

however, that the children of 50 or 60 years ago also gave the State Savings Bank splendid support. To-day I sent for the first ledger used by the bank in 1863. After turning over the leaves of that book I came to the conclusion that the school children in those days were very keen supporters of the institution. I will give an instance. Anything connected with the State Savings Bank business is supposed to be confidential, but owing to the lapse of time between 1863 and 1926, I think I will be exempted from any offence I may commit in that direction. When going through the ledger I discovered amongst the names of the depositors that of Master Edward Horne Wittenoom. Under date 24th November, 1863, there is an entry recording the deposit of 6s. On 30th November, six days later, there was another deposit of 3s., and on the 2nd December one of 2s., making a total amount deposited of 11s. Then the account was balanced on the 17th May, 1864, the entry recording the withdrawal of 11s., the total amount deposited! The account may have been reopened but I did not see any record of such an entry.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Amendment of Section 16:

Hon. H. SEDDON: Will the Minister give an indication of whether it is the intention of the Government to increase the interest paid to depositors?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I could not give a reply to that question straight away. The rate of interest paid by the State Savings Bank is $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on ordinary deposits and 4 per cent. on deposits for 12 months, these being the same rates of interest as apply to the Commonwealth Savings Bank. The question of increasing the rate of interest requires serious consideration because the increase would have to be paid on the whole of the money deposited. The Commonwealth Savings Bank pays 3 per cent. only on deposits of £1,000.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Why is that?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Because they do not wish to encourage large deposits in the savings bank section, preferring that class of business to go to the Common-

wealth Bank itself. The question of raising the rate of interest would require careful consideration by the Treasury officials in order to determine what the effect would be.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 5—Amendment of Sections 19 and 22:

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Nicholson raised an important matter that I desire to look into. I will not proceed further with the Bill this evening.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 8.54 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 8th September, 1926.

	PAGE
Questions: Parliament House grounds	835
Old Men's Home	836
Metropolitan Abattoirs	836
Insurance, Government and private companies	836
Water supply, North Perth	836
Petrol tax	836
Government buildings, cessation of work	837
Motions: Wroth bankruptcy case, to inquire by select committee	837
Police Benefit Fund and Superannuation scheme, to inquire by select committee	844
Railway gauge unification	840
Redistribution of seats	852
Bills: Reserves, 1s.	841
Wyndcatchem Rates Validation, 3s.	841
Coal Mines Regulation Act Amendment, 3s.	841
Co-operative and Provident Societies Act Amendment, 1s.	842
Agricultural Bank Act Amendment, returned	842
Guardianship of Infants, 2s.	842
Married Women's Protection Act Amendment, 2s.	848

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

QUESTION—PARLIAMENT HOUSE GROUNDS.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN asked Mr. Speaker, representing the Chairman of the House Committee: 1, Has he noticed the fence that was on the boundary of Class A Reserve, on a portion of which Parliament House is erected, being removed from the boundary line into the reserve facing Harvest Terrace?

2, Is it the intention to widen Harvest Terrace to the width that the fence is being re-erected? 3, If so, on what or whose authority is this being done?

Mr. SPEAKER replied: 1, Yes. The fence is being removed temporarily to allow room for the erection of the retaining wall. 2, No. 3, Answered by No. 2.

QUESTION—OLD MEN'S HOME.

Mr. TEESDALE asked the Honorary Minister (Hon. J. Cunningham): 1, Is it a fact that the menu at the Old Men's Home is as follows: Sunday, corned beef; Monday, boiled beef; Tuesday, stew; Wednesday, stew; Thursday, stew; Friday, tinned fish; Saturday, stew; whilst for breakfast there is porridge, bread and butter, and for tea there is bread and butter only? 2, Will he look into this and see that a more varied diet, especially a little roast meat occasionally, is issued?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM replied: 1, No. It is more varied than is stated. 2, Two baked dinners are provided each week. I have a copy of the menu, which the hon. member may peruse.

QUESTION—METROPOLITAN ABATTOIRS.

Mr. MANN asked the Minister for Agriculture: What was the profit earned through the metropolitan abattoirs in all its avenues for the year ended 30th June, 1926?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: The profit for the year was £15,019, but the fees have been considerably reduced as from 1st August, 1926.

QUESTION—INSURANCE, GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE COMPANIES.

Mr. NORTH asked the Premier: 1, What is the amount standing to the credit of the Government Insurance Fund in respect of fire risks on Government property? 2, What is the total amount of money received by the Government under the Insurance Companies Act, 1918, as deposits from insurance companies operating in Western Australia? 3, What is the rate of interest allowed insurance companies on such deposits? 4, Is it his intention to lay upon the Table of the House the papers in connection with the fire insurance of Government property for which the insurance companies quoted?

The PREMIER replied: 1, There are two funds. Position as at 31st August, 1926: (1) Insurance of public buildings, £12,815 14s. 9d.; (2) Railway accident and fire insurance fund £78,366 2s. 2d. 2, £290,000. 3, 4½ per cent. per annum as provided for in the Act. 4, If the member desires the papers he should move for them in the usual way.

QUESTION—WATER SUPPLY, NORTH PERTH.

Mr. J. MacCALLUM SMITH asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is he aware that the water at present supplied to North Perth is so filthy that it is unfit for human consumption? 2, What is the department doing to remedy the evil, and when may the people of the district expect to be supplied with reasonably clean water? 3, Pending some improvement, what rebate is he prepared to make on the water rate?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, The department has had no complaint lately from North Perth as to water being unfit for consumption. Water has been discoloured at times owing to rust from the pipes. The formation of the rust is due to the action of the water on the pipes, and is occasionally disturbed from the walls of the pipes by a heavy flow or by a reversal of direction of flow. Discolouration recently has possibly been occasioned also as result of main scraping. 2, The engineer advises that the only remedy at present applicable is flushing the mains when complaints are made and water is found discoloured. 3, The Act does not permit of rebate of water rate.

QUESTION—PETROL TAX.

Mr. THOMSON asked the Minister for Works: 1, What was the amount collected on petrol by the Commissioner for Taxation for quarter ending June, 1926? 2, Have the Federal Government imposed their petrol tax of an additional 2d. per gallon? 3, Is the State still collecting the tax under the Motor Spirit Vendors Act, 1925?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, £23,058 17s. 4d. 2, Yes. 3, Yes; but the tax will, in accordance with the provision of the Act be reduced to one penny when the Commonwealth tax is appropriated to main roads.

QUESTION—GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, CESSATION OF WORK.

Mr. LATHAM asked the Minister for Works: 1, What is the number of buildings under construction by the Government in the metropolitan area? 2, On what number of buildings under construction, or in process of improvement and renovation by the Government, has a cessation of work taken place? 3, What is the cause of such cessation of work? 4, Can he inform the House when it is expected that work will be proceeded with?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: In view of the fact that this matter is now before the Court of Arbitration, and is *sub judice*, it is considered most improper that it should be brought into the political arena. If the question is repeated after the court has determined the matter, the information will be supplied.

MOTION—WROTH BANKRUPTCY CASE.

To inquire by Select Committee.

MR. RICHARDSON (Subiaco) [4.26]: I move—

That a select committee be appointed to inquire into the allegations made by the "Subiaco Weekly" newspaper regarding the Wroth bankruptcy case.

When, a few weeks ago, I gave notice of this motion, it was my intention to present to the House a great deal of detail respecting the Wroth case. Unfortunately, however, for health reasons I shall be unable to speak at any length to-day, and so I will deal with the case merely on general lines. The Wroth bankruptcy case has been dealt with fully by the "Subiaco Weekly," a newspaper circulating in Subiaco. Whilst it may be said to be but a small newspaper, I impress on hon. members that the publisher and proprietor, Mr. O'Keefe, for advertising reasons, guarantees that a copy will be placed in every house in Subiaco. He carries out that guarantee faithfully, and so it will be seen that the total issue represents nearly 4,000 copies. Apart from that, the paper is a first class advertising medium and, in consequence, the business people of Subiaco send copies all over the State. So, anything published in that paper has a very wide reading public.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: That ought to improve the paper's advertising value.

Mr. RICHARDSON: It does. I want to impress upon members that whilst they might think it is but a small paper, actually its circulation is greater than those of many of the larger papers published.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: Are you a shareholder?

Mr. RICHARDSON: No, it is a proprietary concern. Twelve months ago last July, there began in the "Subiaco Weekly" a series of articles dealing with the Wroth bankruptcy case. From their inception those articles contained serious allegations, principally against the bankruptcy court. I gather from those articles that in 1894 Mr. Wroth, who was then the owner of land situated in Toodyay and had fairly large interests generally decided to declare himself bankrupt. This was not because he was actually bankrupt, but because he happened to be short of cash and some of his creditors were pressing him. Therefore, as I say, he determined upon becoming bankrupt, clearing up the estate, receiving the balance, and carrying on with a clean sheet. From the articles appearing in the "Subiaco Weekly," it seems that the whole administration of the estate has been clouded. The case has been before the court on many occasions, and many thousands of pounds have been spent on litigation. This money, I understand from the articles, probably has been charged against the estate. In the beginning, it seems, Wroth was a debtor to the extent of only £1,500. For years past Wroth has desired to get his discharge as a bankrupt, knowing, as he does, that his estate could easily have satisfied his creditors. However, it appears that he has not been able to get his discharge from the court. Principally, the articles in the "Subiaco Weekly" have challenged Mr. Moss, the Official Receiver in Bankruptcy. When Wroth became a bankrupt in 1894, trustees were appointed without his knowledge, and he has never yet been able to learn why those trustees should have been appointed. I wish to make it clear that I am repeating what has been given in the articles alluded to, that I am not expressing my own opinions. The estate came into the hands of the Official Receiver in Bankruptcy, Mr. Moss. The allegations made against that officer are so serious that I trust members will agree to the appointment of some independent tribunal to investigate the case and, if possible, discover exactly who is right and who is wrong. I have no brief either from Mr. Wroth or

from Mr. O'Keefe, the publisher of the "Subiaco Weekly," nor have I any brief for Mr. Moss. I take it that, strictly, Mr. O'Keefe, the proprietor and publisher of the "Subiaco Weekly," is responsible for the articles that have appeared in that paper. So serious are the allegations made that I have been approached by hundreds of people with a request that something should be done to satisfy them as to whether or not the allegations were warranted. If those allegations are wrong, then Mr. Moss, holding a high and honourable position, a man respected by everybody, should be given an opportunity to present his side of the case.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Was he in charge 30 years ago?

Mr. RICHARDSON: No, he was in the department, but was appointed Official Receiver afterwards. It is against him that the allegations are principally made. Other persons are mixed up in the matter. The allegations against Mr. Moss are so strong that if we were to believe everything that has appeared in the "Subiaco Weekly," Mr. Moss would stand revealed as a man who had used his position as Official Receiver in Bankruptcy to allow a deliberate fraud against Wroth.

The Premier: How do you spell "weekly"?

Mr. RICHARDSON: Some spell it with an "e" and some with an "a." Because of these allegations justice should be done in this matter, and on these grounds I appeal for the appointment of a select committee. I will read some of the headings that have appeared in the newspaper from time to time—"The Wroth Case" (this appears in big letters); "Charges made by the 'Subiaco Weekly' of Fraud" (they say that these charges have been sustained); "Scandalous and fraudulent transactions by the Bankruptcy Court": this is again hitting at Mr. Moss.

The Premier: Mr. Moss is not the Bankruptcy Court.

Mr. RICHARDSON: The allegations in the articles are centred on Mr. Moss.

Hon. G. Taylor: He has nothing to do with the decision of the court.

Mr. RICHARDSON: They go on to say that a very important document is missing, and remark "Was it done away with; if so by whom, and why?" They then allege that it was done away with by officials of the Bankruptcy Court. It may be thought that Wroth, after going through this pandemonium for many years, became obsessed

by the importance of his own case. I had that opinion of Wroth when I began reading these articles. I came to the conclusion that he, like many others, had followed his case for so long that he had become obsessed.

Hon. G. Taylor: Paranoic in a way.

Mr. RICHARDSON: Probably many hundreds of other persons would have gone the same way. Wroth, however, submitted himself to Dr. Quinlan and Dr. McWhae, both well-known practitioners in Perth. These doctors tested him severely on the case and on many other points, and have declared that he is not obsessed, that he is quite rational and sane in every respect, and that there are no signs of obsession in him.

The Minister for Lands: For how long did they keep him under observation; for days or weeks?

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am not sure how long the period was, but it was a sufficient length of time to enable them to come to this conclusion about the case. They have also stated that if anyone desires them to give evidence to this effect they are willing to do so.

The Minister for Lands: I know of a case in which two doctors gave a certificate of sanity in respect of a man who is still in the asylum.

Mr. RICHARDSON: That is not to say that this man's case is similar.

Mr. Sampson: Remember what was said of Thomas Mable! He was all right when he left the asylum.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I have come to the conclusion that Wroth is entirely sane. I am sure two medical practitioners of the standing of the gentlemen I have named would not have given such an opinion unless they were sure that Wroth was both sane and rational. We may, therefore, put aside any thought of obsession on his part. Reference was made in the articles to two documents termed deeds, which had been prepared at different times. I have seen them. They are a complete mystery, and do not agree with one another. The publisher of the paper distinctly states that if a select committee were appointed to investigate this case he could satisfy the members of it in 20 minutes that an injustice had been done to Wroth. That may or may not be correct.

The Premier: It is a tall order for a man to say that he could satisfy a select-committee in 20 minutes over a case that has been before the courts for all these years.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I quite agree, but I am only quoting the remarks that have appeared in the newspaper. Serious allegations have been made against Mr. Moss, who is charged with fraud. Here are a few more headings: "Creditors and Wroth defrauded." This is evidently the opinion of a solicitor in Perth. They then speak of the examination of Wroth in regard to obsession. When people read these things week after week they naturally ask why action is not being taken by those against whom the allegations are made. Mr. Moss is a prominent Government official. It is probably not reasonable to expect him to take any action. On the other hand it may be said that perhaps Mr. Moss thinks he would not be able to get damages. Mr. O'Keefe, the publisher of the paper, is a man of substance. He has evidently become so imbued with the idea that Wroth's statements are correct, that he has the courage of his convictions and is game to back the savings of a lifetime so that Wroth may get justice. That is probably the way he is looking at it. I have asked myself why Mr. Moss has not taken action to disprove the statements that have been made. It may be that he does not desire to appear in a libel action. These matters can easily be passed over. A document may be held in the Bankruptcy Court that would prove Wroth to have been wrong in the statements that have been made. The arguments contained in the journal lead one to believe that misleading statements were made when the court proceedings took place. If that is so, it would be possible to bring forward a document to disprove what has been alleged in the "Subiaco Weekly" during the last 12 months. I do not know that such a document exists, but if it does it could readily be produced. Wroth's insolvency was brought about by a debt of £1,500. It is contended that his estate is worth to-day about £40,000, though at the time of the trouble it was not worth that. If that be so, notwithstanding that the debt may have increased through interest, some surplus must be left over for Wroth, provided that the statements which have been published are correct. It is easy to say there is nothing in the case. The matter was first dealt with by the late Mr. R. S. Haynes. It was recently submitted to Mr. Arthur Haynes, of R. S. Haynes & Co. Mr. Haynes is looked upon as one of our leading solicitors. I think his opinion is worthy of the utmost consideration, the more so as he is prepared to have the opinion pub-

lished and to go forth to the world. It is a very strong opinion. Mr. Haynes says—

I have been asked to give an opinion concerning certain phases of Wroth's position, both prior and subsequent to his second bankruptcy and the two deeds of the 18th June, 1904. This is a long standing matter, and cannot be lightly dismissed as a matter that is Statute barred. The claim is based primarily upon breach of trust and fraud as trustee, and it has long been held that the Statute of Limitations does not apply in such cases. My opinion is based upon various documents, namely, the two deeds referred to, certain judgments in Wroth's favour, judgment of the late Sir Edward Stone, then Chief Justice; the two judgments of the present Chief Justice McMillan; the Bank's rejected proof against Hubbard's estate and various documents anterior to the judgments in Wroth's favour.

Mr. Hubbard and Mr. Clarkson came into the matter as trustees. It appears from the articles that their estates have been cleared out of Wroth's estate. The matter is so complex and intricate that it would be impossible for any layman to make it clear to members. The opinion goes on—

The bank was a debtor to Wroth in the sum of £700—

This refers to the National Bank—

—which represented cash, and was also liable to account for considerable real estate in its possession. Hubbard and Clarkson were debtors to Wroth for the balance of his real and personal estate. £3,565 in cash, 1,159 sheep, their wool and increase, and a personal debt of £10,000.

It will be seen that a sum of £14,200 was owing to Wroth, and yet after 33 or 34 years he is still an undischarged bankrupt. The original debt that accounted for his bankruptcy was something like £1,500. Mr. Haynes says—

The only debt due by Wroth as against all these assets that I can see was £400, which represented his liability to the bank for costs. The two deeds referred to disposed of the whole of Wroth's estate, including his after-acquired property. There passed under these two deeds as part of such estate £4,265 in actual cash.

Hon. members will observe that there has been a considerable amount of cash already paid by Wroth. Yet he remains an undischarged bankrupt.

The bank realised Wroth's property in its possession (retaining £700 cash) under Clause 10 of his agreement with the trustees or guarantors, by a private sale to Clarkson for £1,500. Clarkson resold the property for £1,500, and the purchaser paid the £1,500 on Clarkson's behalf to the bank, and received the property from the bank, the bank reducing its valueless and irrecoverable debt against Hubbard by that sum, but retaining its claim thereof against Hubbard.

The bank paid Wroth's money to clear off the claim against Hubbard, and yet Hubbard is still held responsible; so that Wroth gets nothing out of it except that his money is paid on Hubbard's behalf.

In the deed called Clarkson's deed, Clarkson disposed of the balance of Wroth's real estate, including his after-acquired estate and £1,565 cash. The consideration which Clarkson received for the sale of this estate was the retention by him of £2,000 cash, the 1,159 sheep, their wool and increase, and a release from his personal liability of £10,000.

That is what Clarkson got out of it, and why he got it Wroth wants to know, of course.

The purchaser received the whole of Wroth's real estate and £1,565 in return for £1,500 which he paid on Clarkson's behalf to the bank as before stated.

A man buys a large estate for £1,500, and he gets the whole of the estate and also £1,565 in cash. This is not Wroth's statement, nor is it Mr. O'Keefe's statement: it is the legal opinion given by Mr. Haynes, after going through all the documents. There seems to be some inconsistency. Mr. Haynes proceeds—

It was because of Wroth's refusal to turn the bank's worthless debt against Hubbard into a recoverable one that the bank made him bankrupt, with the result that Moss became the trustee, and it then became possible to dispose of Wroth's estate practically without consulting him.

This refers to Mr. Moss, the Official Receiver. The mix-up begins here. The property got into someone else's hands, and entirely away from Wroth. The opinion continues—

There can be no doubt that Wroth was made bankrupt simply for the purpose of turning a valueless debt of the bank against Hubbard into a recoverable one, and thereby rectifying the position which the bank was in not being able to carry out Clause 10 of the bank's agreement with the trustees or guarantors. Clause 10 refers to one of the conditions which I mentioned earlier.

Mr. Mann. Which bank was it?

Mr. RICHARDSON: The National Bank. I ask members to note particularly what Mr. Haynes says next—

Wroth was, in my opinion, illegally made bankrupt, and continued as a bankrupt illegally and fraudulently, and his creditors were thus deprived of the settlement of their claims in order to allow Clarkson, incidentally, to become released of his personal liability to Wroth, and in order to give effect to this the whole of Wroth's valuable estate was bargained away practically for nothing, the net effect

being that Wroth's creditors were defrauded of the payment of their debts, and Wroth was defrauded of the large surplus of his estate left over after payment of all his just liabilities.

That is rather a serious comment for a lawyer to make.

The second bankruptcy, in my opinion, should be set aside, and the two deeds made thereunder set aside also. It appears to me to be a function of the court to make those responsible for the fraud foot the bill. It is extraordinary to me that the bankruptcy courts have been availed of to perpetrate such a scandalous and fraudulent transaction. I have given considerable time to the unravelling of the many complications and complexities associated with this case, but I find that I have not been able to give the adequate time required to bring the matter to finality.

The matter is so intricate that it would take an ordinary man many weeks to go through the documents and discover the rights and wrongs of the case. Mr. Haynes goes on—

I know that some people consider that this matter has become an obsession with Wroth. If a man who has been defrauded of his estate, and who has spent many years in endeavouring to recover his property, is said to be obsessed, then it may be truly said that Wroth comes within that description. I have personally always found him a most patient man, who has always been able to explain matters most lucidly, and clear up the complexities associated with the case. There is no doubt in my mind that he has a genuine grievance and a genuine claim.

Mr. Stubbs: One could not get anything hotter than that.

Mr. RICHARDSON: That opinion has been published, and has never been commented upon. If the opinion were not correct, one would have expected a reply from those to whom it refers. I do not say that Mr. Haynes is right in his opinion. I have not gone into the case with sufficient fullness. However, if there is anything wanting to back up the case for an independent inquiry, it is this legal opinion. The theory of obsession is set on one side by the medical opinions of Dr. McWhae and Dr. Quinlan. I do not wish to labour the case, but I do feel that Mr. Moss should be afforded an opportunity of coming before an independent tribunal and there explaining the case.

The Premier: Evidently Mr. Moss is not much concerned to have the matter cleared up.

Mr. RICHARDSON: That is not the question. Mr. Moss being a public official,

it is the Government's duty to see that the case is cleared up.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Mr. Moss may never have seen that publication.

The Premier: It has been brought under his notice.

Mr. RICHARDSON: If Mr. Moss has not seen it, he is the only man concerned who has not seen it.

The Premier: That paper is the "Smith's Weekly" of Western Australia.

Mr. RICHARDSON: It is useless for the Premier to criticise the paper on the score of its size.

The Premier: I am not doing that. Mr. Moss, I say, saw that issue on the second day after its appearing.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I think the Premier is merely joking, but I do not think it is right to criticise the paper on account of its being a small paper.

The Premier: We all joke now and again.

Mr. RICHARDSON: Although the paper is small, its circulation is large. It is placed in about 3,500 homes each week, and on an average two people at least would read each copy. Therefore the paper has 7,000 or 8,000 readers weekly. For the past 12 months hardly an issue has passed without some allegation being made against the Bankruptcy Court and against Mr. Moss. The public have to be considered, and an inquiry should be held, whether Mr. Moss desires it or not. Estates are placed entirely in the hands of the Official Receiver in Bankruptcy, and therefore these charges are of importance. I regret that occasion has arisen for the levelling of any charge against Mr. Moss, whom I have always held to be a most honourable man. Still, the charges have been made, and it is for us to give Mr. Moss an opportunity of showing, before an independent tribunal, that he has been vilified by this weekly paper; or, on the other hand, let Wroth come forward and prove his case right up to the hilt. The paper says Wroth is prepared to justify every word of what has been published. If he can do that, it is the more reason why an inquiry of some kind should be granted. I hope members on both sides will see the justice of the claim I put forward, that either Wroth is wrong or Moss is wrong. Whichever is wrong, the other should have the opportunity of proving himself right. If Wroth has been the victim of injustice for all these years, there

should be means of affording him some compensation.

The Minister for Railways: Has not the case been before the courts?

Mr. RICHARDSON: Yes.

The Minister for Railways: And what did the courts say about it?

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am giving the matter as it is presented here in this paper.

The Minister for Railways: Are we to constitute ourselves a court of appeal?

Mr. RICHARDSON: Either Mr. Moss should have an opportunity of clearing his character of these vilifying charges, or Mr. Wroth should have an opportunity of securing justice. Therefore I ask members to support me in my request for the appointment of a select committee, so that the matter may be investigated in detail and justice rendered where justice is due.

On motion by the Minister for Railways, debate adjourned.

BILL—RESERVES.

Introduced by the Minister for Lands and read a first time.

BILL—WYALCATCHEM RATES VALIDATION.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—COAL MINES REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Third Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. C. Angwin—North-East Fremantle) [5.17]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

HON. G. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret) [5.18]: At this stage, before the Bill passes the third reading, I desire to again question the wisdom of placing on the statute-book, and legalising, the provision for a seven-hour day. More substantial reasons should be given before the House should agree to the principle.

Mr. Sleeman: You are not opposed to the seven hours.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: No, but I am opposed to placing it on the statute-book. I want stronger arguments advanced, much stronger

than those voiced by the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson), who suggested that more work could be done in seven hours than in eight hours. I need something more substantial before I can be convinced that his contention represented the facts. It is not wise to legislate in this direction while we have arbitration tribunals appointed to decide such matters. Hon. members may have noticed the answer furnished to Mr. Maxwell in the Queensland Legislative Assembly on Thursday last by the Minister for Railways. Mr. Maxwell had asked what increased cost had been involved in the provision of the 44-hour week in connection with the Queensland railway system. The Minister said that approximately 500 extra men had had to be employed at a cost of about £250,000. In view of that statement, based upon the actual experience of the Queensland railways, the argument that shortened hours do not decrease output but tend to increase production, falls to the ground. In view of this concrete case, more should be required from the Government before the House agrees to include this principle in our legislation. In view of these facts how can the member for Collie continue to adhere to his line of argument? It is not reasonable to place such a provision on the statute-book, and I oppose the third reading of the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time, and transmitted to the Council.

BILL — CO-OPERATIVE AND PROVIDENT SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Council and read a first time.

BILL—AGRICULTURAL BANK ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

BILL—GUARDIANSHIP OF INFANTS.

Second Reading.

MR. MANN (Perth) [5.20] in moving the second reading said: The object of the Bill is to remove an anomaly that exists under the 1920 Act. Provision was made in that measure for the father of a child to appoint a guardian to act with the mother in

the event of his death. Under the Act the mother is not permitted to appoint a guardian for her children to assist the father unless she is in the position to establish before a court that the father is not a proper person to have full control of his children. Hon. members will appreciate that it would be rather difficult for the mother to prove such a charge and besides, it would be objectionable to many mothers to have to take that step. Nevertheless it might be necessary that more control and a more effective guiding hand should be available in the event of the mother's death, to assist the father in the better upbringing of his children. Justices of the Peace and others connected with the Children's Court state that of the juveniles brought before that tribunal, the greater proportion are those who have lost a parent or both parents and who are without the necessary parental control. If it is considered necessary that in the interests of the child there should be a guardian to act with the mother, surely it is equally necessary that there should be a guardian to act in conjunction with the father! It must be remembered that the actual upbringing of a child, particularly during its earlier years, is left to the mother rather than to the father. Of necessity the father must be away from the home for the greater part of the day and also, in all probability, during some portion of the evening. Thus the children are left without that necessary care that is essential and consequently they do not receive the training that the child does who is directly under the control of the mother or of someone taking the mother's place. Let me picture an instance of this kind. The father may have been a good parent in that he has earned the necessary money to keep the home together. It has been left to the mother to control, train and bring up the children. When the young people reach an age when it is necessary that great care shall be taken of them, the mother passes away. It is difficult for the father, who may be termed careless regarding the welfare of his children, to adapt himself to the altered circumstances and become wholly and solely responsible for controlling and guiding his offspring, a duty that had formerly belonged to the mother. In such circumstances the consequences would be that the children would not receive the necessary care and attention calculated to make of them good men or good women. This question has received much consideration, not only in Western Australia

and Australia, but in the Old Country. A Royal Commission sat in England during 1924 and that body went closely into this problem. In 1925 a Guardianship Act was passed giving the mother the power that I am asking the House to agree to in the Bill I am submitting to hon. members. The Act passed in England was dated the 31st July, 1925, and one of the newspapers in an article relating to it, had the following to say:—

It gives identical rights of application to the courts in cases of disputes. It provides for such cases being heard before police courts, and that the welfare of the child shall be the sole principle on which they shall be determined. It gives precisely the same rights to both parents with regard to the appointment of guardians after death, and it gives a mother the right to obtain an order for the custody and maintenance of the child without leaving her husband.

To-day the mother cannot get control of her child, or an order to control it together with a maintenance order, unless she leaves her husband. That right is sought in the Bill. Should the mother succeed in getting that order from the court, it will then be open for her to leave her husband and to make a home for herself. The Bill also provides that both parents may appoint guardians and that if they both die before the child reaches an age when it can look after itself, the guardians appointed by the father and the mother respectively shall be charged with the responsibility of properly upbringing the child. It will appeal to hon. members that it is much better that persons known to parents, persons in whom the parents had every confidence, should control the child rather than that the young one should be handed over to a stranger who would have no interest in the child apart from the monetary consideration for undertaking that duty. Nothing extravagant is sought in the provisions of the Bill. I have outlined the principal powers sought. The Bill merely asks that the same privilege shall be accorded the mother that is granted the father. It also asks for another power. A child may have been placed in the care of a home or been handed over to somebody to look after it. After the necessary care has been bestowed upon it in bringing it up properly and the child reaches an interesting age, a parent may come along and demand that the child be handed over to him. The Bill provides that the court shall have the right to consider the interests of the child and may refuse to hand it over to the parent, recognising that the parent has lost his rights

because of his past neglect. The Bill is simple and there is no occasion for me to speak at greater length. Its provisions will appeal to hon. members. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

BILL—MARRIED WOMEN'S PROTECTION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

MR. MANN (Perth) [5.30] in moving the second read said: This is a short amendment to overcome what may be termed a flaw discovered in the Act of 1922. In that Act provision was made for the payment of money under orders made by the court. On the first appeal, however, it was found impossible to distrain for money in excess of one week's order. If the court made an order for £2 a week and the husband had defaulted for 12 weeks, distraint could be obtained in respect of only one week. The select committee, which last year inquired into the Divorce Act Amendment Bill, examined Mr. Millward, a police court official, who gave evidence as follows:—

By Mr. Hughes: Do you think the type of man, who leaves his children to the State to maintain, treats the marriage tie rather recklessly?—I do not think he is at all responsible. He is a callous individual. We have a case of a man who will pay sometimes if a warrant is issued, and at other times will willingly go to gaol. He pays exactly as he pleases. He does not default because he is hard up. He has been fined in the court for betting in the streets and paid the fine . . . The Married Women's Protection Act of 1922 is a business-like measure, but according to a judgment delivered in the Supreme Court, a woman can issue a warrant for only one week's arrears. Because of that ruling the Act is practically inoperative. A warrant sometimes takes three or four weeks to execute. The man is then given another three or four weeks, and the woman finds herself on the losing side all the time.

In the case of Litster an order was made in the police court of New South Wales but the husband absconded and came to Western Australia. When he was arrested he was in arrears to the extent of £60, and an order was made for £1 10s. a week. An appeal was carried to the Full Court where Chief Justice MacMillan, in giving judgment, said—

It is ordered and adjudged that the defendant do pay weekly and every week, now next ensuing, into the hands of the officer in charge of police, No. 10 Police Station, Pad-

dington, in the metropolitan district in the State of New South Wales, for the use of the said defendant's wife, an allowance of one pound ten shillings, the first of such weekly payments to be made on the 18th day of June, 1917. The warrant sets out that the order has been made and "it was thereby directed that if default should be made in payment of the said sum of £1 10s. weekly (or whenever and as often as default should be made in any of the periodical payments aforesaid) the said several sums should be recoverable by execution against the goods and chattels of the said Peter David Litster, and that in default of sufficient goods and chattels he should be imprisoned (with hard labour) in His Majesty's prison (or the police gaol) for six months." The latter part of it is not clear in the order, but is taken from the Act I have just read. It seems to me that the order which was brought over under Section 14 shows there is to be a payment of £1 10s. per week, and that is an order which is enforceable here. In my opinion arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate and proceedings then taken for imprisonment for the amount of arrears. The result of that procedure would be to increase the imprisonment to which he was liable under Section 167. Under that section for each default of £1 10s. he would be liable to imprisonment for three days, but if the warrant was for two defaults, amounting to £3, the term would be nine days.

The court held that the plaintiff could distrain for only £1 10s. If the defendant paid that amount, the warrant was satisfied and he was set at large. Proceedings then had to be taken over again to distrain for another week's arrears. The court cited the case of a man who absconded from Perth and went to Broome. Members will realise the cost entailed to bring a man from Broome. Yet when that man was brought back, it was possible to distrain for only one week out of the 11 weeks' arrears. Before a fresh order could be issued, the man had again absconded and consequently the woman was left without redress. The procedure under the Married Women's Protection Act is taken under the Justices Act. Since this amending Bill was prepared, I have learned that the Minister for Justice intends to bring down an amendment of the Justices Act, which may cover this defect.

The Minister for Justice: That is so.

Mr. MANN: It shows the need for my amendment.

The Minister for Justice: The Government recognise it as being part of the programme for the session.

Mr. MANN: I was not aware of that. It was not until I was making some search in the Crown Law Department that I heard that an amendment of the Justices Act was

being prepared. Although that measure may be carried later in the session, I see no reason why this Bill should not be passed. The amendment to the Justices Act would apply to all procedure and not merely to that under the Married Women's Protection Act. Further, it would make no difference to the Justices Act if this Bill were passed. My amendment would do some good and could do no harm. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Minister for Justice, debate adjourned.

MOTION — POLICE BENEFIT FUND AND SUPERANNUATION SCHEME.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

Debate resumed from the 1st September on the following motion by Mr. Hughes:—

That a select committee of the House be appointed to inquire into the incidence and administration of the Police Benefit Fund and the practicability of the conversion of the fund into a superannuation scheme.

MR. MANN (Perth) [5.36]: In supporting the motion moved by the member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes) I wish to congratulate him on the very clear and concise way in which he presented his case. He had a full grasp of the position, and with his knowledge of accountancy—

Mr. Hughes: I have heard it said, "Beware of the Greeks when they bring gifts."

Mr. MANN: The hon. member might allow me to finish. With his knowledge of accountancy, I was about to say, he was able to place his figures before us so lucidly that it was not difficult for anyone to follow his line of argument. It is unnecessary for me to traverse the same ground, but I wish to give some other facts that may influence members to support the motion. The member for East Perth referred to the Workers' Compensation Act and pointed out that if an employee, who had just gone on to a job, was injured, the injury was apparent at once and his claim under the Workers' Compensation Act would be satisfied. A police officer, however, is frequently injured and no notice is taken of the injury at the time, save that his assailant might be brought before the court and fined 10s. In after years, however, the officer probably begins to suffer from the effects of the injury, and unless there is a record of the injury on his file, he is not able to make a claim for special consideration under the

Police Benefit Fund. I have a case in mind. In 1904 or 1905 a policeman, in attempting to arrest a burglar, was shot. That man continued to serve in the force until 1918 or 1919, when his sight failed. The department had him placed before a board and the board decided that, in the interests of the service, he should be retired. He was retired and was granted the ordinary retiring allowance. Casting his mind back, he recollected that his sight had become affected soon after he was shot by the burglar. Fortunately for him there was a record of the incident on his file and he was able to convince the board that he was entitled to special consideration.

The Minister for Justice: He would have had a hard job to convince an insurance company.

Mr. MANN: I am not so sure of that. It is just as difficult to convince a police board unless a record is made on the man's file at the time. I am advised that an officer of the force died recently while on leave in one of the other States. The cause of death was lung trouble contracted in the course of his duty, but there was no record of his having met with any special injury. He was a healthy man when he joined the force and continued in good health for years afterwards, but he was always engaged on difficult and strenuous duties and he contracted tuberculosis. His widow will get nothing more than the bare amount from the benefit fund. Frequently a policeman, when arresting a man, receives a bad kicking but that is considered part of the day's work.

Mr. Wilson: And the man may also get a kick.

Mr. MANN: If he does, perhaps he deserves it. This sort of thing occurs frequently to the police and no record is made of such incidents. If an officer is assaulted in the execution of his duty it is regarded as an every-day occurrence. One such occurrence, however, may result in injury from which the officer subsequently dies. On the other hand, if a workman falls off a scaffold and injures himself, his injury is apparent at once and he makes his claim for compensation.

Mr. Panton: A man falling from a scaffold might be hurt internally and might not notice it for weeks afterwards.

Mr. MANN: If he was unable to follow his work for a day or two or a week or two, he would make a claim for compensation.

Mr. Panton: But he might continue at work and not feel the effects immediately. In saying that, I am not objecting to your argument.

Mr. MANN: After a man has served in the force for 12 or 14 years or more, he is practically unfitted for any other calling.

Mr. Chesson: I would hardly make that admission.

Mr. MANN: If the department put him before a board and he is certified to be not fit, he is retired.

The Minister for Lands: That applies to all other men.

Mr. MANN: But that does not make the position any better. There is provision to pay a retiring allowance to policemen, and I am trying to show that a pension would serve an officer much better than would a small retiring allowance. A retiring allowance of £200 or £300 soon melts away. The men themselves would be more satisfied. They would know when they had to go out, either because of ill-health or injury, that they were not going to be thrown on the labour market in the waning days of their life. If any good can come from the hon. member's motion in the way of providing a pension, I suggest that the House should agree to it. If such a course were followed it would be a benefit to the men in the service, and if the men benefited the State would benefit.

THE MINISTER FOR POLICE (Hon. J. C. Willecock—Geraldton) [5.17]: I do not intend to oppose the motion but perhaps it will be as well to give some information to the House on the subject of the fund. I have delved into ancient history to find the genesis of this fund and to get some information of the alterations that have been made since it has been in existence. The fund was established almost simultaneously with the Police Force, and it was then practically as it exists at the present time. Continuing in existence, it was maintained practically by the Government, and the first record of legislative or administrative enactment dates back to 1866. At that period, by ordinance, the fund was placed under the control of a board. Originally, 50 per cent. of the fines that were recovered were paid into the fund, but that system was eventually done away with and the Government of the day subsidised to the extent of pound for pound, all the contributions made to the fund. That is the system, practically speak-

ing, that has remained in operation ever since. The motion deals more with superannuation, but the hon. member in his speech referred at some length to the disabilities under which the police suffer in comparison with what would be the position were they brought under the Workers' Compensation Act. He said that if an officer met with an accident he would get no compensation, merely a gratuity equivalent to twelve months pay. The fund is practically a compulsory insurance scheme and such compulsion does not alone apply to the Police Force. It is also in operation in the public service, where all who have been appointed since 1905 are compelled to insure their lives. There is the difference, however, that in the Public Service the employees pay the whole cost of insurance, whereas the police contribute only 50 per cent. and the Government pay the balance.

Mr. Mann: You recognise the risks the police take.

The MINISTER FOR POLICE: Yes. In the Police Benefit Fund the term is mostly shortdated, generally 12 to 15 years, with the result that the outgoings are very heavy. There have been years in which the amount paid out of the fund has almost equalled the contributions, and had it not been for the Government subsidy the fund would not have been equal to the drain made upon it. The remuneration received by the police was considered 12 months ago and if the board awarded much more it would have meant the Government paying to the fund not only pound for pound, but contributing almost wholly to it.

Mr. Davy: If you put it that way, the Government are paying the whole lot now. The Government pay all the wages, and out of the wages come the contributions.

The MINISTER FOR POLICE: The Government accept no responsibility after having paid the wages. The member for East Perth said that the board considered the amount that was paid into the fund. If they did consider that, it means that the Government paid the whole lot. The fact remains that if the Government had not contributed on the pound for pound basis, the fund would have become extinct. The Government payments have allowed the fund to accumulate. The hon. member also referred to actuaries and what they do. I agree that actuaries are very conservative in their estimates. One of the obligations in connection with the fund is that the Government Actu-

ary shall make an actuarial examination of the fund and report on its condition to the Government. This is done every four years. On the last occasion the Government Actuary stated that the fund was absolutely and entirely insolvent. Previous Governments, not being anxious to make a capital payment of £20,000, £30,000 or £40,000 to make the fund solvent, did not do anything in regard to the matter. Notwithstanding the estimate that has been made, the fund at the disposal of the board has continued to increase, but not to a great extent.

Mr. Mann: It has increased rapidly in recent years.

The MINISTER FOR POLICE: Yes. One of the reasons why there is an increase is that more satisfactory arrangements have been entered into in regard to the investment of the money. The position at the present time is that the amount to the credit of the fund is £42,000.

Mr. Hughes: But it is insolvent actuarially.

The MINISTER FOR POLICE: Yes, it is actuarially insolvent. But it will be a considerable time before the assets are extinguished, before any Government will take the responsibility of making a big capital payment into the fund. The present income of the fund is about £9,000 a year. There are some payments made outside of the contributions by the police and the Government. The Government are paying approximately £4,500 per annum. On top of that there is an amount of £300 paid into the fund annually to cover compensation for injuries or retirements on account of ill health contracted as a result of duty. This Compensation has amounted to only a very small proportion of the sums paid out of the fund. The police had asked to be brought under the Workers' Compensation Act, but the then Government decided to contribute the £300 to pay for the claims to which I have referred. This contribution may be regarded as an insurance premium paid by the Government. Instead of paying it to the Government Workers' Insurance Scheme it was paid to the Police Benefit Fund. Under the Workers' Compensation Act the compensation for total disability is £750. A constable who is declared unfit to follow his occupation is not precluded from earning a living by other means, and it does not follow that he would receive the full £750. The extent of his injuries would be assessed, and he would be paid accordingly. The Fund generally is in

a better position just now; principally because the average rate of interest paid on the money invested is better, averaging approximately 5 per cent. During the two years that I have been controlling the Police Department I have never been approached with the suggestion that the liberal provisions the police were enjoying under the fund should be altered in favour of the payments set out under the Workers' Compensation Scheme. That seemed to indicate that the police knew they were better off under the incidence of the existing fund than they would be under any other arrangement.

Mr. Thomson: The police have no pension rights.

The MINISTER FOR POLICE: No; no one joining the Public Service at the present time has a right to a pension. Only those who were in the Service prior to 1904 enjoy that privilege. So well satisfied are the police with their present conditions that no request has been made to me during the past two or three years that they should be brought under the Workers' Compensation Act, instead of under this fund. They enjoy special privileges. For instance, if a man falls ill, he is paid full time over a period up to six months, in addition to which he gets medical attention free. Of course, as far as possible that attention comes from Government medical officers. If the police were under the Workers' Compensation Act, they while sick would receive only the scale of pay set out in that Act which, in respect of any ordinary injury, would be 50 per cent. of their wages. So they are considerably better off under their own fund than they would be under the Workers' Compensation Act, except that, in the event of total permanent incapacity, a policeman would not receive the £750 provided for in the Workers' Compensation Act. However, I have never known of a policeman being totally and permanently incapacitated.

Mr. Thomson: If a man were injured, how long would he receive full pay?

The MINISTER FOR POLICE: For six months, and he would then be entitled to go before a board, who would decide whether he was likely to be again employed in the department. If that board recommended his retirement, he would be retired and so, of course, would get his retiring allowance from the fund. The board administering the fund have given every consideration, not only to the cases brought

before them, but also to suggestions for improvement.

Mr. Mann: They are bound by the regulations.

The MINISTER FOR POLICE: But they have a considerable degree of discretion, and in almost every case the full amount provided for under the regulations has been made available by the board. The hon. member who moved the motion complained that the regulations differentiated between those men who joined the force prior to 1917 and those who have since joined. Of course, experience showed that the fund could not be continued on the basis that obtained prior to 1917. Nothing was taken from anybody by the change of basis. It was agreed that the conditions had to be altered, and all those men who have joined the force since 1917 have joined it under the new conditions. It may seem an anomaly that there should be varying conditions for two separate sections of the force; but the same thing occurs in the public service, where those who joined before 1904 receive a pension, which is denied to those who joined at a later date. The payment of this annual subsidy, amounting to £4,500, is clearly an act of grace on the part of the Government, and could be withdrawn if any Government so desired. The giving of that subsidy is one of the reasons why successive Governments have insisted on the fund being invested in Government securities. At any rate the great grievance about the investment of that money has now been met. The amount to the credit of the fund is £42,000: so interest at 5 per cent. increases that fund at the rate of £2,100 per annum. Of course there are serious liabilities on the fund, and during the next two years the retirement of senior officers will deplete the fund by something like £10,000. Whilst that seems a big sum, it must be remembered that the fund is building up at the rate of £9,000 per annum. The object of the motion is to convert the fund into a superannuation fund. I do not know that a select committee could get us much further in that direction. Nobody would accept on such a proposition any authority but that of an actuary, and it has been estimated by the Government Actuary that to convert the fund into a superannuation scheme would mean increasing the contributions by 4 per cent. which, in turn, would involve an increase in the Government's contributions. Moreover, the Government would have to

and £25,000 in cash to make the scheme satisfactory. Not content with the Government Actuary's estimate, the police union consulted the actuary of the Australian Mutual Provident Society, whose report, I understand, was closely similar to that of the Government Actuary. Subsequently the union got into touch with an actuary in Melbourne, but it seems he wanted a fee that they were not prepared to pay. In New South Wales the Government contribute £75,000 per annum to the police fund, and in Victoria the Government contribute £50,000. In Western Australia the Government have done a fair thing by the police, and have adopted the recommendations of a special board that the remuneration of the police should be increased by about £25,000 per annum. I have no objection to the motion, for I think it might clear the air a little if a select committee went into the question. However, I do not know that anything could be done without an actuary's report, and the hon. member who moved the motion holds that actuaries are too conservative to be of much use to the proposed committee.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The select committee could say how best to convert the fund into a pension scheme.

The MINISTER FOR POLICE: Even that information is already available.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

MR. E. B. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [7.30]: The member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes) made out a good case for the passing of the motion. This was recognised by the Minister for Police, who came to a proper decision in accepting it. If any branch of the public service deserves the right to pensions, it is the police force. Their duties are exceptionally arduous and risky. We recently had evidence of the risks to which the police are exposed on special service both in regard to the unfortunate tragedies at Kalgoorlie, where two brave and experienced officers lost their lives, and also at Narrogin where we had the splendid example of the bravery of Sergt. Johnston and Constable Gannaway, who arrested two armed and desperate criminals a few weeks ago. It was due not only to exceptional bravery displayed by those two officers, but also to their good fortune that another tragedy did not occur at Narrogin on that oc-

casional. I am glad to say that with the approval of the department the bravery displayed by these officers was suitably recognised by the community in which they lived. The latter part of the motion, which says that the select committee shall inquire into the practicability of the conversion of the fund into a superannuation scheme, will no doubt provide most of the committee's work. I take it, it would be its duty to draw up a proper scheme for police pensions. It will then be for this House and the Government to decide whether the probably large sum of extra money required for the purpose can be found and voted by the House. Any such proposal should receive sympathetic consideration from all parties in the House. The motion does not instruct the select committee to bring up such a scheme, but in view of the fact that the member for East Perth will be its chairman, it can safely be trusted to take into consideration that aspect of the question. I hope that as a result of the deliberations and inquiries of the select committee it will be possible to find means of providing in this way for the police force of this State. If the money that will be required is available for pensions for the police, I am sure it is one of the purposes to which the taxpayers will cheerfully agree that money should be devoted.

MR. TEESDALE (Roebourne) [7.34]: I support the motion with the idea that any deep-seated feelings that may be experienced by those responsible for this question being brought forward may be inquired into by a select committee so that it may be ascertained whether there are any grounds for them or not. We are so dependent upon the police that we cannot afford to refuse to inquire into any grievances that may be brought forward concerning them. There will not be much trouble or expense involved, but the select committee will be the means of showing whether there are any grounds for complaint in this matter or not.

Question put and passed.

Ballot taken and a select committee appointed consisting of Messrs. Chesson, Heron, E. B. Johnston, North and the mover, with power to call for persons and papers, to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned, and to report on the 29th September.

MOTION—RAILWAY GAUGE UNIFICATION.

Debate resumed from 1st September on the following motion by Mr. North:—

That in the opinion of this House the time has arrived when the Federal policy of extending the standard railway gauge should be consummated in Western Australia.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS

(Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [7.44]: Members who are interested in this motion will have had an opportunity of reading the report of the Royal Commission that inquired into this matter some four or five years ago, the report of the various conferences that have been held since, and a tentative agreement that was arrived at as a result of those conferences. No one can oppose the motion as it stands. Anyone who takes the long view of this question, from its national standpoint, must agree that the consummation of the unification of the railway system of Australia is very desirable. It would be easy to point to what has happened in other countries, and the advantages that would accrue to the people of Australia generally if this desirable reform were carried out. We all know why we are in our present position of having a number of different railway gauges. The difficulty commenced 70 or 80 years ago when the first railway lines were built in Australia, and it has been going on ever since. We find that it would cost about 57 millions sterling for the railways of Australia to be converted to the recognised Australian standard gauge, 4ft. 8½in. One cannot disagree with the terms of the motion, but there are questions as to the carrying out of this great national work—who shall carry it out, and where is the money to come from, and over what period of years shall the work be spread, and what are the advantages to be gained from it when it is completed. There are 56 pages in the report of the Royal Commission, and there are 23 pages of another report. Reading the two reports together and endeavouring to condense them. I do not find that much can be cut out of them. It is not my intention to make a speech of the length of the reports, but there are one or two aspects of the subject which concern us as Western Australians and on which I desire to touch. It may be argued that in our present state of development we cannot afford to embark on unification of gauge. On the other hand, there are people who say that we cannot

afford not to do it. While from an Australian standpoint unification of gauge is eminently desirable and necessary, yet looking at the matter dispassionately, from a purely Western Australian standpoint, we may say that we are getting on fairly well with our 3ft. 6in. gauge, and that this gauge is likely to last for a considerable time owing to the lower cost of construction involved. We may argue that we can develop our country more quickly at the lower cost of the 3ft. 6in. gauge than at the higher capital expenditure involved in the 4ft. 8½in. gauge.

Mr. North: That would apply also to roads.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, because a road can be built anywhere irrespective of standard, and can be used by any vehicle. On the other hand, railway vehicles, being built to run on a certain gauge, cannot run on any other gauge without a third rail or some contrivance of that description. The whole proposition of unification of gauge has been estimated to cost 57 millions for Australia.

Mr. George: What would it cost Western Australia?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is all set out in the Royal Commission's report. Then there is the less ambitious proposal to construct a uniform standard gauge line between all the Australian capitals, from Brisbane to Perth or Fremantle. The cost of such a railway would be £21,000,000, and our share of the line, namely from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle, would cost about £5,000,000. The tentative agreement reached by a conference on this subject was that such a railway should be regarded as a national work and that the cost should be distributed on a population basis. The Western Australian people at that time representing one-sixteenth of the population of the Commonwealth, this State would be responsible for one-sixteenth of the cost of the whole line between Brisbane and Fremantle.

Mr. George: That would be just over one million.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Other proposals made since have increased the amount.

Mr. George: You have to reckon our loss of rolling stock.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not know that we should have to scrap much of our rolling stock. Our necessities are so great, and our development has been

so rapid, that all the existing rolling stock could be used on the 3ft. 6in. gauge until worn out, especially as our railways, unlike those of New South Wales and Victoria, do not all converge on one point. Our outlying districts are to a great extent connected with the nearest port. The trade of Fremantle could be dealt with over the 4ft. 8½in. gauge, while the trade to other ports, such as Albany, Bunbury and Geraldton, could be dealt with on the 3ft. 6in. gauge. One serious disadvantage of constructing a broad gauge line from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle would be that the traffic from the numerous branch lines converging on the Kalgoorlie-Fremantle railway would have to resort to transhipment of goods.

Mr. Thomson: Is it impossible to instal a third rail?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There is a tentative proposal for the laying of a third rail in South Australia for the line from Port Augusta to Red Hill, with a view to junctioning at some point on the line running northward from Adelaide. Evidently, though there is difference of opinion about the third rail, that device is considered sufficiently practicable.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Could a broad gauge railway from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle be laid on a new route opening up new country all the way?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That has been proposed, but the disadvantage is that the only new country to be developed by such a railway would be the country immediately adjoining it. We could not have the 3ft. 6in. gauge coming on to the 4ft. 8½in. gauge without transhipment. There would be that serious disability from a Western Australian standpoint, though I admit that from the military aspect, and also from the aspect of convenience of travel, a uniform broad gauge railway extending from Brisbane to Perth or Fremantle would be most desirable. The disadvantage of transhipment would exist unless a railway was specially constructed for trans-Australian traffic. The trade of this State with the other States is not likely to be done by rail to any large extent, as sea transport is considerably cheaper. No doubt the great bulk of the trade between Western Australia and the East would continue to be done by sea. I suppose the Leader of the Opposition hopes that that trade will not continue, but that we shall supply our own needs, at all events in the form of foodstuffs.

Mr. North: How do Geraldton tomatoes go to the East?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: By sea. They could not go by rail because the South Australian quarantine regulations forbade the transport of fruit across that State. Quarantine regulations could still be put in force if the Commonwealth built the proposed railway. This question, like many others, boils itself down to a question of finance. It is very doubtful whether in our present state of development we could not spend the money better than on the proposed railway. From a practical standpoint that railway is not absolutely necessary. It will not materially increase the wealth of Western Australia.

Mr. Thomson: Would it cost us a million?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: According to the Commissioner's report £1,078,000. That is on the basis of the 1921 proposal. As regards the railway from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle, if we came into the general scheme this State would be responsible on a per capita basis for one-sixteenth of the proposed line from Kyogle to Brisbane, and of that from Red Hill to Port August, and similarly regarding all other proposals connected with the building of a 4ft. 8½in. gauge line between Brisbane and Fremantle.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The benefit of the capital to capital railway would be greater to Western Australia than to any other State.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is a question whether the seriousness of the disability from which we suffer would justify the expenditure.

The Minister for Lands: We had better spend the money in opening up more land.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The scheme would make Fremantle a city.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: While admittedly there are great advantages to be derived from the scheme, this State at present suffers no special disadvantages from the non-existence of a broad gauge railway between Fremantle and Kalgoorlie. Certainly there are not such advantages as would warrant us in expending £1,250,000 at the present time. While that view may be purely parochial, and one to which most of us as Australians would not subscribe, still it is one which we must seriously consider, having regard to the finances. One of the points of the tentative agree-

ment was that if we came into the general scheme and if a broad gauge railway were built from Fremantle to Kalgoorlie, Western Australia would become responsible for its share of the cost of every other railway built in every other Australian State with a view to the consummation of a uniform gauge between Fremantle and Brisbane. Thus while our one-sixteenth of the £5,000,000 involved in the construction of the line from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle would be merely one-third of £1,000,000, the commitments we would incur in the other States at the same time—I refer to New South Wales, Queensland, and South Australia—would be such that we would be involved in an expenditure of well over £1,250,000. That estimate was arrived at before any proposition was made regarding the proposal to construct a line from Port Augusta through Red Hill, to which I have already referred.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Now the Minister should let himself go about it and tell us the advantages!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not desire to let myself go and deal with the whole question. If I were to traverse all the information available I would have to go through 63 pages of the reports, for I could not do justice to the subject unless I did so. Even if I tried to condense the contents of those reports, I am afraid very little could be cut out because of the importance of the question. The only point to be considered is whether the comparatively small advantage we would achieve from a purely State standpoint—I wish to emphasise that point—would counteract the disadvantages through not developing other parts of the State at the same time. The motion is worded in such a way that it means the Federal Government would be responsible for the cost of the work. It gives an indication that if a suitable scheme could be arrived at as the result of negotiations between the Federal Government and the State Government, we should go on with it. I do not know that we could get any further than the reports take us, because this question has been the subject of so many interstate conferences that it would be unlikely the Federal Government would depart from what was decided by the States at past conferences. I have no objection to the motion. If there is any possibility of a conference with the Fed-

eral Government getting us anywhere, the Government will be only too pleased to discuss the matter. The outstanding disability from a parochial point of view would be that we would spend a lot of money in order to secure something that would not be of very great advantage from a State standpoint, whereas the expenditure of such a huge sum of money would hinder the development of the State in other directions regarding which money could be better spent for the time being.

MR. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [8.4]: I do not think a single member of the House would vote against the motion if it could be shown to be within the realm of practical politics. In view of the financial position of the State, it would be impossible to provide the 4ft. 8½in. gauge throughout the Western Australian railway system. At the same time some effort should be made to construct the 4ft. 8½in. gauge through from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle.

Mr. North: The motion covers that.

Mr. ANGELO: It does not quite say so. The Minister for Railways indicated that it would cost us about £1,000,000 to undertake that work.

The Minister for Railways: The total cost of constructing the line would be £5,000,000, but our share of that expenditure would be a little over £1,000,000.

Mr. ANGELO: The Federal Government would take a keen interest in this work and, in my opinion, it would pay them to provide the necessary money at a low rate of interest, because they would gain considerably from the extension of the Commonwealth line through to Fremantle. I have travelled to the Eastern States by rail on several occasions during the past few years, and I found that the trains are carrying about 60 per cent. only of what they are capable of conveying. I have heard dozens of passengers say that it was the last time they would travel by the trans-Australian railway because of the concluding stage of the journey from Kalgoorlie to Perth. After travelling on the Commonwealth line one realises how inconvenient and inadequate is the Kalgoorlie-Perth section. Having enjoyed the comfort of a beautiful train like that running over the trans-Australian line, the change into the little cabins for four first class passengers and for six second class passengers—I think the latter provision is absolutely

wrong—is merely a deterrent to people making use of the trans-Australian railway.

Mr. Sleeman: What about the section between Port Augusta and Terowie?

Mr. ANGELO: But that section is traversed in the daytime, and people are not herded together as they are during the night.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: And that inconvenience will be done away with shortly.

Mr. Clydesdale: At any rate 10 hours should be cut off from the time taken in travelling from Sydney to Perth.

Mr. ANGELO: Yes. I was talking to Mr. Bell the other day, and he said that with the new engines available in South Australia the run there could be curtailed to the extent of three hours. Recently the trans-Australian train was five hours late, but it arrived at Kalgoorlie on time; so that at least five hours can be cut off the run from Port Augusta to Kalgoorlie. I consider that another three hours could easily be cut off the run from Kalgoorlie to Perth. If we calculate what 40 per cent. additional passengers would mean to the trans-Australian railway, hon. members will realise what a great benefit to the Commonwealth the construction of the broad gauge line through to Fremantle would represent. I believe the additional passenger traffic would almost pay interest on the cost of the work. The same train crew would have to be employed, so that the work should be so much more advantageous to the Commonwealth. If the Government cannot do anything else, I hope an effort will be made to induce the Commonwealth to help us to construct the Kalgoorlie-Perth section. The Federal Government might render us assistance by providing cheap money and accepting responsibility for half the interest costs over a period. The extra number of passengers who would be carried would help to compensate them for the assistance rendered. There is another point to be considered. Two years ago Parliament approved of the construction of a railway from Yarramony to Merredin, a distance of about 100 miles, or one quarter of the distance to be covered by the proposed broad gauge line from Kalgoorlie to the metropolitan area. If the broad gauge line were constructed, the railway, instead of following the present route to Kalgoorlie, would follow the other route that has been surveyed. That point should be considered by the Government when approaching the Commonwealth Government. I support the motion, and regret

that it will not be possible to provide the broad gauge railway throughout Western Australia for many years to come. On the other hand, it would be in the interests of all concerned if the Kalgoorlie-Fremantle section could be constructed. It is regrettable that our trans-Australian train, which conveys so many overseas passengers from Perth to the Eastern States, traverses our wheat areas during the night time. Thus the very parts of the State we would like overseas visitors to view, are passed in the hours of darkness! I would like to know whether it would be possible, if the extension were agreed to, to start the trans-Australian train from Perth at about 8 a.m., and also to save the 10 hours mentioned by the member for Canning (Mr. Clydesdale).

On motion by Hon. Sir James Mitchell debate adjourned.

MOTION—REDISTRIBUTION OF SEATS.

Debate resumed from 25th August on the motion by Hon. Sir James Mitchell—

It is resolved by the Legislative Assembly that a proclamation should be issued for the redivision of the State into electoral districts under the provisions of the Electoral Districts Act, 1923.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [8.11]: The Leader of the Opposition in submitting the motion expressed the hope that it would be dealt with in a non-party spirit. For myself I can give an assurance that I have not discussed the motion with any member sitting in Opposition, or on the Government side of the House. Every member sitting on our side of the Chamber is entirely free to act according to his judgment. No caucus meeting has been held to discuss the motion and no binding decision of any description has been arrived at.

Mr. Latham: Now then, what about it?

The PREMIER: For my own part it will take very little time for me to indicate my attitude towards the motion. When the Electoral Districts Bill was before the House in 1922 I gave it my strongest opposition, and nothing has transpired since to induce me to alter the views I then held. The Electoral Districts Act is teeming with inequalities and if there is to be a redistribution of electoral boundaries it ought to be done on something more equitable than is possible under the provisions of that Act. The

Leader of the Opposition made passing references to the Act of 1911, which was the last time there was a rearrangement of the electoral boundaries in this State. I think he said that Act was a perfectly just and good one.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No one has questioned it for 15 years.

The PREMIER: No one?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And it is 15 years since that Act was passed.

Mr. Latham: No attempt other than ours has been made to alter the Act.

The PREMIER: The member for York (Mr. Latham) should read a little comparatively recent history. The hon. member is quite new to this House and does not know what transpired in 1913. Any boundaries that would be arranged under the Electoral Districts Act would be unjust from beginning to end. It would give twice the representation to the agricultural area that was given to the metropolitan area.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And to the central goldfields.

The PREMIER: I shall come to that. That is another aspect that renders the Act wholly inequitable. But to begin with it says that the people living in the area known as the agricultural area, which stretches from the port of Geraldton right down to Albany and includes Bunbury and the South-West, should have just double the representation of the people who live in the metropolitan area, the area between Midland Junction and Fremantle.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: That is very fair.

The PREMIER: From the hon. member's point of view, it may be.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Not enough, really.

The PREMIER: When we have regard to some of the seats described as agricultural, we cannot over look the Swan which almost encircles the city.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Parts of it are 40 miles from the city.

The PREMIER: It comes down and joins on to the Guildford electorate.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It extends to Wooroloo.

The PREMIER: It comes right to the suburbs of Perth. It joins the Guildford electorate at Midland Junction and the Canning at Kenwick.

Mr. Latham: It consists of small settlements.

The PREMIER: That does not matter. Is there any particular advantage in living

in a big settlement as against a small settlement?

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The people in the Swan district are largely producers.

The PREMIER: Why should one elector living just over the boundary from Canning or from Guildford be the equal of two electors on this side of the boundary? There can be no reason whatever for it.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Still, to-day there are five times as many.

The PREMIER: I know. The hon. member will please understand that I am not attempting to justify the present boundaries. That is not what the motion asks us to do. I am dealing with the motion which asks the House to make a redistribution under the provisions of the Electoral Districts Act. It is admitted on all sides, and has been admitted for many years, that there are very glaring inequalities in the present electoral districts, but that is not the question before us at present. If Parliament should set about making a rearrangement of the boundaries, it is not a sufficient justification to proceed to do that because the present boundaries can be shown to be unjust. We should do it on something like fair and equitable grounds. That cannot be done under the Act passed by the Mitchell Government, which the hon. member would have us put into operation now.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What do you call "fair"? It is all a matter of the quota for each area.

The PREMIER: Of course it is. But why is the State divided into five areas, for instance? Why did the hon. member's Act leave the whole of the agricultural districts, extending over several hundred miles, in one area?

Mr. Latham: Community of interest.

The PREMIER: Exactly; I agree with the hon. member. But why are the goldfields divided into two areas? Is there no community of interest there?

Mr. E. B. Johnston: To give additional representation to the outback mining districts.

The PREMIER: Not at all. On the contrary it was to take representation from what is described as the central goldfields.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Oh, no.

The PREMIER: There is no question about it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It was not so.

The PREMIER: I shall show that it was so. The agricultural districts were included in one area, and in order that the representa-

tion of the goldfields might be reduced, the mining districts were divided into two areas, and so we have what are described as the central goldfields area and the mining area.

Mr. Latham: The central goldfields area has a voting strength equal to that of the agricultural area.

The PREMIER: Of course it has, but it should have greater representation. Why does the hon. member say that the agricultural districts should have a greater voting strength than has the metropolitan area? Simply because those districts are further from the capital.

Mr. Latham: Not only that.

The PREMIER: That is one of the principal reasons; they are further from the seat of government, and they are larger in area.

Mr. Latham. That is so.

The PREMIER: Following logically the same argument, seeing that the goldfields are still further away from the seat of government than are the agricultural districts, why should not the goldfields area have a still lower quota than has the agricultural area? What is the justification for singling out portion of the goldfields and calling it the goldfields central area, and giving that a higher quota than the rest of the mining fields, a quota equal to that of the agricultural area? Following the same argument, having regard to the distance from the seat of government—an important factor that has always been admitted because of the influence electors might exercise upon the Parliament or upon the Government of the day—why has the so-called goldfields central area, 400 miles from the seat of government, been given the same quota as the Swan electorate, which is only half an hour's run from the seat of government and which almost surrounds the city? There is no justification for it except the desire to reduce the representation of the goldfields. This policy of dividing the goldfields into two areas, called the goldfields central area and the mining area, is in the iniquitous Act of 1911, and for no other reason than that those goldfields returned practically unanimously members who supported the Labour Party. There was no other reason for introducing it in the 1911 Act. Even at that time seats were created in what was called the goldfields central area with an enrolment of 4,800 electors, seats 400 miles from the capital as against some of those in the agricultural area and

even right adjacent to the capital with an enrolment of 1,600 and 1,700 electors. That was the Act of 1911. The Electoral Districts Act perpetuates to a lesser extent that evil. Under that Act if a redistribution takes place pursuant to this motion, the whole of the goldfields central and mining areas would have seven seats, but if the mining districts were dealt with as one area, as they ought to be, just as the agricultural districts are included in one area, the goldfields would have not seven but ten seats.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: With an agricultural quota?

The PREMIER: No, certainly not; but if the hon. member is going to argue that the further away from the capital—and that was the basis of his argument—

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is not the only reason.

The PREMIER: The hon. member argued that the further away from the capital, the smaller the quota should be. That is one of the reasons, and it is observed everywhere except on some of the goldfields. It is recognised in regard to the four seats in the North-West.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But they have no train service from the metropolis.

The PREMIER: The hon. member says it is just to give one elector in the agricultural area, say in Swan, Northam, or Murray-Wellington, a voting power equal to that of two electors in Perth. I have heard him urge that every member of Parliament, no matter what part of the State he might represent, is a member for the city. He is here at the seat of government, in touch with the Government and with Parliament, and therefore the agricultural area should have a smaller quota because it has not that advantage. To be consistent the mining area still further back and distant up to 400 miles should be required to have a still smaller quota than that of the agricultural area. The further we go from the seat of government, the smaller the quota should be.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: So it is.

Mr. Latham: As soon as you get through No. 1 rabbit-proof fence, you are in the mining area.

The PREMIER: Does not the hon. member know there has been created what is called the goldfields central area, which is still further distant than No. 1 rabbit-proof fence. It is hundreds of miles beyond the rabbit-proof fence.

Mr. Latham: But electors just through the fence are entitled to more power.

The PREMIER: I know; that is the injustice of the Act. If they are entitled to greater power, being just through the rabbit-proof fence and just beyond the agricultural area, why are not the districts further out entitled to additional power? The hon. member says that persons living in Kalgoorlie and Boulder, by reason of their distance from the seat of government, should be given no advantage over the electors of Swan.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They are pretty concentrated areas.

The PREMIER: It does not matter whether they are concentrated or not. Concentration does not affect the principle. It is the difficulty of reaching the capital and the distance from the seat of government that count, not concentration.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Not altogether.

The PREMIER: Of course it is.

Mr. Thomson: It is a massed population.

The PREMIER: But what has that to do with it? When people are living in a small area over 400 miles away from the capital, they experience all the difficulties of approaching Parliament and keeping in touch with their members. That is one of the important factors. A member can keep in fairly close touch with his electors if his district is within a reasonable distance of the city. If people should live in a comparatively small area, does that reduce their difficulties when they are 400 or 500 miles from the city? How does that affect the position? If two persons live in Boulder, why are they at a disadvantage as compared with two persons living in Swan? Of the two living in Swan, one might live at Mundaring and one at Kalamunda.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Suppose you take Greenough district, which is nearly 300 miles from Perth?

The PREMIER: The extraordinary feature of the Act is that the whole of the agricultural districts are kept in one area.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Of course they are. We could not do anything else.

The PREMIER: But the hon. member could have done something else when dealing with the goldfields. There is no reason whatever why the mining districts should be divided into two areas, unless the object was to maintain the policy introduced in the 1911 Act, the sole purpose of which

was to deprive Labour of seats in the Parliament of this State.

Mr. Thomson: You could not say that about the Electoral Districts Act.

The PREMIER: I am speaking now of the Act of 1911. Still, the Electoral Districts Act follows the lines of the 1911 Act in dividing the goldfields districts into two areas.

Mr. Mann: Could you not have Kalgoorlie as the capital of the goldfields, just as Perth is the capital of the metropolitan area?

The PREMIER: Will that bring the people of Kalgoorlie any nearer to the seat of government?

Mr. Mann: They are all concentrated.

The PREMIER: I know, but what has that got to do with it? Are the difficulties and the obstacles that confront them with regard to legislation and government, reduced by reason of the fact that the people are concentrated? It is much easier for the member for Swan to go through his electorate, large as it is, than for me to visit mine. He could run through his electorate in an afternoon, whereas it would take me three days to get to Boulder and back.

Mr. George: Two nights and a day.

The PREMIER: One cannot visit Boulder and return in less than three days, whilst in one afternoon the member for Swan could visit every centre in his electorate.

Mr. Latham: You would not like to try it.

Mr. Panton: He gets over the difficulty by inviting all the ladies of his electorate here to afternoon tea.

The PREMIER: Of course he does. I have often motored round the Swan electorate in an afternoon. The argument is that because people are concentrated, even though they are some distance from the seat of government, they should have the same representation as the people who, though more scattered, are living at the back door of the capital. If the whole of the goldfields were in one area, as they ought to be under the redistribution, they would have ten seats and not seven. The very fact of dividing the mining area into two, deprives them of three seats, and the object of dividing them was to deprive them of seats.

Mr. Thomson: Not at all.

The PREMIER: When the Bill was first introduced, that was the position and the proposal of the Leader of the Opposition was along the same lines.

Mr. Thomson: Don't forget that Swan was held by Labour for some time.

The PREMIER: That is nothing. The goldfields are absolute certainties for Labour, but Swan is not, and because the goldfields were known to be certainties, it was proposed to reduce their representation.

Mr. George: Was that in the jerryman-dering Bill?

The PREMIER: That is what it was called.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Why is it still the law?

The PREMIER: Because you were eight years in office and did not alter it. Now you want me to make a change in two years. I am expected to accomplish in two years what the Leader of the Opposition failed to do in eight years.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But you were in for seven years.

The PREMIER: And we would have done something but for the friends of the Leader of the Opposition in another place.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You have no right to say that.

The PREMIER: Perhaps I should have said the friends of members opposite.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: A lot of them are your friends.

The PREMIER: I am talking of the hon. member's friends. We had five there out of 30, and there is no more than that number to-day. I have no doubt they acted in all good faith and in accordance with their consciences. Nevertheless in 1913 they prevented the Government from doing something.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: One reflects on them; the other relies on them.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You're a "relier"!

The PREMIER: I wish to emphasise the point of view that by no basis of logic or argument or consistency can you justify the division of the mining area into two, except it be to reduce the representation of the goldfields. For the reasons I have already stated we should have had ten seats instead of seven.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Not under your Act of 1913; you would have had two.

Mr. Latham: You would have been in a worse position—one man one vote.

The PREMIER: The hon. member has not read it; he has only just discovered a few minutes ago that the Act was introduced at all. He did not know that there was such

an Act in existence and in five minutes he pronounces judgment on it.

Mr. Latham: I will read it to you if you like; one vote one value and one man one vote.

The PREMIER: That Act provided for four country seats being equivalent to six metropolitan seats. That is not one vote one value. It allowed for one-fifth above or one-fifth below, and that worked out at four country votes to six metropolitan votes. There is no shadow of justification for taking one little area, one mining town on the goldfields, putting a circle around it and saying, "You are an area in yourself," and then giving that area a higher quota than you would give the surrounding districts. The only object was plainly to reduce the representation of the goldfields. There is no question about that.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You are not justified in saying that.

The PREMIER: That was the object when the Bill was first introduced. The hon. member has overlooked that and he failed to remedy that injustice in the Bill of 1923.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We gave special consideration to the goldfields.

The PREMIER: Very special consideration! I want to know why the goldfields should be divided into two areas. If you talk about area I could argue why the agricultural area should be divided into two, giving the outlying districts the larger area. Northam is not a big electorate. The hon. member has been to Northam and back to-day. See how easy it is to reach the seat of government from Northam. He went there this morning on business, or to attend some function, and he is back in his place in the House this evening. I could not possibly do that. It would take me three days to go to Boulder and back, and yet he provides the same number of electors for Northam.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I could go to Kalgoorlie and back in 36 hours and spend a day there.

Mr. George: Two nights and a day to go there and back.

The PREMIER: That is a long way different from going to Northam and back and spending the day there and occupying altogether 12 hours. What is there special about the people of Northam that they should have that advantage over the people of Boulder or Kalgoorlie, or districts such as Toodyay or Greenough? Both Toodyay

and Greenough are five or six times greater in area than Northam---

Mr. Lindsay: Twenty times greater.

The PREMIER--besides being much farther away from the seat of government. The two points which are supposed to govern the principle of a measure such as this are area of an electorate and distance from the seat of government. Yet those two points are not considered. Why was not the agricultural area divided into two and those nearer to the capital made smaller in size?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I did not fix the area of Northam.

The PREMIER: No, but the hon. member has in his proposal the principle which fixes the area of Northam. He has laid down in his proposal certain definite provisions which fix the area of Northam and other districts as well. Albany is 300 miles away and it would take two or three days to get there and back.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: And it has 3,000 electors.

The PREMIER: It covers a large area of country, larger than Northam, but it is placed on an equality with the electors of districts that are smaller in area.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Why refer to distance as the only consideration? Hang it all, what is 300 miles by rail.

The PREMIER: Of course it is nothing. The hon. member can go to Northam in the morning, attend to the requirements of his constituents and come back here soon after tea. Could the representatives of Greenough or Albany do that? Of course not. It has always been recognised that distance from the seat of government is one of the governing factors with regard to the voting power of electors. In the case of the goldfields, in comparison with the agricultural areas, it has been deliberately ignored.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It would have been a thousand times worse under your proposal. You would have had about three seats on the goldfields.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is quite wrong. I have worked that out.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I am speaking with the book in my hands.

The PREMIER: The book does not explain it; I have worked out the figures. The hon. member under-states it by 100 per cent. when he says three seats. But, no matter what the representation of the goldfields may be, there should not be too great a discrepancy between the voting power of

the electors in one part of the State as compared with those in another. Whilst it is admitted there are grounds for differentiating, still that must not be allowed to go too far, or we shall get entirely away from the democratic basis of government, get away from the one-adult one-vote policy, if we give too great a voting strength to people because they are far away as compared with those close at hand. There must be a degree of reason and justice that this Act does not provide. In the metropolitan area there are 103,000 electors to-day. A redistribution under this Act would give 15 seats to those electors.

Mr. Thomson: They have only 12 to-day, so that would be increasing their number by three.

The PREMIER: The question is whether it would give them sufficient.

Mr. Thomson: You are getting away from your other argument now.

The PREMIER: Not at all. I am not justifying the present boundaries, nor am I declaring what the quota should be for the outback districts. But it is my business to show that a redistribution under this Act would be unjust, and ought not to be carried out. For 103,000 electors in the metropolitan area there would be 15 seats, while for 81,000 electors in the agricultural area there would be 24 seats. So the metropolitan area, although having 22,000 electors more than there are in the agricultural districts, would have nine seats fewer than those districts.

Mr. Latham: And would still have more representation.

The PREMIER: Why?

Mr. Latham: Because we are here six months in the year.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is now taking the goldfields point of view. However, with 22,000 more electors, the metropolitan area would have nine seats fewer than the agricultural areas. Does the hon. member consider that is anything like a fair distribution?

Mr. Thomson: Yes. I do not think the electors of the metropolitan area would expect more than 15 seats.

The PREMIER: If they are to get only three extra seats, I do not think they care much whether there is to be any alteration or not. If we are to make an alteration that will give half the electors of the State only three extra seats, I am afraid those electors do not care much whether any

change at all be made. The member for Katanning considers that 22,000 fewer electors in the agricultural areas should have nine seats more than are given to the electors in the metropolitan area.

Mr. Thomson: Do you believe in equal representation on a population basis?

The PREMIER: I am not saying that I do. But there is too great a difference between the agricultural areas and the metropolitan area. The gap is too wide and the difference too great to justify a redistribution on those lines.

Mr. Davy: The discrepancy is not as great as that afforded by the present position.

The PREMIER: No, but if we are going to remedy something unfair, let us do something that will result in complete justice or fairness, not merely improve it a little bit.

Mr. Davy: You would say, leave it very unfair rather than have it half fair.

The PREMIER: That is not the point. Is Parliament justified in setting about the doing of something in the knowledge that it is going to be only half fair? I say Parliament ought to do the fair thing, not to say, as the hon. member's interjection would imply, this is not a fair thing, but it is better than the existing position, so let us have it.

Mr. Davy: Well, that would be better than the present situation.

Mr. Thomson: It is a matter of opinion as to what is fair. Probably that is where we do not agree.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What would you suggest as a proper quota for each of these electorates?

The PREMIER: I am not called upon to show what in my opinion is a proper quota. I am justified in saying that Parliament is not entitled to impose a redistribution upon the State under this Act, which does not give anything like reasonable equality or justice to the electors.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Did I understand the Premier to say that the goldfields ought to have 10 seats?

The PREMIER: No. I said that if this basis were to obtain as laid down in the Act, the goldfields ought to be in one area and then they would have 10 seats. But I am not saying that that is the right basis. The goldfields were divided originally for the purpose of reducing their representation, and that is the effect of it now. I am not saying that the goldfields ought to have 10 seats, but I say that on the basis on

which the Act is drawn in respect of the metropolitan area and the agricultural area, the goldfields ought to be in one area and ought to have 10 seats.

Mr. Stubbs: You do not agree with the Royal Commissioners' report?

The PREMIER: The Royal Commissioners had nothing to do with this phase of the question. The Act laid down certain definite lines upon which the Commission should proceed. It was not a matter of the judgment of the Commissioners at all. The Leader of the Opposition said this was a perfectly fair and just Act.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: So it is.

The PREMIER: Very well.

Mr. Latham: There is no jerrymandering about it.

The PREMIER: I am not alleging that there is. The Leader of the Opposition says it is a perfectly fair and just Act. The Commission appointed was a thoroughly capable and impartial one. That, also, is admitted. What was the result under this perfectly fair and just Act operated by a thoroughly capable and impartial Commission? The Leader of the Opposition, when Premier, was not able to get a redistribution! Now he asks the House to do something, to proceed again, probably to repeat the experience. What justification has he for assuming that the result will be any more fortunate now than it was three years ago? How was it that under a just Act, on lines drawn by a fair and impartial Commission, the hon. member was not able to get a redistribution?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Because you did not help me.

Mr. Latham: There has been an election since then, and a good many changes in this House.

The PREMIER: I do not know that the hon. member is justified in assuming that either the intelligence or the impartiality of this House is greater than it was during the last Parliament. However, there is the fact: Under a perfect Act which, according to the Leader of the Opposition, it would be difficult to improve upon, and with a Commission consisting of the Chief Justice as chairman, with the Surveyor General and the Chief Electoral Officer as the other two members, the Leader of the Opposition was unable to secure a redistribution.

Mr. Davy: Shall we never try again?

The PREMIER: Does the hon. member mean never try again under this Act? Never for my part.

Mr. Davy: Shall we never have another Act?

The PREMIER: What right has the hon. member to assume that?

Mr. Davy: Apparently you are going to the country without a new Act.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is not justified in assuming that we shall never have another Act. We will have another Act.

Mr. Davy: When?

Mr. Marshall: All too soon for the hon. member. Nobody representing West Perth is ever very secure.

The PREMIER: The reason why the late Government were not able to give effect to the report of the Commission appointed under this perfect Act was because the hands of the Commission were tied down to a basis that did not produce equitable boundaries. Consequently the House rejected the Commission's report.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Let us put up a Bill that will suit everybody here; let everybody mark his own boundaries.

The PREMIER: I am not asking for perfection, but we want to get as far away as we can from imperfections.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It would be impossible to amend the existing boundaries without improving them.

The PREMIER: Possibly we could improve on them a little. The Commission's report that came down three years ago was improving the then existing boundaries, but just the same it did not get through.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Because it did not suit hon. members.

The PREMIER: It did not suit this House.

Mr. Stubbs: That is why we are here on this side.

The PREMIER: I do not know that.

Mr. Stubbs: I am sure of it, and so are you. You know I am speaking the truth.

The PREMIER: I do not, but I know that the Leader of the Opposition, when Premier, was unable to give effect to the report of the Commissioners. Now he says, let us have another try. The last Parliament did not adopt the report of the Commissioners because under the provisions of this Act the Commissioners were unable to draw equitable boundaries. As a matter of fact, under this Act a Commission is not required. All that has to be done is to ascertain the number of electors in a given area, divide them up, and draw a line so that there is as

nearly as may be the same number of electors in each electoral district.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But your idea of 20 per cent. either way was adopted.

The PREMIER: No, it was not.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: In respect of voters, it was.

The PREMIER: Only after having manipulated it and saying that what we take away from one district we add to another.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You do not say the goldfields and the metropolitan area should have the same quota?

The PREMIER: No.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Then you must say something.

Mr. Lambert: You should have said something to your supporters three years ago.

The PREMIER: The Scaddan Government's Act provided for the quota being ascertained and then for the appointment of commissioners. The commissioners might go one-fifth above or one-fifth below according to the lines set down—means of communication, distance from the seat of government. That was the Bill of 1913. That Bill was lost because another place amended it to provide that the metropolitan area and the goldfields central area should have 33½ per cent. more than the quota and that the outlying mining fields and the agricultural area should have 20 per cent. less than the quota. The Council, which was not supposed to be concerned in the matter, did interest itself on that occasion and emasculated the Bill in such a manner that its amendments could not be accepted by the Government. The Leader of the Opposition said that Labour had been eight years in office—

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Let me correct you; I said seven years.

The PREMIER: And had made practically no attempt to alter the boundaries. The seven years to which the hon. member refers was made up of nearly five years of the Scaddan Government and 2½ years of the present Government, and his statement that no attempt had been made to alter the boundaries is disproved by the fact that the Scaddan Government made just as strong an effort to get a redistribution as did the hon. member three years ago.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You mean in 1913?

The PREMIER: Yes; that is part of the term that the hon. member included in the period of seven years. He said Labour had been seven years in office and made no serious attempt to alter the boundaries.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That was 13 years ago.

The PREMIER: But it was part of the seven years referred to by the hon. member. His statement is disproved by the fact that in 1913 we passed a Bill for redistribution and it was lost in another place. We made just as strong an effort to effect an alteration as did the hon. member, and while he failed in this House, we failed in another place. That was the only difference.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I would like you to have another try.

The PREMIER: All in good time.

Mr. Davy: Not until after next March?

Mr. George: This session?

The PREMIER: We will have a try, and we will give a better basis than does the present Act.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: For God's sake make a proposal and let us see what it is.

The PREMIER: I will make a proposal at the proper time and in the right place.

Mr. Davy: About next August?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is scandalous that the Act of 1911 should still operate.

The PREMIER: Why did not the hon. member alter it? He was in power for four years and his party was in office for eight years. He is indignant now that the forthcoming election should be held under the Act of 1911. He wants an alteration of boundaries. But the party of which he was a member for eight years had a majority and did not alter the boundaries. Why didn't his party make an alteration?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I tried to make an alteration.

The PREMIER: Where are the hon. member's grounds for being so indignant because we are not altering the boundaries?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You opposed me when I tried to alter them.

Mr. Davy: He tried and you will not even try.

The PREMIER: The hon. member does not know whether I will try or not. In making that interjection he is assuming too much. It is not for the party, who had an opportunity for eight years and failed to do anything, to be demanding why we have not done something in two years. Probably by the time I have been in office as long as was the hon. member, I shall have made an alteration. I will pledge myself definitely to make an alteration in less time than that during which the hon. member held office and failed to make an alteration.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You have been in office seven years.

The PREMIER: No; 2½ years. We made an effort in 1913 and were unsuccessful. We have been in office 2½ years on this occasion and the hon. member wants to know why we have not done more in 2½ years than his party did in eight years.

Mr. Panton: The trouble is you have done more.

The PREMIER: If there is any legitimate grievance in the mind of the hon. member about the electoral boundaries, his party must take a full share of the responsibility. Having had eight years of opportunity they did nothing. It is not for him to say to the country, "The Labour Government have to take all the blame for not making a change in two years."

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Let us understand the position. You have been in office for seven years, and I was in office for six years out of the last 15 years.

The PREMIER: I am speaking of the hon. member's party. There seems to be in the minds of members opposite a very keen desire to remove the inequalities of the present boundaries, because the electors in some districts have many times the voting strength of those in other districts.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Fifty times.

The PREMIER: No; not fifty times.

Mr. Davy: Forty-two times anyhow.

The PREMIER: I will say many times. Still, whatever the boundaries are, the electors of this State return 50 members to this House. They all have a vote. It does not lie with the Leader of the Opposition to complain of the inequalities of the existing boundaries and of the greater voting strength in one district as compared with another after having stood up in this House last evening and strenuously supported a policy that denies to two-thirds of the people of this country a vote for the Legislative Council. Why this anxiety about the injustice being done to electors for this House when members opposite are prepared to say that two-thirds of the men and women of this country shall have no actual voice in the final determination of legislation? Two-thirds of the electors for this House are not entitled to a vote for the Council. Is there no inequity in that? Is there no injustice in that? Let members opposite show a little consistency. The injustice of some men having many times the voting strength of others for the Assembly concerns members opposite, but it does not appeal

to them as being in the slightest degree unjust or iniquitous that two-thirds of the men and women of this State should have no vote for the Council. The Leader of the Opposition only a few nights ago talked of the injustices of the present electoral boundaries, and last evening he saw no injustice whatever in two-thirds of the people of this country being deprived of the full rights of citizenship.

Mr. Davy: Can you see any injustice in the present state of affairs as affecting the Legislative Assembly?

The PREMIER: Of course I can, but not so much injustice as I see in the present state of affairs as affecting the Council, in respect of which the hon. member sees no injustice.

Mr. Davy: Not so much as in one man having 50 times as much voice as another man.

The PREMIER: One-third of the electors are getting all the voice in the Council and two-thirds of them are getting none at all. Why does the hon. member talk about injustice? I suppose there is no injustice in that. I call it rank inconsistency for members to talk about the inequalities regarding this House when they are quite prepared to say that two-thirds of the people on the same rolls, people about whom they profess to be deeply concerned, shall not have a vote for the Council. They want equality between all electors for this House, but they are prepared to say that two-thirds of the electors shall have no vote for the Council. What have they to say to that?

Mr. Panton: Dead silence!

The PREMIER: They talk about the injustice of the electoral boundaries. It will be time to talk about that when they are prepared to give to all those voters I have indicated the full rights of citizenship, when they are prepared to give them a voice in the making of another place as well as in the making of this House.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You did not propose that.

The PREMIER: No, but the hon. member would not be prepared to go one-tenth of the distance in that direction. I did not ask him to give the two-thirds of the electors a vote for another place; I merely sought to give the vote to only a comparatively small proportion of them, and his attitude was "No, you must not do it."

Hon. W. D. Johnson: He did favour married men having a vote.

Mr. Lindsay: We have not yet voted on that Bill.

The PREMIER: I have no doubt what the decision will be.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: This House is far more important than another place.

The PREMIER: Another place has the final say regarding everything we do; it has the final determination of what shall or what shall not be law; it has the final say in everything that affects the well-being of the electors so far as the right of government can affect them.

Mr. Davy: Except the loaves and fishes of office.

The PREMIER: There are not so many loaves over there.

Mr. Davy: This House determines the loaves and fishes in both places.

The PREMIER: What does that matter? Another place has greater power than has this House; it can throw aside everything that this House does.

Mr. Davy: This House put you in your position.

The PREMIER: We control administration, and that is all. Legislation is the thing that counts. In this House we say that two-thirds of the people who have no vote for another place can be taxed. Laws can be made to which they have to conform. They can be prosecuted, and have to stand the rigour of the law in our civil or criminal courts. They have to submit to all the laws of the land as administered by our courts, but they have no final say in the making of the laws.

Mr. Davy: They have.

The PREMIER: In this House they have only half a say.

Mr. Davy: In the other House all they can do is to stop them.

The PREMIER: Of course. The other House can stop them, and can amend legislation.

Mr. Panton: That is all a bullock can do, but it is pretty effective.

The PREMIER: By being able to amend it and stop it, has it not the final say? This House has to accept its amendments or decisions, or abandon the Bill.

Mr. Stubbs: Or compromise.

The PREMIER: I hope that members who talk about the rights of all these electors will not confine their attention to their

rights so far as representation in the Chamber is concerned, but will go the full measure and talk about their rights in another place, which is half the Parliament of the country. That is what they ought to do. I do not know that it would be difficult to convince a number of electors that they are not getting a fair deal with regard to their representation in this Chamber, and at the same time say, "You are not entitled to any say at all in the Council." That is the position we have arrived at to-day. I have not altered my view of the Act since 1922. It contains provisions under which the boundaries of the State ought not to be readjusted. For that reason I shall vote against the motion.

MR. LATHAM (York) [9.17]: It is only to be expected that the Premier would oppose this on the same ground that he opposed the Bill that was previously before the House.

The Minister for Lands: Seeing that he was not here, I do not know how he could have voted for it.

MR. LATHAM: He was here.

The Minister for Lands: He was away sick.

MR. LATHAM: I am surprised at the great interest the Premier has taken in what he calls the central goldfields area. Under this proposal, and that which was submitted previously, the central goldfields will still retain the four seats. The electors there cannot be disfranchised.

The Premier: The Leader of the Opposition gave the number as three. You can decide it amongst yourselves.

MR. LATHAM: Under the report of the Royal Commission, Boulder, Brownhill-Ivanhoe, and Kalgoorlie would still be retained.

The Premier: Not under the present figures. These are the figures of three years ago.

MR. LATHAM: They are the present figures. There is still the margin to be allowed for. The Premier also stated that the Bill introduced by Mr. Scaddan was fair and equitable. The wording of that Bill is the same as the wording of the Federal Act. Will the Premier say that it is fair in this State to have a big area like Kalgoorlie represented by one man, whereas Perth, a small area, is represented by two?

The Minister for Lands: The Federal Act provides for equal boundaries.

MR. LATHAM: I will read an extract from the Bill that was introduced by Mr. Scaddan—

The quota of electors shall, except as hereinafter provided, be the basis for the division of the State into electoral districts, and the Commissioners may adopt a margin of allowance, but in no case shall such quota be departed from to a greater extent than one-fifth more or one-fifth less.

The Minister for Lands: That is not in the Federal Act.

MR. LATHAM: This provides that the quota shall not apply to other districts. The Federal Act says, in making any proposed distribution of the State into divisions, that the distribution commissioner shall give due consideration to certain things, community of interest, etc., and goes on to say—

Subject thereto the quota of electors shall be the basis for the distribution, and the distribution commissioners may adopt a margin of allowance, to be used wherever necessary, but in no case shall the quota be departed from to a greater extent than one-fifth more or one-fifth less.

In this case we are entitled to five seats. That is the same wording as appears in the Bill introduced by Mr. Scaddan.

The Premier: Does that condemn the Bill?

MR. LATHAM: We say it is more unfair than the present proposals that are on the statute-book.

The Premier: That is a matter of opinion.

The Minister for Railways: That is so.

MR. LATHAM: Does the Minister for Railways think it is fair that a man should represent Kalgoorlie, and that two should represent the metropolitan area? The community of interest is identical in the latter case.

The Minister for Railways: That is the fault of the principle, not the distribution.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You will get a different result when you divide by 50 than when you divide by five.

MR. LATHAM: Yes. Still, we would place the outback people in a more unfair position than the city people. I would quote the words of Mr. Gladstone, "If there were no representation in the city of London, they would still have more representation than in any part of Scotland." That remark could well be applied in this place.

MR. PANTON: And yet you want to give them three more seats.

MR. LATHAM: We are prepared to give some, but not to go as far as the Premier wants to go. I am merely quoting what a

statesman once said. Let us examine the present position from the point of view of Boulder. That electorate has six times fewer electors than has the Canning district.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Why not examine the Act?

Mr. LATHAM: I am showing why the motion should be carried.

The Premier: Not necessarily. We can agree that they are unequal to-day. That is not to say that this is the way the seats ought to be distributed.

Mr. LATHAM: I have not heard of any better system. Taking Boulder as an example, we find that Canning has six times as many electors as Boulder; Leederville and Subiaco five times as many; Claremont, Guildford, East Perth, and North Perth four times as many; North Fremantle and East Fremantle three times as many; and Swan, Nelson, South Fremantle, and West Perth twice as many. One vote in Cue is equal to 27 votes in Canning.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: What would the 1923 Act do in a case like that?

Mr. LATHAM: It would place things in a better position than is the case to-day.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: In what way?

Mr. LATHAM: One vote in Menzies is equal to 49 in Canning. It is time these defects were remedied, and we are proposing the best means available for doing so.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: How would you remedy the 1923 Act?

Mr. LATHAM: If the hon. member had been here he would have known what we proposed. We split the State up into various areas. The Premier told us what they were. There was the metropolitan area, the agricultural area, the outer goldfields area and the central goldfields area. Each was to be taken as a separate quota, and divided according to the basis set out. One vote in the city of Perth was to represent two in the agricultural area, four in the outer goldfields, and two in the central goldfields area.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: What would be the comparison between the Swan electorate and the adjoining electorate of the Canning?

Mr. LATHAM: It would amount to 50 per cent. more.

The Premier: Just double.

Mr. LATHAM: It would mean two votes to one. Instead of being as it is now 49 times greater than Menzies, the position would be that four votes would equal one in Canning.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: And you say that is equitable?

Mr. LATHAM: Yes. I was surprised to hear the Premier say that because the Swan electorate adjoins the metropolitan area, this was not right. Let me take the goldfields area where it adjoins the agricultural area. Just over the rabbit-proof fence four votes are equal to one in the city, but on this side of it two votes are equal to one in the city. There must be some line of demarcation. The member for Canning cannot but vote for this motion.

Mr. Clydesdale: You look after yourself. That is my funeral.

Mr. LATHAM: It takes 49 of his voters to equal one in Menzies.

The Premier: And you say to thousands of people in Canning that they shall not have a vote for the Council.

Mr. LATHAM: That is quite possible.

The Premier: You show wonderful solicitude for the Canning so far as this House is concerned.

Mr. LATHAM: We are not dealing with the quotas for another place.

The Premier: That is right. Keep them out of the Council altogether.

Mr. LATHAM: That subject will be discussed under another heading. Something must be done to remedy the present state of affairs.

The Premier: Of course it is most inequitable.

Mr. LATHAM: The Canning electorate possesses 15,116 electors, and Menzies 307. Surely that is an unfair position.

Mr. Panton: I do not represent Menzies, but the State. I see outside the Menzies electorate.

Mr. LATHAM: I hope the hon. member will not see too much of my electorate during the next six months. There are eight members sitting in the House representing less than 5,050 votes, less than the number of electors that are represented by the member for Guildford.

The Premier: You show a wonderful solicitude for the electors so far as this House goes, but two-thirds of them have not a vote for the Upper House.

Mr. LATHAM: The Premier does not know how I am going to vote. I may support him.

The Premier: You have never hinted it.

Mr. LATHAM: The Premier is anticipating altogether too much. Some of the wonderful speeches made by the hon. gentleman

might easily have persuaded me to accept his view.

Mr. Sleeman: What quota has York?

Mr. LATHAM: It has over its quota.

Mr. Sleeman: Which part are you anxious to lose?

Mr. LATHAM: I am not anxious to lose any part.

Mr. Panton: Do you think the Commission would now bring down a different recommendation from that of 1923?

Mr. LATHAM: Redistribution is a serious question.

Mr. Panton: What about Mt. Margaret?

Mr. LATHAM: I have said nothing about Mt. Margaret.

Mr. Heron: Neither is Mt. Margaret saying anything.

Mr. LATHAM: The fairest system of representation in this Chamber was that put up by the present Leader of the Opposition.

The Minister for Agriculture: Why did you not alter the distribution of seats a few years ago, when you had the chance?

Mr. LATHAM: Because the Premier of that day was not able to convince everyone that he was right.

The Premier: That is the worst of it; other members will not see the position as we see it.

Mr. LATHAM: I am pleased that this is not a party question on the other side of the House. No doubt members opposite will give an intelligent vote, which will be in favour of the motion. Members on this side are quite free.

Mr. Lambert: They were pretty free last night.

Mr. LATHAM: Absolutely.

Mr. Lambert: They were loyal to their leader until then.

Mr. LATHAM: Redistribution has never been a party question on my side since I have been a member. Admittedly there is need for redistribution of seats. Then the question arises, what is the right basis? I maintain, for the want of something better, the basis now on the statute-book is the right one.

The Minister for Lands: Do you say that that question was not a party question?

Mr. LATHAM: I do say so.

The Minister for Lands: That is an incorrect statement.

Mr. LATHAM: I am better capable of judging as to that than the Minister for Lands.

The Minister for Lands: On this subject I have the word of members who are as honourable as you are.

Mr. LATHAM: I definitely say that it was never a party question.

The Minister for Lands: I say it was.

Mr. LATHAM: I can only reply that the Minister for Lands must have attended some party meetings at which I was not present.

The Minister for Lands: Some members then on the Government side of the House told me so, and they were honourable men.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. LATHAM: It was not a party question at all.

The Premier: Oh!

Mr. LATHAM: I refer to the measure of 1923, when the present Leader of the Opposition was Premier.

The Premier: That is not the measure I was referring to.

Mr. LATHAM: Neither of those measures represented a party question. I hope members opposite will support the motion, or else let us put up a proposal more acceptable to the people. We are not here to consider ourselves, but the people of the whole State. Members opposite should consider the motion in a non-party spirit. No doubt the member for Canning (Mr. Clydesdale) and the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) and other members representing thickly populated constituencies will support the motion.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: What about the two-thirds of the people who are disfranchised for the Legislative Council?

Mr. LATHAM: I do not propose to be side-tracked by the member for Guildford. That question is already on the Notice Paper. I shall have an opportunity of satisfying the hon. member with regard to it at an early date. I shall then express my opinions as freely as I am expressing them now.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You will be equally considerate then about representation.

Mr. LATHAM: We regard this as a fair proposal for redistribution, and I have no doubt the member for Guildford will be on our side when the division is taken.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam—in reply) [9.36]: The Premier's objection to the motion is entirely based upon the Act of 1923 and what he calls its unfairness to the goldfields.

The Premier: Not necessarily to the goldfields alone.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier dwelt on that point.

The Premier: I mentioned Northam too.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier said that of course the goldfields quota should be much less than the quota for the agricultural districts, because the goldfields are further away. He really argued that the quota for the goldfields should be fixed for the whole of the goldfields, and not as provided by the Act of 1923, one quota for the thickly populated districts on the goldfields and another for the scattered outer fields. I took it from the Premier's remarks that if the same quota had been applied to the whole of the goldfields electorates, he might have been induced to support our proposal.

The Premier: It would have been very much better.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: And it would not have made much difference.

The Premier: A difference of three seats—the difference between seven and ten.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not think so. At any rate, let me compare the Act of 1923 with the proposal made by Mr. Seaddan's Government in 1913. Under the 1913 Bill there were to be four seats for the North-West, and the total number of votes, less the number of votes in the North-West, was to be divided by 46 to give the quota.

The Premier: There were three seats for the North-West under the 1913 Bill.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The number was altered from three to four. Taking the votes at 206,000, less the North-Western votes of something over 3,000, 202,000 votes were to be divided by 46, giving a quota of 4,400. The 1913 measure provided that the Commissioners might vary the quota by one-fifth: that is to say, for the metropolitan area there might have been a quota of at most 5,280, which would be made up of 4,400 plus one-fifth, and for the rest of the State, other than the North-West, namely for the goldfields and the agricultural areas, the quota might have been 4,400 less 880, or 3,520. That was the best that could have happened to the goldfields, the lowest goldfields quota under that measure. Under my measure of 1923, which is the law to-day, there are seven seats for the goldfields, or two more than under the proposal of the Labour Government with which the Premier was associated.

The Premier: But the hon. member knows that I did not argue on those lines. I was

talking about the whole construction of the Act.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am coming to that. The Premier would have us believe that if he could have the 1913 proposals passed into law and my Act passed out, he would be content.

The Premier: I did not say anything about that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But the Premier would have us believe that. He said it was fair.

The Premier: Much fairer than this, I said.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The goldfields, as I have shown, would have fewer seats under the Scaddan proposal than under my proposal. Turning to the agricultural districts, we find that the quota which under the 1913 measure would have been 3,520, was under my Act 3,371—not very much difference, only about 150 votes. Under the Scaddan proposal the agricultural districts would have had 23 seats.

The Premier: No.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes.

The Premier: What is the quota? You said 4,000 odd.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No; 3,520. I wish the Premier and the House to realise that I am following the Premier's argument. I give to the metropolitan area all that the margin provided in the Scaddan measure would have allowed. So I arrive at a maximum of 5,280 for the metropolitan area, and for the other parts of the State I arrive at a minimum of 3,520.

The Premier: That is where the quota is wrong. For the metropolitan area the quota would be one-fifth over, for the agricultural area it would be the actual quota, and for the outer areas it would be one-fifth less.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: They would have had one-fifth less on a quota of 4,000 odd.

The Premier: The Bill did not say so.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I know, but that is the only logical conclusion.

The Premier: But the Bill did not indicate that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is what it meant. On that basis there would be 23 seats for the agricultural area as against the 24 under my proposal.

The Premier: The hon. member is quite wrong.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The number of electors in the agricultural and

metropolitan areas has increased, but in the goldfields districts the number has decreased. That is unfortunate and we regret it, but we have no control over it. Representation must be on something like a fair basis and we should all desire to be fair in dealing with such an important matter.

The Premier: Hear, hear!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then, if the Premier takes the lowest possible quota under the Scaddan Bill, he would have five seats for the goldfields districts, whereas under the 1923 Act the goldfields would have had seven seats.

The Premier: The hon. member is not basing his remarks on my argument at all.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier said that the goldfields would not be fairly treated under my proposal.

The Premier: I referred to the whole construction of the Act, but you are dealing with the goldfields under one Act, and the agricultural area under a Bill that did not become law.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: As a matter of fact, the goldfields, if we adopted the 1913 Bill would not have as many representatives as under the 1923 Act.

The Premier: That is so.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The agricultural districts would have very few less.

The Premier: No, several less. The hon. member is basing his agricultural calculations on one-fifth less than the quota.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, I have taken off the greatest possible number. We would not have fewer than we have to-day. The metropolitan area would have gained by the Premier's proposal and under the 1913 Bill, there would have been 19 seats with a quota of 5,280 electors, as against 15 seats under the later proposal. All will agree that 15 members would provide fair representation for the City of Perth, and therefore no one can argue that the 12 representatives of to-day is a fairer number than if there were 15 representatives.

The Premier: You must have regard to adult franchise. If we are to give seven times the representation of one district to another district, it merely represents one way of giving plural voting.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There would have been very few more representatives for the agricultural districts under the 1923 Act than under the Bill of 1913. On the

other hand, there would have been a greater number of representatives for the goldfields districts under the 1923 Act than under the 1913 Bill. Therefore the Premier's argument goes by the board. There should be hardly any member who will not agree with me that the 1923 Act, having regard to the figures, was a better and fairer measure than the Bill of 1913. The interests of the people in the metropolitan area are more or less identical, but it is not altogether a question of distance from the centre of government that has to be taken into consideration, for the interests of all the people are, from one standpoint, more or less identical. It cannot be argued with the same force that the interests of the people throughout the agricultural districts are the same. Certainly they are not the same as are the interests of the people throughout the metropolitan area. It is generally agreed that in any electoral system there must be regard for community of interests. We must have regard for the good government of the country, and for the great responsibilities resting on the people.

Mr. Thomson: We would not be prepared to give half the representation to the metropolitan area.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No. The existing law sets out how the various interests shall be taken into consideration. How are we to deal with this motion? Every goldfields members must agree that the Act of 1923 was far better and more fair than the Labour Party's proposal of 1913. It cannot be denied that the goldfields representation would have been greater. What do the goldfields members propose to do about it? Under the 1913 Bill the quota for those seats would have been 3,520, whereas under the 1923 Act the quota would have been 1,685.

The Premier: What have your colleagues done during the past eight years to overcome that defect?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Are the goldfields members going to stand by the Premier with his larger quota, or support the motion which provides for a quota of 1,685 electors?

The Premier: That is not the alternative put to them.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But they must give that point consideration.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: Do you propose to increase the number of metropolitan seats?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, by three.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: Then you will not get my support.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The hon. member wants an excuse to support his Leader.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: It would mean more than three extra to-day.

The Premier: No.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Under the 1913 proposal that the Premier believes in, the metropolitan area would get an increase of not three seats but seven seats.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: The present Act would reduce the goldfields representation.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, but the present Act gives the goldfields better treatment than was proposed by the Labour Government in 1913.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: Then why not retain it?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is why I ask members to retain the 1923 Act because that is fairer to the agricultural districts and to the goldfields. Nothing could be worse or more unfair than the present electoral boundaries?

The Premier: Unless it be that no votes are allowed at all for some parts.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am referring to the representation in this House, where Governments are made and unmade.

The Premier: But where the laws are not made.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We make the laws that govern the question at issue. How unfair are the present provisions? Where is the member for Canning (Mr. Clydesdale)? Why is he not looking after the interests of his 15,000 electors? One goldfields member represents 307 electors. While the member for Menzies (Mr. Panton) is charged with that responsibility, the member for Canning represents 15,116 electors. Are we to perpetuate such an anomaly? If the representation in this House were to be on the same basis as that of the Menzies electorate, we would have 672 members in this Chamber. It is our duty to improve the present situation. Nothing could be worse. When we run up the scale from 300 electors to 15,000 electors and find the quota for the metropolitan area is a little over 6,000—

The Premier: That is not as bad as running up and down the scale and finding that two-thirds of the people have not got a vote.

Mr. Richardson: That is a different proposition.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: These anomalies ought to be rectified, even if we do nothing else. Why should the member for Fremantle represent 4,375 electors, and the member for South Fremantle 5,505 electors, while the member for Canning represents 15,116 and the member for Leederville 11,923 electors? Why allow that to continue?

The Minister for Agriculture: Why did you not correct it when you had an opportunity?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: These anomalies should be done away with.

The Premier: You had five years within which to do it, why did you not alter it?

Mr. Davy: He did try but you will not try.

The Premier: You don't know whether we will or not.

Mr. Davy: We know you won't.

The Premier: We have years to go yet before we reach the stage at which you tried to alter it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: What about the Canning seat?

The Premier: Why did you not alter the position?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Something should be done now.

The Premier: This indignation after eight years!

Mr. Davy: Nevertheless, we tried and you will not do so.

The Premier: You were there for seven years before you tried.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There is a tremendous difference between the number of electors in the Nelson electorate compared with those in the Pingelly electorate, more than twice the number.

The Minister for Agriculture: Why did you not alter it?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier represents 2,719 electors and his Honorary Minister, the member for Hannans, 893 electors, although that is just over the fence from the Premier's constituency.

The Premier: The position is not much different from what it was when you were at the head of the Government.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Are these anomalies not to be corrected?

The Premier: Tell us why you did not correct them.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course they should be corrected, for nothing could be worse than the present boundaries. The Premier cannot suggest anything worse.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: There is something worse.

The Premier: Eight years!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The present Government are content with the boundaries of to-day. Frequently they rush in where angels fear to tread; why, then, should they be afraid to do something to correct this position?

The Premier: We have been cleaning up other things during the last two years.

The Minister for Agriculture: Why did you run away from your own Bill?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: What is it that futile creature says who sits on the Treasury bench?

The Minister for Agriculture: What was it you called me? I will come and pull your nose!

Hon. G. Taylor: What sort of conduct is that? It is disgraceful in a Minister of the Crown!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! What does the hon. member say?

The Minister for Agriculture: I ask that "Hansard" be asked to reproduce the statement made by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. SPEAKER: What was it the hon. member said?

The Minister for Agriculture: He said I was a vile creature.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Nothing of the sort. The Minister asked why did I run away from my own Bill. He knows, of course, that I did nothing of the sort. I then referred to him as a futile creature.

Mr. SPEAKER: Since there is a difference of opinion as to the word used, I will ask "Hansard" to reproduce what was said by the Leader of the Opposition. . . . As reported by "Hansard," the dialogue was as follows:—

The Minister for Agriculture: Why did you run away from your own Bill?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What is it that futile creature says who sits on the Treasury bench?

I rule that those words are personally offensive, and I ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw them unreservedly.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do so unreservedly. But what about the Minister's words?

Mr. Teesdale: Let them be withdrawn also.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member should have taken an objection and utilised the Chair for correction at the time. "Why did you run away from your own Bill" is not strictly un-parliamentary, although it may be offensive. If offensive to the hon. member, he should have taken objection to the words through me at the time. His own words were taken objection to, and therefore I called upon him to withdraw unreservedly, and he has done so. This matter can proceed no further.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: When the interruptions from the other side were such as to make it almost impossible for me to hear myself speaking, we were discussing the fairness of the representation proposed in 1923 as compared with the proposals of 1913, in which my friends opposite believed. I think I have shown that the proposals of the provisions contained in the Act of 1923 were fairer to all parties. The member for Albany (Mr. A. Wansbrough) said he could not vote for my motion because it meant increased representation in the metropolitan area. I am afraid we have not faced this question fairly. Something ought to be done to bring about a better arrangement of boundaries. The Premier has admitted that. He said I was in office for eight years after 1911. I do not know that I was. Certainly I sat on the Government side for eight years.

The Premier: I meant the party.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I was in office for six years, for five of them as Premier, and I made an attempt to amend the boundaries, but did not succeed, because I could not get 26 members to vote for me. Since the amendment is a constitutional amendment, it must be supported by 26 members. I could not get them, but the Premier, if he were to bring down proposals under this Act of 1923, would have the support of members sitting on this side, and so he could not fail. When I made my proposals the then Opposition, to a man, objected to them; it would be totally different if they were brought down now by the Premier. Even since 1923 the numbers of electors in the various divisions have changed considerably. As I pointed out the other day, there are now 19,000 more electors in the metropolitan area than there were in 1923, while the increase in the agricultural districts represents 14,836 electors. I say it with regret, but in the goldfields areas there are only 17,000 electors altogether. There was no fixing of boundaries in 1923, but in 1926

we ought to determine upon a revision of existing boundaries. In common fairness to the people of the State that ought to be done.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Did you say on the 1923 Act?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes. The Act put in by the hon. member, when a Minister, was not nearly so fair to the goldfields as is the present Act.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I have had no enjoyment yet to-night.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not suppose the hon. member has. No doubt he feels very uncomfortable at having to vote against the motion, and I can quite understand his not enjoying himself. I cannot imagine any member enjoying himself if he is going to oppose the motion.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It is another place I am concerned about, the two-thirds of the electors who have not a vote for the Council.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The hon. member had better concern himself about this place, because that is what we are considering at present. If the Act of 1923 does not suit members on the Government side, why have not they proposed some amendment.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You are basing your remarks on the 1923 Act.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am, and I have shown that it is a fair Act to the goldfields and would give them more representation than the measure of 1913 would have done.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: We want a better one still.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I would have no chance of amending the 1923 Act, even if I desired to do so. I consider it perfectly fair and just, but if the Government are not satisfied with it, why have not they proposed some amendment in the last two years and three months?

Mr. Lambert: The session has not closed yet.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I hope the Government will do something.

The Premier: It took your party seven years to think about it, so do not rush me.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Why does the Premier compel me to remind him that he has been in office for seven years of the period since 1911, and that when he goes out of office in March next he will have been in office for eight years?

The Premier: Your party were in office eight years continuously and I have a long way to go before I reach your stage of neglect.

Mr. Davy: Well, he did try, anyhow.

The Premier: Not for seven years.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: After I had been in the office of Premier for three years, I introduced the measure, and it was rejected.

The Premier: Four years.

Mr. Lambert: Rejected by your own followers.

Mr. Latham: And it received no support from the Labour side.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Is it any wonder that I feel annoyed when a member tells me I ran away from my Bill. I did the best that was in me to get the Bill passed. By the consent of every member sitting behind me at the time, it was not made a party measure.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is the reason why it was not passed.

The Premier: But the other measure that determined the basis of redistribution was a party measure.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It gave a good deal more flexibility than the Bill of 1913, in which the Premier believed.

The Premier: But the Bill that laid down the basis of redistribution was made a party measure.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It was.

The Premier: And that was the all-important Bill, not the boundaries.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Nothing of the kind. Members are paid by the people to serve them faithfully and well. I realise that we ought to have a redistribution and that new boundaries ought to be fixed. When the Premier says I made no effort to bring about an alteration, I resent his statement. Everybody knows that I did try.

The Premier: Your party had a much longer period than I have had in office before you made an attempt.

Mr. Davy: The need then was not so great.

The Premier: I admit they had not the benefit of the hon. member's advice at the time.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier has been in office for two years and three months, and has not brought down a Bill. He has had time to bring down a measure on two or three occasions at least, plenty of time. Members must take the re-

sponsibility and answer to the people for the votes they cast here to-night. I know they will argue that because the measure of 1911, which was objected to and criticised at the time, suits them still, they have a perfect right to say it should continue to be the law of the land, but they will have great difficulty in persuading the electors that that is so.

The Premier: Are you speaking for the electors now?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Not for the two-thirds who have not a vote for the Council.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am speaking for the electors who vote for members sitting here. Members will have great trouble to persuade the electors that they have done justice to the country.

The Premier: I shall endeavour to enlighten them.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If members approve of this motion they will be doing justice to the electors. Try as members may to sidetrack the question, they will not succeed. Try as they may to delude the electors, they will find it difficult. Members sitting on the Government side, who represent so many more electors than they should will find it difficult to satisfy their constituents that their representation is all-sufficient. They will not be able to do it. It is futile to discuss the matter further.

Hon. G. Taylor: The word "futile" has been declared to be most objectionable.

Mr. Teesdale: You will have to withdraw it if you do not mind.

The Premier interjected.

Mr. Teesdale: A member was called a liar the other night.

The Premier: Why didn't you take exception to it?

Mr. Teesdale: We have a bit more generosity than you display.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I regret that so much heat has been introduced in the debate. I am sorry I lost my temper, even for a moment.

Hon. G. Taylor: You do not lose it very often.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I lost it only under great provocation. I do not know why we in this Chamber cannot consider this question, which is of vital interest to the people. It is of vital interest because we should have fair representation. Since it is left to us

to see that a fair thing is done, it is extraordinary that we cannot face the question calmly and without feeling. We should disregard our own interests—individual and party interests.

The Premier: The hon. member was the first to lose his temper.

Mr. Davy: Was the insult hurled at him in cold blood?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I regret that for once in the whole evening I lost my temper, but I consider I was subjected to great provocation. Members must take responsibility for their votes, and if they cast a vote that means the present boundaries are to be retained, they will do so knowing full well they are doing an injustice to the people.

Mr. Lambert: That is what Mr. Bruce said the other day.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I advise members to vote with my side of the House on this occasion. No member will be justified in voting against the motion.

Mr. Clydesdale: It is a good electioneering speech.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not make electioneering speeches. The electors are already well informed. I merely moved this motion because I hoped the Premier would agree that we ought to have the boundaries re-arranged.

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

Ayes	19
Noes	23

Majority against .. 4

AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Barnard	Mr. North
Mr. Brown	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Davy	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Denton	Mr. Taylor
Mr. George	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. E. B. Johnston	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Latham	Mr. C. P. Wansbrough
Mr. Lindsay	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Mann	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Lamond
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Lutey
Mr. Clydesdale	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Collier	Mr. Millington
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Pantom
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Troy
Mr. Heron	Mr. A. Wansbrough
Miss Holman	Mr. Willcock
Mr. W. D. Johnson	Mr. Withers
Mr. Kennedy	Mr. Willson
Mr. Lambert	(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES.

NOES.

Mr. Maley		Mr. McCallum
Mr. J. M. Smith		Mr. Munster

Question thus negatived.

House adjourned at 10.25 p.m.

BILLS (3)—THIRD READING.

1, Trust Funds Investment Act Amendment.

Passed.

2, Shipping Ordinance Amendment.

3, Legitimation Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Assembly.

BILL—NAVIGATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. J. W. Hickey—Central) [4.39] in moving the second reading said: Although this Bill contains a number of clauses, there is not much of a contentious nature in it. The printed memorandum attached to the Bill sets out the necessity for this legislation. Section 30 of Part IV. of the Navigation Act, 1904, is obscure, and in fact does not stipulate the survey of local or intra-State vessels. The proposed new section in the Bill defines the classes of vessel that this section shall apply to and sets out the vessels excepted from survey under the statute, including those holding a seagoing certificate issued by the board of trade under the Merchant Shipping Act or by the Commonwealth Government under the Commonwealth Navigation Act. Provision is also made to survey vessels once a year instead of every six months, which brings our legislation into line with other Acts, including that of the Commonwealth Government. The Navigation Act, 1904, under which we are now working only gives power to survey steamships, whereas the Bill provides for the survey of all classes of vessels including motor or auxiliary motor schooners, etc., in addition to steam driven vessels, thus ensuring the better control of and the power to survey the small coasting craft which trade between ports on this coast and are not at present subject to survey or manning conditions. The Bill also give greater protection to the crews of such vessels and the owners of cargo. More particularly is this the case with craft lightering wool between ports and to vessels. Provision is also made for the survey of harbour and river craft, more particularly in regard to their engines and boilers. Provision for this control was included in the old Inspection of Machinery Act of 1904, but omitted from the amend-

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 9th September, 1926.

	PAGE
Question: Rabbit-proof fence	871
Bills: Trust Funds Investment Act Amendment, 3R.	871
Shipping Ordinance Amendment, 3R.	871
Legitimation Act Amendment, 3R.	871
Navigation Act Amendment, 2R.	871
Soldier Land Settlement, 2R.	873
Government Savings Bank Act Amendment, Com.	874
Wyalcatchem Rates Validation, 2R., Com. Report	875
Vermin Act Amendment, 2R.	875
Return: Land tax assessments	876

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

QUESTION—RABBIT-PROOF FENCE.

Hon. W. T. GLASHEEN asked the Chief Secretary: 1, What is the annual cost of upkeep of the No. 2 Rabbit-proof Fence, including interest on capital cost? 2, Are the Department of Agriculture aware that the gates on the fence can frequently be found standing wide open? 3, How many convictions have been recorded during the last three years against persons leaving the gates open? 4, What is the average amount of the fines imposed?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, £7,447. 2, Officers of the Department and also members of Vermin Boards have found gates open, and in each instance have endeavoured to catch the offenders, but without result. 3, Nil. 4, Answered by No. 3.