meeting was promoted by Mr. Dixon, the Victorian Minister for Recreation and Sport. What could Mr. Dixon's interest be in a national sports lottery? Quite simply this—Melbourne wants to hold the Olympic Games. To hold the Olympic Games is a vastly costly exercise and he would need some form of national funding. He has obviously been told quite clearly by Mr. Fraser and Mr. Ellicott that he cannot look to the Federal Budget to assist

Melbourne in that Olympic Games venture. The answer is a national sports lottery, so that everyone in all the States contributes to Melbourne's holding of the Olympic Games. Mr. Dixon is clearly very much in favour of that. Mr. Dixon promoted the meeting, which was held in his office. Mr. Ellicott went along because, naturally, he wants the Federal Government to be let off the hook so far as the Federal responsibilities are concerned.

Mr. Booth, the New South Wales Minister, attended because he was specifically invited at an earlier stage. He went there very sceptical about the proposal and left the meeting expressing severe doubts about New South Wales' ability to take part in the concept. I was informed of the meeting on Friday. The meeting was to be held on the following Wednesday and as an afterthought a telegram was sent suggesting that I might like to go if I felt it would be useful. That is not the sort of meeting at a national level that I think I should have been taking part in.

It was interesting that, when all the sports Ministers of the State and Commonwealth met in February, they agreed that the matter be looked at more closely and a further properly constituted meeting of Ministers held. That was not the meeting I was being invited to; rather, it was something cooked up between Dixon and Ellicott and I was not prepared to be in it. We have Harris's proposal, we have the Federal Government's desire to get off the hook, and we have Mr. Dixon wanting to find money for the Olympic Games, and we in South Australia are being asked to provide finance.

What are the implications for us here? Quite clearly, this could have profound implications for South Australian sporting funds and organisations. I mentioned that the Federal Government provides about \$1 300 000 a year to sporting organisations. In South Australia last year we spent double that amount to assist sporting organisations and recreational activities in this State. It is a pretty proud record, and we have been increasing our spending year by year in this area, so we certainly have not backed out of our responsibilities.

Moreover, we run a State lottery. One of the most successful ventures of our Lotteries Commission in recent years has been instant money. The proposal being touted at the Federal level is an instant money proposal. It would require the changing of legislation in South Australia to permit that game to be conducted here. It would be in direct competition with our State lottery. Our State lottery profits go to the Hospitals Fund and it would mean, in fact, a transfer of money from that area of social concern into the area of sports. I do not think, in the current economic climate, that we could possibly afford to do that.

In addition (and this is something sporting organisations ought to look at closely), small lotteries run by sporting organisations in South Australia return over \$4 000 000 to sport annually. If those small sporting lotteries are running in competition with a national sports lottery, clearly those people who have a sporting dollar to spend will take it away from their own small clubs and organisations, which are going to suffer. The money will go national.

What sort of return will we get from it? I will give some of Mr. Harris's figures because that is the developed proposal being touted on behalf of the Federal Government. Mr. Harris predicts a turnover of \$100 000 000 nationally from a sports lottery. About \$60 000 000 (60 per cent) would be returned as prizes. Mr. Harris would take \$12 000 000 for his Carlton Marketing Services, which would be acting as the agent of the Commonwealth. Let it be remembered that the Commonwealth was not even proposing to set up a lotteries commission to run the lottery; it was going to get this private developer to do it and cream \$12 000 000 off

the take to do so. The return to South Australia would have been a measly \$2 000 000 if we were lucky and if we got the money back on a proportional basis. Set that against the revenue from our State lottery and its instant money game and against the \$4 000 000 being raised by sporting clubs in South Australia, and members will see that, for a major contribution from South Australia of about \$6 000 000 to \$10 000 000 that we might be required to make if it is on a percentage basis, we would be getting back \$2 000 000.

If that is the sort of proposal that people in the community think I, as a South Australian Minister and we as a Government should be pursuing, I think they should have their heads read. It will not help sport in South Australia, and it certainly will not help us either at the national or State level.

SUBCONTRACT WORK

Mr. MAX BROWN: Can the Deputy Premier say whether there is any intention that certain subcontract work will be given to Whyalla building firms, arising from the recently announced \$8 000 000 contract for housing for the new Leigh Creek township, work that is to be carried out in Whyalla? The contract in question has been welcomed in Whyalla, but I believe that a spin-off to other firms in Whyalla employing labour could eventuate. I will be most grateful for any information the Minister can obtain about this matter.

The Hon. HUGH HUDSON: The two contractors are Blunts and Wender and Duerholt. I know that Wender and Duerholt propose to obtain the garages or car ports from a Whyalla supplier. Of course, Blunts will be involved in construction in Whyalla at its Geddes subsidiary transportable home that will be provided as part of the contract.

I also understand, in the case of Blunts, that a number of other materials that will be used in on-site homes, to be constructed at Leigh Creek, will also be sought in Whyalla. I will endeavour to obtain full details as soon as possible, and I will supply the honourable member with that information so that this worthwhile impetus to activity in Whyalla can be given the fullest local publicity.

OPTICAL AND DENTAL SERVICES

Mr. ALLISON: Is the Minister of Health able to declare a precise date for commencement of decentralised optical and dental services for pensioners and underprivileged persons? The Minister will recall that he recently informed me the supply of optical and dental services would be imminent in country areas and that negotiations between the South Australian Government and the Federal Governments had recently been concluded. He also said that the Australian College of Ophthalmologists was working out final details. I point out, however, that this reply is identical to a letter that I received from the former Minister of Health, the Hon. Don Banfield, about two years ago, (in December 1977) and I wondered whether the most recent promise was reliable or whether it was just another regurgitation.

The Hon. PETER DUNCAN: The honourable member will have to contain his enthusiasm for a little longer in regard to a date for the commencement of this scheme. He will be pleased to hear that in the not too distant future an announcement will be made about the gradual introduction of the scheme. He mentioned some facts, which I think were basically correct. Negotiations have been

undertaken with the Federal Government, and an offer from the Federal Government to the State Government to cover portion of the costs of the scheme has been received.

I had a meeting with the Ophthalmologists Association last week, and negotiations proved to be quite useful. I think a stage is being reached where some agreement can be made with the ophthalmologists about their participation in the scheme. I will meet with the optometrists in a week or so (I forget the exact date) and I think that, once the meeting has been held, the scheme can be introduced progressively towards the latter part of this year. Obtaining an accurate date will have to await those further negotiations.

GLENELG ROUNDHOUSE

Mr. GROOM: Will the Deputy Premier outline the problems encountered in regard to the completion of the Roundhouse at Glenelg? Yesterday, on a radio programme, comments were made about the Government's position, and those comments were, in part, misleading. The matter is important, particularly for the local community, which I am sure would like to be made properly aware of the current situation and the Government's involvement.

The Hon. HUGH HUDSON: I make one point clear immediately—the Government would certainly wish, as a matter of policy, to see a development which resulted in the completion of the Roundhouse at Glenelg.

An honourable member: Who caused the problem?

The Hon. HUGH HUDSON: Certainly not the Government. I think Mr. Somerkamp bought what was formerly the Roundhouse and approached the South Australian Development Corporation for a Government guarantee on further borrowing. The Development Corporation, after employing consultants and spending about \$20 000 on work by consultants to get estimates checked, and so on, came to two basic conclusions.

One was that the percentage of equity that the proponents had in the development was not high enough and the risk of loss was increased greatly as a consequence. The second was that the estimates that had been provided were inadequate in a number of respects and probably either under-estimated costs or over-estimated revenue.

I met in my office with Mr. Somerkamp and others associated with him, along with the Development Corporation, and it was made clear to Mr. Somerkamp that in order to have a chance to get this project completed he would have to make arrangements to secure additional equity in the project and he would need to resubmit the matter with more satisfactory estimates of what it was going to cost, for example, to furnish the rooms in the proposed hotel and also more satisfactory estimates of the revenue that would be obtained from the restaurant. He was told that, if he did this, the matter could be given further consideration.

Mr. Somerkamp made a further submission, but he did not meet the kind of requirements that the Development Corporation and I had laid down with respect to the percentage of equity. I thought it had been made very clear to him what degree of equity would be required and I am certain that the member for Morphett, who was at that meeting, would confirm that I laid on the line to Mr. Somerkamp with some degree of clarity what was necessary, and I repeat that position. The Government is not prepared to take a huge risk in relation to this project. It is prepared to take some risk and, in order to minimise the degree of risk that would be involved in giving a Government guarantee, we do need particularly a

significant increase in the percentage of equity that would be held by the proponents of the project, so the weight of borrowing would be somewhat less and the interest costs that would have to be met in the earlier years of the project somewhat reduced. In those circumstances there is a much better chance of there being a reasonable cash flow, particularly in the early years of the project.

Unfortunately, for one reason or another that I do not understand, Mr. Somerkamp has chosen not to accept the advice I gave him on that occasion, and he has chosen now to say that it is all the Government's fault that he cannot go ahead with it. Well, I will leave people in general to judge the position, but certainly our view is that, while because of social policy there is a case for the Government's taking some degree of risk in relation to any guarantee on borrowing, it is not proper that the risk that the Government accepts on the matter should be excessive, and that a higher proportion of equity is therefore justified from the proponents of the project.

WALLAROO JETTY

Mr. VENNING: Can the Premier say what was the total cost of the rebuilding of the bulk handling equipment, the property of the Marine and Harbors Department, on the jetty at Wallaroo, and what stage has been reached in the determination of compensation for damages? Members will remember that about 18 months ago the *Wuzhou*, a Chinese vessel, damaged the jetty at Wallaroo, putting the bulk handling equipment out of commission for some time. Members would also know that it was a case of who would have to pay for the damages, which in the early estimate were thought to be about \$1 000 000. I therefore ask the Premier whether he can inform the House on the present situation.

The Hon. J. D. CORCORAN: I cannot inform the House offhand of the actual cost or the exact situation regarding the legalities that surround the matter. The honourable member would be aware that the Minister of Transport has been appointed Minister of Marine. It is a marine matter, and I shall be pleased to refer the question to him and get a considered reply for the honourable member as soon as possible.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Mr. HEMMINGS: Can the Minister of Health at this stage give me any indication of how many people probably will drop out of private medical insurance cover as a result of the Federal Government's forecast change in its policy on refunds for individual medical consultations? Recently I have been approached by many constituents who are fearful of a dramatic increase in private health fund contributions as a result of the announced change in the Federal Government's contribution in relation to rebates. The fact that the community will now have to pay the first \$20 of any consultation fee is causing considerable concern to my constituents, as it could result in their having to drop out of private medical insurance cover. I draw the Minister's attention to a report in the *Advertiser* of 28 July which states:

The future of Australia's fee-for-service health insurance scheme was in jeopardy. The secretary of the Voluntary Health Insurance Association of Australia (Mr. J. Mansfield) told the meeting that health funds throughout Australia were facing a massive drop-out of contributions. Thirty-nine per cent of contributors had annual health insurance costs substantially less than their contributions, he said. But if this

section "dropped out" contribution rates would have to increase by 64 per cent for the remaining contributors so funds could break even.

The Hon. PETER DUNCAN: I cannot give any accurate forecast of what is likely to happen after 1 September. We will have to wait and see what impact the quite dramatic increases that inevitably will occur in health fund insurance rates has on the average member of the community. I have seen a number of estimates of the likely effect that this will have. The *Advertiser*, in an editorial headed "The sick system", got stuck into the Federal Government's changes heavily and I think this assessment is as accurate as one would get. The report states:

Now, with the Federal Government forcing more of the cost on to the individual, the cost of insurance is becoming so high that there are significant financial incentives for almost two people in five to drop out of insurance altogether.

I should imagine that two in five would be a reasonable estimate, although I do not want to be seen to adopt it, because, as I have said, I think it would be a fairly wild guess at present. The most dramatic thing that will occur on 1 September is the increase in rates charged by health insurance funds. There have been various estimates of that: I have seen instances ranging from 30 per cent to 70 per cent. The *News* contained a report a short time ago that it thought it had information indicating that the top rate in South Australia for family cover was likely to increase to about, I think, \$18 a week. If increases are made to bring the rates up to the magnitude of \$18 a week, I think many people will drop out of health insurance.

Of course, this matter is the Federal Government's responsibility, and we are seeing a situation that will be of grave concern to each and every member of this Parliament, because I believe that every member will have concerned constituents questioning him or her about what action they should take when confronted with these dramatic increases. The problem is a difficult one and one that I, as Minister of Health, am no closer to solving for the benefit of my constituents than is any other member.

I imagine that every member is as confused as most members of the public are. I doubt that any member of this House is clear on whether he should opt to continue with insurance or to let it go and get out of the insurance system. I suppose that, in a sense, it is easier in our position, being on relatively high salaries, to make that decision, because, if we decide to opt out of insurance, we probably are in a position to cope with any unforeseen medical or hospital expenses that we encounter, given the fact that hospital inpatient treatment in South Australia continues to be provided free in standard wards.

That is not the situation for the vast bulk of people, the middle class people in this society—the middle income earners. They are in a very great dilemma as to whether or not they should stay in insurance schemes. People with families are in a great dilemma to know whether they can afford insurance at the dramatically increased rates being foisted upon them as a result of the increase in doctors' fees, which went up recently by 12.9 per cent, and also as a result of the Federal Government's abolition of the 40 per cent rebate on services costing less than \$20.

In those circumstances, the average member of this community is, in financial terms, confronted with a great dilemma. I believe the result will be that large numbers of people will withdraw altogether from the insurance system, and that, of course, will be a catastrophe for the people of this country, because they will be carrying the risks themselves, and that small proportion of people who become sick and need expensive medical treatment will have their financial resources stretched to the limit. Also, it will be a disaster for the health system; if vast numbers

of people opt out of insurance schemes, they will in effect be opting out of the fee for service system which Mr. Moon is so keen on promoting at every opportunity, and opting to take their medical treatment at the outpatients' clinics of the large public hospitals.

Alternatively, they could attend at private doctors' surgeries and pay the full cost of the medical treatment. If that happens, I believe that the primary care units at the public hospitals will be absolutely stretched to capacity, and we will see a situation in which there are queues and waiting lists, which would be highly undesirable. We are in this situation because the Federal Government—

Mr. EVANS: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I rise on the same point of order as previously. I believe that Ministers are using answers to questions to give second reading debates when they could make Ministerial statements; they have that opportunity. I ask you, Sir, to give some direction to Ministers to cut down the length of the answers they are giving to questions.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order, but once again I ask Ministers, if possible, to cut short their answers to questions. I repeat what I have said previously: answers from Ministers very often are prolonged by interjections.

Mr. Mathwin: There wasn't one interjection then.

The SPEAKER: Order! There have been interjections this afternoon during Question Time. The honourable member is out of order.

Mr. Mathwin: Not then.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member to order. He knows that, when the Speaker is standing, he must not interject.

Mr. GOLDSWORTHY: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Hon. Hugh Hudson interjecting:

Mr. GOLDSWORTHY: You can talk about wasting time!

The SPEAKER: Order! I hope the honourable member will go on with his point of order, and I hope that interjections will cease.

Mr. GOLDSWORTHY: I refer to Standing Order 125, which states that, in answering questions (that is, questions before the House), a member (including, of course, a Minister) shall not debate the matter to which the question refers. We have only to recall the answers of the Deputy Premier and the answer we are getting at the moment to come to the inescapable conclusion that that Standing Order is being breached continually by Ministers.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order. If the Deputy Leader is consistent, I think he must agree that on occasions in this House we see members on both sides debating questions. However, I ask Ministers to cut down, if possible, the time taken in answering questions.

Mr. GOLDSWORTHY: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, could we have a clear ruling from the Chair? I realise that I have been pulled up many times in the last two days for debating questions, but I ask you to give a firm ruling on the interminable answers we get when Ministers debate the question. We want a clear answer, not a sermon.

The SPEAKER: I assure the honourable member that Ministers have always been given more latitude, and I will continue to allow that.

Mr. GOLDSWORTHY: With respect, that is not a ruling in relation to the Standing Order which I have raised. The point of order is: will the Speaker give a ruling on whether or not the Minister is debating the question, in contravention of Standing Order 125?

The Hon. J. D. CORCORAN: I take a further point of

order, Mr. Speaker. I think Standing Orders are perfectly clear. If the Deputy Leader reads Standing Order 123 he will see that it states:

At the time of giving notices of motion, questions may be put to Ministers of the Crown relating to public affairs; and to other members, relating to any Bill, motion, or other public matter connected with the business of the House, in which such members may be concerned.

There is a clear distinction between Ministers of the Crown and members. Standing Order 125 states:

In answering any such question, a member shall not debate the matter to which the same refers.

My point of order is that the Deputy Leader does not have a point of order.

Mr. Goldsworthy: You are saying that Ministers are not members?

The Hon. J. D. CORCORAN: They are Ministers of the Crown, and they are referred to as Ministers of the Crown in the Standing Order.

The SPEAKER: I have already ruled that the Deputy Leader is out of order, and I uphold the Premier's point of order. I think the Minister of Health has explained his reply fully, and I hope he will bring it to a conclusion.

The Hon. PETER DUNCAN: Yes. Indeed, I certainly did not use the last five minutes that have been so wasted—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I hope the honourable Minister will get back to answering the question.

The Hon. PETER DUNCAN: If I am given the opportunity by members opposite, I will.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable Minister to order. I hope he will get on with answering the question.

The Hon. PETER DUNCAN: The final point I wanted to make was that, if the Fraser Government continues for its doctrinaire reasons to tamper with the health system and to dismantle what remains of Medibank, I can only say that we will see health matters in this country deteriorating to the appalling situation that exists in some other so-called advanced Western societies where people cannot afford the medical services and hospital services that they need and require, and therefore are left in the situation where they are virtually left to die and to be sick without any assistance from that society. That would be an appalling situation in which we as a Government would not wish to be involved, and we will do everything in our power to see that it does not happen.

WATER MAINS

Mr. BLACKER: Can the Minister of Planning say whether the Government has determined a policy on the replacement of existing Engineering and Water Supply Department mains that have, because of age, become inadequate and in some cases beyond the stage of economic repair? The Minister will be aware that, when any extension of a main is laid, a capital contribution is expected from the respective service point. However, when I inquired last year about the Government's policy on the replacement of existing mains, I found that there was no such policy but that it was then under discussion.

The situation prevails on Eyre Peninsula, and no doubt in many other parts of the State, where the service mains are sometimes 50 years old, and they are beyond their economic and practical life. In the case of Port Neill, the 4-inch diameter main now has a pressure meter, and it has been cut back and back to such an extent that there is no effective service to the township of Port Neill. This means that not only is it not catering for the development of the

town but also it is not catering for the existing line. Has the Government now determined a policy on this matter and, if it has, can the Minister outline it to the House?

The Hon. R. G. PAYNE: In order to give a short answer, I will bring down a considered reply.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT: REGENCY PARK

The Hon. PETER DUNCAN (Minister of Health): I seek leave to make a statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. PETER DUNCAN: During Question Time today I was asked by the member for Hanson a question about Regency Park. I have received further information on that matter, and I am informed that Regency Park was informed of the matters of which I advised the House in a letter from the Officer in Charge, Deficit Financing Section, Adelaide office of the Commonwealth Department of Health.

At 3.50 p.m., the bells having been rung:

The SPEAKER: Call on the business of the day.

BUSINESS FRANCHISE (PETROLEUM PRODUCTS) BILL

His Excellency the Governor, by message, recommended to the House of Assembly the appropriation of such amounts of money as might be required for the purposes mentioned in the Bill.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 31 July. Page 226.)

Mr. WILSON (Torrens): There are two main purposes for this Bill, one overt and one covert. The overt purpose, or the ostensible purpose of the Bill is to put a levy by means of a franchise tax on the sale of petroleum products. This is to replace the present road maintenance tax which has been abolished since 1 July as a result of the recent heavy truck blockade. It has been reported that all States have agreed to this action. One of the reasons the Minister has given for introducing this Bill is that all States have agreed to introduce a fuel tax levy, ostensibly on the same terms.

As far as we can ascertain, only Victoria has introduced a fuel tax of a type which remotely parallels that now applying in this Bill. We find that Western Australia has

certainly introduced a fuel tax Bill, or a franchise tax, but that differs markedly in its application from what is proposed in this legislation. New South Wales, we are informed, will not introduce a fuel franchise tax, certainly not in the near future. We have not heard what Queensland and Tasmania will do.

As far as those purposes I have stated are concerned, the Bill does carry them out. There is one thing that we should remember: when this Bill is proclaimed it will bring in more money (and the Minister will not deny this) to the State than what was previously received from road maintenance tax receipts. Therefore, if the Government is being honest with the people, and if this fuel tax is designed only to replace road maintenance tax, the Government should remit to the people of this State the excess receipts it receives when this tax is levied.

Certainly, the Minister has announced (and, of course, it does not apply in this legislation) that he will introduce regulations to the Motor Vehicles Act whereby certain rebates on registratin will apply. Furthermore, under this Bill, diesel fuel for non-road use will be exempted. That is only half the story, because we now come to the less obvious purpose of this legislation. The Government has not been honest with the people of South Australia; it has tried to hide its real purpose. That purpose is to gain additional revenue to swell its Highways Fund. It is, in fact, another method of State taxation. What is more the pity is that the Minister has introduced this measure without explaining to the people of South Australia what he intends to do.

Let us look at the figures. The Minister's figures on the effect on revenue of this measure for 1979-80 are that the proposed receipts from the fuel franchise tax in a full year will be \$14 000 000. If we deduct those registration fee rebates that I have just mentioned, which the Minister has estimated at \$6 450 000, and deduct the amount that would have been gained in road maintenance charges of \$4 800 000, there is a net gain to the State of \$2 750 000. They are the Minister's figures, not mine, the R.A.A.'s, or anybody else's, so the Minister admits by his own figures that there will be nearly \$3 000 000 profit to the State.

Let us look at an alternative calculation using other sets of figures. I have based these figures on the latest information I can get concerning the consumption of petroleum products. They come from statistics concerning consumption of petroleum products in the State marketing area in 1977-78, the source being the Processing and Distribution Branch, Department of National Development. As the table I have is purely statistical, I seek leave to have it incorporated in *Hansard* without my reading it.

Leave granted.

CONSUMPTION OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS IN STATE MARKETING AREAS—1977-78
(Megalitres and percentage of total Australian consumption of each product)

Product	New South Wales		Victoria		Queensland		South Australia		Western Australia		Tasmania		Northern Territory		Total	Per cent All Products
	ML	Per cent	ML	Per cent	ML	Per cent	ML	Per cent	ML	Per cent	ML	Per cent	ML	Per cent		
Aviation																
Gasoline	30	26.1	20	17.5	23	20.3	11	9.9	17	14.6	4	3.8	9	7.8	115	0.3
Motor Spirit																
Super	4 431	34.0	3 653	28.0	2 010	15.4	1 213	9.3	1 289	9.9	358	2.7	92	0.7	13 046	34.4
Standard	419	30.7	433	31.7	200	14.7	153	11.2	97	7.1	56	4.1	7	0.5	1 365	3.6
TOTAL	4 849	33.6	4 086	28.4	2 211	15.3	1 366	9.5	1 385	9.6	414	2.9	99	0.7	14 411	38.0

CONSUMPTION OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS IN STATE MARKETING AREAS—1977-78—Continued
(Megalitres and percentage of total Australian consumption of each product)

Product	New South Wales		Victoria		Queensland		South Australia		Western Australia		Tasmania		Northern Territory		Total	
	ML	Per cent	ML	Per cent	ML	Per cent	ML	Per cent	ML	Per cent	ML	Per cent	ML	Per cent	ML	Per cent All Products
Aviation																
Turbine Fuel	855	42.2	424	20.9	297	14.7	115	5.6	239	11.8	28	1.4	69	3.4	2 027	5.3
Lighting																
Kerosene	67	25.2	58	21.6	30	3.4	21	7.8	82	30.8	9	3.2	1	0.2	267	0.7
Heating Oil	255	29.1	435	49.7	17	2.0	81	9.3	13	1.5	73	8.4	1	—	874	2.3
Power Kerosene	5	22.2	6	27.2	9	38.3	2	9.8	—	0.7	—	1.0	—	0.8	24	0.1
Automotive																
Distillate																
Inland	1 655	27.6	1 141	19.0	1 250	20.8	485	8.1	1 153	19.2	168	2.8	151	2.5	6 003	15.8
Bunkers	52	35.5	37	25.0	17	11.2	4	2.8	31	21.1	1	1.0	5	3.4	147	0.4
TOTAL	1 707	27.8	1 178	19.1	1 267	20.6	490	8.0	1 184	19.3	169	2.7	156	2.5	6 151	16.2
Industrial Diesel																
Fuel																
Inland	354	24.9	208	14.7	53	3.8	323	22.8	265	18.7	80	5.6	135	9.5	1 419	3.7
Bunkers	183	31.3	139	23.8	61	10.4	23	3.9	142	24.3	36	6.1	1	0.2	585	1.6
TOTAL	537	26.8	348	17.3	114	5.7	346	17.3	407	20.3	116	5.8	136	6.8	2 004	5.3
Fuel Oil																
Inland	1 012	22.2	368	8.1	1 006	22.1	189	4.1	1 347	29.6	226	5.0	404	8.9	4 552	12.0
Bunkers	656	32.5	582	28.8	100	4.9	99	4.9	574	28.5	5	0.2	3	0.2	2 019	5.3
TOTAL	1 668	25.4	950	14.5	1 106	16.8	288	4.4	1 922	29.2	231	3.5	407	6.2	6 571	17.3
TOTAL, Main Products																
9 973 30.7 7 505 23.1 5 074 15.6 2 720 8.5 5 250 16.2 1 044 3.2 878 2.7 32 444 85.5																
Change from 1976-77																
+1.2 +3.8 +2.2 +1.1 +3.1 -0.3 +4.9 +2.3 — Per cent Per cent Per cent Per cent Per cent Per cent Per cent Per cent																
Other Products (of which 48.5 per cent was refinery fuel, and the balance bitumen, lubricants, solvents, liquefied petroleum and refinery gas—breakdown by States not available)																
5 499 14.5																
TOTAL, All Products (Breakdown by State Marketing Areas not available)																
37 943 100.0																

Source: Processing and Distribution Branch, Department of National Development.

CONSUMPTION OF MAIN PETROLEUM PRODUCTS IN STATE MARKETING AREAS
(Megalitres and percentage of total Australian consumption)

Year	New South Wales	Per cent	Victoria	Per cent	Queensland	Per cent	South Australia	Per cent	Western Australia	Per cent	Tasmania	Per cent	Northern Territory	Per cent	Total Australia	Per cent	Increase on Previous Year
1968-69	7 379	32.7	5 764	25.5	2 846	12.6	2 480	11.0	2 992	13.2	842	3.7	299	1.3	22 602	10.2	
1969-70	7 842	32.5	6 138	25.4	3 099	12.8	2 414	10.0	3 475	14.4	849	3.5	345	1.4	24 162	6.9	
1970-71	8 139	32.2	6 428	25.5	3 204	12.7	2 206	8.7	3 918	15.5	947	3.8	393	1.6	25 235	4.4	
1971-72	8 630	32.8	6 605	25.1	3 419	13.0	2 224	8.5	4 007	15.3	927	3.5	467	1.8	26 279	4.1	
1972-73	8 740	32.5	6 659	24.8	3 696	13.7	2 252	8.4	3 942	14.7	993	3.7	594	2.2	26 877	2.3	
1973-74	9 468	32.3	7 042	24.0	4 178	14.2	2 479	8.5	4 413	15.0	1 036	3.5	744	2.5	29 359	9.2	

CONSUMPTION OF MAIN PETROLEUM PRODUCTS IN STATE MARKETING AREAS—*Continued*
(Megalitres and percentage of total Australian consumption)

Year	New South Wales	Per cent	Victoria	Per cent	Queensland	Per cent	South Australia	Per cent	Western Australia	Per cent	Tasmania	Per cent	Northern Territory	Per cent	Total Australia	Per cent	Per cent Increase on Previous Year
1974-75	9 500	32.2	7 008	23.7	4 351	14.7	2 566	8.7	4 288	14.5	1 019	3.4	812	2.8	29 544	0.6	
1975-76	9 483	31.6	6 918	23.1	4 671	15.6	2 672	8.9	4 418	14.7	1 031	3.5	777	2.6	29 968	1.4	
1976-77	9 856	31.1	7 227	22.8	4 967	15.7	2 690	8.5	5 091	16.0	1 047	3.3	837	2.6	31 716	5.8	
1977-78	9 973	30.7	7 505	23.1	5 074	15.6	2 720	8.5	5 250	16.2	1 044	3.2	878	2.7	32 444	2.3	

*State Marketing Areas—The State marketing areas of Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory are identical with the political areas.

In the remaining States, although there are instances where the marketing areas vary from company to company, the following generalisations can be made:

1. The State marketing area of Queensland includes the whole of the political area plus the Murwillumbah district of New South Wales.
2. The State marketing area of South Australia includes the whole of the political area plus the Broken Hill-Wilcannia district of New South Wales and the Murrayville district of Victoria.
3. The State marketing area of Victoria includes the whole of the political area less the Murrayville district but plus the Riverina district of New South Wales.
4. The State marketing area of New South Wales includes the political area (and the A.C.T.) less the Murwillumbah, Broken Hill-Wilcannia, and Riverina districts.

Mr. WILSON: The consumption of petroleum products in State marketing areas is listed in various categories. The total consumption of motor spirit for the South Australian State marketing area was 1 366 megalitres. The consumption of automotive distillate (and I do not refer to bunkered fuel) is 485 megalitres. None of those figures include industrial diesel fuel, fuel oil, or anything of that nature.

If we take the figure for motor spirit, I mentioned that these figures apply to this State marketing area of South Australia. I want to be as fair as I can to the Minister, so I inform the House that the State marketing area of South Australia includes the Broken Hill and Wilcannia district of New South Wales and the Murrayville district of Victoria. I have made inquiries of various organisations and oil companies, and it is estimated that those areas are responsible for 2 per cent of the State's total litreage. Therefore, if we take a total consumption of 1 366 megalitres and deduct 2 per cent for the Broken Hill and Wilcannia, and Murrayville areas we arrive at a figure of 1 338.68 megalitres. At a fuel tax of 1c a litre (and I will say more about that in a moment), which is the figure that the Minister has announced will apply, we have a total tax of \$13 386 800 on the sale of motor spirit.

I turn now to the figures for distillate. The total consumption of distillate in the State marketing area was 485 megalitres. Of course, there is a lot of distillate supplied for non-road use. Much distillate is used by local government organisations, and organisations of that type. I am informed that 29 per cent of the total distillate sales attract Federal excise. This figure is contested by motoring organisations to which I have spoken, and I do not just mean the R.A.A., because I know the Minister is not very fond of the R.A.A.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: That's not true.

Mr. WILSON: I thought from the Minister's comments on television the other night that he was not fond of it.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: The statements about this have been quite irresponsible, but that does not mean I do not like the R.A.A.

Mr. WILSON: I am glad that you put that on the record. Of the 485 megalitres, 29 per cent attracted Federal excise. This figure is stated as being too low by various organisations. Once again, to be fair to the Government and the Minister, I stick with that figure. Twenty-nine per cent of that figure comes to 140.65 megalitres. If we apply the fuel tax, as it would apply to diesel fuel, of 1.5c a litre that gives us another \$2 109 750, which when added to the previous figure gives a total receipt of nearly \$15 496 550, not \$14 000 000 as the Minister has said. This would gain the Government an extra \$4 246 550, not \$2 750 000 as stated, so already the estimated receipts to the State are considerably more than the Minister stated—they are now \$4 250 000. Other organisations such as the R.A.A. (and the Minister has said he thinks that the R.A.A. is irresponsible)—

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: I said that I thought Mr. Waters's statements were irresponsible.

Mr. WILSON: I assure the Minister that the general public will not consider Mr. Waters's statements irresponsible. I think all members received a copy of a letter from the Royal Automobile Association, which was signed by Mr. Waters. The fourth paragraph of that letter states:

Australian Bureau of Statistics' motor vehicle fuel consumption figures for the year ended 30 September 1976, compiled in association with the bureau's survey of motor vehicle usage, showed consumption of 1 181 and 244 megalitres of petrol and diesel respectively. At 1 cent/litre for petrol, and 1.5 cents/litre for diesel, the new tax proposals would yield nearly \$15 500 000.

That figure is the same as that calculated by me. The letter continues:

Our current estimate is \$16 600 000. The expected revenue figure announced of \$14 000 000 appears conservative.

There, Mr. Waters is saying that the Government would receive \$16 600 000, which will increase Government revenue, if the figures are correct. The story does not end there. I have been informed by one very large road transport organisation that its estimate of the Government's tax receipts is \$17 000 000. These figures are starting to make the Minister's figure of \$2 750 000 look small indeed.

Once again, that is not the end of the story. The fuel franchise tax, as contained in this measure, is to be levied as a percentage (4.5 per cent of the value of motor spirit and 7.1 per cent on the value of diesel fuel), in which case the tax is indexed to the price of fuel. Since 18 July, there has been an increase in the price of fuel of 3c per litre. If one applies the percentages to the new price, one finds that the tax is now 1.1 cent per litre on petrol and nearly 1.7c per litre on distillate. If these figures are correct, on my calculations the Government will accrue a further \$1 338 000 on motor spirit and another \$281 000 on distillate, which gives the Government another \$1 600 000 before the Bill is even passed.

Members opposite have had the gall to stand up in this place in the past two days and criticise the Federal Government's fuel excise, when the State Government is doing exactly the same thing but in an underhanded way. It is extremely possible, and predicted by many experts, that the price of fuel will double in the next two or three years. If this is the case, by the time the price of fuel has doubled at these rates, unless the Minister uses the power he will have under this Act to declare a lesser price for fuel, the Government will receive an extra \$20 000 000 a year in revenue in excess of what it would normally have received for road maintenance tax.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: Will Fraser double the price of petrol?

Mr. WILSON: You are not denying what I have said, are you? That is the perfidy of this Bill—that is the dishonest purpose of the Bill. The Government has not been frank with the people of South Australia. In two or three years, \$20 000 000 a year will swell the State's coffers, and money will go into the Highways Fund as well, as provided for in the Bill, except that the Treasurer will have power to deduct monthly amounts from receipts for administration purposes.

Mr. Tonkin: General revenue: why aren't they honest?

Mr. WILSON: Regarding the effects of this Bill on the people of South Australia, the Minister made a statement (on television, I think, and I apologise if I am wrong) that no person who had not previously paid the road maintenance tax would be disadvantaged under this legislation.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: I never said that.

Mr. WILSON: You said that publicly. That contains a double negative.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member must not refer to other members as "you".

Mr. WILSON: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Some people will be disadvantaged by the Bill, for example, the private motorist. The Minister has announced that the private motorist will receive rebates on his registration as from 3 October. He also announced that he would gazette regulations to provide for these rebates. There will be a 20 per cent rebate to the private motorist. I know that the Minister is unhappy with these figures, but I will quote more figures and perhaps that will make him happier. I examined the effect of this State's franchise tax upon the owner of each of three standard motor vehicles. I will assume for the purpose of the exercise that the owner of a Holden Kingswood and the owner of the other two cars I will mention travel an average distance of 18 000

kilometres a year.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: Do you do that?

Mr. WILSON: The Minister can laugh. I do much more than 18 000 kilometres a year. Perhaps the Minister does not travel that far for his own reasons, but I certainly do more than 18 000 kilometres a year. People in the motor industry have told me that 18 000 kilometres a year (or 10 000 to 12 000 miles a year) is the average figure that should be used for the purposes of this type of calculation. Therefore, I have used that figure. The current registration on a Holden Kingswood is \$68; a 20 per cent saving would represent \$13.60. Assuming a fuel consumption of 14.1 litres per 100 kilometres, which is 20 miles per gallon, the motorist would pay a fuel levy, at 1c per litre (and remember the cost is more than that—it is 1.1c per litre), of \$25.38. In other words, the Kingswood owner would pay \$11.80 more than the previous cost.

Mr. Arnold: Clearly, the motorist is being ripped off.

Mr. WILSON: It is very much a rip-off, and the motorist will realise that when he pays for his petrol. One of my constituents telephoned me and was irate because I had not investigated the situation regarding a Chrysler, but I think that the comparison is valid. For a Holden Commodore, the current registration cost is \$61. A 20 per cent saving on registration would amount to \$12.20 and, assuming the same fuel consumption as applies to the Kingswood and taking the same distance travelled in any one year, the fuel levy would cost \$25.38. Once again, that figure is based on a tax of 1c per litre. Therefore, the Commodore owner will pay \$13.20 a year more than previously.

The current registration fee for a Holden Gemini (a smaller car) is \$36; a 20 per cent saving on that registration would represent \$7.20. Assuming a fuel consumption of 11.28 litres per 100 kilometres, which is 25 miles to the gallon (and these figures have been supplied to me by motor associations), a Gemini owner would pay \$20.30 a year as a petrol levy. Therefore, he would pay \$13.11 more than previously. In fact, the smaller car owner will pay more than the large car owner under these figures, and, when we are talking about energy saving and conservation, that is a totally ridiculous situation.

Let us take another theme. Instead of using those figures, I will use the 1976 figures of the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The average distance travelled annually by cars and station waggons as at 30 September 1976 was 15 400 kilometres. That is probably a figure that appeals to the Minister rather than the figures I have just quoted, but that was in 1976. I am sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you travel more than 18 000 kilometres a year.

The annual savings of registration under these new figures for the Kingswood would be cancelled after 33 weeks of driving, and for the remainder of the year the Kingswood owner would pay an additional \$13 based on the consumption of 20 miles a gallon. The corresponding figure for the Commodore is 29 weeks, and the owner would pay an additional \$9.53. For the Gemini the annual savings on registration would be cancelled after 22 weeks of driving, and the Gemini owner would pay \$10.18 more. Once again the owner of the small car will pay the penalty. I will just have a look at the R.A.A. figures, and that association has taken an average figure for all cars.

Mr. Chapman: What does the Minister base his figures on?

Mr. WILSON: I am not sure what the Minister's figures are based on.

Mr. Chapman: Certainly they are being disputed by the reputable motor industry associations of South Australia. There is no question about that.

Mr. WILSON: The member for Alexandra was quite

correct, because motoring organisations in South Australia are incensed.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Alexandra is out of order.

Mr. WILSON: In his letter, Mr. Waters gives details of the Australian Bureau of Statistics survey of motor vehicle usage for the 12 months ended 30 September 1976 (the reference is bulletin catalogue Nos. 9208 and 9209), from which the following comparisons can be made. The annual average distance travelled is 15 400 kilometres a year; the average fuel consumption is 12.6 litres per hundred kilometres; the annual average consumption is 1 940 litres. An extra \$19.40 would be payable with a 1c levy per litre on petrol, whilst a 20 per cent registration concession would amount to, say, \$13. The motorist would therefore be out of pocket by \$6.40. In other words, no matter which set of figures one looks at, the motorist is out of pocket.

Let us turn to the rural community. The honourable member for Alexandra will deal with this in more detail.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: Oh, he's supporting you, is he?

Mr. WILSON: Indeed, the honourable member for Alexandra will be supporting me, as I support him. The primary producer has not been used to paying road maintenance tax. In fact, 65 per cent of primary production vehicles are between the capacity limits of 4 to 8 tonnes, and the 4-tonne to 8-tonne range, under the Minister's proposals, are to receive no registration rebates, but now the primary producer will have to pay the extra fuel tax franchise.

Mr. Groom: What about world parity prices?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. WILSON: What about the off-road use for primary producers? It is true that, where primary producers are using off-road diesel machinery, they will be exempt from the tax, but what about the number of primary producers who use motor spirit on the farm or in the orchards? I am told by my colleagues that the orchardist will be particularly disadvantaged by this legislation; the honourable member for Chaffey would probably know more about that. All these primary producers will now pay the fuel levy. Previously, they did not pay road maintenance tax. They are just another group in the community who are being disadvantaged by the Minister's proposal.

Mr. Chapman: But they've never had any sympathy from this Government anyway.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: Fraser didn't have any sympathy when he just put 3c on every gallon.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. WILSON: It is true that most professional fishermen use diesel engine boats, but I am informed by the member for Eyre that a fairly large proportion of inshore fishermen still use petrol driven engines in their boats. The fishermen with diesel engines, of course, will be exempt, but under this legislation an added cost will be added on to the fishing industry because those people will now have to pay the 1c per litre tax on motor spirits. That is just another group who are disadvantaged by the legislation. What about the small pleasure boat owner? I am informed there are thousands of these in South Australia. Those who are not fortunate enough to have diesel engines in their craft will also pay the fuel tax levy.

Mr. Arnold: That's scandalous.

Mr. WILSON: I recently took a trip on the Murray River on a petrol driven houseboat. I picked that craft because it had an inboard petrol engine which is far more economical than an outboard. However, future patrons of the firm operating that craft will pay more now, because the firm will have to pay 1c per litre under present values of fuel and that will be passed on to the public. Also, industry generally will pass on the costs of this measure to

the public. All the industry sites where petrol driven machinery is used will incur the extra fuel tax, and that will be passed on to the public in the form of increased costs.

The last group I wish to deal with consists of the service station proprietors. As is often the case with small businessmen, they are first to be forgotten. It seems that, whenever a tax is to be levied or financial times are hard, the person who bears the brunt is the small businessman. In this case I refer to the service station proprietors. Two things about this legislation affect them markedly.

First, they will have to pay, on the receipt of their first delivery of fuel, after 1 September, the increased fuel tax; that is, if this Bill passes through Parliament in the required time, they will have to pay to the oil companies the extra levy on the fuel delivered to their tanks. On an average drop to a suburban service station of 30 000 litres, that will represent an extra investment for the service station proprietor of \$300.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: Do they pay cash on delivery?

Mr. WILSON: Most of them do; I have checked that. Some pay on account, but most of them, especially the smaller ones, pay cash on delivery.

That represents an extra investment for the small service station proprietors of \$300, following closely on the investment of thousands of dollars that they paid on 18 July, when the price of fuel increased. What else will affect service station proprietors? Under the Bill, they will be licensed and will receive a class B licence, and a licensee will have to pay \$50 a year for that licence. He is already licensed, time and time again. He is licensed under the Motor Fuel Distribution Act, and that costs him \$100. He is licensed under the Dangerous Substances Act, he is licensed with the Labour and Industry Department, and now the Government intends to inflict another licence system on him, and he will be out of pocket by another \$50.

Where is the logic or equity in such a measure? Why cannot the Minister use the licence under the Motor Fuel Distribution Act for the administration of this Act? Why should the service station proprietor pay another \$50 on top of what he is paying already merely so that he can have a licence to buy fuel from a wholesaler, a class A licensee, under the legislation? Why is it necessary for the Government to rip off everyone? Why is it necessary that small businessmen, who have had to put up with enough under prevailing conditions, should have this added to them?

I hope that action will be taken in another place to at least reduce the amount that the service station proprietors must pay and, preferably, to make it only a straight-out registration for no fee. That is what the proprietors deserve. I cannot understand why the Government cannot use registration under the Motor Fuel Distribution Act for the purposes of this measure.

I wish to refer now to some other points in the legislation. I have discussed the provisions regarding the licences and the fact that the system is to be instituted on a percentage basis. I have also discussed the way that receipts from those percentages will escalate as the price of fuel increases. Other provisions in the Bill include the grouping provisions that apply to companies and, virtually, they are the same as provisions in the Tobacco Franchise Act. These have been inserted to prevent wholesale companies from avoiding liabilities by splitting the company.

The Commissioner of Stamps is to administer the Act. An appeal tribunal is to be set up, and its decision will be final. It is being established to hear appeals from decisions of the Commissioner as to the payment of licence fees and the granting of licences. There is to be one person, but

there is no provision for an appeal from the tribunal and no provision that it should include a legal practitioner. The Bill appoints a Registrar, and inspectors will be appointed with power to enter, inspect records and premises, and ask questions in respect of the business of dealing with petroleum products. The powers of the inspectors are quite wide: they will be able to enter without warrant.

As I have said, the legislation exempts fuel used for non-road use and it is to be an offence to sell petroleum products without having the appropriate licence. The Minister (and this is an important clause) is to fix the value of fuel for the purposes of this Act. He is to fix the value on which the tax will be collected. There is a provision to prevent him from fixing the value of fuel at more than that gazetted by the Commissioner for Public and Consumer Affairs. A further protection is that that determination by the Minister must remain in force for three months, and I am pleased that the Minister is agreeing with me on that. However, the Minister should be prepared to use his powers under this provision, if necessary, to declare the price of fuel at less than that declared by the Commissioner, so that the Government will reduce the amount that it receives over and above what it normally would have collected from road maintenance charges.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: That's precisely what the clause does.

Mr. WILSON: It gives the Minister power to do it, but the Minister has not given us any indication of whether he will do it. He could well have stated that in the second reading explanation, as he knows. I have said that licence fees are to be paid to the Highways Fund monthly. This is essential but, as I have also said, they will be less the cost of administration, and that cost will be decided by the Treasurer.

The Opposition supports the concept of a fuel levy to replace road maintenance tax, and it acknowledges that there has been some (I stress "some") agreement between at least two States. What the Opposition does not support is legislation disguised so that it appears to achieve these objects but really achieves only another method of taxing the people of South Australia. For that reason, we will not oppose the second reading, but we will seek to make amendments at the appropriate stage.

Mr. TONKIN (Leader of the Opposition): First, I congratulate the member for Torrens on the amount of work that he has done in sorting out this legislation and getting to the bottom of it. I believe that his contribution to the debate has been most valuable, not the least part of it being his obtaining an admission from the Minister that, if he wished, he could declare the price of petrol under the clause that has been referred to, but he has given no indication yet that he will do so. It seems to be something of a back-down, because, quite frankly, this legislation, which has been introduced on the pretext that it replaces the levy from road maintenance tax, seems to be a cheap and underhand attempt by the Government to increase its State taxation revenue.

I am perfectly prepared to believe the figures that have been given by the member for Torrens about the potential—that in two to three years it will be possible to net the State Government an extra \$20 000 000 a year under the measure as it has been introduced. I repeat that there is no indication in the Bill that the Minister will take any action to control that. Knowing him and his Government, I think the temptation to increase the revenue of the State will be too great for him to resist. I do not believe that the legislation should be left as loose as that. The Government is trying to pull a fast one, a confidence trick, on the motorists of this State, because

the burden will fall on them particularly.

If this is not so, why did not the Minister tidy up the legislation before he introduced it? Why did he not talk, in the second reading explanation, of what he could do and of what his intentions were? This is typical of what we have come to expect from him. I believe the member for Torrens has dealt very well with the Government's proposed legislation, and I do not intend to cover the same ground. We have always supported the removal of road maintenance tax, with all the anomalies and inequities that have gone with it. The Liberal Party has always supported the concept of a fuel tax, in co-operation with other States, to replace road maintenance tax. We would also support rebates in registration fees.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: You mean the Liberal Party here, not federally?

Mr. TONKIN: I am speaking on the State scene, as I always do. The Government would do better if it were to spend more of its time and attention in dealing with its responsibilities on the State scene generally. We support rebates in registration fees to balance the additional income that would come with the new tax, because we believe that the whole situation with the fuel tax and rebates of registration fees will lead to a more equitable way of raising road revenue.

It is interesting to note that neither Queensland nor New South Wales has moved, or appears to have any intention of moving, to impose a fuel tax. That was clearly stated yesterday in a report from New South Wales. Although those States have abolished the road maintenance tax, there is no indication that they intend to impose this other tax. I would prefer to see that situation apply in South Australia, but we know that the South Australian Government's continued discouragement of industrial and mineral development in our State has resulted in a steady decline in our economy, and therefore in the return to the State Treasury.

It was alarming, when the last Budget was presented, to see by how much the revenue to the State Government had fallen below the projected income because of a downturn in our economy. I predict that the same situation will apply when the next Budget comes down. We have had a steady decline in our economy, and I have no doubt that the State Treasury will be more than delighted to receive the additional income over and above that which replaces the road maintenance tax.

There is no doubt about the figures that have been given to us. This legislation has been introduced to replace the \$4 500 000-odd which will—

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: \$5 000 000.

Mr. TONKIN: As the Minister knows, \$5 000 000 is not the sum actually collected each year.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: It would have been this year.

Mr. TONKIN: I am interested to hear that, because, as I understand it, there is always a shortfall of a considerable sum. The proposals contained in the Bill represent a potential tax hike (and I emphasise "potential") of horrendous proportions. The figures have been dealt with by the member for Torrens, and I do not intend to repeat them, except to look at the final figure of \$20 000 000, which would be the sum coming to the Government in additional revenue by the time fuel prices doubled. Anyone who believes that fuel prices will not double is deluding himself; they will double, as they have doubled in other countries.

There is nothing whatever the Minister can do, by talking about the Federal Government, or the Prime Minister, or anyone else, that will change the fact that there is a world shortage of oil. The attitude of the Minister of Transport concerns me considerably. He is the

Minister responsible for transport in this State, yet he appears to be in the same unfortunate situation as many American citizens whom I met while I was away seemed to be—that somehow or other, there is no world shortage of oil, but that it is the Government's fault for not forcing the refineries to produce enough. That attitude came through quite clearly in a proportion of the American population; they have been unable to accept that oil is becoming in short supply, is becoming more expensive, and that the price of fuel will become even more expensive.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo interjecting:

Mr. TONKIN: If the Minister believes that in some way the Federal Government, even our Federal Government with its high reputation, can increase supplies of world oil, he is a fool.

I do not agree with the proposals in the Bill. I am completely unable to accept that the Government is unaware of the potential tax rip-off involved, and I believe that few people in the community are not sick and tired of heavy taxation and will not resent this action and this Bill, just as much as the Opposition does. We will support the replacement of taxation revenue from road maintenance tax, but we will not support in any way the possibility of increased taxation over and above that which replaces the road maintenance tax.

If the Minister is depending on the replacement argument to get this legislation through, I suggest he should have another think and tidy up the whole situation more thoroughly. We will not support the present legislation, which makes no concession for non-road vehicle petrol, and particularly for farm trucks. All of these things, including licence fees and the right of appeal, will be dealt with in Committee, and we will not oppose the second reading, so that amendments can be considered. Certainly, we cannot support a potential increase in State taxation of the proportions threatened by this legislation, and we cannot support legislation which would make it possible, whatever the Minister might say, for him to hike taxation to the extent referred to. The people of South Australia already have enough to put up with, without that possibility.

Mr. CHAPMAN (Alexandra): It is unfortunate that this whole taxation issue has become politically loaded, as it has, because for many years the Government and the Opposition in this State have been consistent in their attitude to the abolition of the road maintenance tax. Since I came to this House in 1973, there has been at least a common feeling towards the early abolition of road maintenance tax in relation to South Australia, and from both Parties has emerged a policy that the revenue raised from road maintenance tax should be raised from the motorists using fuel, in particular those motorists who use fuel on the road.

It is on that basis that I have been particularly interested in the announcements made by the Minister in the period leading up to the introduction of this Bill. Following all-State agreement to abolish road maintenance tax, it has been with that interest that I have observed the reactions of the various States. It appears that Queensland, whilst supporting the abolition of road maintenance tax, does not intend to try to recover the lost revenue from its motorists.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: Not true.

Mr. CHAPMAN: The Minister interjects at this early stage, suggesting that my remark is not true. As of today, I understand that that is the position in Queensland. The Minister will be interested to know that his colleague in the Labor State of New South Wales has not prepared legislation and at this stage does not intend to proceed with the preparation of legislation to replace the

\$19 000 000 that that State has lost following the abolition of its road maintenance tax. Indeed, the New South Wales Parliament is not sitting, and it will not be for another fortnight that they will proceed formally to remove from their Statutes the road maintenance tax legislation and its effects.

New South Wales has not even commenced any action in this direction, although South Australia has, and, as I understand it, Victoria has, and Western Australia has, although in another way. We understand that Western Australia, while fixing a tax, has done it in a way different from that proposed in this State. Western Australia has simply applied a 1c a litre tax on petrol in that State, with a tax on diesel of 3c a litre. Whether or not that is challenged through the courts as an infringement of the Constitutional rights in introducing a State tax in that form instead of a franchise Bill has yet to be seen.

Victoria, the State on which apparently the Minister has modelled his legislation, has proceeded and applied its franchise tax in a way similar to that contained in this Bill. What concerns me is that the all-Party agreement within this State to abolish road maintenance tax and replace it with a fuel tax to recover the amount lost has not been adhered to in this Bill. Indeed, the Bill is designed, as the Leader said a moment ago, to raise revenue for this State, to recover the lost revenue from road maintenance tax, to recover the \$6 500 000 that we hope will be applied to registration reductions, to recover the collection costs of this tax, and indeed to recover for the State an additional sum of some millions of dollars. If the price of fuel doubles, so the net return to the State will increase dramatically because the overall administrative and recovery costs would already have been achieved in the first round of taxation so that, as the franchise percentage applies to overall increases in the future, it will be just additional funds directly available to the State. It is that element of the Bill in particular about which the Opposition is most disturbed.

We are further disturbed to learn during this lead-up period that the Minister, via the press and the media in South Australia, has set out to sell several principles that he claimed would apply within the ambit of this Bill, not the least of which was that the ordinary motorist would not be financially affected as a result of the passage of the Government's franchise Bill. Already, two motor industry organisations in South Australia, the Automotive Chamber of Commerce and the Royal Automobile Association, have reacted violently to the Minister's discrimination and false claims. They have said many times, as the shadow Minister of Transport has said today, that the Minister's calculations are ill-based, and that he has misled the public. He has told the people of South Australia generally and the motoring public in particular that they will not be affected as ordinary motorists, when they will be so affected and, indeed, substantially affected.

I am informed by the representative of the United Farmers and Graziers of South Australia that they too have received an undertaking from the Minister and that that undertaking was further supported by the Premier, in so far as fuel (meaning petrol and diesel) would not be subject to tax for vehicles used on primary producing properties. I have been given to understand that by the Secretary of the United Farmers and Graziers Association, and I have also been given his permission to quote it in this place today, and yet the Minister shakes his head. On paper the United Farmers and Graziers has said:

In seeking the opinion of the United Farmers and Graziers and Stockowners of South Australia Incorporated to the above legislation, let me state categorically that our members are totally opposed to their costs of production being

increased through what we consider to be poorly framed legislation.

From today the United Farmers and the Stockowners Association are combined into one group. They speak with a single voice on behalf of all of the members of the two organisations. Mr. Andrews goes on to say:

From assurances given by the Minister of Transport, via his office but in his name, likewise personal assurances by the Premier, we were given to understand that off-road vehicles would be exempt from the fuel franchise legislation.

On reading the Bill, I find that the Minister and the Premier have backed off that undertaking to the rural community in South Australia. No other interpretation than that can be drawn from the contents of this letter. Indeed, "fuel" means petrol and diesel, and "petroleum products" means petrol and diesel, and yet we find that the Bill does not give exemption to primary producers for the use of petrol in vehicles used on their farms. Mr. Andrews continues:

We still believe that neither Mr. Corcoran nor Mr. Virgo intended the rural producer, or primary industry in general, to be affected. In that respect we urge that all off-road use of both petrol and diesel fuels be exempt through the tax only applying on that fuel used to propel vehicles on roads. Although we are grateful for the exemption on diesel fuel for off-road use, I would stress that our industry is a major consumer of petrol associated with off-road use involving motor trucks, utilities, Land Rovers, self-propelled headers, other harvesting equipment, motor bikes, stationary engines, etc.

When one appreciates that the compounding effect of those increased costs to us will force up the price of food to the consumer in South Australia, I am sure it would be the wish of the people of this State to have petrol for off-road use excluded from the tax. Also, of course, the tax on petrol must mitigate against other primary industry such as mining and oil research projects. In other words we have a responsibility to ensure as a State, developmental incentives are not only proposed, but established, in fact.

After hearing the Premier today in his attempts during Question Time to tell this House what a great job the Government is doing in producing incentives for industrial development in South Australia, that really is a joke when we are asked to proceed with some sort of support for the Bill.

The letter from the grower organisations also states:

It should be stressed also that the 4-8 tonne commercial vehicle range should have been given a registration concession similarly to private motor vehicle and like commercial vehicle operators.

The 4-8 tonne vehicle range constitutes a large proportion of the commercial vehicles on farms. For those vehicles to be excluded from any form of registration rebate under this system is really the delivery of a harsh backhander to primary industry by the Government of South Australia. The letter continues:

The reason the latter received their concession was due to them not previously having paid road tax maintenance charges. However, neither did the 4-8 tonne range pay such charges; therefore, discrimination has occurred, and we understand we could have the basis for a legal challenge to the legislation on this point.

Whether or not that is so, I think it is highly undesirable that the situation should have reached the stage where the primary industry of South Australia, through its elected representatives, received an undertaking from a Government Minister and the Premier in this respect, but has now been so far undermined as to have to consider taking legal action against the department or the Minister because of the action taken. The letter continues:

I trust that this matter will not become a purely political issue, but that both the Government and the Opposition will appreciate this whole matter is tied to principles which must be established in respect to fuel priorities, apart from the base economics involved. We are food producers and we simply ask that we can get on with the job and provide such essential items to the South Australian public, and for export, at the lowest possible price.

I repeat that the action of the Government this afternoon in introducing legislation loaded towards revenue raising, as this Bill is, is a blatant backhander to the primary producing sector of this State and, indeed, makes a mockery of the comments made by the Premier this afternoon. He is not fair dinkum about assisting industry, and in no way can he claim to provide incentives to industry in this State, while introducing this sort of legislation.

It appears that Victoria is the only State that has produced legislation of the type that South Australia is commencing to produce at this time. Despite the all-State agreement for abolition and, as the Minister indicated earlier, the all-State arrangement to enter into some form of State taxation on fuel, there is no intention in Victoria to raise additional revenue over and above the amount that, first, was lost in road maintenance tax, which was about \$10 000 000; secondly, that was involved in collecting the fuel tax; and, thirdly, that was lost in the restructuring of their motor registrations. Incidentally, even though Victorian motor registration costs are substantially lower than are those in South Australia, that State proposes to restructure its rates and include reduced registrations for pensioners across the board.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: Has it done that?

Mr. CHAPMAN: No, but that is all part and parcel of the proposal. The Government has given an undertaking in that State (where the public accepts undertakings given by the Government) to restructure registration fees so as to cause a substantial loss in that State to the Police Department from which the Country Roads Board receives the revenue from registration fees.

It is the intention (and I checked on this this morning) of the Victorian Government to recover the road maintenance tax funding loss as a result of its abolition and the associated fees attached to collection and registration reduction, but it is not its intention to exploit the motorist in Victoria and take from him a tax which will boost overall State revenue. That Government is not so blatant as the Minister in this State, who is seeking simply to load up the coffers at the expense of the motorist in South Australia, and at a level far beyond what he has indicated, what the Opposition agreed to earlier, and what the Opposition can agree to at this time.

I have a copy of similar correspondence from the Stockowners Association, correspondence I understand it directed to the Minister last night, putting its position on record, too. The letter states how disturbed it is on behalf of its members, particularly that section of the community that belongs to the Stockowners' Association and occupies the vast area of South Australia, the pastoral division, where people are extremely dependent on the motor vehicle for the purposes of managing pastoral leases. They cannot enjoy any registration rebates even on the vehicles that they are required to register. Naturally enough, they cannot enjoy any registration rebate on the vehicles that they do not register. In both cases, vehicles up to a carrying capacity of eight tonnes have never attracted road maintenance tax. They very seldom, if at all, go out on the road. In no circumstances is it fair for those vehicles to be included in a tax on fuel.

The question could be raised (and undoubtedly it will be

raised) as to how in the hell the Government could administer such a scheme. We have a situation in South Australia (indeed, in every State) where duty free diesolene is available for off-road use, for propelling vehicles on properties, for example. I understand, from the explanation given by the Minister, that it is intended to extend that scheme for the purpose of exempting off-road diesel use within the terms of this Act. I see no reason at all why the State cannot be responsible for administering a common scheme, or a further extension to it, for the purpose of exempting petrol used in off-road vehicles from the tax. In no circumstances, considering the basic principle involved, should off-road vehicle use of fuel be embraced within the ambit of this taxation measure.

I do not propose to go into all of the details of the arguments about how much it will cost and how much actual revenue will be returned, as did my colleague earlier, but I draw to the attention of the House a brief memo that came to me last night from the R.A.A., as follows:

Australian Bureau of Statistics motor vehicle fuel consumption figures for the year ended 30 September 1976, compiled in association with the bureau's survey of motor vehicle usage, showed consumption of 1 181 and 244 megalitres of petrol and diesel respectively.

Tax levels of 1.1 cents a litre and 1.7 cents a litre revenue on the A.B.S. 1976 figures amounts to a total revenue return of \$17 100 000. At the same time, the Government claims that the total revenue will be \$14 000 000. Someone must be wrong. Indeed, I am in no position to dispute the figures, but there is a wide discrepancy between the claims made by the Minister about the anticipated revenue and those of the R.A.A., other motor industry organisations and my colleague, who has done an incredible amount of research into this matter. I tend to believe that the Minister is off the track, and he should be more careful in preparing legislation. He should be more careful, too, when he prepares his second reading explanation in regard to such Bills. Although the second reading explanation has gone on the record without being read, I have obtained a copy. On page 4, the Minister states:

Basically, the legislation provides for each oil company to pay a nominal licence fee, plus a fee based on the value of its sales in a previous period for certain petroleum products, namely, motor spirit and distillate, used in propelling vehicles on roads.

In that context, the Minister has misled the House because the implication in that paragraph, as indeed in a similar paragraph on the previous page (which refers to the report of the Australian Transport Advisory Council of June 1979), is that the whole intent of the organisation recommending to the Government was that the fuel tax apply to vehicles propelled for road use. Yet, hidden in the content of the Bill is this area that allows an extension of the tax to off-road use and use on industrial sites, when there is no justification and moral back-up at all to derive tax from that section of the community.

Regarding motor registration reduction, I cannot let this opportunity go by without reminding the House of the incredible anomaly that already exists within the ambit of motor vehicle taxation in this State. Because each State calculates its motor tax on the size, weight and power of vehicles, specific examples must be used to illustrate the relative tax burden that applies in South Australia. As at 1 July 1979, the combined registration fee, third party premium and stamp duty charged in each State on a new Holden Kingswood six-cylinder sedan, priced at \$6 929, was as follows: in New South Wales, \$309.40; in Victoria (including a surcharge of \$12.50 on the first registration of the vehicle), \$366.60; in Queensland, \$193.60; in Western

Australia, \$171.63; in Tasmania, \$247.27; in the A.C.T., \$212; in the Northern Territory, \$242; and in South Australia—the daddy of them all—\$389. In South Australia, the combined cost for initial registration of a new Holden Kingswood is 25.7 per cent higher than in New South Wales, 6.1 per cent higher than in Victoria, 57 per cent higher than in Tasmania, 83.5 per cent higher than in the A.C.T., 60.7 per cent higher than in the Northern Territory, 100.9 per cent higher than in Queensland, and 126.7 per cent higher than in Western Australia. These figures show that the cost of registering and putting a vehicle on the road in South Australia is dramatically higher than the cost in all other States in Australia. On that basis, to suggest that a 20 per cent registration rebate be extended to some motorists in South Australia is an insult, and a backhand to the primary industry, which is excluded altogether.

I refer to another revenue-raising element that applies to this Bill, bearing in mind that the Bill is specifically related to the licensing of the distributors of fuel. Quite apart from the A class licence, which apparently is required for the purposes of identifying wholesalers involved in this distribution project, service stations in the metropolitan area are involved, as are, I suppose, service stations throughout the State. These service stations are included in the net and will make a contribution to the Government as a result of this Bill. Accordingly, on the figures available, approximately 1 500 retail fuel outlets in South Australia, each paying \$50 per B class licence, will add \$75 000 additional revenue to the Government each year.

The Bill is a total rip-off from beginning to end; it imposes an unfair and cruel burden on the community, which the consumers must ultimately pay. The anomalies that existed in the road maintenance tax system have been repeated in this Bill; the crook areas that applied previously have been incorporated. The Government has jumped from the frying pan into the fire. Those involved have fought year in and year out, with a resultant blockade of truckies from Adelaide to Murray Bridge; the blockade, however, did not do what it was designed to do, even though the road maintenance tax has been unloaded.

The following service stations object, in the form of a hasty petition, to the Government's proposals to embrace their service stations in this Bill and cause them to pay not only a licence fee but a fourth licence fee in relation to their business practices; Ampol Service Station, Underdale; Cross Roads Service Station; Mobil Reedbeds Service Station; Shell Henley Service Station; Porsche Motors; Golden Fleece Service Station, West Beach; V. J. Garuccio Service Station; W. and L. Pomfret Service Station, Burbridge Road; Shell Service Station, Hilton; Brennan's Service Station, Hilton; the Mobil Service Station, Keswick; S. K. Frith, Mobil, Keswick; Golden Fleece Service Station at Frome and Greenhill Roads; Caltex Service Station, Pirie Street, Adelaide; Golden Fleece Service Station, Hackney; B.P. Service Station, Harrington Street; John Scerri Service Station; Mobil St. Helens Service Station; Peter and George's Auto Centre, Blair Athol; Shell Service Station, Kilburn; Raymond A. Russell Service Station, Croydon Park; Skinner's Auto Port, West Croydon; Ampol Service Station, Kilkenny; Shell Service Station, Woodville North; West Motor Engineers, Pennington; Caltex Service Station, Woodville; Basten's Service Station, Woodville; Hindmarsh Service Station; Mile End Service Station; Shell Wainhouse Service Station, Henley Beach Road; a service station at Thebarton; Mercury Motors, Henley Beach; and others that I cannot read.

At this stage, the proprietors of these service stations

must pay a fee for motor fuel distribution and for flammable liquids, to the Department of Labour and Industry, and a fourth fee for a B class licence that is required under this Bill. It is a disgrace that the Minister can sit here and joke about the subject, make a mockery of the whole scheme, give undertakings to the public, and introduce a Bill that does not do what is desired and what he has indicated he will do, in an effort to recover lost revenue from road maintenance tax. He has cheated in this instance.

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. GOLDSWORTHY (Kavel): There is one inescapable fact from which the Government has no answer, and that is that the motorist in South Australia is slugged by this Administration to an extent which is not rivalled by any other State in this Commonwealth.

Mr. Slater: Try the Federal Government.

Mr. GOLDSWORTHY: It is very difficult to make a valid comparison between the finances of the Federal Government and those of the State Government, and even our friend from Gilles ought to have enough grey matter to make that fairly elementary assessment. The Government opposite has, over the years since it has been in office, put in a plea for the little people of this State and said that it will cut down the tall poppies. Members opposite say the Government is the representative of the little people. The former Premier would get up here and wail, cry, scream and shout in an academy award effort, berating the Federal Government for any proposed increase at the Federal level in motor taxes, yet since members opposite have been in Government the charges in this State have far outstripped those in any other State. In fact, they are double. The charges on the working man's car are double those that people in some States in the Commonwealth pay.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: Charges for what?

Mr. GOLDSWORTHY: Motor charges levied by the Government. Here they are for the Minister's benefit. When we add together registration, third party insurance and stamp duties charged in each State and Territory at 14 June 1979, we find that South Australians, these poor little people that the Government is hell-bent to help, pay \$389; in New South Wales the figure is \$309; Victoria, \$366; and Queensland, \$193. People in Western Australia pay less than half—\$184, and that has already gone down from 1 July to \$172; people in Tasmania, pay \$247; those in the A.C.T. pay \$212, and those in the Northern Territory pay \$242. Let the Minister of Transport laugh that off! Despite those figures, they say they are the upholders of the rights, freedoms and privileges of the poor people, the little people, the average people, in this State.

This measure will give them another slug, another hit, in the guise of replacing the road maintenance tax. The Opposition is supporting the Bill, because it believes that the road maintenance tax was a difficult tax, and everyone acknowledged that it was difficult to collect. The Minister bandies around a figure of \$5 000 000 but if we look at the Auditor-General's Report we see that, before we take into account any of the costs of collection (which I have heard admitted in this House by the Minister and by others is very high), these are the sorts of revenues which the tax collected: in 1975-76, \$4 200 000; in 1976-77, \$4 700 000; and in 1977-78, \$4 800 000. That is before a cent is deducted for collecting the tax. I would be very surprised if the Government ever got more than about \$3 000 000 clear out of road maintenance. While I was looking at these figures, interesting little facts emerged which indicated the sort of things that are happening in South

Australia. They have not been able to get all this money because a number of people have gone bankrupt and another is in the hands of the receivers. We see that, in 1975, 260 people went bankrupt; in 1976, 232; and in the next year, 184. The numbers of companies in liquidation were, respectively, 34, 41 and 15. That is an interesting sidelight to show just how business has been progressing in South Australia during the time of this Administration.

A fair bit of the Minister's speech is given over, as is usual, to complaining that the Federal Government has not been able to collect the money for the State. There are two references to this. We know that, when the Premiers, whether Liberal or Labor, come away from the Federal Government, they say that the Federal Government has never given them enough money. It is one time when they are in concert. We had it again this year. There was a cutback in Loan funds, but the fact that there was a massive increase in general purpose grants seems to have escaped the notice of the Premier of this State.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: Do you think we got enough?

Mr. GOLDSWORTHY: This Labor Government will never have enough.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: Do you think we got enough?

Mr. GOLDSWORTHY: Of course, you never get enough for your scheme.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: Did you get enough for yours?

Mr. GOLDSWORTHY: We would have one hell of a job to come to grips with the mess this State is in. I will be the first to admit that, but I can also say, without fear of contradiction, that if we had had a Liberal Government since 1970 we would not have got in this mess. We would not have gone for big government. Members opposite say the public are demanding services. What a myth! Demanding services! So, we now have a whole heap of people on the Government pay-roll, and they cannot be sacked. We realise that our political difficulty would be that we cannot sack people. The best thing the public of South Australia can do would be to sack this Government. The Minister cannot escape the fact that the Government wants the Federal Government to do the dirty work and have the odium of collecting the tax. That is why members opposite do not like this federalism system. They want it both ways. They do not want to raise the money, they just want to spend it. In those circumstances, they will never have enough.

A Labor Government will never have enough, because it works on the philosophy that if you are spending money you are doing good, which is absolute nonsense. We saw that in the years of the Whitlam Government, when the State Government had money running out of its ears for education; they could not spend it fast enough. So we are in this most unhappy position in this State of being saddled with a Government that has been most profligate in the spending of funds. It cannot follow the lead of the other States and reduce taxes. Every other State in the Commonwealth has reduced significantly taxes which affect the little people. Those taxes have been mentioned in the House in the last day or two—taxes like land tax on the residential home, succession duties on successions from parents to children. This is a case in point.

I do not blame the Federal Government. If the Federal Government gets bashed verbally every time it is told that it does not give the States enough and every time it raises a tax, I do not blame it for saying, "Do your own dirty work." If this Government had any sense of responsibility, it would be the first to acknowledge that we will not get good government in this country until the spending authority is the taxing authority. Unfortunately, in this State, in the areas where the Government has the capacity to tax, it really belts hell out of the average citizen. The

table which I quoted indicates just what happens in relation to motor car charges in this State. We pay more than double the charges in Western Australia and almost double the Queensland charges on the average motor vehicle, and we are way above the charges in every other State.

No wonder the Government has seized the opportunity with this Bill to give with one hand and take with the other, except that the hand that is doing the taking is taking a bigger slice. It is not this even-handed sort of operation we would expect if the Government was being honest. It is giving with one hand and taking a lot more with the other. As I say, we do not know exactly how much the Government has cleared in relation to road maintenance tax, but I know perfectly well, as does the Minister, that it was not \$5 000 000 after the cost of collection had been deducted, because it has been acknowledged that the costs of collection are high.

I acknowledge freely that we do not argue with the principle in the Bill, but we certainly argue with some of its detail. The member for Torrens has put that cogently, and I do not intend to go through the figures that he has quoted to the House. Let the Minister, in his reply, refute what the member has said. Let him deny the calculations in relation to this matter, and let him deny that the Government is making extra taxation revenue from the measure. It would not be so bad if the Government put it to us honestly and said that it was short of road funds. We get that impression when the Minister opens his mouth about the Stuart Highway or any other roadworks in the State. We cannot escape the conclusion that the Minister is short of funds.

However, if the Government wants additional road funds, why is it not honest about the matter? Why does it not say that it has the opportunity to raise some road funds and that it will replace the existing tax and raise extra revenue? If the Government did that, at least we would have more respect for it and be prepared to approach the Bill with some measure of sympathy. I do not believe that the Government is being honest, and I do not believe that the Minister does not know that it is raising more revenue from the operation of the Bill than it is giving back in the 20 per cent reduction in fees for the registration of motor cars, which are grossly over-taxed in South Australia.

I am concerned about a matter to which the member for Alexandra has referred, namely, the licence fee. I think he was the first to raise that matter, and it is not an insignificant part of the Bill. It will involve the retailer and the wholesaler in additional charges and additional book work. One complaint that I hear from business people in my district from time to time is that they are fed up to the back teeth with the book work that they are involved in simply in keeping up with the red tape imposed on them by the Government.

I clearly remember visiting a moderate size automotive business in my district not long ago, when I had a bitter complaint from the proprietor. He said, "Is it worth it?" He was about to shut up shop, yet he was providing significant employment in a small country town. Most employment in a country town is on a small scale, in small businesses, and the Government says that it wants to help the small businessman. This Bill makes a further impost on them, and creates further red tape. The proprietor in question said he had to employ an accountant full time, just to keep up with the Government red tape and the returns. Now we are going to lumber these people with another charge and another return.

There is also the case of a small retailer in a very small country centre in my district, and I remember referring to this matter in 1974, when a similar Bill was before the

House. It concerns a little place called Black Hill, which I have not visited for several months. I received a letter from the proprietor of the post office, cum store, cum petrol bowser at that place, complaining bitterly that he had to pay \$50 for a licence fee for the privilege of selling petrol on which he made a profit of \$5 a week. He said, "It is not worth my while to do it. We have local residents and people who pass through and want petrol", and he provided a service. He was making \$5 a week, and he thought that to lumber him with \$50 for a licence fee just for the privilege of selling petrol was a bit steep. I agreed with him. Here are the great champions of the little people, and we have heard it all previously.

I have made my complaint about what is going on in relation to this Bill, which has been dealt with adequately by the member who led for the Opposition. We are prepared to support the measure through the second reading for the sole purpose of having it discussed further. We know that the legislation makes a mockery of the Premier's recent claim that the Government did not want to increase State taxes. I may say it has a narrow definition of "taxes". We know that every State Government charge has been increased. We know what happened to water rates from 1 July: they are the highest in Australia. We also know that the average citizen in the State is being hit to leg, and this Bill bids fair likely to do that further.

We trust that, in the Committee stage, we will be able to improve the measure and cater for the primary producer. The member for Alexandra has dealt with that matter to some extent, but I am concerned about the level of tax that will be levied and the effect it will have not only on the wholesaler but also closer to home in our districts, on the retailer. I am concerned at the effect on the average citizen, because he will be behind further in relation to motoring in this State. I am further concerned, because I do not believe that the Minister is being honest in the way he has presented this Bill to the House.

Mr. BLACKER (Flinders): This measure has been the subject of much speculation in the community in regard to how it has been introduced. Information that has been given to some product organisations earlier does not correspond with the indications in the Bill. My first reaction was to oppose it. However, on the understanding that there is a need for the State to receive some revenue to replace road maintenance tax, it is desirable that such legislation should be debated. However, I am opposed to it in its present form because the people were never given to understand that an escalating scale would be attached to the business franchise levy. It was indicated that the figure could be as high as 1c a litre, and that was how the matter was sold to the public.

Furthermore, my concern has been about the haste with which the Bill has been introduced. If the Bill was parallel to the way it was presented to the public through the press earlier, we might be able to understand the Minister's haste in pushing it through in one day. It was introduced yesterday and I have had no chance to get back to my transport hauliers, and fuel suppliers, wholesalers and retailers to find out how it will affect them, although I have spent much of the Government's money in telephone calls to find that out. I am supporting the second reading, but the measure has caused considerable concern, basically because of the misunderstandings and the poor public relations with which the Minister has presented it to the people. It has been surrounded with mystique. A few weeks ago, when I attended a United Farmers and Graziers (as it was known previously) conference at Murdinga, the President and the Secretary of the organisation said that the Minister had given an assurance

that fuel products for on-farm use would not be included in this measure. There was mention that there may have to be a system of dyeing or colouring the fuel. These were issues suggested about how fuel could be identified for various purposes.

On the basis that primary producers were to be exempt from the provisions of the Bill, the whole issue died. The farming community and the pastoral community were happy in the false belief that they were to be exempt. There is no doubt that the road tax was the curse of the transport industry in more ways than one. It forced many operators to the wall, basically because they were operating on a fine line. As a result, some got behind in payments and were forced out of business. The sad part, from the Minister's point of view, was that he lost public respect, when he tried to sell to the people the idea that this measure was a \$5 000 000 revenue-earning one for the State.

The highest figure ever available was \$4 825 000 gross, and I have said publicly that I believe the Government has never netted more than \$3 000 000 out of it. If the Minister were honest he would admit that it was considerably less than \$3 000 000. It was certainly a very expensive tax to collect, and the Government's reluctance to specify the cost of that collection is a clear indication that it was a totally unprofitable tax, the cost of which, if it were made known, would cause severe embarrassment.

The United Farmers and Graziers have had to rethink its situation since the introduction of this Bill. The member for Alexandra quoted a letter from the State Secretary of that organisation. I do not wish to read that letter in full, but it does clarify and amplify the misunderstanding, either deliberately or accidentally, caused, among the rural community. One of my wholesalers in Port Lincoln has said that he has no way of distinguishing between fuel used for on-road purposes and that used for off-road purposes.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: Motor spirit?

Mr. BLACKER: Diesel fuel. He said that it comes out of the same tank.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: There is a system, which is acceptable to the Commonwealth Government, of identification, and that is what we shall be working on.

Mr. BLACKER: I thank the Minister for raising that matter, because it raises a further issue. If what the Minister has said is the case, it is then the retailer who has to collect this money: it is the retailer who has to differentiate between the types of fuel used. I hope the Minister will explain the situation.

Mr. Gunn: Diesel fuel bought tax free is booked out tax free; when you pay tax on it, it is booked out that way.

Mr. BLACKER: Yes, but it is booked out by the retailer. There is still some confusion in the minds of my colleagues about the way this is done. The bill given to the primary producer is from the retailer, and the retailer receives his fuel from the wholesaler on that basis. The proposed sums of 4.1 per cent per litre for petroleum products and 7.1 per cent for distillate indicate that, from the Eyre Peninsula alone, over \$500 000 will be collected. I also note the road grants for this particular year of \$557 000 in income from the proposed tax, compared to \$342 000. That is considerably less than the revenue which would be received from this measure.

A wholesaler's price at Rudall, based on present figures, is 1.7c per litre for diesel and 1.184c per litre for petrol, so it has already risen above the magical figure of 1c per litre. Regardless of what we call it, it is a tax on country people. People in the metropolitan area share part of this burden—and it is a burden—but basically it is a tax on the cost of living of people who are obligated, through their

place of residence, to pay this additional sum; that is what concerns me.

The Minister told the public that he had to raise \$5 000 000 principally to replace the road maintenance tax. I canvassed that matter and said that it was doubtful whether he ever needed to raise that much money, which had never been netted previously. Secondly, he has put forward a proposal which will raise revenue of \$14 000 000; that is a three fold increase.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: Don't pull up there; what about the registration concessions? You did that regarding the collection of road grants on the West Coast, and that was pretty sneaky.

Mr. BLACKER: The Minister would know as well as I that the revenue-collecting ability under the Bill will probably net from metropolitan motorists three times the concession which he is offering. However, we are not here to debate that issue. The Minister is to be condemned, because he has the gall to sell this proposal on the basis that he has to raise \$5 000 000.

He has introduced a growth tax, and I can understand the Government's wanting such a tax. It is only fair to say that if the Opposition were ever on the Treasury benches it also would want one. However, the Minister was dishonest when he told the general public that the tax would amount to 1c per litre, then immediately implementing a percentage scale which has that automatic growth factor built into it. The whole measure has been introduced under a guise. In the Minister's second reading explanation, referring to an A-class licence, he said:

... where the wholesaler, generally the oil company, will be required to pay \$50 a month plus an additional fee per litre of 4.5 per cent of the bulk wholesale reseller's maximum price for petrol . . .

I note the explanation regarding diesel of 7.1 per cent of the bulk wholesale reseller's price for distillate. I understand that petroleum products do come under price control, but distillate does not. Therefore, there could be a varying degree of tax collection operating throughout South Australia. This worries me, because one person living in a certain part of the State should not have to pay more per litre for petrol than somebody living in the metropolitan area. This issue has not been satisfactorily explained. I support the second reading, but I am quite concerned about the overall implications. I acknowledge that this measure was introduced primarily as a means of replacing the road tax, but in its present form I do not accept it in total. I understand that some amendments are proposed, but if those amendments fail I would have no option but to oppose the Bill outright.

Mr. EVANS (Fisher): I support the Bill through the second reading, although I support my colleague's comments that it needs amending. If, in the end result, the amendments are not accepted and the Bill is not brought into what my Party considers acceptable form, I will oppose it. Ever since I came into this House, and prior to that, I have believed that the registration system we have in South Australia and the fees we charge are improper. It is a serious burden on people who do not wish to use their motor vehicles frequently. It is a system that encourages people and develops a habit in them to use their vehicles, whereas in the past, if we had had lower registration fees, more people may have used public transport.

In the metropolitan area, it is now becoming expensive to leave a motor vehicle in a garage and take public transport. I am not against the move by the Government to reduce registration and to put some form of extra penalty on those who use the roads, by charging extra for the fuel they use. I believe it is a proper practice.

Other countries in the world charge only a nominal registration fee. The fee in England is about £3 a vehicle, whether for a Rolls Royce or a Mini Minor. In America in 1974, the registration fee was \$10 in American currency for any motor vehicle. We are moving in the right direction, but not fast enough. We should be charging motorists about \$10 to register a vehicle, regardless of type, making registration available for up to five years. In that way, we would not need so many people to administer registration, and we would not be penalising people who wished to leave their vehicle in the garage, using it only when necessary. We could encourage more people to use public transport, which is a big burden on the State and which serves mainly only the metropolitan area.

I support the move to reduce registration in some categories, but I hope that registration fees would be reduced, in all categories, to about \$10 a vehicle. I hope that all sides of politics would accept that principle, because that is the only way to encourage people to use vehicles less, yet still retain them for convenience.

Mr. Venning: How can you use them less?

Mr. EVANS: Less than they are used at the moment, especially within the metropolitan area. One aspect of the Bill is covered by the arguments used by country members. I was a country member before the metropolitan area caught up with my district. People in the outer fringes of the metropolitan area do not have a satisfactory public transport system, and are forced to use motor vehicles to commute to work. Many Government members have people in that category in their districts, as I do.

While the fringe areas have a poor public transport service provided by the Government, they are having placed on them a heavier penalty for using their vehicles, with a small reduction in registration fees. In the main, they are the people who travel the greatest distances to work, so they use more fuel. Under this system, they will thus carry the heaviest burden of all metropolitan residents. I understand the problems of country people who must travel long distances in the course of their daily lives, business or private. I recognise that their burdens are greater, but the people in the outer fringes of the metropolitan area will suffer more under the legislation than will the people in any other sections of the metropolitan area, and the Government should recognise that.

I am always concerned about exemptions. During the war years, fuel was available under certain conditions, but the Armed Forces fuel supplies were dyed a red colour. Persons who stole that fuel and sold it to private operators were sometimes apprehended, as were some of the private operators, and severe penalties were imposed. Dye is used in the United States, and the member for Flinders said there has been some talk of introducing that. I believe it is the only way to introduce some form of honesty into the system. With any form of exemption, it is always the honest who pay the bill. The dishonest manipulate the system, as is done with income tax. If there is a loophole, they will use it.

If a person has an exemption certificate, as with the diesel fuel that is available for primary producers or off-road users through the Federal customs and excise authorities, he can use diesel fuel, for which he has gained an exemption, for his road vehicle. He should not do that, but it is impossible to catch that person. If the excise people wish to check by reading speedometers on on-road vehicles, it is a simple practice for the owner to disconnect the speedometer cable for a few days or a few weeks, and then reconnect it. That is done regularly by many people, and it is almost impossible to catch them. Some say they

buy fuel from various garages, and there is no way of checking cash purchases and the quantity of fuel used.

I support the exemption for the off-road vehicle and for off-road use, whether for stationary engines, earthmoving equipment, farm equipment, or on waterways, but we must have a system so that we can catch up with the dishonest. If not, the burden is placed on the honest, or people are encouraged to be dishonest. It is a pity to allow such a provision to operate.

I received a letter today from a person who complained about the proposal for an extra tax on fuel. He is a motorist with no suitable public transport in his area to enable him to travel to and from work. He lives at Upper Sturt. His letter states:

With the ever-increasing need for fuel conservation, perhaps there should be greater incentives for people to use motor cycles and at the same time be more safety conscious.

To slug a 350cc motor cycle \$140 per annum for third party insurance, compared with \$105 per annum for a private car, is a penalty, and no incentive at all.

He has an argument. Quite often the motor cyclist is not the person most at fault in an accident, but he receives major injuries. We do not recognise the penalties we are putting unjustly on motor cyclists. That is another area the Minister needs to look at.

I will support the second reading, having made the points about registration, exemptions, and catching up with the dishonest, and also having drawn attention to the situation of people in the outer fringes of the metropolitan area, who should have better transport facilities, and who have to pay a greater penalty under the Bill than do inner metropolitan residents.

Mr. MILLHOUSE (Mitcham): I am dashed if I support the second reading. I have not heard one argument the whole afternoon which would lead me to support the second reading, and yet everyone on the Opposition side keeps on saying that they will support the second reading, in some vain hope that the mass of amendments on file will be passed. We all know that there is not one hope, not the hope of a hailstone in hell, that any of these amendments will go through, so the whole thing is a blasted sham and a farce.

Mr. Arnold: What was your policy on the road maintenance tax?

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I do not like the road maintenance tax, and for many years I have said so, but that does not mean we have to accept, in 24 hours, a most complex Bill in substitution for it. It is absurd for the member for Chaffey to make that interjection. Does he think that is an argument in favour of taking anything, because we do not like it? That is about the standard of the so-called shadow Ministers of the Liberal Party. I am not prepared to support this Bill in any shape or form, and I cannot understand why the member for Chaffey (perhaps he will be able to explain it to the people of Renmark) should support the Bill at all. Every argument we have heard from the member for Torrens and the member for Alexandra—

Mr. Chapman: You weren't here half the time.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I have one of these idiot boxes downstairs. I could hear the debate.

Members interjecting:

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I know the Liberals are aware that they have made a tactical error now, and they are committed to it. They are rather regretting that they will be shown as supporting the blasted Bill. But that is their bad luck. They ought to work themselves out a bit better and co-ordinate their affairs before they come into the

Chamber. What they are doing is nothing but a sham, and I will not be a part of a sham.

The Bill was introduced yesterday, and I have done my best to read and understand it. I can read the words, but I am dashed if I can understand the whole thing. For it to be pushed through in one day is absurd, and I am not prepared, for that reason alone, to be a part of it. I accept the arguments against the Bill that have been advanced by members who have spoken but who will now support it. I accepted them and will act on them. This will be complex legislation that will put burdens on those who must administer it. Of course, the legislation is not really necessary, as we know from the example of other States. The Government will take off the road maintenance tax, which none of us likes, and get back about twice as much with an escalating figure for the future. What sort of a sham is that? I thought the Government said that, when the road maintenance tax went off, it would be replaced with an equivalent tax, but that is not the case at all.

Mr. Chapman: Do you support the amendments?

Mr. MILLHOUSE: If it is worth supporting them, I will.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member cannot canvass amendments.

Members interjecting:

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I am sorry, but I cannot hear you, Sir, above this cacophony.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! That is a pity, because the honourable member cannot now canvass the amendments on file.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I was not going to canvass any amendments, but I had an interjection from the Liberals, asking whether I would support them.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member should not reply to interjections.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: Very well, I will try not to, in future, including your own, Sir, when you are not in the Chair.

Members interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Interjections are out of order. The honourable member for Mitcham should address himself to the Chair.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: This is complex legislation which will be a burden to administer. In all fairness, I realise that we in Australia (and this is, of course, an answer to the member for Fisher) are in a difficult position because no State Government can put on an excise. Therefore, we cannot just put a tax on petrol.

Mr. Chapman: Western Australia has.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: Well, they are fools if they have done that, and it will not last long.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: They haven't.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I am pleased to hear from the Minister that they have not, and I accept what the Minister says rather than what the member for Alexandra says about the matter. They would be foolish to try to do that, because it is unconstitutional—no State Government can do it. South Australia tried in the late 1920's, but the High Court ruled it out. That has been the situation ever since. So, we are in a difficult situation, as I acknowledge. We cannot do what the "Brits" do, namely, have a fuel tax and a low registration fee, if we are to make people who use the facilities pay for them. That is obvious. However, that does not excuse a Bill such as this.

There is only one specific matter to which I refer and which the Liberals have not even picked up. Clause 37 refers to proceedings in respect of offences that are to be disposed of summarily. When we have the enormous monetary penalties that we have in the Bill, in my view a person should be entitled, if he so desires, to trial by jury in the District Criminal Court. Worse still, we find in the

clause a quiet little provision (perhaps the Liberals will take some note of this and, although they missed it this time, they may care to do something about it in another place)—

Mr. Chapman: We have got some colleagues in another place.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I know that the Opposition in this place must rely heavily on its colleagues in another place for any legal advice that they can get. However, I am offering them a bit of free advice this time, and it is worth more than the fee that I am charging.

The Hon. G. R. Broomhill: Why don't you rejoin them? They need a lawyer on the front bench.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I know that they are desperately in need of it, but even that need would not be sufficient justification for me to return to the Liberal Party. From the way that they treat me sometimes, I am not sure, despite their desperation, that they really want me.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am not sure that this has anything to do with the Bill.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: It has absolutely nothing to do with the Bill. I return to clause 37 (2), which provides that proceedings for offences against the Act may commence at any time within two years after the day on which the offence is alleged to have been committed. If members look in the Justices Act, they will find that for summary offences the normal time is six months. So, the Government and the bureaucrats who will administer this legislation are giving themselves four times as long to pick up offences and to prosecute people as is the norm in this State. When one links that with the fact that these offences are to be dealt with summarily and not by jury, one realises that that, of itself, is a very bad thing, and I cannot understand why nothing has been said about it.

Why should the Government make it so much easier for itself by giving itself two years, instead of the usual six months, to pick up offences? If the Liberals have any sense at all they will back an amendment to reduce that period from two years to six months.

Mr. Chapman: Have you got an amendment on file?

Mr. MILLHOUSE: No, because I will vote against the Bill.

Mr. Arnold: You're not worried about amendments, then.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: They are of no use at all in this Chamber. I do not know why the member for Chaffey takes such an antagonistic attitude towards me on this occasion, because I am trying to be helpful. Normally, he is like a mouse and does not open his mouth, but he has been interjecting and going red for the whole time that I have been speaking.

Mr. Hemmings: He's the shadow Minister now.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: Perhaps that makes a difference. Actually, I thought he was that before. I am opposed to the Bill and the principle of it. I am against the way that it is being put into effect, and I therefore intend to oppose the second reading.

Mr. GUNN (Eyre): I wish to make only one or two brief comments regarding this Bill, as my colleague, the member for Torrens, covered it in great detail. The member for Mitcham can afford the luxury of being irresponsible in this Chamber. It is obvious that he and the few people in South Australia who support him will never be the Government in this State, so they can carry on as irresponsibly as they like. The Liberal Party, which will be the Government after the next election, has a responsibility to the people of this State to act responsibly.

No-one has been a stronger critic of the Road Maintenance (Contribution) Act than I, and I was

delighted when action was taken to have this form of taxation removed. It was a cumbersome tax, which caused much inconvenience to the people involved in the transport industry, who had to fill out blasted forms every month that required more details than did their income tax returns. They had to state at what time the journey commenced and finished, and all the other nonsense in the world. It was certainly a bureaucrat's paradise, having inspectors taking the numbers of vehicles, when they were parked, and writing to people wanting to know how many kilometres their vehicles had travelled on a certain day.

Mr. Wotton: I wonder what all those people are doing now.

Mr. GUNN: They were dual inspectors; they held other positions within the Highways Department's inspectorate. However, when the Government announced that it would impose a fuel tax, I believed (and so did most other people in South Australia who knew anything about this matter) that the sum charged would recoup the Government the money that it lost in relation to the abolition of the Road Maintenance (Contribution) Act. Unfortunately, it would appear from reading the Bill that the Government intends rather to collect far more than it will lose. My constituents have expressed to me great concern regarding this matter.

I think they all recognise that, if roads are to be maintained in a reasonable condition, they must be prepared to pay a reasonable sum. In the past, they have been ripped off by the road tax. My constituents were paying road tax for the worst roads in Australia. Many times they were forced to pay it at times when they were driving through bulldust and, sometimes, through mud. There was no justification for that, nor is there any justification for introducing another system that could have the effect of grossly discriminating against those in outlying areas.

It is absolutely essential that people living in my district have motor vehicles just to go about their normal daily activities. Secondly, there is built into the cost of daily goods and services that they receive a freight component. If these charges, which will be levied under the Bill, bring about an increase in freight costs, every person living outside the metropolitan area will have that freight component greatly increased. That, in itself, is not only unfortunate but undesirable. The member for Alexandra clearly pointed out the concern of the United Farmers and Graziers. I was contacted early this afternoon by a person representing that organisation, in the western part of my district. We have had little time to consider the legislation, and I hope that the Minister has considered what the R.A.A. has had to say. I remind him of the first paragraph of the association's letter, as follows:

The association council is concerned that the current proposal for a replacement scheme for the road maintenance tax significantly shifts the tax burden from heavy vehicle operators to private motorists and operators of vehicles under eight tonnes.

Many vehicles under eight tonnes are not used on roads very often.

Mr. Chapman: Some not at all.

Mr. GUNN: Rarely at all, but these vehicles have to be registered, because a person occasionally has to go on to a road, and cannot run the risk of committing an offence.

Mr. Wotton: They must be registered even if they want to cross the road.

Mr. GUNN: Yes. The R.A.A.'s concern is a common concern that has been expressed by large sections of the community. The association's letter continues:

The expected revenue figure announced of \$14 000 000 appears conservative. Registration cuts amounting to \$6 150 000 will result in a net gain which is in excess of the

loss of revenue through abolition of road maintenance tax (\$5 000 000).

We all know that the motorists are the easiest group in the community to milk. All Governments have consistently milked the motorist on every possible occasion, because he has no alternative but to pay. This Government would take the cake for milking the motoring public of Australia. The Deputy Leader pointed out, and I repeat, that we have the highest charges in Australia for the initial registration of a motor vehicle. It was interesting to examine some of the figures. In South Australia, it is 25 per cent higher than in New South Wales, 100 per cent higher than in Queensland, and 111 per cent higher than in Western Australia for the combined cost of the initial registration of a new Holden Kingswood.

I sincerely hope that the sensible and logical amendments which the member for Torrens will move at the appropriate time will be accepted. I make clear that I am prepared to support the second reading but, if his amendments are not accepted, I shall certainly oppose the third reading of the Bill, because I am not prepared to give the Minister what would amount to an open cheque. We saw the crocodile tears shed by the Government yesterday at the fuel-pricing policy currently operating in Australia: one day later, it sets out in a devious fashion to use that system to its own advantage. The people it has been criticising have been open and frank about the particular policies on which they have based their fuel pricing, but this Government, by clear deception, is setting out to exploit a situation to line the pockets of its own Treasury. The public of South Australia is most concerned at the effects of the legislation. I cannot think why there is the need to rush it through. Why could it not lie on the table until next week or the week after?

Mr. Wilson: The companies have to apply for a price rise.

Mr. GUNN: That may be correct, but adjustments can occur in the sum to be charged. I believe that it would be appropriate, when the measure reaches another stage, and after we have dealt with the first clause, if progress could be reported and the Bill allowed to stand for the time being. I will attempt to do that.

In conclusion, I hope that the Minister will rethink his current position and honour what I understand were the undertakings he made to certain organisations and consider the great concern that has been expressed at the measure.

Mr. ARNOLD (Chaffey): If this Bill ever becomes law, not only will it be one of the greatest tax rip-offs we have seen for a long time; it will also be a glorious example of this Government's collecting a tax clearly under false pretences.

Members interjecting:

Mr. ARNOLD: I believe that the member for Stuart and my little friend the member for Mitcham would both be well aware that there is no point in opposing a Bill at the second reading if there is an opportunity of amending it. Most responsible South Australians (and that does not include the member for Mitcham, because he is in the happy position of being an Independent and can operate totally without responsibility, knowing that he will never be in the position of having to accept the responsibilities of government) would realise my point.

Members interjecting:

Mr. ARNOLD: The reason why we are supporting the second reading is that my Party adopts a responsible position as regards legislation. In adopting that responsible position, there will be a number of important amendments which will bring the concept of this

legislation back into line with what the people of South Australia have accepted: road maintenance tax should be replaced by a fuel franchise tax, and that is precisely what my Party supports, because it has a responsible approach to this matter. Obviously, if we adopted an irresponsible approach to legislation, we would oppose all measures that affect the charges made on South Australians. That would be totally irresponsible, and perhaps we cannot expect much better from the member for Mitcham. If this Bill becomes law, the Government will be collecting taxes under false pretences in certain areas.

The boating industry will involve a complete collection of tax on fuel used in petrol-powered boats. Most small privately owned boats in South Australia are trailer boats; owners will still pay the registration fees for the boat and trailer, and the sum involved in the increased fuel consumption of the towing vehicle will contribute to road maintenance. A charge by the Government, for road maintenance purposes, applying to boats or vehicles that in no way contribute to the wear and tear of highways is completely dishonest and cannot be supported.

Mr. Keneally: How would you organise it?

Mr. ARNOLD: The member for Fisher indicated what was the practice in overseas countries, where fuel can be coloured to show whether or not a tax had been paid on it. The Minister can laugh and carry on in his normal manner, but the points made by the honourable member are pertinent and responsible. That procedure is adopted in much larger countries than Australia where it works successfully and does not leave the system open to the abuse that is possible under this Bill. That system, as it applies to diesel fuel, is largely an honesty system, and although many people will abide by the law, others will not. An exemption is provided in the Bill for off-road vehicles, but 95 per cent of those vehicles are petrol-driven vehicles and not diesel powered, so that the exemption is of little value for off-road vehicles. As regards horticultural and fruitgrowing industries, the member for Mitcham questioned whether people in the Riverland would accept the franchise tax in place of the road maintenance tax, but the majority of responsible people agree that that is what should be done. What they do not agree with is the Minister's increasing the tax to such a level that it greatly exceeds what was collected in road maintenance tax, especially as it will be an on-going tax that will become an increasing burden on the community. I support the second reading.

Mr. Millhouse: That's amazing! Everything that the honourable member said has been against the Bill, yet now he supports it. Not one thing has he said in favour of it, yet now he supports it.

Mr. ARNOLD: The honourable member bases his standard of contribution in this House on the number of interjections that he can make. Unfortunately, that type of contribution is of little value to the House, because it clouds the general issue.

Mr. Millhouse: I am sorry to have embarrassed you, Peter.

Mr. ARNOLD: The honourable member has caused me no embarrassment at all. I support the second reading to try to have our amendments carried. If we can have the amendments inserted, the Bill will come back into line with the original concept of replacing the road maintenance tax with a petrol franchise. If that can be achieved, it will retain income to the State for roadworks, and it will not add any additional burden to the people of South Australia. Presently, however, the Bill increases that burden. I am willing to support the second reading, knowing that it will be extremely difficult to get the Government to accept the amendments but, in the long

term, after those amendments are considered here, the Bill will be considered in another place. What the final outcome of the Bill will be, anyone can guess but, whilst it is before this House, the Liberal Party will be supporting the second reading to allow the amendments to be moved.

If the amendments are not accepted by the Government, we will be voting against the third reading. That situation has been made clear to the House, and that is the responsible approach to this measure. Certainly, it is far more responsible than the irresponsible approach that has been outlined by the member for Mitcham, who I believe has no responsibility concerning this State and who, in fact, is trying—

The Hon. G. R. Broomhill: To stir?

Mr. ARNOLD: No, he is trying to make cheap political capital from his position as an Independent, knowing that he will never have to accept responsibility for Government in South Australia. The fruitgrowing industry operates generally on a smaller scale as regards machinery use, but smaller machines are more often powered by petrol than are machines used on larger farm undertakings. For this reason, unless our amendments are accepted, the Bill will affect smaller horticultural and primary producers more than anyone else. I will support the second reading and, as I have said, if the amendments are accepted, the Liberal Party will support the third reading. However, if they are not accepted, then we will vote against the third reading.

Mr. RODDA (Victoria): The member for Mitcham and I are the only two members on the Opposition side who, although for a short time, have been Ministers, and we have both had the experience of grabbing a quid where possible, although I do not suggest that that is what the Minister is doing. However, for as long as I can remember, road maintenance tax has been like a sore bottom to a boundary rider. Ever since I have been a member of the Liberal Party, and long before, it has been argued that a tax should go on fuel, and that the user should pay. When it was announced that this tax would be levied, I was the shadow Minister of Agriculture, and I received many telephone calls from primary producers who saw themselves being caught in the dragnet.

With my colleague, the member for Alexandra (who was then looking after transport), I issued a press statement. I was over on the West Coast looking after the interests of the member for Eyre (and very well, if I may say so) and I was heartened (as all the farmers on the West Coast were heartened) to hear the Minister say that he would introduce amendments to take care of the off-road vehicle as it applied to primary production. That is the only point I want to make. Clause 18 (1) (a) states:

(i) 4.5 per centum of the value of motor spirit;
and

(ii) 7.1 per centum of the value of diesel fuel,

That is a set charge. If the price goes up, the take goes up, and this is one of the things worrying members on this side of the House, including myself. Clause 18 (2) states, in part:

(c) the value of any diesel fuel sold by the applicant or, as the case may be, a member of the applicant's group during the relevant period that is to be used otherwise than for propelling diesel engined road vehicles on roads,

shall be disregarded.

I implore the Minister to extend his generosity (as I know he is chock-a-block full of it) by taking a step further and applying that to motor spirit for off-road vehicles. That is my first point. Secondly, in the same clause the Minister has bestowed upon him by subclause (5) the following power:

Subject to subsections (7) and (8) of this section, the Minister may, by notice published in the *Gazette*, determine a value per litre for motor spirit and a value per litre for diesel fuel for the purposes of subsection (4) of this section. That gives him the power to do something about the per centum charges. That is an area where we should have some assurance from the Minister that he will use his bestowed power to do something about the take. The big fear is that, when the sums have been done, they will prove that this is a rip-off. If there is not some assurance given, members on this side of the House will be looking down the barrel of a rip-off. I make those two points on behalf of primary producers and all those people who have off-road vehicles, and stationary motors that are not wearing out the roads. I do not think that there is any argument about the user paying. As the Constitution of this country is drawn, this is the way it has to be approached.

Mr. VENNING (Rocky River): It can be said that this legislation has come about because of the strike by the truckies a few weeks ago. Whilst it was an effective exercise by those concerned, I believe it was incorrect in that truck drivers who did not wish to join the queue should have been permitted to carry on with their journey. It is totally wrong to say that the police were unable to handle the situation. I go along with what the truckies did, but I believe that they had no right to force a person to join the queue if he did not wish to.

We would never have had road maintenance charges in this State if, years ago, the States had agreed to a Federal franchise. The only way that the States would agree to that franchise was that the money so far collected in a State was spent in that State. One can imagine the difference between the amounts collected in New South Wales, with its large population, and Western Australia. As a consequence, the States could not arrive at a formula to suit everybody. I was amazed at the lengths to which the Highways Department went to collect its dues. I was talking one night to the right-hand man of an inspector who told me that they had travelled several miles into the back country to pick up money owing for road maintenance charges for some time. This is the history of road maintenance, and I think most people are pleased to see it go. I must say, though, what price the abolition of road maintenance tax? By the same token, while we are pressing for the abolition of death duties in this State one has to say, with this Government, "at what cost?"

The SPEAKER: Order! There is nothing about death duties in this Bill.

Mr. VENNING: I know, but I am talking about the actions of this Government. I ask, at what price? That is the burning question with this legislation. The Minister has said that, if he finds that the Government is getting a lot more money than it had anticipated, he will reduce registration fees further to 30 per cent, but he is playing it safe and is only reducing them by 20 per cent.

Something had to take the place of road maintenance tax, so we have this Bill before us today. There is going to be a levelling out of the whole procedure in this State, and all motorists will pay. I believe that, if it were possible, the Government would have said that it would give exemptions to off-road vehicles and boat owners, but under the proposed scheme it would be very difficult, unless a system of coloured fuel was implemented. The amount of money involved is not great. Those people will be saying that they are not road users and that, therefore, they should not be contributing to road maintenance.

The Minister has mentioned off-road vehicles and farm vehicles. Tractors and headers, in the main, are diesel-

powered, but quite a few headers still run on petrol. I believe that the Minister will have to consider putting motor spirit used for off-road use in the same category as diesel fuel used for off-road use. It can be handled in the same way as diesel fuel, in a bulk situation. Where petrol is purchased in bulk, I believe that this can be done. My Party intends moving an amendment to this legislation to cover that situation. I would be disappointed if the Minister did not note this point.

We have listened today to the member for Mitcham, and it is the same old story over again. I have a few words I would like to quote to the House that I learned when in kindergarten, as follows:

Robin's Song

God made little Robin,
In the days of Spring;
"Please," said little Robin,
"When am I to sing?
When am I to sing?"

The SPEAKER: The honourable member must stick to the clauses of the Bill.

Mr. VENNING: I will link it up directly, but I have to go through it first. The poem continues:

God then spoke to Robin,
"You must sing always;
But your sweetest carol
Keep for wintry days,
Keep for wintry days."

God heard Robin singing
Such a welcome song:
"Cheer up, little children,
Summer won't be long!
Summer won't be long!"

God loves all the children,
And it makes Him glad,
If they sing like Robin
When the days are sad,
When the days are sad.

I think members would agree with me that there would be many sad days for the people of this State if the member for Mitcham was allowed to handle the legislation in this House and this State in the manner he would wish to. I support this legislation to the third reading stage and I would hope that the Minister will consider the amendments that will be put forward later and explained by members on this side of the House today.

Mr. WOTTON (Murray): It is a very hard act to follow after Robert Louis Stevenson's effort! I want to be brief, because everything that needs to be said has been said. I wish to make a few comments in relation to what has been said, particularly in relation to my electorate. It used to worry me a great deal, and I used to have many complaints from constituents in relation to road maintenance tax. I probably had as many complaints about road maintenance tax as anything else. It used to concern me a great deal when I travelled anywhere from Tailem Bend to Adelaide and saw the inconvenience that the drivers and operators were going through as a result of that tax, not to mention the cost to the Government of bringing in that tax. I am not very pleased about this legislation. In fact, it sickens me that the Government should be looking to gain so much additional revenue from this legislation over and above what normally would have been gained by the Government as a result of road maintenance tax. It also makes me wild that the Government has not, at this stage, looked at exempting from the provisions of the Bill motor spirit used for non-road purposes.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: We have looked at it.

Mr. WOTTON: Not much has been done about it though. We are going to give the Government the opportunity of doing something now and, if it does not, a lot of people in this State will be very upset about the Government in this State. I am also not thrilled about the time factor involved in the introduction of this legislation. It is important legislation and we are expected to look at it over a very short period; in fact, we have had one day to consult with our electorates. It was introduced in this House yesterday.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: There was an advance copy of the legislation.

Mr. WOTTON: We were given a copy yesterday, and we had to consult our electorates; that is what I am grizzling about. This legislation, as has been said already, is nothing more than a rip-off, and I am particularly concerned about the rip-off to the country people. It seems that country people are penalised today in so many ways, particularly by this Government. They are automatically penalised for living in the country by way of taxes, fuel, freight, higher living and operating costs, sometimes the lack of amenities, communications, medical attention, etc. The present Government in South Australia is doing absolutely nothing to help the people in the country at present. Escalating fuel costs are probably the biggest immediate worry to a country constituent because of distance, particularly if the people are on the land. This legislation, as has been said by members on this side of the House, is nothing more than a rip-off. I will support the second reading of the Bill purely to allow two important amendments to go through. I started off by saying that I was concerned about the extra revenue. I am also concerned that non-road vehicles are not exempted. I will be interested to see what the Minister and the Government do about this situation. I am not going to finish up with a song; rather, I will quote a letter which I received today from a constituent in my electorate, as follows:

I have been prompted to write to you to voice my protest after reading the editorial "Room to spare" in this week's *Standard*.

The local Murray Bridge paper has concentrated this week in its editorial on many of the problems being experienced by country people today. The letter continues:

It is true that escalating fuel costs are certainly going to be felt by all, but, as mentioned in the article, it will be doubly harsh for those of us living in the country.

But what are us country folk and the politicians who represent us doing about it? I hope that, as my representative in Parliament, you will do something to make the city politicians realise the extra penalties being meted out to those in the country before we all pack up for the city life.

Mr. Keneally: Signed, "Dad."

Mr. WOTTON: It is not signed "Dad" at all. That is only one of a large number of similar pieces of correspondence which I have received from constituents in country areas who are very concerned about the plight of the country person. We anxiously await the Government's decision and what the Minister of Transport will do in regard to the amendments that we are to put forward. If the Government cannot support those amendments, it will live to regret it.

Mr. RUSSACK (Goyder): It is not my intention to cover all the ground that other speakers and my colleagues have covered. I support the remarks that have been made by my colleagues on this side of the House. The Government has taken the opportunity, in replacing the road maintenance tax, not just to replace it but to extend that tax, or a tax in

its place, and to bring other taxpayers into the net.

Over recent weeks, and on one night at a meeting, I suggested that in this legislation it would be necessary to see that off-road use of motor spirit was not taxed. There came a ready response from one in the audience who said, "But the Minister has already given that assurance." I understand that that assurance came down through the farmer organisations, and there must have been some discussions and some understanding for this to have been said. I am very disappointed that this Bill does not specifically provide for the exemption of off-road motor spirit to its full degree for use in stationary motors, in vehicles that are used for off-road purposes in the agricultural industry, and for marine use.

There is an immense amount of spirit that is used for marine purposes that have nothing to do with road maintenance. When one considers that this is supposed to replace the road maintenance contribution, it is not only replacing it but also extending it and placing a greater imposition on many people who would otherwise not be involved. The Minister has the ability referred to in clause 18 (5). When we say the Minister has the ability, we realise it has to be approved by the Government of the day and approved by Cabinet, but there is the ability to increase this tax at any time the Government sees fit.

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

Mr. RUSSACK: Prior to the dinner break I was suggesting that the Government had the right to vary the sum received at any time that the Minister saw fit. One of the major questions that has been asked by constituents is: "Will the money be used for the purpose of road construction and maintenance?" I notice in clause 30 that the procedure will be that money will be paid from general revenue to the Highways Fund as soon as practicable after each month of collection and after the assessed cost of the administration of the Act during that month has been deducted. Will the Minister say that this money, after being collected, will be spent specifically for the construction and maintenance of roads?

I was contacted by a council in my area, which pointed out that local government was exempt from road maintenance tax; however, under this Bill, local government will be obliged to pay an additional tax for the fuel used. I wrote to the Minister on 5 July asking whether consideration would be given to the fact that local government right across the State, not only in country areas, will now have to pay a tax on fuel used, and asking him to take into account that local government did not pay road maintenance tax. I received a reply from the Minister dated 17 July, and part of that reply is as follows:

Following the decision by the mainland States to abolish road maintenance charges from 1 July 1979, the South Australian Government approved of the introduction of a fuel tax as the most equitable means of replacing the road maintenance charges.

If one examines what other States have done, one finds that in South Australia there is to be a \$50 licence fee. In Queensland and Western Australia I understand there will be no licence. There will be a licence in Victoria, but I do not know whether the cost will be \$50; however, it could well be, because I have also been told that this Bill, in principle, follows the Victorian legislation. The licence fee is not really equitable on a national basis. The letter continues:

At this stage it is envisaged that the fuel tax will be in the order of 1c per litre on motor spirit and about 1.5 c per litre on diesel fuel. It is also envisaged that the regulations under the Motor Vehicles Act will be amended to provide for

substantial reductions in registration fees for passenger motor cars and other varying reductions in registration fees for motor vehicle derivatives, so as to ensure that heavy vehicles which cause greater wear and tear to roads will continue to contribute to the maintenance of these roads.

From that, I assess that, if heavy vehicles are wearing away the roads, they travel mainly on the State highways, and a higher standard of road will result. We must remember that many of these vehicles traverse the metropolitan area, for which funds should be provided if this measure goes through as the Government wishes. The letter continues:

In conclusion, you may be assured that all the matters raised in your letter were thoroughly examined prior to the preparation of the abovementioned draft legislation.

Local government should have been considered, because the Bill provides for a greater impost on local government. Perhaps the Minister is a little upset because his portfolio was taken from him and given to the Minister of Community Development. If full consideration has been given to this matter, I assume that the Minister does not mind that local government will pay more; that does not seem to matter. I vividly remember the Minister's saying many times that local government must stand on its own feet. Even though this may be a minor matter of expense (it is considerable in many areas), the Minister says, "Let local government stand on its own feet. The Government will not worry about the fact that local government did not have to pay road maintenance tax or that the fuel tax will be a heavier burden."

I return to the words the Minister used in his letter regarding the most equitable means of replacing the road maintenance tax. I cannot emphasise too much the word "replacement", as many vehicles and motors that use fuel but do not use the roads will have to pay this tax. In the definition clause, aviation gasoline is not included, and I agree that it should not be. If aviation gasoline is not included because planes do not use the roads, engines and off-road vehicles should also be exempt if a policy of equitability is to be followed. If this formula can be used and if it is effective in regard to diesel fuel, why cannot a formula be introduced that will enable off-road vehicles to be exempt? I speak mainly of petrol stationary engines, grain carriers on farming properties, petrol driven headers, farming machinery driven by gasoline and not diesel fuel, and vehicles used for marine purposes. If the Government is to be equitable, these uses must be considered.

I wish to bring forward those points, and I hope that the Bill will emerge to the third reading stage in a better and more acceptable form than at present. The Bill should be more equitable. Because it is a replacement of a road maintenance tax, only those vehicles used on the roads should be taxed. Also, the private motorist should not have a greater impost than he now has. In saying that, I mean that the Government should give greater consideration to a larger concession in relation to the registration of vehicles.

Mr. ALLISON (Mount Gambier): I wish to point out to the Minister a few of the more important objections that have been raised to this Bill by people in the South-East of South Australia.

Mr. Millhouse: Do you support the Bill? Tell us what you are going to do.

Mr. ALLISON: I should have asked, "Who killed cock robin?" The Minister should realise that this is probably one more nail in the decentralisation coffin. The South Australian Government has made great play of its decentralisation incentives, but one has to consider that anything which increases very substantially the cost of

road transport for people travelling from Adelaide to remote country areas must surely militate against industry and commerce and against individuals wishing to leave the metropolitan area to settle in country areas. Whether the Government therefore is interested in decentralisation or whether it is a lip service bulletin that it keeps issuing is a question that has to be asked increasingly.

I am informed by people in the South-East that this tax will have considerable effects upon the import and export of materials by road transport. We are dependent to a large extent on the very substantial road transport industry in the South-East for the movement of materials into and out of the area, and many of the things that we produce in the South-East are quite heavy primary products that need considerable transport. The cost of transport is very considerable, so the likelihood of people being more interested in country areas for decentralisation programmes is diminishing.

I realise that South Australia has a problem in attracting any form of industry to the State and therefore the differential increases in fuels which are being introduced here must also have an effect not only on decentralisation but also on the possibility of industry and commerce even coming to Adelaide. Western Australia has one price range, and Victoria has another. South Australia has yet a third, and South Australia's will be indexed upwards quite significantly, because it is a percentage increase rather than a fixed price per litre. Western Australia and Victoria have already taken the fixed price per litre alternative.

That means that people who consider the freight component would surely look to those two States and say, "Right, at least we know where we are going; the cost is a fixed one, whereas in South Australia, if the OPEC people increase their prices substantially over the next two or three years, the increase to the State Government coffers will obviously also be very substantial." That point has been made repeatedly.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: Why will it be?

Mr. ALLISON: Obviously, if you are going to index the prices upwards, you ignore the clause in the Bill which gives you the right to declare.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: But you are ignoring it.

Mr. ALLISON: I am not ignoring it, but I am suspicious of the Minister's intentions, because the Minister has on numerous occasions in the past by regulation simply announced that he was going to increase the cost of registration of vehicles. Although at this stage he has given a 20 per cent discount and implied that he will consider further reductions depending upon the amount of additional income raised, I am nevertheless suspicious that, once the impact of this tax has passed over and people have absorbed it, it would be equally simple for the Minister or his successor, who may not be so honourable a man as the present Minister, may think that it is quite sensible to increase the cost of registration of motor vehicles. That, of course, is not built into the legislation: it is simply a Ministerial promise, and we are all well aware of the value of Ministerial promises. The people have been fighting shy of them for many years. They are aware that, unless a provision is built into the legislation, things can be changed overnight.

We are rather disturbed that this increase in petrol prices—yet one more increase—will greatly increase the cost of living in the country. There is no doubt that it is expensive to live in country areas. People are extremely dependent upon the private motor vehicle, because there are very few cities or country areas in South Australia which even have an apology of a public transport service, let alone an efficient one such as the various parts of metropolitan Adelaide have. We just do not have them,

even in Mount Gambier, which is a city. We have a sort of a shadow transport system which is serving a very small portion of the population.

In addition to the city-based people of Mount Gambier, there are the people engaged in primary industry. They, too, have pointed out there is no tax on aviation fuel and that, should the Minister wish to be consistent, he would consider static engines, fishing boats, pleasure boats, and any vehicle which is not dependent upon a road—although, of course, some pleasure boats are pulled on the road to the river, lake or seaside. But vehicles such as farm trucks, the one-tonne trucks, utilities, transport trucks for taking produce to market, should be considered for some sort of exemption. I realise the Minister would have extreme difficulty in exempting materials at the bowsers, but perhaps some form of invoice exemption for bulk fuels supplied to farms could be considered. It would not be necessary to colour the fuels, as that would obviously necessitate having duplicated storage, one for the coloured fuel and one for the normal fuel. However, perhaps some form of assistance could be worked out.

I am quite sure that the Minister will be aware that primary producers over the last decade have fought with flood, drought and fire, and they have had very few good seasons with which to offset the many bad ones. Australia rarely seems to have what is considered to be a national good season unless the man on the land is having a good season. It is from there that primary, secondary and tertiary industry really get their boost. I think we acknowledge that Australia has ridden on the sheep's back for decades. Although it no longer does, the primary sector is nevertheless extremely important and, although I am not involved in primary industry myself and never have been, I am very much appreciative of the fact that the cost of meat, wool, butter, eggs and milk have not risen at the same rate as the cost of living has risen.

We have been subsidised extensively by the man on the land who has been unable to offload his rapidly rising costs against a rise in the supply of his produce to market. It has been a constant complaint that farm profits have been diminishing, and this Bill is one more nail in the coffin of primary industry as well as in the coffin of decentralisation. Both of them are essential for the well-being of Australia and South Australia, if we are not to have a cluttered metropolitan area, which is already sprawling like Los Angeles has done, with its massive public transport and smog problem. Adelaide is very similar to that city. We do hope that people will move themselves away from the metropolitan areas, which are becoming too large, to settle in the country.

Therefore, I request that the Minister consider what has been said by various speakers on this side of the House. They have spoken in all sincerity, and we are simply putting to the Minister the voice of the people in our electorates. I personally have no hesitation in saying that I believe the legislation would be considerably better even if it were only slightly amended. Public opinion at the moment is that, to some extent, this latest impost is immoral, in that previous indications from the Government were that the road maintenance tax would be lifted by South Australia if all States in Australia were to lift the tax—that it would be not a unilateral action but a collective action, and then the States would consider whether to replace that tax with something quite fair. Everyone assumed that it would be some form of impost on fuels, and here we have not collective action but unilateral action being taken by different States. I think that South Australia, being among the very dearest States from a taxation and a living point of view—one of the most difficult States from the point of view of attracting

industry—should not take steps which would make life even more difficult both for the Government and for the residents of South Australia.

Mr. MATHWIN (Glenelg): I wish to point out some matters in relation to the Bill.

Mr. Millhouse: Are you in favour of the second reading?

Mr. MATHWIN: If the honourable member will just wait a little, I will give him my views. For the relief of my hairy friend on my left, let me say that I support the second reading, in the hope that the Government will accept the amendments put forward by my Party. To test the Minister, we have to support the second reading, as the member for Mitcham well knows.

This is a revenue raising Bill, another slug by the Government on the small proprietor, the small shop keeper, the petrol reseller. I refer mainly to class B licences, for which the Minister will charge an annual fee of \$50 for the privilege of selling petrol. In doing this, the Government is getting at the little people, those whom the Minister has said many times in this place that his Party represents.

The Minister has indicated how much money he intends to raise with the Bill, but, typically, he will raise much more. He has said that he will raise \$2 750 000, when in fact he will raise about double that amount, about \$4 250 000, in extra revenue. That is a slug.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: How do you work that out?

Mr. MATHWIN: Let me remind the Minister. Receipts from the fuel franchise tax are shown as \$14 000 000, less registration fee adjustment of \$6 450 000, less road maintenance charges of \$4 800 000, giving the Minister's figure of \$2 750 000. If we look at figures based on consumption of petroleum products in State marketing areas in 1977-78, we see, for motor spirit, a total consumption of 1 366 megalitres, less 2 per cent for Broken Hill, Wilcannia, and Murrayville, Victoria, which are included in the State marketing area, giving a total of 1 338.68 megalitres, which, at 1c a litre, represents \$13 386 800.

Mr. Whitten: This was all said by the shadow Minister.

Mr. MATHWIN: I thought you were deaf, George, because of your trade.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have spoken many times to the honourable member. We do not call people by their Christian names in this House. I hope the honourable member will say, "the member for Price" or "honourable members opposite".

Mr. MATHWIN: I apologise, Mr. Speaker. I understood that my friend, the member for Price, was a little hard of hearing, but apparently he is not. However, for his benefit, I will continue with the explanation. The total consumption of distillate was 485 megalitres, of which 29 per cent attracted Federal excise for road use, giving a figure of 140.65 megalitres which, at 1.5c a litre, represents \$2 109 750. Total receipts amount to \$15 496 550, not \$14 000 000, as claimed by the Minister. This means that the Government, and the Minister, in drafting the Bill and in adding up the figures, will gain an extra \$4 246 550, and not the \$2 750 000 suggested by the Minister.

Most of the aspects of the Bill have been well canvassed by members on this side, and there was even some comment by the member for Mitcham. I do not wish to go through the Bill clause by clause, but I should like to draw attention first to clause 13, which provides that the Governor may appoint a person to constitute the Business Franchise (Petroleum) Appeal Tribunal. We have one person who has the right to act, to be appointed, and whose decision is final.

The second matter, mentioned earlier by some of my colleagues, relates to clause 16, which deals with the powers of inspectors. We have pointed out time and time again that the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Labour and Industry are keen on giving more powers to their inspectors than are given to police officers in this State. The inspectors may enter premises without a warrant. Clause 16 provides that an inspector may at any time, with such assistance as he considers necessary, without any warrant other than that provided in the clause, enter and remain in any premises which he reasonably suspects are used for or in connection with the business of dealing with petroleum products, or for the storage and custody of any records relating to the business of dealing with petroleum products. The clause means that the powers of the inspectors are far greater than are the powers given to any police officer in South Australia. I believe that position to be extremely dangerous, and I object to the inspectors having such wide powers.

The Government has decided that this will be another revenue raising measure. It will raise further taxation from the people of South Australia. I object particularly to the Minister's forcing petrol resellers to pay an annual fee of \$50 for the privilege of selling petrol. Who will be next? Will it be the sweet shop owner, the man who sells ice-cream, or the local greengrocer? Who is next on the Government's list? I object to this, but I support the second reading in the hope that the Minister will support the amendments we have put forward.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO (Minister of Transport): This has been an interesting debate, for various reasons, and perhaps my reasons are a little different from those of members opposite. Certainly, any claims about the lack of publicity in relation to this Bill will be overcome as a result of this debate, because many members have participated in order to have a little paragraph in their local paper, just to show that they have spoken. Hopefully, they will get some sort of correct message across on what the Bill is all about.

Perhaps the other unique experience in relation to this Bill is that the member for Torrens launched into his maiden speech as the shadow Transport Minister. I should like to join with the Leader of the Opposition in congratulating him. I appreciate the way in which he approached the subject, and I am sure that, given two or three years experience, when he finds out what transport is all about, the honourable member will be able to handle himself quite well. Certainly, he will do much better than the former shadow Transport Minister. I now refer to a report dated 2 October 1977, as follows:

Mr. Tonkin and his colleagues feel that Mr. Chapman, who has a reputation as a tough, outspoken debater in the House of Assembly, would be a good match for the Minister of Transport, Mr. Virgo, whom the Party feels has had an easy ride.

Mr. Chapman: Will the Minister announce his intention to resign?

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: It did not take long for the Leader to say that his shadow Transport Minister was a howling failure, and to replace him. I appreciate his contribution and the contributions of the member for Torrens and the predecessor of the member for Alexandra, the member for Goyder, all of whom have been shadow Transport Ministers. I have enjoyed them all, and I wonder whether I will get another shadow before this Parliament ceases and I cease to be a member. I am pleased that the member for Eyre is present in the Chamber, as he did something very unique.

Mr. Millhouse: If the thing is unique, I do not think it

can be very unique.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: It is very unique.

Mr. Millhouse: No, it is just unique.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: It was very unique, even for the member for Mitcham. The member for Eyre is well known for his constant attacks on workers who stand up for their rights. However, tonight the member for Eyre is on record as congratulating the truckies in their show of industrial muscle, which forced the Governments of Australia to remit the road maintenance tax. The member for Eyre has never before congratulated workers who have gone on strike or exercised their industrial muscle. So, we must be living in an enlightened age, when even the member for Eyre acknowledges the rights—

Mr. Gunn: I make no apology for it, either.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: I am delighted to hear that. I hope that on some other industrial dispute that has absolute right behind it the honourable member will again come out and support those involved, something that he has not done previously in his life.

A lot of references have been made to the character of this Bill, but I think only one member (I am not sure who it was, so I will not mention any name) only slightly touched on the fact that we are dealing with a very delicate subject. We are trying to steer a course to avoid infringing the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Dr. Eastick: You want to stay out of the High Court.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: Of course we do, and we certainly do not want this legislation invalidated by a High Court action. If members would accept that situation, they would more readily realise the difficulties with which we were faced in the drafting of the Bill. Certainly, there has been wide consultation at officer level throughout the length and breadth of Australia. I am pleased that the Commonwealth Government co-operated with us in this regard in an attempt to try to find a solution to what was an extremely difficult problem. At this stage, the best possible solution has been found. However, I hasten to say that the Bill as it presently stands need not (and I venture to say "should not") remain as the final piece of legislation, never to be altered.

A lot of foolish statements have been made. I am reminded of, I think, the member for Torrens, and certainly the Leader of the Opposition, talking about the Government's using this Bill as a means of supplementing the State's revenue. No-one who has read the Bill could make such a stupid statement because, if members cared to read clause 30, they would see that it provides that the total fund, less the cost of collection, must go into the Highways Fund.

Mr. Wilson: That's all right, but it's still revenue, isn't it?

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: I should have hoped that the member for Torrens, in his capacity as shadow Minister, would offer a better comment than that, because the Highways Fund is divorced from the State's Revenue Budget. I should have thought he knew that.

Mr. Wilson: Only indirectly.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: I can understand the comments made by members opposite, as they must have had an absolute gut full of their Federal counterparts, who have used the excise duty (to the extent of more than \$1 200 000 000 in the past financial year) to try to balance the Budget. As a result of the last increase, that sum will increase to about \$1 700 000 000 or \$1 800 000 000.

I assure members that the State Government is not about to follow the backward and wayward ways of the Fraser Government. The money raised in this area will be used for road purposes, and clause 30 makes this abundantly clear. Anyone who cannot understand that

does not deserve to be on the pay-roll as a Parliamentarian.

Mr. Venning: When will you retire?

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: The member for Rocky River had better think about that, because his successor was in the gallery this afternoon and I do not think that he was all that impressed. A great deal of play has been made about the sum of money that will be collected. I have said (and the figures have been quoted back at me today) that the fuel franchise tax is anticipated to yield \$1 400 000 000. Registration fee reductions will cost an estimated \$6 450 000, and it is anticipated that the net (not gross) road maintenance charges collected in 1979-80 will amount to \$4 800 000. This means, with the total of \$4 800 000 and \$6 450 000, that there will be a surplus of \$2 750 000.

I do not think we are at odds on those figures. I am delighted that the member for Torrens agrees with me. However there is one slight matter that he has overlooked. The figures relating to the franchise tax are for a full year, although the tax will be collected for only nine months of the year. The registration fees are for a full year but, in fact, will apply for only eight months, although the road maintenance charge relates to the full year. The anticipated surplus at this stage is not \$2 750 000 but \$1 400 000. I hope that the honourable member understands that.

Mr. Wilson: No, I am sorry that I do not understand that.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: I am sorry if the honourable member does not understand the figures, which I have tried to make as plain as I could. He was talking about what the position would be in a full year. What I am trying now to get through to him is that the fuel tax will be collected over a nine-month period, not 12 months, so there is an estimated reduction from \$14 000 000 to \$10 500 000.

Mr. Venning: What about the second time around?

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: One honourable member is trying intelligently to listen, and stupid interjections by the member for Rocky River will not help. The registration fee reductions will apply not for 12 months but eight months, so the cost will be \$4 300 000, not \$6 450 000. The net result of that is that, instead of having a surplus as is anticipated, calculated for a full year as being \$2 750 000, it is now calculated, because of the restricted period, at \$1 400 000.

Mr. Wilson: I said in a full year.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: We are not in a full year.

Mr. Nankivell: You will be some time, surely.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: I am delighted by the interjection, because the honourable member reminds me that, initially, after the Ministers from all States had collectively and unanimously agreed to this proposition, I came back and said that, on our earlier figuring, we would provide a 10 per cent reduction in registration fees. We then looked at this matter in more depth and obtained more accurate assessments, the net result being that we were able safely to apply a reduction of 20 per cent. After the passage of a year, when we know from experience, not by calculation, what the result of this legislation will be, then the registration fees must again be reviewed. Whether there will then be a further reduction or whether there can be a delay in what could quite possibly otherwise be a 10 per cent increase in registration fees will be determined in the future.

If the figures we have are in some ways accurate, that is about the way it will go. There is provision in the legislation for the Minister to determine from time to time the price on which the franchise is to be paid. So, the Minister will be able to regulate that sum.

Mr. Wilson: I asked whether you would use it.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: I think that the answer to the question is by way of another question: what does the honourable member think it is there for if it is not going to be used if and when desired? It is not put in there to fill up the page. The member for Torrens has made all sorts of statements tonight on figures, and he came up with some in the press. All I can really say on this matter is that it is an extremely foolish report he has put out as a news release; given a little more experience, I think that he will do better.

Again, I say that the oil companies, which are most vitally involved in this legislation, have insisted all the way through that uniformity is of paramount importance. Indeed, the Shell Company's letter to me (and I think it is worth letting the House know) states:

We do not welcome the prospect of taxes . . . being imposed by the State Governments on motor fuel. There will be an adverse public reaction . . . possibly from truck operators, despite the intention that such taxes would replace road maintenance tax . . . Although legislation has already been passed in Western Australia, we would strongly favour, on the grounds of practicality and administrative simplicity, the Commonwealth raising specific additional revenue on behalf of the States through an increase in motor gasoline and distillate duties.

This same view is unanimously held by every Transport Minister, other than Mr. Nixon, in Australia—whether Country Party, Liberal Party, or Labor Party. The letter states that if that is not acceptable they will co-operate with us, and it makes the following point:

It would obviously be essential for tax rates to be uniform Australia-wide to obviate border-hopping and consequent distortions and evasions. Uniformity signifies equitable treatment of all road users.

That, to me, has been an extremely basic point in considerations of the whole of this matter. It is on that score that I had discussions some time ago with the Victorian Minister and, indeed, with all Ministers who are parties to ATAC. The Victorian Minister was about to introduce the legislation and was courteous enough to provide us with a draft advance copy of the Bill. He and I were of the one mind: uniformity was an absolute must. I put forward the view that the rate of tax should be three-quarters of 1c for motor spirit and 1½c for dieselene. The Victorian view was that it ought to be 1c for both motor spirit and dieselene. It was left to the Victorian Minister, who was in the process of drafting his legislation and discussing it with his Cabinet, to determine the matter.

I gave him an assurance (perhaps almost to sign a blank cheque) that, within reason, South Australia would conform to the decision of the Victorian Cabinet, and that is exactly what we are doing. All these criticisms I have heard this evening levelled against me ought to be levelled against the Victorian Liberal Government. One of the points made (I think by the former shadow Minister) was the Victorian Government's intention to reduce registration fees. To the best of my knowledge (and the Victorian Minister is overseas at present), that is exactly what Victoria still has: intentions. It has not reduced, nor given a positive indication of a reduction of, registration fees since it introduced the Bill. Clause 11 (4) of the Victorian Bill provides:

The amount to be paid to the Country Roads Board Fund—

that is the counterpart of our Highways Fund—

in each financial year shall be not less than one-quarter of the amount credited to licence fees under this Act during the financial year.

The charges that have been levelled at us about using this

tax to bolster the State's revenue is true in the Federal arena, true in the Victorian arena, and completely false in South Australia. It is only because of the Liberal attitude of members opposite that they are frightened.

Mr. Chapman interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I hope that the honourable member for Alexandra will cease interjecting. That is the fifth time that he has interjected out of his seat.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: We have heard much about the tax rip-off, which is the term that has been used, but there is no rip-off involved here. I have explained simply and clearly to the House what the situation is. Unfortunately, many people, when they have read material on this matter, have absorbed only what they wanted to, ignored what they did not want to know or what they did not understand and have later said, "You are not doing what you said you would do." My press release of 26 July (it follows other press releases that I have made, but that is the one to which honourable members have referred tonight) states:

All States are now considering a form of levy on oil companies as a percentage return from petrol and diesel sales. Both the oil companies and the fuel retailers will be required to pay a licence fee, and the oil companies will also have to pay to the Government a percentage of their returns.

Everyone forgot that, or did not understand it, merely putting in the 1c and 1½c, which were easier to use, and now they are claiming that they have been misled. The member for Alexandra was one of them. Obviously, he has not even read the second reading explanation, which states:

On the basis of the latest available figures—

Mr. Chapman: I have.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: If he had, he would never have made any of the silly statements that he did make.

Mr. Venning: Next time we'll ask you to read it.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: Can the honourable member not read? I would be delighted to read the explanation to the honourable member in private if he has such difficulty in reading. My second reading explanation states:

On the basis of the latest available figures for consumption of petrol and distillate, it is estimated that these charges will produce revenue of approximately \$14 000 000 in a full year. In view of this, and as a first step towards the user pays principle the Government has decided to reduce motor registration fees for private vehicles and light commercial vehicles, thereby creating a package deal and offsetting some of the effects of the additional fuel costs.

If honourable members had read that explanation they would not have been able to contribute tonight honestly. I was interested in the letter that the member for Alexandra read to the House tonight from the United Farmers and Graziers. It was ironic that Mr. Grant Andrews said in that letter to the honourable member that he hoped that this would not become a political issue. Mr. Andrews did not even see fit to send a letter to the Minister in charge of the Bill, yet he says he does not want it to become a Party-political issue. Whom is he kidding?

Mr. Chapman: He assured me that he waited on you long enough.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: I spoke to Mr. Andrews on the telephone today and I told him—and I will now put it in *Hansard* so that there can be no misunderstanding whatever—that we are introducing a Bill that is largely a mirror of the Victorian legislation and, given the passage of what I expect will be a short period, we will have similar legislation in all the States. Western Australia has already indicated that in about 12 months it will seriously look at the South Australian and Victorian legislation for the

purpose of amending its legislation to conform. Tasmania, contrary to the views that have been expressed tonight, has already indicated that it will introduce similar legislation as soon as its Parliament resumes. Have honourable members forgotten that Tasmania has just held an election? Have Liberal members failed to read the headlines about that election result? They probably burnt that page to help them forget it. The Queensland Country Party Minister has left no doubt that as soon as the New South Wales Government introduces such legislation Queensland will do likewise, but until that happens it will be in difficulty because of border problems.

It is absolute nonsense for honourable members to go on as many of them have done tonight. Once this situation is achieved and once all Ministers have experience in the operations of the Bill, I anticipate that the Australian Transport Advisory Council will deal with this matter as a regular item on its agenda, thus reviewing its operation from time to time and trying to ensure that there are improvements on a uniform basis. Those improvements could and should encompass the use of motor spirit that is not used on roads, although at this stage that is not possible, but I will deal with that aspect in Committee.

The Leader agreed that the Commonwealth should not be asked to collect this tax, as it would be an odium on it. That is absolute arrant nonsense, because all State Ministers asked that the Commonwealth collect that tax with the authority and on behalf of the States and tab it as a request of the States in exactly the same way that, if and when the States are forced into collecting income tax, one knows how much they are collecting, how much has been collected on behalf of local government, and so on. We invited the Commonwealth to put the blame fairly and squarely on the States and not to accept the odium, but its lack of co-operation goes back to the fact that in the last financial year it collected—here the words "tax rip-off" are so appropriate—from motorists more than \$1 700 000 000 and used all but \$450 000 000 of it for general revenue purposes.

That is where the tax rip-off is taking place, and it is absolute nonsense for members opposite to talk as they have done. I am sorry that honourable members have not had more opportunity to study the Bill. Certainly, I appreciate the co-operation that the shadow Minister has given, although I did not appreciate the comment from the shadow Minister of Environment, who said that he had seen the Bill only yesterday: it almost suggested that he and the shadow Minister of Transport are not talking. But the fact is that the road maintenance tax has been removed.

A sum of almost \$5 000 000 per annum is being lost to the maintenance of roads in this State. I do not really believe that any member of this Parliament could be so irresponsible as to suggest that we ought not recover that sum just as quickly as we can. That is the very reason why this Bill has been introduced. I hope that the House will pass the Bill tonight and that the Legislative Council will do likewise on Tuesday night.

Question—"That the Bill be now read a second time"—declared carried.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: Divide!

While the division was being held:

The SPEAKER: There being only one member on the side of the Noes, I declare that the Ayes have it.

Second reading thus carried.

In Committee.

Clauses 1 to 12 passed.

Clause 13—"Constitution of Appeal Tribunal."

Mr. WILSON: I move:

Page 7, line 10—After "person" insert "who is a legal

practitioner”.

As the Appeal Tribunal is constituted, it will consist of one person. The tribunal will hear appeals against decisions of the Commissioner of Stamps on the question of the granting of licences and the setting of licence fees. This clause does not spell out who the Appeal Tribunal will be. It could be anybody: somebody connected with the industry, with the Government department concerned, or with the Commissioner of Stamps himself (in which case there would be a conflict of interest). I am not for a minute suggesting that the Minister would necessarily appoint somebody of that type, but I think, as a protection for the public, the person appointed should at least be a legal practitioner so that he will bring some expertise to the position.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: I regret that I cannot accept the amendment. I do not subscribe to the view that we ought to start nominating legal practitioners to various positions. I am not convinced that a legal practitioner would be any better, or indeed any fairer, than a lot of other people. I wonder what the honourable member's attitude would be if the Government, after the next election, appointed the person who was previously the member for Mitcham as the Appeal Tribunal. I think that it is undesirable to tie the Government down. I accept the sentiment behind the honourable member's amendment, because we need a person who is scrupulously fair and has the capacity to make judgments and (I hate to use the words, but I cannot think of any others) to act as a watchdog.

I do not know whether the honourable member realises that this terminology would prevent the Government from appointing, say, a judge or a magistrate to act in that capacity because they are no longer legal practitioners. Indeed, I wonder whether other people who have the qualifications could not do the job just as well. All I am really saying is that I do not think that the Minister, or the Government, ought to be restricted to appointing a person who must have legal qualification as a practitioner. That does not mean that a legal practitioner might not be appointed, but I do not think it ought to be a restriction.

Amendment negatived; clause passed.

Clause 14 passed.

Clause 15—“Inspectors.”

Mr. CHAPMAN: Will the Minister say whether it is intended that the inspector, under clause 15, shall extend his duties to inspecting the use of diesoline at the consumer level?

The diesel duty-free fuel now is subject to the use of duty-free certificate numbers. The second reading explanation in relation to clause 15 is fairly brief, understandably, but the detail applicable to clause 15, which relates specifically to the duties of the inspector, more generally applies to the inspectorial duties that surround the supply points like the retailer and wholesaler; it makes no reference to the inspectorial duties of field staff members. Is it intended that inspectors cited here will inspect the other end of the spectrum at the user point out in the field, where diesel is exempt from the tax? Will they duplicate the role of customers and excise inspectors already in the field dealing with the inspection of the use of fuel out in the field?

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: I cannot give a specific answer to the honourable member's question other than to make the general observation that the inspector or inspectors (I cannot see it becoming plural) would be concerned with inspections to the extent of the licences. The principal area of licences is the A class licence, and that is where they would spend the bulk of their time. However, there is the provision for the B class, which is out of the retail area. There would be some form of inspection from time to

time, but I would have expected that that would be fairly minimal because, in that location of the retail area, the tax would be payable only where the fuel is obtained outside South Australia.

Mr. CHAPMAN: Who is going to police the legislation as it applies to diesel usage in the field where diesel is purchased and used for franchise-free purposes and franchise-payable purposes? I cite the example under the legislation of a primary producer who buys a bulk quantity of diesel fuel upon which he does not pay tax for that portion which he uses on the property but is required to pay franchise tax on the portion he uses in his truck. At this stage, the customs and excise inspectors handle it for the purposes of Commonwealth duties, but who is going to do the job for the purposes of the State franchise tax?

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: I believe that with the implementation of this legislation there will be discussions with the Commonwealth to avoid duplication. We do not want the State inspector doing one part of the job and the Commonwealth inspector coming in and doing the same part of the job. I hope we will get dual co-operation.

Mr. CHAPMAN: I asked those two questions because it is our intention to seek to have off-road petrol exempted from the tax. I cannot talk about that before it is presented to the Committee in some amendment detail. I raised the question in relation to inspectors to determine from the Minister whether he intended to duplicate the inspectorial services in the field. He has clearly explained that he does not intend to do that. If possible, he seeks to use the Commonwealth inspection service as it currently applies and has applied for many years quite successfully. It is my view that the same Commonwealth inspector could extend his duties to police the tax-free petrol for off-road use. Before this Bill was debated, I saw no reason at all for there to be any difficulty in administration and, now that the Minister has answered the question in the way that he has, it confirms in my mind that it is only common sense to extend the tax free petrol for non-road use, and utilise the facilities that we already have at our disposal.

Clause passed.

Clause 16 passed.

Clause 17—“Petroleum sellers to be licensed.”

Mr. WILSON: This is a very important clause because it is probably the policing powers of the Bill; it prevents the transfer of petroleum products between any other than licensed holders. I take up the point of the holder of a class B licence and seek information from the Minister on this question. Is it absolutely necessary, for the purposes of this Bill, for there to be a class B licence holder spelt out in the Bill? Could it not be done by means of a simple registration?

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: The reason for spelling out the two classes of licence is that there are two different areas of operation. Class A, in general terms, is the wholesale outlet end. Class B is the retail outlet end. If a retailer decides to purchase his supplies from a wholesale outlet outside the State, that wholesale outlet would not have paid or charged the retailer the 4.5 per cent that otherwise would have been the case. It is a means of preventing cheating by border hopping. For example, if a retailer in Mt. Gambier obtained his fuel from Portland, the retailer would not pay the 4.5 per cent because it is outside the State. That 4.5 per cent would then be payable at the retail end but, where the retailer in North Terrace gets his fuel from the Stanvac Refinery, the 4.5 per cent is paid and it is just a straight registration.

Mr. WILSON: I thank the Minister for that explanation. It seems that it would be quite possible, for the purposes of this Bill, to use one of the existing licences that are held by a retailer or just apply a simple registration without fee.

The service station proprietor is a small business man and will be up for an increased investment in stock because of the results of this Bill when it becomes law. He will also be up for a fee to be paid because of the B class licence that has to be issued to him. It seems that, when compared with the position of one of the A class licence holders (the oil companies), when we work it out closely, the class A licence holder will receive revenue or tax from the Class B licence holders, and through them from the public, and they will be holding millions of dollars in fuel tax for at least a month before they have to pay the Government; it will then be paid into the Highways Fund. One could imagine the advantage that could be taken of this money on the short-term money market.

It seems in one respect that the class A licence holders will be compensated for collecting the tax on behalf of the Government because they will have the use of this money in advance, whereas the class B licence holders will be disadvantaged. Will the Minister consider this point before the Bill leaves the Parliament? Will he also consider lightening the load on the class B licence holders?

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: I will examine the point that the honourable member has raised and, if it is possible, practicable and desirable to take any action, this can be, and will be, done in the other Chamber. I do not want to imply that I will do nothing. I mentioned some important points earlier. This subject borders on contravention of the Constitution and can react against the interests of South Australia. The importance of the Bill standing up is enhanced if uniformity is achieved. Victoria has introduced the \$50 licence fee at the retail outlets. If South Australia were to do something different, our stance would be weakened. Having said that, I assure the honourable member that I will have the matter examined again to see whether anything can be done.

Clause passed.

Clause 18—"Fees."

Mr. WILSON: I move:

Page 9, line 29—Leave out "4.5 per centum of the value" and insert "one cent for each litre".

This amendment is designed to set the fuel tax levy at a fixed rate per litre. It is actually to match what the Minister said would be the tax at the present cost of fuel—that is, 1c per litre on motor spirit and 1.5c per litre on diesel. I know the Minister will say that there is possibly a constitutional difficulty in applying the tax in this way, but I point out that the Western Australian legislation (and Western Australia was one of the parties to the all-States agreement to bring in this fuel tax) actually applies the tax in this manner, although the figures are not the same. In fact, it is applied at a fixed rate. According to legal opinion that I received today, there is really not much difference constitutionally in applying the tax at a fixed rate compared to applying the tax as a percentage. In other words, both methods of applying the tax are equally liable to challenge.

There is a great difference in the revenue over and above what the Government would normally have received as road maintenance charges, and that is the point that the Opposition is trying to make with this amendment. Despite what the Minister says about the application of this tax, he did not mention the escalation in the price of petrol and therefore the escalation in the amount of tax collected by the State. The Minister spoke at great length about the \$2 750 000 in a full year or \$1 400 000 in eight or nine months, but he did not mention the fact that the percentage method of levying this tax will bring in accrued revenue to the State at a faster and faster rate and, as I mentioned before, for every 2c to 3c that the price of fuel rises, the State will receive an extra

\$1 600 000. By the time the price of fuel has doubled (and I repeat that many people have said that this will occur within two or three years—and I do not think that this estimation is unreasonable, considering the way OPEC prices are increasing), the State will gain an extra \$20 000 000 in revenue over and above what it would normally have received in road maintenance charges. In calculating those figures I have allowed for registration rebates. I commend the amendment to the Committee.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: The Government will not accept the amendment for a number of reasons. The honourable member has suggested that, because Western Australia has a fixed rate, South Australia should also have a fixed rate. If the honourable member were genuine, he would advocate that South Australia should have the same fixed rate as does Western Australia.

Mr. Wilson: Why should I?

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: The honourable member wants the best of both worlds. Members should understand that the fixed rate in Western Australia is 1c a litre for motor spirit and 4c a litre for diesel. Does the honourable member want South Australia to do that?

Mr. Wilson: You know that is not what I said.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: The honourable member wants to pick the eyes out of it and get the best of every world. The honourable member may not know that, when the Transport Ministers met in Sydney recently, the Western Australian Minister, Mr. Rushton, pressured all members to make a decision there and then because at that stage the Western Australian Government had five sitting days left, I think. Mr. Rushton was most anxious to get replacement legislation into the Parliament so that it would operate from 1 July. All other State Ministers were reluctant to comply with his requirements. While other Ministers sympathised with Mr. Rushton's predicament, we were not prepared to commit ourselves until we had obtained facts. Mr. Rushton had to go home and introduce legislation in isolation and, if one looks at the amendments that were introduced before the Bill really hit the floor of the Parliament, one realises the difficulty involved. I sympathise fully with Mr. Rushton because bringing in legislation in a rush is one hell of a job, and one will inevitably make mistakes. Certainly, Mr. Rushton indicated to other Ministers that the Western Australian Government would consider the legislation sympathetically (and South Australia has introduced the same type of legislation) so that uniformity can be achieved in about 12 months.

The undertaking that the Western Australian Government gave was that this legislation would stand for 12 months, and it is not prepared to waltz on that. Great play has been made of the escalation. I do not have the same crystal ball that the honourable member for Torrens has. I do not know whether there will be an escalation under the guise of world parity, but in fact the greatest bulk of the escalation is taking place because of the excise duty paid to the Commonwealth Government. The honourable member knows as well as I do that it is the Commonwealth Government that is getting the rip-off in this area by increasing the excise duty under the guise of world parity, and using it to bolster the flagging economy of the Commonwealth. If the Commonwealth Government does that, I do not think the honourable member ought to be blaming this State Government. We do not have very much control over Malcolm Fraser. Hopefully, the honourable member may have a little more.

A final point that I think needs to be taken into account is that the Bill provides the authority for the Minister to set the price. That provision has been put in so that, if it is desirable or necessary, it will be used. I am not able to give

an unqualified guarantee that the price will be proclaimed at pre-July 1979 figures and maintained there for the next five years. No responsible person would do that. If the honourable member by some chance found himself on this side, he would adopt exactly the same attitude.

Mr. WILSON: The Minister mentioned escalation, and he also mentioned Western Australia. That State levied the tax on a fixed rate basis.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: And Victoria put it on the same basis as we did, and we are neighbouring States.

Mr. WILSON: The Minister refuses to answer the question that I have continually put to him about the escalation and the receipts that the States will accrue from that escalation. I hope that tomorrow the Minister will hand the *Hansard* report to his officers and get them to go through my figures, because if I am wrong I would like to be told. The Minister will not give us the information we require about escalation, and the price has already escalated since 18 July to the point where, if the Minister applies 4.5 per cent on motor spirit and 7.1 per cent on diesoline, he will be getting 1.1c per litre on motor spirit and 1.7c per litre on diesoline. That is before the Bill has even passed out of this Parliament.

If the Minister is not continually to receive far greater profits for the State Government than it would normally have received from road maintenance charges, he will have to make a determination which is substantially less than the price fixed by the Prices Commissioner, because the clause provides only that the price shall be no more than that fixed by the Prices Commissioner and that, once that determination has been made, it shall stand for three months after gazettal. The Minister will adjust it if and when it suits him politically. I urge the Committee to accept this amendment, because it is a very important amendment that goes to the nub of the whole Bill.

Mr. CHAPMAN: I support this amendment, and agree that it is the nub of the Bill. I am amazed that the Minister continually refuses to answer the question put to him by the member for Torrens. He has the opportunity of placing a ceiling on the price of fuels on which the percentage will be payable in the form of tax, but surely the least he can do is inform the State of what the ceiling price will be.

I also ask him to explain how he proposes to determine the amount of fuel that is on company-owned agency sites at the time of having this Bill proclaimed. There is nothing in the Bill that indicates how he will measure those amounts in stock. If outlets do have some stock on hand—

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point of order. We are dealing with an amendment to strike out "4.5 per centum of the value" and insert "one cent for each litre". What that has to do with the stock on hand is beyond me, and it certainly is nothing to do with this clause.

The CHAIRMAN: I will accept the point of order. That is the motion before the Chair, and I ask the honourable member for Alexandra to tie any remarks he may wish to make to the amendment before the Chair.

Mr. CHAPMAN: I thought I was doing that, but I will raise it again in another area that deals with the licensing of dealers or, indeed, with the percentage of tax that is applicable. The fuel I was speaking of will be subject to the tax being paid but will not be subject to payment to the Government. That is what it amounts to. I want to know how the Government proposes to measure that stock on hand at the time of proclaiming the Bill.

The Committee divided on the amendment:

Ayes (17)—Mrs. Adamson, Messrs. Allison, Arnold, Becker, Blacker, Dean Brown, Chapman, Eastick, Evans, Goldsworthy, Gunn, Mathwin, Rodda, Rus-

sack, Tonkin, Wilson (teller), and Wotton.

Noes (21)—Messrs. Abbott, Broomhill, and Max Brown, Mrs. Byrne, Messrs. Corcoran, Drury, Duncan, Groom, Groth, Harrison, Hemmings, Klunder, Langley, McRae, Payne, Simmons, Slater, Virgo (teller), Wells, Whitten, and Wright.

Pairs—Ayes—Messrs. Nankivell and Venning. Noes—Messrs. Hopgood and Olson.

Majority of 4 for the Noes.

Amendment thus negated.

Mr. WILSON: I move:

Page 10—

After line 4—Insert paragraph as follows:

(d) the value of any quantity of motor spirit sold by the applicant or, as the case may be, a member of the applicant's group during the relevant period in relation to which the Commissioner has made a determination pursuant to subsection (2a) of this section,

After line 5—Insert subclause as follows:

(2a) The Commissioner may, upon application by an applicant for a class A licence, determine that a specified quantity of motor spirit sold by the applicant or, as the case may be, a member of the applicant's group during the relevant period was or is to be used otherwise than for propelling vehicles on roads.

The first part of this amendment seeks to exempt from the provisions of the Bill motor spirit used for non-road purposes. The Bill exempts diesel fuel used for non-road purposes, but does not exempt motor spirit. This means—and it as been canvassed widely this afternoon—that several groups in the community will be disadvantaged because they will now have to pay tax on fuel for non-road use, whereas previously they were not paying road maintenance tax. These groups include farmers, fuel for on-farm use, professional fishermen whose boats have petrol-driven engines, pleasure boat owners, and, very importantly, industrial users where a great deal of machinery and plant is driven by motor spirit. Therefore, of course, if the amendment is not accepted by the Government, the Bill will go some way towards causing an increase in the cost of production.

The Opposition realises that there are problems in collecting the tax to be imposed under this measure, and so we have inserted the second part of the amendment, which will have the effect of allowing the tax to be collected only on bulk-delivered supplies on invoice. If a person wants to fill up a lawnmower at a service station, he will not be able to claim exemption from tax for that purpose. If professional fishermen had a pump at their wharf and received a bulk-delivered supply, and if the fuel was to be used for fishing purposes only, there is no reason why that provision could not be administered quite satisfactorily. I realise, of course, that there would have to be a declaration there, and also a declaration under the existing Bill for diesel fuel.

If there were problems, the fuel could be coloured, but I do not think that will be necessary. If the exemption applies only to motor spirit in bulk-delivered quantities, say for a motor boat marina with its own pump, or for industrial use in situations where there are tanks on the premises, or for farmers, all bulk-delivered on invoice, I see no problem, because the same position would have to apply for the exemption of diesel fuel.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: As I have indicated, I am not unsympathetic to the points raised, but it would be most unwise at this stage for us to risk the legality of this legislation with acts of this nature. It would be essential, for the mechanics of it, to have the complete co-operation of the oil companies, and the oil companies have told us at

this stage that it is not possible to do it. That does not mean that it will not be possible at some future stage, and I believe that ATAC should look at this question when all the States have introduced legislation, which I hope will be uniform, to see whether the uniform approach can be made to achieve this objective.

I do not accept the honourable member's claim of increased costs of production. In the four years since 1975, the amount of duty, the cost imposed by the Commonwealth Government, has increased from 5·8 cents to 13·7 cents, 8 cents a litre, and we have heard not one squeak from members opposite about the added cost that the Commonwealth Government has thrust on the people.

Mr. Wilson: And you're charging a percentage tax on the Commonwealth duty.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: It does not matter that there is a percentage tax. The member's own Party federally has increased the cost more than one and a half times.

Indeed, every person who today buys a litre of motor spirit pays 13·755 cents to the Commonwealth Government. So, 48 per cent of the cost of fuel is a gift, donation, tax or rip-off (call it what one likes) to Mr. Fraser. The tears for industry that members opposite are supposedly shedding are a little hollow. Nevertheless, I hold the view that the claim for exemption is valid and that, as soon as uniformity can be achieved, a uniform approach should be made through the Australian Transport Advisory Council, and I would take that action.

Mr. Chapman: I am indeed pleased to hear that the Minister is sympathetic to the intent of the amendment and that he is willing, along with his colleagues and counterparts in other States, to examine the matter and that he believes it is fair to seek an exemption in relation to the off-road use of motor spirit and that such motor spirit should be exempt from taxation. In his attack on the Federal Government for its current taxation measures relating to fuel prices, the Minister said that the tax amounted to 48 per cent of the total cost of the product, or 13·75 cents per litre. The Minister is such a hypocrite that he criticises the Federal Government for imposing a tax to that extent, yet on this occasion the Minister is promoting a Bill that imposes a tax on the people whom we are trying to protect, namely, South Australia's primary producers, as well as imposing a tax on the Federal Government's tax. So, the Minister is using the Federal Government's tax as a part of the total cost of the product on which to tax the people to whom I have referred. I have never heard anything as hypocritical as that.

I am pleased that the Minister has placed on record the Government's attitude regarding this matter. However, I am amazed, South Australia being one of the forerunner States in Australia in introducing this new form of fuel tax, that the Minister has not seen fit to take the initiative and introduce the sort of scheme that he thinks should be considered on behalf of these people. It is incredible that the Minister can say that this is a good idea and that he wants to be consistent with the other States yet, with South Australia being a forerunner State in this regard, he is not willing to give it a go.

My only conclusion can be that the Minister has seen an opportunity to rip-off more funds from this State's rural sector, which the Government of which he is a member has always disregarded and still intends to disregard. It is clear that every additional burden that is placed on these primary producers will ultimately be paid for by this State's consumers. It does not matter in which form the taxation is imposed, any added costs to be borne by primary producers will ultimately be paid for by consumers.

How the Minister can condone the practice provided for in this legislation of applying yet another tax on users of fuel who did not previously pay the road maintenance tax, and not give 1c of that money back in the form of a registration rebate, something that every other section of the motoring public will enjoy (thereby giving primary producers a double backhander), I do not know. The Minister merely says that, although the Opposition's amendment has much merit, he is sorry that he cannot support it. I have never heard anything so hypocritical, and I hope that the Minister lives long enough to wear it around his neck.

Mr. Wilson: Did the Minister say that the oil companies were approached but refused categorically to co-operate with the Government in relation to the exemption of motor spirit from the Bill?

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: The officers who have been handling this matter have had discussions with the oil companies throughout Australia, and I am advised that the companies have said that they do not have the machinery or the capacity to handle motor spirit as they do with diesel, and that they would not be willing or able at this stage to entertain a change.

Mr. Rodda: I find it amazing that the oil companies, having such success with the Minister and his colleagues, irrespective of their political persuasion, are having such an effect.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: They are collecting.

Mr. Rodda: I know that, and they are too lazy to get off their backsides. I was surprised to hear the Minister say that the rural sector had never complained. It has never stopped complaining about this matter.

Mr. Venning: They have every reason to complain.

Mr. Rodda: That is so.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: To whom are they complaining?

Mr. Rodda: These people are complaining to their members. In the 15 years that I have been a member of Parliament, there have been only two years when we have been able to do something about this.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: You didn't do much about it.

Mr. Rodda: It was a different ball game then. I am not detracting from the difficulties that the Minister and the Government face in this matter. However, they are moving into an area of taxation which will replace the road maintenance tax and which has not hitherto applied. So the Government must take the responsibility for this. It is having a bit of grist from a velvet patch that it has not hitherto touched, and the Government will have to wear this. Although these people do not form a large part of the Government's political base, I would be failing in my duty if I did not raise a protest on their behalf.

Mr. Blacker: I support the remarks made by the members for Alexandra, Torrens and Victoria, with perhaps a small variance in relation to what the member for Alexandra said. Those who are being hit by this action are the people who have an off-road use, namely, primary producers and fishermen. They are not in a position to pass on their costs to the same extent as is the average citizen. They must absorb their costs in one way or another; in most cases they must work harder, either at harvest time or at fishing.

The hypocritical aspect of the whole matter is that we are now talking about encompassing within this provision (which is basically a measure to replace a road maintenance tax) people who, although they will contribute, will have no effect whatsoever on our roads. Those people who use machines (primary producers would have in mind oat headers, which guzzle hundreds of litres of fuel a day) will be seriously affected, as will fishermen.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: Did you talk to the Federal

Minister when the price went up 3c a fortnight ago? Did you state a strong case to the Federal Government then?

Mr. BLACKER: I did.

The Hon. T. G. Virgo: And what was the response from the Federal Minister?

Mr. BLACKER: I can appreciate the Minister's argument, but he is beating around the bush. More important, he is licking his chops, because every time the price increases in Canberra more dollars come into the State's coffers. The Minister knows that, yet he blames the Fraser Government. Perhaps there is some validity in that; I do not know.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: It's 1c for the States and 3c for the Federals: that's not a bad ratio.

Mr. BLACKER: How the revenue will be used should be considered. If it is to go to roads, is it fair to hit the fishermen who use their outboard motors to go out diving? The Minister made a promise to the primary-producing groups four or five weeks ago, and the leaders of those organisations canvassed the country areas saying that he had given an undertaking that primary producers would be exempt. I also understand that fishermen were given a similar undertaking.

The Hon. G. T. Virgo: I wrote to them last week, telling them what the score was.

Mr. BLACKER: They received a letter today, but I do not know whether it corresponds with what the Minister has said. The Minister is hiding behind a technicality, which he has not seriously tried to get around. Why did he not advise the producer organisations earlier? Only in the past 48 hours have they found out the extent of the Bill, which is being pushed through under a false premise.

Mr. CHAPMAN: I read out earlier today the contents of a letter I had received from the combined grower organisations, signed by Mr. Grant Andrews.

Mr. Blacker: What was the date?

Mr. CHAPMAN: It was dated 1 August. In that letter, I explained that, from the assurances given by the Minister, via his office but in his name, and likewise personal assurances by the Premier, we were given to understand that off-road vehicles would be exempt from fuel franchise legislation. Will the Minister say whether he was aware of the assurances given to that organisation by his office but in his name, whether a similar assurance was supported by the Premier, or whether Mr. Andrews' letter did not convey the true picture?

Mr. RUSSACK: The Minister has violently objected to the Federal Government's attitude and to having to impose this tax on the State, and in introducing the legislation in its present form he is passing on the same attitude, if it is correct, to local government and other areas.

The CHAIRMAN: The honourable member must tie up his remarks to the amendment.

Mr. RUSSACK: Yes. I support the amendment, which seeks an exemption for off-road vehicles. The legislation, as it stands, extends the base from which it can attract taxation, and that extension includes vehicles and motors used for off-road purposes. I wrote to the Minister, as follows:

When the road maintenance contribution was in existence, local government councils were exempted from the provisions of the tax. Therefore, I respectfully request that, when considering the detail of the new fuel franchise, consideration be given to exempting councils, otherwise it will be an additional tax as far as they are concerned, and in many cases a considerable amount will be involved.

Every little extra burden placed on local government must be passed on to the ratepayer and that will apply in this case. I attended a meeting at which those present believed,

from information given through the growers organisation, that the Minister had assured that off-road vehicles using dieseline would not be taxed.

Mr. Venning: He won't answer.

Mr. RUSSACK: Perhaps he thought that, in times past, the grower organisations had been effective in getting certain forms of taxation abolished or decreased. Perhaps he thought that there might be a concerted objection if that impression was not given. Will the Minister assure me that he will seek some formula and that off-road vehicles will be exempt? Further, will he explain the position concerning local government?

Mr. VENNING: The Minister sounds like *The Silence of Dean Maitland* because, time and time again this evening, he has been asked to explain what he said to the U.F. and G. I quote from the *Advertiser* of 27 July, as follows:

The Minister of Transport, Mr. Virgo, and the Premier, Mr. Corcoran, had been asked for an automatic exemption from increased fuel prices for off-road vehicles because those vehicles had not been involved in road-tax charges. Mr. Virgo and Mr. Corcoran had agreed to do this in the legislation.

Why does the Minister not answer our queries? We believe the Minister told the grower organisation that diesel fuel or motor spirit used for off-road purposes would be exempt from the tax.

Why does not the Minister answer? I was amazed at the Minister's statement from his officers about the oil companies not being able to do certain things. It is amazing what can be done when it has to be done. Under the Bill, the poor farming community will have to do many things that it would not wish to do. I ask the Minister to say something about this matter.

Mr. CHAPMAN: I look forward to hearing the Minister comment on Mr. Andrew's letter and on the assurances referred to in the press, and confirmed in the correspondence given to the organisation, as Mr. Andrews said, by the Minister and the Premier. I look forward also to an explanation from the Minister about how the Government has been dictated to by the fuel companies in South Australia. This morning, while attempting to get information from Victoria, the Victorian Treasury officer with whom I spoke confirmed that the Victorian Government had considered exempting fuel used for off-road purposes on primary production sites. The officer said that it had been intended to try to arrange that, but the fuel companies had not been able to accommodate the Government with the necessary administration to carry out this function. He made clear that the Government was subject to fuel company manipulation in Victoria. I again checked the position in South Australia and I had hardly got the question finished before the officer in the major fuel company in Adelaide said the same thing. He said that in no way had the company been asked to co-operate with the Government, but that it had had extensive consultations with the Minister's staff. He confirmed what the Minister said about that tonight and said that the companies had indicated they would not co-operate in the administration of an Act applying to motor spirit used for off-road purposes. I was told how clearly this company had informed the Government that the companies would not co-operate. Therefore the Government has backed off. What the Minister has said is good and sound, but I know why the Government is unable to proceed with it: because it is being dictated to by the fuel companies in this State, in particular with the major fuel companies with which it has been consulting, and it is a bloody disgrace, to say the least.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the honourable member to withdraw that remark.

Mr. CHAPMAN: I withdraw it, but it is disgraceful that the Minister can admit that he is introducing legislation in a form that is being dictated by the fuel companies involved. I am appalled that we are delegating legislation that has not been drafted through the ordinary process but through the dictates of the companies concerned. I am disgusted that we should be faced with a situation where our own community is being discriminated against and victimised out in the field by the Minister's weakness. The Minister has tonight confirmed what has happened and it is a disgrace, I look forward to his reply, denial, or whatever he has to say on the matter.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: I thank the member for Alexandra for telling members of his own Party exactly what the position is. At long last he has now stated what I have been trying to say for a considerable time. The honourable member has now admitted that he has made inquiries and found out that what I have said is correct. If the Opposition will not believe me, perhaps it will believe the honourable member, although not many people do. I do not believe that the terms used by the honourable member are very patronising when he suggests that the Government is being manipulated by the oil companies. That is a stupid statement to make. The oil companies have agreed to use their facilities for the purpose of collecting the tax through their own internal organisation, and they are limited to the extent of their computer capacity and the necessity of having uniformity throughout the States.

The member for Alexandra can rant and rave, referring to manipulation and tax rip-offs, and try to be kind to Victoria in saying that it is going to look at it, but Victoria makes no provision in its legislation regarding motor spirit, although it does make provision for diesel fuel. That is the exact position here in South Australia. It is not a matter of what one likes or dislikes: it is a matter of what one can get. In their quieter moments honourable members would realise that what I have said is the best way of going about it. Let the legislation be introduced in a practicable manner, and then through the Australian Transport Advisory Council we can attempt to improve areas such as exemptions for motor spirit for off-road vehicles and implement any other measures that are desirable. That is the practical way of achieving something. The Opposition can rant and rave for as long as it likes and still achieve nothing, and no-one knows that better than the former shadow from Alexandra.

The Committee divided on the amendment:

Ayes (17)—Mrs. Adamson, Messrs. Allison, Becker, Blacker, Dean Brown, Chapman, Eastick, Evans, Goldsworthy, Gunn, Mathwin, Rodda, Russack, Tonkin, Venning, Wilson (teller), and Wotton.

Noes (23)—Messrs. Abbott, Bannon, Broomhill, and Max Brown, Mrs. Byrne, Messrs Corcoran, Crafter, Drury, Duncan, Groom, Groth, Harrison, Hemmings, Klunder, Langley, McRae, Payne, Simmons, Slater, Virgo (teller), Wells, Whitten, and Wright.

Pairs—Ayes—Messrs. Arnold and Nankivell. Noes—Messrs. Hopgood and Olson.

Majority of 6 for the Noes.

Amendment thus negated; clause passed.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO (Minister of Transport): I move:

That the time for moving the adjournment of the House be extended beyond 10 p.m.

Motion carried.

Clauses 19 to 26 passed.

Clause 27—"Appeal."

Mr. WILSON: I move:

Page 14, line 12—Leave out all words in this line.

As the clause stands, a decision of the tribunal is final and

cannot be appealed against. The Opposition does not approve of such provisions in legislation. If this amendment is carried, I will move to have a new clause inserted so that an appeal can be made direct to the Supreme Court from a decision of the tribunal, which, as I mentioned before, consists of one person.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO: The Government is not prepared to accept this amendment or the proposed new clause. The provision of a further appeal against the decision of the tribunal will do nothing more than provide a feast for the lawyers. I do not believe that is a desirable feature in legislation of this kind. We all accept the necessity for appeal provisions in certain instances, but in instances such as this it would do nothing more than line the pockets of lawyers.

Amendment negated; clause passed.

Remaining clauses (28 to 40) and title passed.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO (Minister of Transport): I move:
That this Bill be now read a third time.

Mr. WILSON (Torrens): The Bill, as it comes out of Committee, does not satisfy the Opposition in any way at all. No provision has been made in this Bill for relief to the citizens of South Australia, other than those measures already announced by the Minister. The Minister has failed completely to answer questions about the escalation of the proposed tax. He has refused, or been unable, to tell us how much revenue the Government expects to receive, or he does not want to tell us how much the Government expects to receive from these measures. The Opposition still has the strongest objection to the measure. It has said that it would support the second reading with a view to having amendments carried, but the Government has not acquiesced and, for that reason, the Opposition opposes the third reading.

Mr. BLACKER (Flinders): I oppose the third reading. I supported the second reading in the hope that there would be reasonable discussions and that, hopefully, the Minister would give more detailed explanation than he gave in his second reading explanation. Many primary producers and primary producer organisations will be quite dismayed about the activities during the past two days in this House associated with this Bill. They will be taken by complete surprise and, once again, their confidence in the Minister will be shaken.

Mr. CHAPMAN (Alexandra): I would like to comment on the Bill as it has come out at the third reading stage. I join with my colleague in expressing disappointment that the Government has seen not fit to produce a Bill which is consistent with the attitudes expressed by the Government and the Opposition over a number of years. Indeed, repeatedly in this House in reply to questions and in statements that have been made about the old road maintenance tax, the Government has made clear what it intended to do upon gaining an agreement with the other States. It got that agreement early this year to abolish that other iniquitous form of tax. It has exploited and capitalised on the situation to introduce a Bill in this place. Then, it has rejected amendments and, at the third reading, the Bill is in a form inconsistent with the statements that the Minister has made over that very long period. Indeed, on 7 July 1976 it was stated:

The Minister of Transport, when considering a similar proposal, indicated the possibility of a fuel tax not exceeding 2 cents per gallon (0.44 cents per litre) with car registration reductions of up to 25 per cent.

This Bill, as it emerges at the third reading stage, is far from consistent with that statement, and I am extremely

disappointed.

I close on the matter that has disturbed me considerably in this debate. That matter is the Minister's refusal to comment accurately on the situation outlined during the debate; that is, on what Grant Andrews said. The Minister said this evening that he had spoken to Grant Andrews today and he said, "I can assure you, Mr. Andrews, that what I have put in *Hansard* today will satisfy you." He said that in reply to a question from the member for Rocky River. I am amazed that he made a statement in this place and put himself in the corner that he must be in henceforth. He gave those undertakings, and I am extremely disappointed that he is not man enough to uphold them in the field and at least clarify the situation here tonight.

Mr. VENNING (Rocky River): I oppose this Bill as it has come out of Committee and I oppose the third reading of the Bill. At day break I will be looking to see Grant Andrews to see what the comments really are between the Minister and the organisation in the light of what the Minister has said tonight; that is, that he told Grant Andrews that what he has put in *Hansard* will make him happy. That is contrary to what we have read in the paper of the comments of Grant Andrews of a couple of days ago. It also amazes me that the Minister has said, "Let's give it a go and we will look at it afterwards." What sort of legislation does one call that? Once one gets one's foot in the door, one usually walks right in. It is much better if one is to rectify a Bill when preparing it, rather than to try to pull the wool over the eyes of the people, thinking that the Minister will agree to something else afterwards. The Minister tonight has acted very lamely in the handling of the Bill, particularly in the latter parts of it. He has not answered the questions raised by members on this side, and I know what the reaction of the country people is going to be. These people, who are so far from the centre of activity in the State, those people right out in your outside country, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are not going to be very pleased about the amount per litre that they are going to have to pay for their fuel. I would have wished that you had something to say tonight to help these people on the outskirts of the State. I oppose the third reading of the Bill.

Dr. EASTICK (Light): This is the first time I have spoken on the Bill, and I oppose it because it has not come from the Committee in the manner in which it has been publicly promoted by the Government. The Bill is clearly contrary to public promotion and, because it was introduced only yesterday, in a form that was different from its previous public promotion, opportunity is denied to a large group of the public, the chance to assess the alterations made since their initial approval was given. Even though I accept the need for the Bill and the virtue behind the measures contained in it, the manner in which it has been presented and the way it has emerged from Committee meet with my disapproval.

Mr. RODDA (Victoria): This Bill is a fraud and is highly inflationary. It is spawned on the horses' birthday—1 August. All people brought into the ambit of contributing to roads will soon be riding horses on those roads, because we are going back to the horse and buggy days; a lot of people might arrive at that point faster than they would like to think. As the Bill emerges from the Committee, I make a plea for the people in the outback who drive vehicles on private property and who never drive on main roads, such as fishermen (with whom I have had a lot of contact), abalone fishermen—

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member must speak to the Bill as it comes out of the Committee. He must not canvass matters that should have been canvassed at the second reading stage.

Mr. RODDA: As the Bill comes from Committee, it does all of the things that it should not do. It will bring great displeasure to many South Australians. I oppose the third reading.

The House divided on the third reading:

Ayes (22)—Messrs. Abbott, Broomhill, and Max Brown, Mrs. Byrne, Messrs. Corcoran, Crafter, Drury, Duncan, Groom, Groth, Harrison, Hemmings, Kenneally, Klunder, McRae, Payne, Simmons, Slater, Virgo (teller), Wells, Whitten, and Wright.

Noes (16)—Mrs. Adamson, Messrs. Allison, Arnold, Becker, Blacker, Dean Brown, Chapman, Eastick, Goldsworthy, Gunn, Rodda, Russack, Tonkin, Venning, Wilson (teller), and Wotton.

Pairs—Ayes—Messrs. Hopgood and Olson. Noes—Messrs. Evans and Nankivell.

Majority of 6 for the Ayes.

Third reading thus carried.

ROAD MAINTENANCE (CONTRIBUTION) ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.
(Continued from 31 July. Page 226.)

Mr. WILSON (Torrens): This Bill seeks to repeal the road maintenance tax legislation retrospectively. The reason for that is that the Government has not yet collected all the taxes that are still due from before 1 July. The Bill is an absolute necessity, especially in view of the legislation that has just passed through this Chamber. The Opposition supports the Bill.

Mr. GOLDSWORTHY (Kavel): We support the Bill because it has been pointed out that it has been the policy of the Opposition to abolish the road maintenance tax in this State and to supersede it with some better form of taxation. The Bill is a little strange; one understood in the first instance that all it was going to do was repeal the road maintenance tax legislation but, as has been pointed out by the member for Torrens, the Government has yet to collect some money which has fallen due but which it has not yet been able to collect. If we look at the Auditor-General's Report, we realise that the Government will take quite a lot to collect it. If we look back over the last three years and see the amount of money the Government has been able to collect under this legislation, we realise that the Government has had a great deal of difficulty in extracting the money. The Minister claims it is well over \$5 000 000 in this current year. The Government collected \$4 800 000 in the last financial year; a fair bit was hanging over still to be collected from last year. So, heaven knows when the Government will get around to proclaiming this legislation; in other words, when it will get around to abolishing this road maintenance tax legislation. If we can take any notice of what is in the Auditor-General's Report, it will take quite a while.

Mr. BLACKER (Flinders): I support this measure. If there is any district in which people will be pleased to see the legislation go, it is my district, where people have been burdened with considerable freight problems. The irony of the whole road tax situation is the number of people whose creditability has been damaged during the time the

legislation has been on the Statute Book. In the last year, there were 184 bankrupt estates and 15 companies went into liquidation, and they are victims of a system which has had its inequities and its problems within the community.

Furthermore, it has been a tax which has been progressively more detrimental to country areas as they get farther away from the greater metropolitan area. I have pleasure in supporting the Bill, and I regret only that this legislation was not being implemented by a measure which would return a similar amount of revenue.

Mr. GUNN (Eyre): In commenting briefly on this measure, let me say that it has taken this Government about 15 years to honour the promise it made in 1965, when it endeavoured to mislead the people of South Australia, to repeal this legislation. Like many other of its promises, this was not honoured.

Like the member for Flinders, I am delighted to see the legislation being repealed, because it has had a detrimental effect on my district. People have had to pay this obnoxious tax while using some of the worst roads in Australia. Driving through bulldust and mud, some of my constituents have had to pay road tax to cart water for their sheep. It has been a blight on the House ever since it was first enacted, and I am delighted to see its repeal.

I hope that such legislation will not be placed again on the Statute Book. It was a bad tax, difficult to collect, and it created a situation where inspectors were taking the numbers of vehicles, where other employees of the State Government were acting as pimps, and where various other people were having to go into devious company arrangements to try to avoid the effects of the legislation.

The House is taking an enlightened step by repealing it.

Bill read a second time and taken through Committee without amendment.

The Hon. G. T. VIRGO (Minister of Transport): I move:

That this Bill be now read a third time.

Like the member for Eyre, I am delighted that this tax is now being repealed. It is yet another piece of Liberal taxation introduced by the Playford Government that the Labor Government is able to get rid of.

Bill read a third time and passed.

MOTOR FUEL RATIONING BILL

His Excellency the Governor, by message, recommended to the House of Assembly the appropriation of such amounts of money as might be required for the purposes mentioned in the Bill.

LIBRARY COMMITTEE

The Legislative Council intimated that it had appointed the Hon. R. A. Geddes to fill the vacancy on the Library Committee caused by the retirement of the Hon. Jessie Cooper.

ADJOURNMENT

At 10.21 p.m. the House adjourned until Thursday 2 August at 2 p.m.